

then decided rightfully to make it the introductory volume to the set that had grown to 12 volumes, of which volume II bears the subtitle *Leftwich's Grant*, and covers the period from 1823 through September 1826.

This book presents in facsimile the manuscript diary and letterbook, page by page, with a printed transcription at the bottom of each page. Of the 438 pages, only 373 are complete; 165 pages are completely blank, missing, or badly damaged. Nonetheless, the available material gives a good account of the activities of the two non-Spanish-speaking agents and their impressions of newly independent Mexico and its government officials, as well as their relations with other United States, European, and Mexican empresarios, among whom were Stephen F. Austin, James Wilkinson, James Barry, Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala, and Lorenzo de Zavala.

Understandably, the Mexican officials were more concerned about organizing their government and sustaining independence. However, it is important to note the courtesy of Agustín Iturbide, both before and after he became emperor of Mexico; of his minister, José Manuel de Herrera; and of members of the congress, in personally receiving these foreign empresarios, who apparently naively interpreted this reception to mean that their requests would be readily attended. The diary and letterbook reveal more about the maneuvering, thinking, and frustrations of the grant seekers than about Mexico and the crucial events occurring there.

The work is illustrated and carefully documented, and contains translations of some of the colonization laws considered and passed between 1822 and 1824. It also lists the grants (i.e. contracts) issued by the state of Coahuila and Texas during 1815–35. It is well worth consultation by anyone interested in the early colonization of Texas.

University of Texas at Austin

NETTIE LEE BENSON

*México ante la crisis: El contexto internacional y la crisis económica.* Coordinated by PABLO GONZÁLEZ CASANOVA and HÉCTOR AGUILAR CAMÍN. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985. Notes. Tables. Graphs. Pp. 435. Paper.

*México ante la crisis. Tomo 2: El impacto social y cultural/ Las alternativas.* Coordinated by PABLO GONZÁLEZ CASANOVA and HÉCTOR AGUILAR CAMÍN. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1985. Graphs. Tables. Notes. Figures. Pp. 425. Paper.

These two volumes attempt a comprehensive examination of “the Mexican crisis” by gathering over 40 research articles and essays by leading Mexican scholars. Eight of the contributions—a mix of academic and political writing—approach the crisis in its global context; 12 concentrate on its economic dimensions; 11 are grouped under the rubric “society and culture”; and 11 purport to present

alternatives for the future. In design and perspective, the collection is reminiscent of *El perfil de México, 1980*, a successful three-volume set published a decade ago by Siglo XXI. While a number of essays are without substantiation, the volumes are well endowed with data and bibliography helpful to the specialist.

The purpose of the volumes—to debate the nature of the Mexican crisis—is undone to some extent at the start when the editors decline to define “the crisis” itself. The crisis is variously described as abandonment of the Mexican Revolution and its mass politics (II, 208); as a threat to democratization (II, 215); or as the inability of the Mexican system to deliver social services so that gross deprivation is not the order of the day for the majority of the poor. In its least satisfying construction, the crisis is considered the global manifestation of the hegemony of the United States since World War II (I, 30).

Many of the troubles that have come to dominate Mexican life in the past several years are examined (or at least identified), including environmental pollution, failed health care delivery, urban violence, and political corruption. A number of specific studies are well done and insightful (viz., Fernando Fajnzylber on science and technology, Ignacio Almada Bay on health). Rolando Cordera Campos’s outline of alternatives for the future sharply frames the politics of the “respectable left opposition,” though it is slightly reminiscent of the social policy debate of the López Portillo years.

The research in these volumes is relatively hermetic. In the first section of volume I, the origins of the crisis are attributed to the global system and the role of the United States, but agriculture—the most internationalized sector of the Mexican economy—is almost totally ignored, and academic literature from the United States virtually unmentioned. And, although Mexico’s woes are shared by other Latin American countries, most essays abjure a comparative perspective, maintain tight boundaries by academic discipline or political perspective, and treat Mexico in isolation. So Juan Gastaingts Teillery’s study of Mexican inflation fails to even cite David Barkin and Gustavo Esteva’s prize-winning book *Inflación y democracia*, published in Mexico only a few years ago. And S. M. Menshikov is the sole source cited to defend generalized price controls (II, 323), when both Brazil and Argentina have actually implemented such programs.

One interesting insight is offered by Rolando Cordera, who remarks that the Mexican crisis means the generalization of “the social question” to the whole of Mexican society (II, 371). Perhaps that phenomenon will stimulate the political system or its opponents to battle the crisis on behalf of Mexican society as a whole. But in neither volume is there a comprehensive essay analyzing the assets of the Mexican political system or the forces required or available to change it.

These studies would have been helped by an analytical focus and a more parsimonious approach to what is actually critical in Mexico today. As these volumes present work by some of the best-known scholars in Mexico (who, unfortunately, are not identified anywhere in the book), one of the academic and political tasks of

the future is to cull the political, social, and economic ephemera from those areas in desperate need of attention.

Ford Foundation, Brazil

STEVEN E. SANDERSON

*La pobreza en México.* By MOISÉS GONZÁLEZ NAVARRO. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1985. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 494. Paper.

For over three decades, Moisés González Navarro has been writing about Mexican history. Primarily a social historian, his scores of books and articles range the entire gamut of the history of Mexico. *La pobreza en México*, a book of nearly 500 pages, merely confirms what his colleagues have long known: for intimate knowledge of Mexico, particularly the years of don Porfirio, González Navarro has no peers.

*La pobreza* explores a theme seldom touched on by historians. Essentially, it examines the ideology and politics of state and church for the poor, the alienated, and the marginal population in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Mexican republic, the author points out, by embracing capitalistic values, supplanted the paternalism of the colonial church with liberal doctrines. The ward status of the poor (mostly Indian) succumbed to concepts of equality and class. Poor and rich alike were Mexicans—no more, no less.

Still, as González Navarro says, to be Mexican meant diverse things, depending on one's rank in society. To cite "La formación de la conciencia burguesa," the best of his chapters, the dominant class marched in step with social Darwinism, not just the Porfiristas but the cream of the Reforma intellectual elite. During this epoch, while the state made timid efforts to take up the slack left by the fall of the colonial church's "safety net," here and there building hospitals and orphanages, for example, it placed the burden on private charity. Good, wealthy citizens, when the spirit beckoned, had a moral obligation, as individuals, to open their hearts and give charity.

With the fall of the Porfiriato, thinking changed, but not drastically. Most "revolutionaries" no less *burgués* than the former rulers, continued to call on private enterprise to handle the problems of the poor, both before and after the Cárdenas years. When business prospered, so went this reasoning, so did the poor and marginal. The more profits for the magnates of industry, the more jobs. Yet, since capitalist teachings often proved to be more fiction than fact, it befell the state to take a hand in the battle against poverty, particularly under Lázaro Cárdenas, who began to design a plan for a social security system. Paradoxically, writes González Navarro, the secular state, not infrequently at odds with the church, had to embrace precepts of colonial friars.

But, as don Moisés concludes, state efforts to alleviate poverty have tasted at best only fleeting victories, because "[c]apitalism (particularly of the dependent