

tists may be puzzled by the remarkable absence of the PRI. Does this represent authorial oversight or, more likely, further evidence of the skeletal character of the “hegemonic” party, even during its corporatist heyday? And readers in general will find the style, at times, convoluted and prone to jargon. But they would do well to persist. Such failings are more than compensated by the originality and insight of this study, which make it essential reading for students of modern rural Mexico.

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*El sexenio alemanista: ideología y praxis política de Miguel Alemán.* By TZVI MEDIN. Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1990. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. 207 pp. Paper.

In this brief overview of the presidency of Miguel Alemán (1946–52), Tzvi Medin offers a superficial recounting of Mexico’s first postrevolutionary civilian president’s primary objectives and accomplishments. Citing a handful of personal interviews, newspapers, published documents, a few memoirs, and a thin collection of secondary works, Medin concludes that Alemán succeeded in establishing the omnipotence of the presidency in the modern Mexican political system.

Alemán came to power, according to Medin, with a well-defined program to which he firmly, and at times forcefully, adhered throughout his term. The new president’s program included liberal capitalist economic development based on import-substitution industrialization and increased agricultural production; a close but dependent economic relationship with the United States; and an omnipotent presidency, established by bringing under its control the military, the newly formed PRI, the political opposition, the unions, and the national bourgeoisie. In six terse chapters Medin demonstrates how Alemán succeeded in putting his program into operation. One wonders, however, at Alemán’s transition from labor lawyer arguing for workers’ rights to president using Machiavellian tactics to rid the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) of leftists, promoting *charrismo* in the CTM leadership, and unleashing the military on petroleum workers who dared to strike against the state. Medin reveals no clues to how Alemán’s mind worked. In fact, most of the personalities he discusses are flat and one-dimensional.

Likewise, one can only guess at Medin’s purpose in writing this book. Little is revealed here that is not readily available elsewhere. At times, information is omitted that would enable the reader to draw intelligent conclusions. For example, Medin provides a litany of Alemán’s accomplishments in education: building the *ciudad universitaria*, dramatically increasing construction of new primary and secondary schools, and so on. But he fails to mention that teachers’ salaries were held so low that it was impossible to staff the schools with qualified professionals; that the university’s operating budget was so limited that its beautiful library contained almost no books; and that while 3.3 million school-age children (one reliable

source claims only 2.25 million) attended classes regularly, another 3 million were excluded for lack of resources. Numerous omissions such as these lessen the value of Medin's work.

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*Unions, Workers, and the State in Mexico.* Edited by KEVIN J. MIDDLEBROOK. U.S.-Mexico Contemporary Perspectives Series no. 2. San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1991. Tables. Graphs. Notes. ix, 249 pp. Paper. \$18.95.

The focus of this study is the relationship between workers—both unionized and nonunionized—and the Mexican government. The amorphous “social pact” that provides close and mutually beneficial ties between union leaders and government officials originated in the violent first decade of the revolution, but this venerable collaboration has deteriorated since 1982. Kevin Middlebrook's volume explores worker disaffection and unrest in recent years in which the frustrations of unemployed, underemployed, and unorganized workers have begun to spill over into the ranks of the favored “official” union, the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM). The collection's eight contributors leave the impression that the era of harmony between the government and the working class is over and that the future of relations between workers, unions, and the state is much in doubt.

The quality of these essays is quite good, although conservative readers may be disturbed by the authors' tendency to view their subjects more from the perspective of the workers—especially nonunion and disaffected union types—and less from that of old-line union members, the political elite, and corporate directors. Although controversial for some, this approach bears considerable significance not only for Mexican but also for foreign readers. The rapid intermeshing of the Mexican economy with the international system gives the plight and the perspective of the Mexican worker paramount importance for a wide range of readers outside Mexico, from bankers, industrial managers, union officials, and politicians to the usual group of journalists and academics.

While the factual and analytical depth of these essays cannot be summarized in a brief review, certain points can be cited. The impact of the inflation, severe real-wage declines, and unemployment of the 1980s is explained in Alejandro Alvarez Béjar's “Economic Crisis and the Labor Movement in Mexico.” Victor Manuel Durand Ponte's essay indicates that both members of the “social pact” foundered in the 1980s due to workers' widespread sense of alienation from both the CTM and the government. Adriana López Monjardín's discussion of the five million nonunionized agricultural workers adds to the gloomy picture.

If there are rays of hope, they come from outside the traditional government-labor axis. Barry Carr and Enrique de la Garza Toledo point to new, grassroots union movements that promise a more dynamic assertion of workers' autonomy.