

and without; that is, from the viewpoint of an insider involved in the workings of the machinery or from that of an observer alert to the changing perspectives of successive administrations—or, of course, from both positions. Flores Caballero in this study stands for the most part on the outside. He relates how administrations reacted to the peculiar circumstances of their times at the uppermost levels of government from the colonial period to the present. It is not his intention to explore the functioning of these administrations or to analyze the results of the changes that they advocated. Instead, he tells us what they proposed to do and why, which in itself is a valuable contribution to our knowledge, despite our yearning to be invited into the inner sanctum of Mexico's political and administrative behavior.

The book naturally is strongest on topics about which Flores Caballero is most knowledgeable: the turbulent early independence period characterized by its revolving political strongmen and treasury shortages that undermined administrative intentions; the advent of the *Patrimonio Nacional* in a determined effort to give post-World War II economic development an assuredly Mexican shape by preserving the nation's resources and controlling foreign investments; and the far-ranging administrative reforms of the *López-Portillo sexenio* (1976–82) designed to make the federal bureaucracy an active agent in the nation's economic and social development. By establishing detailed programs to meet specific goals (outlined in the book), the penultimate administration sought to democratize politics and to equalize the distribution of wealth. The government of Luis Echeverría had sought to do the same by assigning an increased portion of federal income to the states and municipalities.

In sum, reacting to increasing national stress created by international political and economic uncertainties, the heightened demands of domestic special-interest groups, substantial population growth, administrative overlap and corruption, and the knowledge that more Mexicans than ever find themselves alienated from (i.e., fed up with) their government, federal administrations have for at least the past three decades initiated reforms meant to stabilize the country politically, or, some would say, to keep the lid on. So far, assures the author, such procedures are admirable and have worked.

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*Mexico's Agricultural Dilemma*. By P. LAMARTINE YATES. Foreword by JIMMYE S. HILLMAN. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981. Map.

Tables. Figures. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xv, 291. Cloth. \$19.95. Paper. \$8.95.

P. Lamartine Yates has written a well-organized and highly readable account of some aspects of Mexico's agricultural development since the Second World War. His central argument is that the agrarian institutions that emerged after the Mexican Revolution, and especially the ejido, no longer adequately meet the country's development needs. He calls for major reforms in land tenure that would grant unfettered private property rights to ejidatarios. He believes that this, within the framework of a competitive market economy fully exploiting comparative advantage regionally and internationally, would enable the country to resume the dynamic agricultural growth that began in the 1940s and slowed down markedly after the mid-1960s.

The author first examines in detail agricultural production trends. This is followed by a review of trends in demand for crop and livestock products. He then treats land resources and their use, irrigation, livestock production, technology, and the agricultural work force. This is followed by a critical examination of government policies concerning land tenure, finance, prices and credit, employment, and finally agricultural development programs during the 1976–82 administration of President José López-Portillo. He identifies many problems and suggests his solutions. More free enterprise and less bureaucratic intervention are the essence of his advice.

The author's treatment of the various sources of often-conflicting official data is usually professional. He explains their bases and limitations simply and clearly. Inexplicably, however, he makes only passing reference to the most authoritative and thorough earlier review and analysis of the data and problems he is dealing with, the study sponsored by the Interamerican Committee on Agricultural Development (CIDA) on Agrarian Structure and Agricultural Development in Mexico published nearly a decade ago. Many of the data and conclusions of the CIDA study diverge sharply from those of *Mexico's Agricultural Dilemma*. It would have been instructive if the author could have explained why he feels his data are better and his conclusions more relevant than those of this earlier analysis by an outstanding team of Mexican and foreign social scientists, other than being more up-to-date. One suspects it is mostly a matter of approach and objectives.

The CIDA analysis took as its starting point the extremely complex agrarian institutions and processes evolving since the Mexican Revolution. It asked what could be done to improve both agricultural production and the living conditions of the poorer peasants and worker groups. It

took into account actual and potential social forces and the rapid social and economic changes that the country was undergoing. Yates, on the other hand, starts from the premises of the neoclassical capitalist development model. He finds Mexico's agrarian institutions to be highly deficient in relation to this norm. He suggests changing them so that they will conform better to the free enterprise ideal.

This reviewer has the impression that Yates does not fully understand the impossibility of replicating today in developing countries (such as Mexico) the conditions that allowed rapid capitalist economic growth accompanied by gradually improving social conditions and greater political democracy in northwestern Europe and North America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He has selected his evidence to support his convictions. He fails to show that freer markets in land and labor would necessarily stimulate capitalist economic growth significantly more than the present system in Mexico, and much less that this would imply a major expansion in employment opportunities for the poor. He forgets that many other developing countries on the "periphery," such as Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela, without the "fetters" of the ejidos, have the same problems of social polarization and stagnating staple food production. The case of one former poor ejidatario in Sinaloa who became a rich commercial farmer demonstrates neither the viability of the "agricultural ladder" for Mexican campesinos nor the possibility of family farms becoming a new motor for future agricultural growth.

If United States immigration and trade policies become more stringent, what effect would this have on the Mexican economy and social conditions? Oil prices are already falling and the government's social programs are being cut. (Mexico is not the second most populous oil exporter after Indonesia, as the author asserts, but the third after Nigeria.) Would not more authoritarianism instead of more democracy be the inevitable outcome of increasing social tensions accompanying an accelerated dismantling of the ejidos? These questions are not seriously faced in Yates's book. He is concerned about the relative insecurity of land tenure faced by some peasant producers and a few commercial farmers but much less worried about the greater insecurity most ejidatarios would face if their lands could be freely bought and sold. He laments the legalizing of new political parties with more radical clienteles and platforms than the PRI (the governing party since the Revolution), while conveniently forgetting that PAN, on the right of the political spectrum, draws more votes than all these leftist parties combined.

His main concerns coincide with those of some commercial farmers and other members of the business community. They are not those of the vast majority of campesinos and workers or of political leaders who

have to maintain sufficient national consensus to avoid another outbreak of widespread violence. Few observers question his assertion that agrarian institutions should be reformed. Many of us would strongly disagree with his analysis of why and how.

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*José Napoleón Duarte and the Christian Democratic Party in Salvadoran Politics 1960–1972.* By STEPHEN WEBRE. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiii, 233. Cloth. \$17.50.

Published in 1979, this book could hardly have been more timely. In July, the victory of the Sandinist rebels in Nicaragua had sent a shock-wave through official Washington. Within days, high government officials were already discussing the need to avoid a “second Nicaragua” in El Salvador. That country’s right-wing military dictatorship, it was argued, should be replaced by a moderate civilian-military junta that would include Christian Democrats. Those of us who chanced to hear such talk were not particularly surprised, therefore, to learn two months later that Washington’s wish had become a reality as young military officers staged a coup that brought to (apparent) power precisely that type of government. Though the façade of reformism soon became tarnished and civilian junta members came and went, José Napoleón Duarte (the great, reformist hope of the 1960s) was eventually appointed interim president (in name at least), and he and his party were openly backed by the United States in the 1982 “democratic” election.

Though it only covers events up to 1977, Webre’s book is very useful in understanding the party and candidate that the United States helped resurrect during this later ill-fated attempt to engineer a “moderate” alternative to revolution. After carefully summarizing the evolution of Salvadoran politics to 1960, the author devotes the body of the book to chapters on the birth of the party in the early 1960s; its ideological, tactical, and organizational character; its heyday during the optimistic 1960s; and, finally, its suppression in the 1970s. Throughout, one is struck by the impression that while the Christian Democrats in general and Duarte in particular were sincere and humanitarian reformers, they never really stood a chance. The real rulers of El Salvador—the military and the monied elite—allowed them to participate in politics largely for rea-