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BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

# Mexico, 1940–1968 and Beyond: Perfect Dictatorship? Dictablanda? or PRI State Hegemony?

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico.** By Christopher R. Boyer. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. Pp. xix + 337 pages. $27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822358329.

**Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938–1968.** Edited By Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. Pp. vii + 444. $28.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822356370.

**The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Post-Revolutionary State.** By Halbert Jones. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014. Pp. ix + 296. $55.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780826351302.

**Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century.** By Gilbert M. Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013. $23.95 paper. Pp. x + 252. ISBN: 9780822355328.

**Instituting Nature: Authority, Expertise, and Power in Mexico's Forests.** Andrew S. Mathews. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 304. $32.00 paper. ISBN: 9780262516440.

**The Logic of Compromise in Mexico: How the Countryside Was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism.** By Gladys I. McCormick. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 284. $32.95 paper. ISBN: 9781469627748.

**Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960.** By Thomas Rath. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013. Pp. vii + 256. $29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780807839294.

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With his 1969 classic, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, John Womack initiated a shift in modern Mexican historiography away from the politics of modernization toward an emphasis on class, capitalism, and authoritarianism. Womack challenged Frank Tannenbaum's thesis that the Mexican Revolution was a peasant rebellion against feudalism with social justice principles engrained in the postrevolutionary state. He established that the Zapatistas in Morelos rebelled against a capitalist project but lost to new rulers bent on its continuation.[1] Studies by Mexican and Anglo-American scholars used Marx, Weber, Gramsci, and just plain empiricism to flesh out the revisionist thesis of a centralizing state that subordinated worker and peasants into client corporations while repressing dissidents. Key among them was Arnaldo Córdova's

[1] John Womack, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969).

*La ideología de la Revolución Mexicana: La formación del nuevo régimen*.[2] Regional studies complicated the thesis—they showed how messy, fraught, and incomplete was the process of state formation given the regions' strength, diversity, and mobilizations. In 1986, Alan Knight published his study of the Mexican Revolution and a key essay in the *Bulletin of Latin American Research*.[3] He returned to Tannenbaum. Social movements, he argued, were serious motors of change, often responsible for destroying haciendas prior to legislation and otherwise shaping state formation. With his sociopolitical history, Knight introduced post-revisionism.

In 1994, the collection of Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, marked a cultural turn in post-revisionism.[4] It introduced issues of language, meaning, and symbolic behavior to analysis of state/subaltern relations. In his essay in *Everyday Forms*, William Roseberry proposed the concept of hegemony as useful to understanding this process.[5] As Jeffrey Rubin reminds us in his concluding essay to Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith's collection *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico: 1938–1968*, Roseberry borrowed from Gramsci to suggest an analysis of a dynamic set of conditions and discourses for struggle and redress within a system of domination.

*Everyday Forms* did not explore the period immediately after 1940. Might Roseberry's concept serve the subsequent period if it took into account changing contextual factors and shifting relations of power—above all, a shift toward conservative government with greater control over popular organizations and the initiation of rapid economic growth (6.4 percent annually between 1940 and 1970)? Most studies here addressing post-1940 rule do not use the concept of hegemony. However, they suggest that the conservative state negotiated with popular mobilizations, regional power configurations, as well as disgruntled actors and institutions.

Gilbert Joseph and Jürgen Buchenau's *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century* is a gracefully written, comprehensive synthesis for the classroom and general reader. It includes new research up to 1940 (much of it from the authors' impressive collections and monographs). As it does not include findings from the books on the subsequent period reviewed here, it is a yardstick by which to measure the contributions made after its 2013 publication. *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution* balances historiographies of revisionism (an emphasis on state consolidation in order to advance a capitalist project) and post-revisionism (attention to compromises thrust upon the state by social mobilizations). It follows a central state narrative but pays attention to relations between local, regional, and national power.

Unique among the works reviewed here, the authors acknowledge Mexican contributions to global history (the concept and practice of *indigenismo*, the aesthetics of nation building, the challenge to private property, and the social democratic legacy that fostered Mexico's role in United Nations human rights formulations in the 1940s). More than other studies here, the book incorporates proliferating research on women and highlights the transnational framework shaping twentieth century Mexico: from the difficult negotiations with US bankers between 1920 and 1924 to those introducing NAFTA in 1994.

The study emphasizes the contradiction of an aspiring democracy whose politics were fought not at the ballot box but by military factions in the 1920s. General Calles brought officers together in 1929 to form the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). Programs in education, land reform, health, and infrastructure were impressive. Yet they rested on principles of hierarchy and inequality. The paternalistic, authoritarian state knew what was best for an ignorant people (but often learned more from the people than it taught). While recognizing President Cárdenas' redistributive reforms, the authors note that the progressive uptake began under regional governors and Calles-appointed presidents. They emphasize constraints on Cárdenas created by Catholic rebellion, opposition within his coalition, and transnational factors. With popular organizations incorporated into the reformed PNR, the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM), Cárdenas' "greatest legacy may be the one party state formation" that operated "to vertically incorporate, legitimate and control through patronage the nation's peasants, workers, and other organized sectors" (Joseph and Buchenau, 12). Cárdenas bowed to increasingly conservative public opinion and, in antidemocratic custom, chose his successor—a moderate. Fraud secured Manuel Avila Camacho's 1940 victory.

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[2] Arnaldo Córdova, *La ideología de la Revolución Mexicana: La formación del nuevo régimen* (Mexico City: Era, 1973).

[3] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); "The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois? Nationalist? Or Just a 'Great Rebellion'?," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 4, no. 2 (1987): 1–37.

[4] Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

[5] William Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 355–366.

Critical to this essay is Joseph and Buchenau's interpretation of the post-1940 period vis-à-vis the other works under review. Using a term coined by Mario Vargas Llosa in 1990, they describe a "perfect dictatorship" between 1940 and 1968: a one-party system with the appearance of democracy that sustained regular elections and avoided military coups and social upheavals. In the reorganization that became the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in 1946, the party removed the army from formal political power. The state/party emphasized securing dominance with loyalty, order, and representation of PRI sectors in local elections. The latter required central government reliance on local strongmen and their minions, effective political and cultural brokers. Culture was important in negotiating styles, manipulating rhetoric, consecrating monuments, and melding national and regional ritual performance. The mass media created a sense of *mexicanidad*. As Alemán replaced militant union leadership with compliant *charros* (bosses), the central state and party cemented control over popular organizations. The economy picked up after 1948, benefiting from exports for the Korean War, import-substitution industrialization, infrastructural investments, and the promotion of tourism. Workers recovered some purchasing power and there was demand for Mexican labor in the United States. The state invested in education, health care, sanitation, the eradication of contagious disease, housing, and subsidization of prices for basic goods. Achievements were impressive and owed a lot to talent in the central state, a talent hardly recognized by other studies here reviewed.

Joseph and Buchenau note selective protest movements (Ruben Jaramillo's mobilization of campesinos in Morelos, the Coahuila miners' strike and caravan of hunger in 1951, the railroad workers' strikes of 1958–1959) and repression (of the railroad workers and Jaramillo's 1962 assassination). They highlight growing crisis as the 1959 Cuban Revolution offered a new model for revolution, anti-imperialism, and armed struggle. Cárdenas led the left of the PRI and other progressives into the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional, while Miguel Alemán and ex-Callistas organized against it. The public split encouraged voices from the right and left. Add to this political contention the increasingly visible contradictions: uneven benefits of economic growth, population explosion creating pressure on the land and migration to cities, growing unemployment and inflation. For Buchenau and Joseph, the students rebelling in Mexico City in 1968 represent a coming-together of these critical contradictions: they demanded the rule of law, freedom from repression, and social justice. This interpretation overlooks the students' own subjective position, forged in a privileged urban milieu nourished by the child-centered policies of the state, market, media and church and ignited by a transnational youth rebellion. As the primary focus in this review is the 1940–1968 period, I leave to the reader to enjoy the well-crafted chapters covering later years.

In his essay in *Dictablanda* on the transition to more conservative rule from 1938, Alan Knight suggests that the proper question for historians is not the turn to the right itself but how it was possible to achieve significant social reform, successful institution building, and the maintenance of a measure of social peace and order during a period of world crisis without recourse to Gulags, concentration camps, massacres of priests, or harsh repression of labor. Much credit goes to President Avila Camacho, argues Halbert Jones in his fine book, *The War Has Brought Peace to Mexico: World War II and the Consolidation of the Postrevolutionary State,* based on presidential archives, US diplomatic and military papers, those of the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, and the Mexico City press. For most Mexicans, Avila Camacho was illegitimately elected. No one wanted to go to war except him (and the labor unions, after Germany invaded the USSR in 1941). The president recognized that Mexico's participation could enhance the prestige and power of the PRM, bring unity to the fractured country, repair international relations damaged by the oil nationalization, and create a platform for prosperity. He sought to persuade public opinion (PRM politicians, generals, the conservative PAN, the radical Sinarquistas, the church, the multivalent press). He did so through careful, patient attention to divisions and pressures within and without and to Mexico's military capabilities, which he and Defense Minister Cárdenas enhanced while disciplining the institution away from politics toward national defense. After Pearl Harbor, the president declared Mexican neutrality. When German U-boats sank Mexican ships in May 1942, he declared a state of war on undefined terms. Division plagued his cabinet. Cárdenas opposed entry until brought over by US concessions. He and the United States agreed on one issue, for different reasons: he wanted no large Mexican contingent sent off to war, while the United States wanted no more brown soldiers. The solution was brilliant. In spring 1944, Mexico sent the small Air Force Squadron 201 into the Pacific theater. Lionized in newsreels and feted from Laredo to Mexico City on their return, the pilots became national heroes.

It had taken three years to offset opposition. Rebellion had erupted over conscription introduced in late 1942. Pro-war propaganda permeated the press, parades, and the mass media. Avila Camacho was the first president to use the media systematically. Jones is aware of the discourse of democracy coming particularly

from Hollywood, but he does not cite Michael Nelson Miller's study of the media's contribution, nor does he mention William Dieterle's antifascist, pro-democracy films.[6] The production of nationalism—star-studded in the media, more seriously emphasized in public schools, and amalgamated with local interests in patriotic festivals—was a brilliant manoeuver the state used time and again to legitimize itself. As Jones notes, this democratic discourse masked critical undemocratic moves during the war: central intervention in congressional elections, the initial domestication of unions and the left, and creeping control over the press. Congress approved the law of social dissolution against "internal enemies": it would have long legs. Gobernación enhanced election monitoring and intelligence gathering with the formation of the Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DGIP) (later, Dirección Federal de Seguridad or DFS). Gobernación's civilian minister, Miguel Alemán, became president in 1946.

Unlike the above studies, essays in Paul Gillingham and Benjamin Smith's collection *Dictablanda* take a decentered look at the Mexican state. In their excellent historiographical essay, they reject the idea of a perfect dictatorship and the framework of hegemony for understanding PRI dominance. By "dictablanda" they mean a competitive authoritarian regime (with real but unfair electoral competition), characterized by a weak state with low levels of penetration, frequent challenges, and negotiating capacity. It attempted to control access to resources and to distribute the benefits of growth. While it could form broad coalitions, it ruled through degrees of censorship, intimidation, violence, and repression, although not at levels comparable with totalitarian or bureaucratic authoritarian regimes. These essays, many utilizing newly opened national security archives, make four contributions. One, in emphasizing central state weakness, they show how weakness favored stability, as it necessitated delegation, concessions, and negotiations. It also fomented corruption, impunity, and violence. Two, weakness empowered the army. Three, authors provide evidence for electoral competition, together with management and fraud. Four, popular protest persisted as a tactic for redress of grievances. As I examine the essays, I pair three with their authors' recent monographs.

Thomas Rath's essay challenges the narrative of demilitarization. He draws from presidential archives, the DGIP, Secretaría de Defensa, US military and diplomatic reports, and the press. When officers threatened to create a new political party in 1948, Alemán survived by boosting pay, pensions, and benefits and directing young officers toward careers in the DFS. He distributed promotions and positions rich for graft and immune from prosecution as officers became governors, senators, party officials, and police chiefs. The army substituted for law enforcement institutions in marginal areas and partnered with the police, *defensas rurales*, and *pistoleros* in putting down protests. The capital press seldom reported these repressions. He notes that not all of these were unwelcomed by local populations. We might ask whether rewarding generals with political office did not weaken the military as an institution.

In *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920–1960*, Rath covers familiar territory in the pre-1940 period and expands upon his *Dictablanda* essay. Useful is his description of conscription, its intent, and opposition. Rebellions broke out, led by Ruben Jaramillo in ex-Zapatista territory and among ex-*cristeros* and Sinarquistas around Zacatecas. By 1950, the state had ceded: those conscripted trained on Sundays. The heart of Rath's book is an analysis of the *cacicazgo* created by General Maximino Avila Camacho in Puebla. Here, army officers ran judicial police forces, held municipal posts, and frequently repressed dissidents. By the end of the 1950s, the army played less political roles. While it continued repression as protests massed in Puebla City, the protests themselves mortally wounded the cacicazgo.

While Rath links army repression in the 1950s to its aggression against students at Tlatelolco and 1970s guerrillas, he notes factors that contributed to a more centralized military controlled by the president. He cites reduction in military size and budget, increased professionalization, shifts in generational attitudes, reduced military participation in politics, the collapse of the military cacicazgos, and deeper penetration of civilian and other security institutions.

In their essays in *Dictablanda*, Paul Gillingham and Wil Pansters each argue for considerable competition in local elections, particularly within the PRI. They use sources similar to Rath's, plus those of the Dirección de Gobierno. Gillingham uses the archives of Veracruz, and Pansters, those of San Luis Potosí. Gillingham's primary data go to 1952, Pansters's to 1958. They argue that even when primaries ended in 1950, elections involved "subordinate inclusion" and "deferred compensation." The party sought local candidates acceptable to communities with records of providing benefits and public works. As Vincent Padgett noted in 1957, these authors argue that the party could afford to cede at this level, important to local people but not to Mexico City.[7] According to President Ruiz Cortines, the federal legislatures and governors belonged to the

[6] Michael Nelson Miller, *Red, White, and Green, The Maturing of Mexicanidad, 1940–1946* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1999).

[7] Vincent Padgett, "Mexico's One-Party System: A Reevaluation," *American Political Science Review* 51, no. 4 (1957): 995–1003.

president, the local legislatures to the governor, and the municipal government to the people (Gillingham, 161). Occasionally an opposition party like the PAN won a municipal election. Here the PAN built the base it would later expand to governorships and the presidency. Pansters looks at electoral management by lieutenants of cacique Gonzalo N. Santos in the northwest region of San Luis Potosí. However, when Santos sought to repress a PAN/Sinarquista movement that surged in 1958 around municipal elections, President López Mateos cut him out.

Santos was one of several regional caciques that came to power under Cárdenas and fell from the end of the 1950s. In his essay, Rogelio Hernández Rodríguez stresses that they differed from older caciques: they combined traditional methods of clientelism, patronage, familialism, group loyalty, violence, and, above all, personalism with control over modern institutions (state administrations, popular organizations, the party, and elections). As has been established by previous research, they were adept at handling what the federal government could not: local cultures and conflicts. When they could no longer guarantee stability, as indicated by their mismanagement of protests launched by new groups (e.g., the landless swelled by population growth, the middle class, including Catholics, professionals, women, and students), the center removed them.

Hernández does not note the cacique's particular form of masculinist domination—personalist, hermetic, violent, carousing, predatory; obsessed with power, subordination, and loyalty. Singular women might imitate some of this behavior, but María Teresa Fernández, the only contributor to take up gender in this collection, makes another argument. Women could vote in municipal elections from 1947 (in some places earlier) and in federal elections from 1953. Fernández looks at the career of Jalisciense and Priísta Guadalupe Urzúa (1912–2004), a teacher who started in the female branch of the Regional Agrarian Committee, became a founding member of the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC), secretary of the CNC feminine action in the PRI, municipal president, councilwoman, and congressional representative. Drawing on Urzúa's rich personal archive, newspapers, and studies of Jalisco politics, Fernández argues that she was not a cacique but rather an advocate who secured health, medical, educational, and communication services for her constituents through mastery of laws, bureaucracies, and the art of petitioning. In the 1960s she joined with other female elected officials in Jalisco to formulate a women's agenda. They were not alone: women well positioned in the state as social workers, educators, lawyers, and hygienists moved from pressing for women's rights and social services outside the party in the 1930s to pressing for them within the PRI after 1940.[8] We must ask how women's suffrage and office-holding shaped politics, state service, and the PRI: under what circumstances did they reproduce or alter behavior and agendas?

Fernández suggests that Urzúa's model was not only the secular activist but that of hundreds of Catholic women devoted to service. Both Gillingham and Roberto Blancarte in this volume note the PAN's mobilization of women from the 1940s. They also participated in Catholic protests against the "texto único" and the Cuban Revolution between 1960 and 1962. Women would come to form the base of the PAN: With what impact on the party and broader politics?

In his essay, Benjamin Smith notes female participation as consumers and market vendors in tax rebellions in the 1940s. As we know, tax evasion was pervasive. The weak central state could neither collect taxes (they were 10.4 percent of GDP in 1965, the lowest in Latin America) nor assure adequate division of income at different levels of government. New is his account of protest. He draws on the presidential archives and archives of Gobierno, the DGIP, and Oaxaca to describe popular mobilizations. Protests contested regional state taxes imposed on commercial transactions to supplement what states had sacrificed in income to the federation. When state governments responded by rescinding these taxes, he argues, they compensated with bribes placed on legal infractions. The central government made up for the shortfall with oil revenues and by printing money. Smith says local governments came to depend on the church and Indian village cooperative labor (*tequio*) for services.

Smith's essay raises questions. First, although local caciques could turn tequio into forced labor, tequio is also the community's contribution to public works. It is not always exploitative: it means that the bridge or school, like the colonial church, belongs to the village and not the state. Second, Smith's primary data cover the 1940s to 1952. Were there later rebellions? Third, if the federal state had so little tax income and spent a small portion on social services, how can we explain community after community, tax-rebelling city after city, organization after organization, governor after governor receiving so many perks from the state? PRI chose its candidates for office on the basis of their achievements in public works. The list of services

[8] See Susie S. Porter, *From Angel to Office Worker: Middle-Class Identity and Female Consciousness in Mexico, 1890–1950* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).

is detailed again and again: roads, schools, clinics, health care, potable water, wells, corn mills, drainage, scholarships, electrification, telegraph and telephone services, housing. Some financing came from state and private enterprises; citizens often provided labor and maintenance. Still, how did the financially strapped governments accomplish so much? Was it through foreign borrowing that eventually did the PRI in?

Michael Snodgrass and Gladys McCormick in their essays note that the list of perks lengthened for those who operated within official organizations in profitable industries. Snodgrass looks at the Mine and Metallurgical Workers and Sugar Workers Union disciplined by President Alemán (as were unions everywhere at this moment in the Cold War). He draws from secondary sources, DGIP archives, interviews, and his monograph, *Deference and Defiance in Monterrey: Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890–1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). In exchange for *charro* control, limited striking power, and PRI votes, workers benefited from economic growth and price stabilization in the 1950s. Napoleon Sada, who ruled the metal workers for forty years, secured most of the "list," as well as job security and mobility, improved pensions, workman's compensation, production bonuses, consumer cooperatives, and sports facilities. To advance demands, union workers abandoned the justice/rights discourse of the 1930s for one of production, costs, and earnings. Benefits also begat corruption. With control over hiring and promotions, leaders sold jobs to favor family and friends and to weave webs of dependency. The sugar workers' union provided similar benefits to mill workers and offered bracero contracts in the United States. Such co-optation did not cancel internal criticism or factional competition. However, the longer *charrismo* endured, the more venal and corrupt it became. Protest movements surged from the 1970s.

Gladys McCormick looks at the sugar cooperative of Zacatepec in Morelos organized by Cárdenas. The mill workers, belonging to the sugar workers union affiliated with the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), won privileges over the cane-producing *ejidatarios*, members of the weaker CNC. She tells the story of Antonio Jaramillo, brother of the more famous Ruben, whose militancy has been examined by Tanalís Padilla.[9] Disciplined by violence, Antonio and his colleagues chose to work within the system. In addition to the "list," they secured job mobility, a technical college, and scholarships, which moved children into the middle class. Ejidatarios continued to struggle against management's abuses through routinized protest (cooperative elections, petitions, caravans to Mexico City, and advertisements in capital newspapers). They transitioned in discourse from peasant rights to partners in development; with their knowledge of the technical dimensions of production they could pinpoint management's shortcomings. Particularly when they made common cause with mill workers, they achieved results—the state dismissed at least two corrupt managers between 1949 and 1960.

McCormick's monograph *The Logic of Compromise in Mexico: How the Countryside Was Key to the Emergence of Authoritarianism* stumbles in its overarching argument that authoritarianism emerged in the 1950s in the countryside and migrated to the cities. Mexican society and state have been authoritarian from pre-Columbian times and only in recent decades began to shift unevenly toward something more democratic, open, and egalitarian. Second, the government had its own practices of urban rule and repression. Still, her analysis of sugar ejidatarios is excellent as are her sources (presidential archives, those of Secretaría de Trabajo y Previsión Social, the DFS, and extensive oral interviews). She is sensitive to the patriarchal relations pervading social, work, and political life from top to bottom. She makes three additions to her Zacatepec story. First, she relates the experience of the cooperative at Atencingo. Functioning within the Avila Camacho cacicazgo and an operation owned by its crony, William Jenkins, ejidatarios did not have the maneuverability of those at Zacatepec, who appealed directly to the president. While Porfirio Jaramillo, brother of Antonio and Ruben, led the cooperative between 1946 and 1952, he was assassinated in 1956, while leading a movement for greater autonomy.

Her second contribution is a chapter on DFS espionage, which she argues became integral to authoritarianism in the 1950s. The government asked the DFS to investigate the sugar industry, among several troubled sectors. It produced 25,000 pages. Like the regime, it understood corruption to be integral to order but dangerous when it fueled excessive mismanagement and discontent. Like the regime, it preferred compromise over repression for the sake of order. Agents blamed Jenkins and governor Rafael Avila Camacho for Porfirio Jaramillo's assassination and were sympathetic to ejidatario grievances. However, McCormick argues that the center intervened at Atencingo to undermine the Puebla cacicazgo. Helping ejidatarios was secondary.

[9] Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

Her third contribution is to the cultural politics of memory. Cárdenas was Ruben Jaramillo's *padrino* from whom he sought protection from repression and support for advancement. Ruben built his movements outside of Zacatepec especially among the swelling landless. In distributing more land than any president except Cárdenas, President López Mateos responded to challenges from proliferating land invasions and the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional led by Cárdenas. Ruben joined the MLN and worked to form a new campesino organization. Continuing to mobilize, linked with the Communist Party, and praising Cuba, Ruben died with his family at the hands of the state in 1962. The new radical movement taking shape in Mexico City embraced him as a martyr. Writers Carlos Fuentes and Elena Poniatowska integrated him into a new post-1940 narrative of repression's victims (jailed railroad workers and muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros). The students of 1968 revered him. In short, the *idea* of Ruben Jaramillo became ensconced in a repertoire of revolutionary memory and its myths of justice, morality, and community—the good patriarch protecting the pueblo from the abusive stepfather, the corrupt PRI regime. Yet many in Zacatepec remember Ruben as a rabble rouser and opportunist ready to cut deals to advance his power, quick to use the threat of violence to gain a place at the table, and wavering in his position once he got there. Their own politics of compromise and state repression shaped their memories.

Christopher Boyer's article, his monograph *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico*, and Andrew Mathews's *Instituting Nature: Authority, Expertise, and Power in Mexico's Forests* look at federal policy implementation. The Forestry Service, formed in 1908 and strengthened by Cárdenas, would regulate forests to preserve soil and water. It would introduce "rationality" to "irrational" campesinos. Cárdenas ceded 60 percent of forests in land grants and required the formation of cooperatives with detailed forestry plans to be approved and monitored by forestry officials. The meager bureaucracy was not up to the task. In the 1940s, the government created bans to stop deforestation and authorized the formation of private Forestry Management Units (IUEFs) to log for industrial consumption. Virtually substituting for the state, IUEFs were to reach agreements with local cooperatives on logging, prices, hiring, and services from the "list." They usually ignored these obligations while seeking exemptions from or bypassing the bans. The bureaucracy colluded. Communities also sought exemptions. If they did not receive them, they forged documents, logged illegally, took authorities hostage, set fires, and slayed a warden or two. Not until 1971 after years of complaints from industry and communities were the bans suspended.

Boyer's monograph creates a comprehensive picture of two stages of forestry from the IUEFs to the state enterprises, founded in the 1960s and expanded by President Echeverría to benefit forest communities in management, income, jobs, schools, clinics, roads, and housing. They failed on many counts and disappeared under the onslaught of protests and neoliberalism in the 1980s, when forests reverted to community control. Drawing on national and local archives and the press, Boyer examines two temperate pine forest regions, the Sierra Tarahumara in Durango and Chihuahua, and the Meseta Purépecha in Michoacán. His analysis suggests that communities with strong traditions of local governance and resource management, *without* PRI-linked organizations but *with* state support, could come out ahead when sustained by markets.

Such was the case with Cherán and Nuevo San Juan Parangaricutiro in Michoacán, recipient of state aid after the volcanic eruption of 1943. They benefited from Cárdenas's support as honorary head of the Tepalcatepec River Basin Project, singular committed forestry personnel, the organizing skills of ex-braceros, and the expertise of their sons prepared in forestry careers through community scholarships. In the 1970s a new generation of state foresters entered with a commitment to community control. Here were ready markets in the resin industry, paper factories, the avocado industry (crates), and Home Depot. Nonetheless, Boyer provides a sad vignette: by 2011 Cherán fought off *narcotraficantes* and private logging companies.

Communities in the Sierra Tarahumara fared worse. Living dispersed and meeting occasionally for religious celebrations, the Rarámuri lacked traditions for unified resistance. The Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) entered in 1952 to revive and multiply cooperatives, negotiate logging contracts, and build infrastructure. The INI created a boarding school that graduated teachers and bilingual promoters and ran a Rarámuri radio station. The INI helped to create the Supreme Council of the Raza Rarámuri, uniting communities. Aided by the INI and the Ejido Bank, the community of Cusárare became a model foresting cooperative that officials turned into an IUEF to avoid subordination to private companies. But most communities flagged. Today, the drug trade threatens Tarahumara forests.

Ixtlán, in the Oaxacan Sierra Juárez, studied by anthropologist Andrew S. Mathews, may be Mexico's most successful foresting community. Mathews draws on oral interviews and participant observation, Oaxaca archives, the press, and transnational studies of forestry, bureaucracies, and knowledge making. Historically, Ixtlán has been administratively strong as a district center and a municipality with control over smaller communities. Towns here entered the mid-nineteenth-century civil wars forming National Guard units

under regional caciques. They preserved communal control of land in the liberal disentailment and took part in the Sovereignty Movement led by caciques to block the intrusion of the 1910 revolution. Ixtlán has hearty traditional institutions including regular assemblies and a now secularized cargo system. To these, Cárdenas added a separate Comisariado de Bienes Comunales, responsible for land and forests and deriving authority from the national Instituto de Reforma Agraria. Thus productive enterprise was kept apart from other community issues. The Comisariado negotiated with private companies, IUEFs, the forestry bureaucracy, and the Fábrica de Papel Tuxtepec (FAPATUX), a private company made into a state-owned enterprise in the 1960s. The Comisariado also turned against regional caciques.

From the 1970s, Ixtlán and other communities allied with a new generation of progressive bureaucrats, environmentalists, NGOs, and the Oaxaca press to remove FAPATUX. Neoliberal president Miguel de la Madrid dismantled its control over forests. The communities had learned to practice sustainable, profitable forestry. FAPATUX had provided infrastructure, community saw mills, and a pulp-processing plant. It "educated" in forest "rationalization" through jobs, inclusive of management, and youth's professional preparation. In the 1970s, the INI helped communities obtain government services. Throughout, local people learned the language of the state: when to conceal, be silent, speak, and mobilize. Ixtlán distinguishes itself from surrounding communities it considers less enlightened. Strong communities can talk back to the state. Matthews argues that these are most successful when they also collude with it.

Returning to *Dictablanda*, its final section on culture is conceptually weak. Does culture refer to aesthetics, clusters of shared attitudes, behaviors and expectations symbolically communicated, or the hodgepodge referred to in the introduction: festivals, schools, murals, comic books, and the media? In this section, culture seems to refer to message-producing institutions. It could have included Roberto Blancarte's earlier-placed essay on the church. He argues that the modus vivendi with the state engineered in the 1940s turned to a more critical stance in the 1950s, as the church became concerned with poverty, social justice, and political participation. When Vatican II (1962–1965) and liberation theology followed on the heels of anticommunist mobilizations against Cuba and Mexico's "texto único," Catholic politics became diverse and massive, creating another key group of regime challengers.

The cultural section begins with Andrew Paxman's essay on the mass media. He usefully examines relations between the government and media impresarios Emilio Azcárraga, William Jenkins, and Rómulo O'Farrill. He is weaker on media content and reception so essential in the period to changing mentalities. Several essays in this volume suggest that, contrary to the conventional wisdom of state press control, the aggrieved regularly used newspapers to plead their cases. Even more regularly, Pablo Piccato argues here, the crime pages subverted state legitimacy. They exposed *pistoleros*' state-related and state-protected acts of violence and turned murder into a political act as readers and the press recognized rampant impunity and judicial ineffectiveness. Murder gave the perpetrator an opportunity to talk. When Emma Martínez shot Senator Rafael Altamirano in 1959, she stepped up to denounce sexual debauchery and harassment in the government bureaucracy.

Guillermo de la Peña's essay on the Instituto Nacional Indígena founded in 1948 points to creative dissidence within a state institution. Leadership, particularly Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's, wanted to address exploitation in intercultural regions dominated by non-indigenous actors. In coordinating centers in areas touched by river basin projects and highway construction, personnel fought internal colonialism through introducing roads, schools, clinics, and bilingual agents. Distinct from the Cárdenas era's brief turn toward respect for indigenous cultural autonomy, Aguirre Beltrán promoted PRI penetration and the ejido tied to the central state. Yet practice differed. When Oaxacan communities resisted dismantling their cargo systems, Moisés T. de la Peña and Julio de la Fuente defended them as indispensable to community survival. Aguirre Beltrán objected to the formation of the Rarámuri tribal council but did not interfere. Some confronted serious opposition: in Chiapas from ladino caciques, and in the Papaloapan project, a rebellion by displaced Mazatec communities. But overall, the INI assisted communities in undermining exploitative relations. In the 1960s, its officials, bilingual promoters, and a new generation of anthropologists and activists criticized its functionalist, paternalistic anthropology. In the 1970s, they joined the INI and other organizations to promote community-driven activism. By the 1980s, with the state's neoliberal withdrawal, movements surged for indigenous autonomy and the separate legal regime of *usos y costumbres*.

Essays by Tanalís Padilla and Jaime Pensado deal with institutions generating student activism. Padilla shows how teacher radicalism in the 1930s survived in the Escuelas Rurales Normales serving the sons and daughters of campesinos and teachers. Nowhere else in this book do we encounter such pure preservation. By the 1960s their militancy deepened through the Cuban and Chinese Cultural Revolutions and spread through the Federación de Estudiantes Campesinas Socialistas. The latter somehow resisted PRI co-optation

to produce new revolutionaries: Lucio Cabañas, a graduate of Ayotzinapa, and the guerrillas who attacked army barracks at Ciudad Madera, Chihuahua, in 1965. Normalista students followed a Spartan regime—making their own provisions, intermixing classes, workshops, sports, and cultural productions. Their school government imitated Soviet collectives. In the north, they joined land invasions led by the Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de México and worked in Chihuahua forest communities. The government closed many schools in 1969, but their cultures of activism survive.

In his essay on the strike at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN) in Mexico City in 1956, Jaime Pensado seeks to re-periodize student mobilizations. He argues that the 1968 movement was not a watershed because this earlier strike gestured toward a challenge to systemic authoritarianism usually associated with 1968. It also invented 1968's tactics: mobile informational brigades, lightening rallies, seizure of buses, and occupation and defense of public spaces. The tactics responded to the state's use of riot police, thugs, provocateurs, pistoleros, and the law of social dissolution. Protesting the IPN's alleged collusion with American companies to privatize Mexican industry, students demanded organizational autonomy from their PRI-linked federation and participation in IPN governance. The government responded with "pan y palo"—a promise of greater institutional investment and a commission to study academic and administrative issues, together with army intervention and the appointment of a hardline director, who introduced pistoleros, thugs, DFS agents, and police. Pensado sees the strike as part of a gathering national student movement furthered in the early 1960s by the Central Nacional de Estudiantes Democráticos.

Jeffrey Rubin writes a provocative concluding essay. He suggests that the concept of hegemony may better describe the politics of the 1938–1968 period. Not only is hegemony, as defined by Roseberry and fleshed out by Florencia Mallon, a framework in which the terms of struggle and forms of domination are changing and complex, it suggests for Ruben significant spaces of freedom.[10] The Mexican state was educating but not regimenting—when it tried, as it did with religion or conscription, it failed. As a weak state with pretensions to control, it fostered corruption and evasion at all levels, but it also left spaces, as Ruben says, for enjoyment, pleasure, worship, and creativity. The village fiesta, national university, and sports were such spaces. The movies, radio programming, recorded music, and dance halls, only superficially regulated, were formative of new mentalities and behaviors. It is probably this relative freedom that Octavio Paz referred to when in 1990 he rejected Vargas Llosa's notion of a perfect dictatorship. He spoke instead of the hegemony of a party. Ruben argues that the term dictablanda also satisfies this criterion of a relative freedom.

The dilemma with any of these defining terms comes for the PRI state in the 1960s when it had difficulty managing new forms of struggle initiated by emerging social groups as well as a major party split. Clumsily it resorted to flagrant violence in 1968 and counterinsurgency in the 1970s. At the same time, the PRI state embarked on a process of gradual democratization and decentralization. It opened the electoral system, the press, the cultural realm, and recruited more initially democratically minded youth. The student discourse of 1968—anti-authoritarian, anti-corporate, anti-corruption—was clearly counterhegemonic, and subsequent state policies, inclusive of gross state mismanagement and the adoption of neoliberalism, ended PRI hegemony and mortally wounded any perfect or soft dictatorship. Democratization produced a modern civil society. Decentralization produced crime-linked regional PRI mafias. Civil society demanded the rule of law and the transparent, predictable functioning of systems of justice and security, so abysmally abused by the PRI state. Today civil society engages in a battle with a PRI government of regional mafioso origin; unprecedented corruption, incompetence, and deafness; and legions of organized criminals linked to transnational forces and the state/states. By the time this review is published, we may know the winner, but not the outcome.

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[10] Roseberry, "Hegemony," 355–366; Florencia E. Mallon, "Reflections on the Ruins: Everyday Forms of State Formation in Nineteenth-Century Mexico," in Joseph and Nugent, *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, 69–106; Florencia E Mallon, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (1994): 1512–1515.

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