

the empire, they provide fascinating views of life in Brazil at the onset of the period that Costa discusses.

Micanopy Historical Society

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Poverty and Politics: The Urban Poor in Brazil, 1870–1920. By JUNE E. HAHNER. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986. Maps. Plates. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 415. Cloth. \$32.50.

The late-1960s search for a “new history” led many to investigate social groups overlooked in earlier historiography. One popular approach viewed society from the bottom up, examining the working classes. Not all studies in this vein satisfied, however, as documentation was incomplete, European and U.S. paradigms ill fit Third World countries, and authors patched over holes with antiestablishment bias. June Hahner has overcome such problems, which should make this book a model for studies of the urban poor in other societies.

The book is descriptive in the best sense: it organizes and presents an enormous amount of information about the masses in Brazil’s cities. The main sources are newspapers, private papers, censuses, and official reports. The author describes working conditions, housing, diet, health, and relations with public authorities. For the early period, she includes slaves; for the later years, race relations. She also recounts events such as protests, riots, and strikes, in which the poor were actors. Finally, she tells how workers organized to protect themselves against adversity. The result is a fine-grained picture of the urban poor, revealing their diversity, suffering, hardships, and contributions.

In good inductive fashion, Hahner draws a thesis out of the dense material she presents. In the earlier period, the urban poor responded viscerally to problems—they rioted with anomic abandon. The elite responded just as crudely—they called out troops to crush the protest. She shows that “[t]he vaunted Brazilian spirit of compromise did exist, but only among the elites, not between them and their ‘inferiors’” (p. 291). As time went on, the working class organized and developed more effective ways to pursue its interests, and the elites responded in more subtle ways. Hahner provides detailed accounts of episodes mentioned only in passing by others. Her chapters on union activity from the 1890s on are especially good and original.

The emerging solution was an accommodation of the elites and masses. Gradually, the well-to-do and the poor sorted themselves into different neighborhoods, reducing interclass contact. In addition, public health improvements lowered the danger of epidemics. Finally, some members of the elite took it on themselves to do something about the “social question,” or the problem of urban poverty. Politicians and civic leaders recognized that the poor were with them and had to be taken into account. Hahner describes the early experiments with worker integra-

tion. Thus, a definite, if halting, evolution occurred: the urban poor went from being angry, cowed mobs to being partially organized and accepted masses.

Those who know Brazil well will savor the minibiographies Hahner provides for historical figures usually only named and labeled. They will appreciate her allowance for individual will and initiative on the part of poor people. They may agree with her that avoidance of labor militancy was a rational choice for many workers, given the likelihood of violent sanctions. They will enjoy the section she devotes to popular forms of recreation and entertainment, following the sensible observation that “[d]espite disease, overwork, and poor nutrition, urban workers did not live lives of relentless suffering” (p. 211). Finally, they will appreciate the unusually large number of illustrations.

Hahner’s empirical approach left virtually no room for discussion of sociopolitical theory, which disappointed me. About 90 percent of the book deals with Rio de Janeiro. Still, its raw material and intuitive syntheses make it a major contribution to the literature on the masses in Brazilian history.

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INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The United States and Mexico. By JOSEFINA ZORAIDA VÁZQUEZ and LORENZO MEYER. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiii, 220. Cloth. \$29.00.

Part of a series designed to view United States foreign policy through the eyes of the nations affected by that policy, this brief volume emphasizes how various events appeared to Mexicans. The authors, both affiliated with one of that nation’s most prestigious scholarly centers, provide an effective overview of the interaction between the two nations since Mexican independence, indicating the Mexican reaction to and interpretation of the principal incidents, while capturing the intensity of Mexican feelings.

Reflecting the Mexican perspective, the work is highly critical of the impact of the United States on Mexico. Naturally, the war between the two nations during the nineteenth century was a key factor in shaping attitudes on both sides of the border. The authors effectively show the continuing importance of this event, demonstrating the impact of the Mexican historical consciousness on later events throughout the twentieth century to the present. Citizens of the United States not familiar with the war’s impact on Mexico will find this discussion highly useful. The authors focus on Mexican efforts to achieve economic development, and the