

type) will not solve the problems of poverty and marginality" (p. 427). The replacement of church dogma and institutions with capitalist slogans and practices has left the poor, a majority in Mexico, no better off than in the days of the Spanish crown—this is the message of González Navarro's careful examination of the documentary record.

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*Land Reform in Mexico: 1910–1980.* By SUSAN R. WALSH SANDERSON. Orlando, FL: Academic Press, 1984. Figures. Tables. Maps. Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xviii, 186. Cloth.

Susan Sanderson's study of agrarian policy in Mexico since 1910 is an important contribution to the growing literature on land reform during and after the decade of the Mexican Revolution. Of particular value in this work is the linking of land distribution with the other agricultural needs perceived by the Mexican government and with the policies that the Mexican government has pursued. Further, the author highlights the difficulties in agrarian policy generally: burgeoning population and limited governmental economic resources, among others.

Sanderson correctly points out that land reform has been crucial to Mexican political stability. The desire for land was probably the single most powerful motivating factor for revolutionary armies throughout the nation, although this desire was most clearly articulated by the Zapatistas in the South. Thus, Sanderson sees land distribution as a largely political issue that is designed to satisfy and indeed to pacify peasants who have been highly mobilized in the past and might be so again. Land reform is directed toward rural areas, and is linked politically with the agriculturalists' desires for high prices for the commodities produced.

This political problem is juxtaposed against one more clearly economic: the need for increasing commercial production to feed the rapidly growing urban population. Policies are designed to improve efficiency and to favor landholdings that are commercially viable in size, and they are directed toward export or toward providing food for the urban masses at low prices. Thus, there are inherent tensions in agricultural policy between the political and economic outcomes desired.

Sanderson shows that land distribution increases at times of potential or actual unrest. In the early 1920s, land reform was used extensively to consolidate support for the new government of Alvaro Obregón, particularly with the Zapatistas. However, the author perhaps underestimates the importance of reform in the rest of the country, as recent scholarship shows that land distribution took place in many other areas as well, though the resolutions on a number of these were not made definitive until the period of Lázaro Cárdenas. Nevertheless, Sanderson is quite accurate in asserting that this reform was clearly linked with political goals: at the time of the de la Huerta rebellion during Obregón's presidency, land was

distributed at the same time as rifles were given out to those who would support the government, and these *agraristas* became important in combatting the uprising. Further, whenever many migrant Mexican laborers have been repatriated from the United States, the distribution of land has accelerated. This phenomenon was most notable during the Cárdenas period.

Sanderson also points out that under later governments, the peasants have been at a disadvantage in gaining land because of the considerable time lag between the first petition and a definitive resolution. Requests for change go through three levels—local, state, and national—and by the time they arrive at the point of definitive resolution, the president may well have changed and the particular balance of policy along with him, sometimes leading to a negative decision.

The book includes valuable summaries of land reform legislation, and a particularly good section on the "Spatial and Temporal Dimensions of Mexican Land Reform." In addition, Sanderson's data are considerably superior to the information heretofore available to researchers; they are drawn directly from the official documentation of all presidential resolutions on agrarian reform as published in the *Diario Oficial*. Her findings are therefore more complete and more reliable than earlier statistical studies.

The least satisfactory aspects of the book are the graphs and charts, which are extensive and interesting, but poorly formatted. For example, the base lines of graphs are divided arbitrarily, usually into four- or eight-year segments, rather than corresponding to the politically significant six-year presidential periods. In addition, although the starting dates are indicated, it is sometimes difficult to tell the dates of the last entries.

Nevertheless, this work is extremely valuable in helping the reader gain a real understanding of the course of agrarian policy in Mexico over an extensive time period. The book shows clearly the problems faced by the Mexican government in this area and the difficult choices that a country with a growing population, scant remaining available supplies of land, and limited economic resources has had to make.

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*Promised Land: Peasant Rebellion in Chalatenango, El Salvador.* By JENNY PEARCE. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986. Maps. Graphs. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. viii, 324. Paper. \$12.95.

*Promised Land* combines a text based in part on the personal experiences of the author in Chalatenango, El Salvador, with passages of interviews with members of the guerrilla army and local peasants, and documents from other sources. The book begins with a general discussion of the peasant economy of El Salvador