

Oil and Revolution in Mexico. By JONATHAN C. BROWN. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Graphs. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 453 pp. Cloth. \$40.00.

This lengthy monograph by business historian Jonathan Brown both enlightens and disappoints. Based heavily on documentation from foreign oil companies operating in Mexico, it contains much new material of interest, as well as much that is dramatic and fascinating. It gives a solid description of the oil business from the oilmen's point of view during the important period 1880–1920. This choice of sources, however, leads to the book's major problems. The work is far more about foreign oil companies than about either revolution or Mexico.

Arranged in five long chapters, the text is only roughly chronological, moving back and forth in time as it introduces new topics. The first two chapters, which concern foreign entrepreneurs' early entry into the Mexican oil business and their activities during the oil boom at the height of the Revolution, are the most satisfactory. Chapter 3, however, purports to show that the Revolution's economic nationalism arose not from a desire to defend Mexican resources against exploitation by foreign interests but from a connection that "led the new political elites to blame the foreign interests for bringing about the conditions that provoked rebellion" (p. 250). Yet the author offers no documentary evidence that these new leaders, principally President Venustiano Carranza and his advisers, were thinking in those terms. It seems more likely to this reader that Carranza needed money for his government and taxed the high-profit oil companies to get it, a reasonable strategy for a government facing reconstruction after a devastating civil war.

Brown spends another chapter trying to refute the "oft-repeated misconceptions about the collusion of foreign interests and domestic reactionary forces" (p. 4), while noting elsewhere that the oil companies were eager to restore the status quo before the adoption of Article 27 of the new Constitution of 1917. The author is too ingenuous here. Article 27 seemed likely to convert the oil companies' previous direct control over subsoil rights to mere concessions of the Mexican state. It is not surprising that the oil companies would seek to help opponents of the regime who might give them more favorable terms. Actually, collusion between the companies and various anti-administration actors, such as Manuel Peláez, continued into the 1920s.

In his conclusion, Brown avers that the oil companies contributed to economic change and modernization, thereby unleashing "racial and class antagonisms" that elites in Mexico feared (p. 367). Consequently, writes Brown, "during the widespread rebellions of the Mexican Revolution . . . the state felt obligated to the foreign interests" (p. 371). Brown further argues that the growth of state power was generated by that same social upheaval, a product of the economic modernization abetted by foreign capital.

This argument again is speculative. Although it is quite likely that economic modernization did induce the desire for change from below, it seems clear from

most sources that the oil companies tried to stop that change rather than foster it. Furthermore, the oil industry's actual impact on other Mexican sectors during the years at hand is unclear. Indeed, the industry seems to have operated as an enclave and to have affected the rest of the economy very little. Mexican governments, seeking to control and tax these firms, were far more concerned with protecting national resources and generating state revenues than with problems of social control raised by the industry's growth.

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The Maquiladora Revolution in Guatemala. By KURT PETERSEN. New Haven: Orville Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School, 1992. Graphs. Notes. Index. xvi, 244 pp. Paper. \$7.95.

Doing Business with the Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899–1944. By PAUL J. DOSAL. Wilmington: SR Books, 1993. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xi, 256 pp. Cloth. \$45.00.

Much of the extant literature on the tragedy that defines Guatemala is misleading. On the one hand, the Central Intelligence Agency–sponsored coup in 1954 that ended the revolution begun a decade earlier has attracted a disproportionate amount of attention to this period. On the other hand, the conflicts that spread across Central America during the 1970s and 1980s tended to obscure Guatemala's distinctiveness.

This generalization holds true especially for historians of U.S.–Guatemalan relations. Not only do we continue to focus on crises at the expense of long-term developments, but we remain wedded to a Washington-centric perspective. As a result, our examinations frequently rob Guatemalans of their historical agency. We should read both these books.

Paul Dosal's straightforward narrative about the United Fruit Company's Guatemalan venture provides missing pieces of the historical mosaic. Because UFCO records were inaccessible to researchers, previous chroniclers of the company's pivotal role before and during the revolutionary period relied on often dated and always suspect published accounts. By exploiting the Freedom of Information Act, Dosal pried out archives the Department of Justice had obtained when it sued UFCO in 1954 for antitrust violations.

These documents confirm what historians had inferred but UFCO had hotly denied: the company's incontestable control of the International Railway of Central America allowed UFCO to wield greater influence in Guatemala than in any other country. Dosal methodically details how and to what end UFCO acquired this monopoly, exposing the conventional list of culprits: Minor Keith, Samuel Zemurray, the Dulles brothers, and the rest. His fundamental argument, nevertheless, is that the most dastardly villains were the caudillos, most notably Manuel