

Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development. By PAUL J. VANDERWOOD. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xix, 264. Cloth. \$21.50. Paper. \$8.95.

The heart of Vanderwood's breezy book beats in two fine chapters that describe the Porfirian rurales, the fearsome "rural" police of the Díaz regime. "They were respected," Vanderwood writes, "not so much for their efficiency or harshness as for the haphazard and unpredictable manner in which they operated" (p. 129). Recruited from the flotsam of the Porfirian economic miracle, the rurales were poorly paid and seldom promoted. Recruits deserted with alarming frequency, fell into alcoholism and vice when they stayed, and proved utterly unreliable as a fighting force when tested. In the last ten years of the dictatorship, "the government had to recruit more than twenty thousand" to the corps "just to maintain the twenty-four hundred budgeted" (p. 110).

The remaining chapters of this book rewrite Mexico's history from the final years of the colonial regime to the Revolution by mixing accounts of political conflict with tales of exemplary bandits. The rurales were meant to solve two problems: the need for a specialized force to police the country's bandit-ridden rural areas, and the need for an instrument of presidential authority more reliable than either the military or the municipal police and state militia that so frequently turned their arms against the regime in power. Both problems are illustrated vividly in this book. Not infrequently the two problems came together as bandit gangs sought a license to loot and pillage as erstwhile allies of (usually liberal) contenders for political power.

Vanderwood is unaware of the royalist precedent for the Porfirian rurales. During the independence wars, police units known as the "Rurales y Rústicas" were formed in the Bajío to pursue the remnants of Hidalgo's army supported by taxes levied on Guanajuato's mine owners. The first attempt to form such a corps after independence, as Vanderwood reports, came early in the Juárez administration. Ironically, Juárez subsequently found it convenient to commission bandit gangs as liberal guerrilla units to harrass the French. This precedent was followed after the restoration of the republic, as bandit leaders were invited to form units of the reconstituted rurales. The Díaz regime also followed this practice, recruiting bandits as rurales to pursue their former colleagues. In the last years of the Porfirian regime, however, the rurales were assigned mainly to protect urban factories from working-class discontents.

The most entertaining passage in this book describes a series of bandits and bandit chiefs, some of legendary repute: the Plateados of Morelos;

Chucho “el Roto” Arriaga, famed kidnapper of priests; the Thunderbolt of Sinaloa, Heraclio Bernal. Some, like León Ugalde, managed to rise from banditry to command a corps of rurales. Although Vanderwood occasionally uses the term “social banditry,” he describes most of these brigands in thoroughly entrepreneurial terms and suggests that “rather than disrupt the social order, [banditry] may have reinforced it” (p. 103).

The wealth of new information that Vanderwood has uncovered about banditry and the rurales serves a rather abstract framework that rests on the putative competition between “order and disorder.” Society tilts from one to the other as a result of individual decisions based on pure self-interest. “When it became worthwhile for Mexicans to settle down,” he writes of the Porfiriato, “a sufficient number of power brokers designed a pattern of domestic peace in their own best interests” (p. 44). The same model applies to banditry, described as a “means of social mobility” (p. 96), employed, one assumes, when the opportunity costs were low and the returns compensated for risk. When Vanderwood asks who turned to banditry and why, his general framework allows him only to report that “no precise pattern appears” (p. 11). He offers the same response to questions about the social determinants of political instability. The social historian might ask for more systematic effort at formulating and testing for patterns in the evidence, but Vanderwood’s data do not lend themselves easily to such effort.

This is “history from the bottom up,” as the author calls it (more appropriately than most since he starts underground, as it were). The framework lends itself to occasional lapses into facile cynicism, but the book is quite entertaining and full of new evidence of real utility to students of Mexico’s social and political history.

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La clase obrera en la historia de México: Al norte del Río Bravo (pasado inmediato) (1930–1981). By DAVID R. MACIEL. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1981. Tables. Chronology. Bibliography. Pp. 234. Paper.

Perhaps more than any other Chicano scholar, David Maciel in recent years has made intellectual society in Mexico aware of the Chicano experience in the United States. From his two-volume anthology *Aztlán: Historia contemporánea del pueblo chicano* (1976) to his 1978 anthology *La otra cara de México: El pueblo chicano*, plus his various pieces in Mexican journals, Maciel has promoted Chicano scholarship south of the