

*The World of the Mexican Worker in Texas.* By EMILIO ZAMORA. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1993. Photographs. Tables. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 285 pp. Cloth. \$39.50.

Although the title is somewhat misleading, this is a well-conceived study of Mexican workers in southern Texas during the first two decades of the twentieth century. In the tradition of Thompson, Gutman, and other proponents of the (not so) “new labor history,” Emilio Zamora reconstructs the political culture of working-class Mexicans and seeks to correct the prevailing view that Mexicans did not take an active part in determining their own history. In contrast to historians like Mario García, who argue that Mexicans were, for the most part, content with their position and reluctant to voice their concerns for fear they would lose their jobs, Zamora asserts that “Mexicans actively sought to improve their condition as a minority, and a bottom segment of the working class, by forming the organizations and regional and interethnic alliances necessary to accommodate varied aspirations and group interests within the community” (p. 4). Through a variety of tactics, including withholding labor, community-based organizing, the formation of Mexican trade unions, and sporadic armed confrontation, Mexican workers creatively responded to racism and demeaning working conditions by drawing on their cultural identity to forge a sense of community.

Drawing on a variety of archival materials, Spanish- and English-language newspapers, government documents, and trade union materials, Zamora makes clear that labor leaders enlisted workers in mutual aid societies, unions, and other associations by fostering an “all-inclusive Mexicanist identity.” The chapter on the *mutualistas* is excellent. Organizers like the spiritualist poet Sara Estela Ramírez urged the workers to unite and preached the values of mutuality—emphasizing fraternalism, altruism, and reciprocity. The *mutualistas* offered a safe haven from the workplace where Mexican cultural preferences and values were stressed. This identity was also sustained by a porous border that permitted an ongoing cross-fertilization between exiles escaping the violence of the Mexican Revolution and their compatriots working on commercial farms throughout southern Texas, or in factories and businesses in border towns like Laredo and El Paso. Interestingly, Zamora contends that Anglo unions left Mexican associations to their own devices during the first two decades of the century and, along with the federal government’s repression of the PLM and socialist unions, thereby indirectly contributed to a sense of “Mexicanness” among the workers.

The argument begins to break down, however, when the author tries to explain why, if these organizations were so successful at fostering a sense of community, many Mexican workers so quickly abandoned their own unions and associations and joined the AFL during the 1920s. For Zamora, the answer is not the evolution of an assimilationist Mexican American community in the Southwest but rather a pragmatic response by Mexican leaders to changing political and economic conditions.

Finally, a common criticism of this genre of labor history is that it all too often reflects the goals and aspirations of the leadership, not the rank and file. If Zamora's work proves no exception, it provides a nonetheless illuminating view of working-class culture along the border at the turn of the century.

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*The Civil War in Nicaragua: Inside the Sandinistas.* By ROGER MIRANDA and WILLIAM E. RATLIFF. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1993. Notes. Index. 308 pp. Cloth. \$32.95.

*Sandinista Economics in Practice.* By ALEJANDRO MARTÍNEZ CUENCA. Boston: South End Press, 1992. Notes. Index. 178 pp. Paper. \$12.00.

*Inside* is the key word in the subtitle of the first of these two books. Coauthor Roger Miranda, former chief of the Defense Ministry Secretariat and top aide to Comandante Humberto Ortega, was a member of the inner circle that ruled Nicaragua from the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in 1979 until Miranda's removal to the United States in 1987. Much of his account is based on the top-secret documents he carried out with him. William Ratliff, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, also has been a keen observer of the scene since 1979. His earlier work, *Castroism and Communism in Latin America, 1959–1976: The Varieties of Marxist-Leninist Experience* (1976), provides the background for his analysis; the spark that set off the Sandinista revolution was struck in Cuba in January 1959 when Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces ousted Fulgencio Batista.

One might expect an extreme bias from an affiliate of a conservative university think tank and a defector to capitalism. Not so. Ratliff and Miranda tell it like it is: the Sandinista defeat in the election of 1990 confirmed the obvious failures of the National Directorate of nine comandantes that promised so much and delivered so little.

The authors lead us “behind the curtain which no outsider could penetrate” to show the personalities and power struggles among this clique of nine: Tomás Borge, Humberto and Daniel Ortega, Bayardo Arce, Jaime Wheelock, Carlos Núñez, Henry Ruíz, Luis Carrión, and Víctor Tirado. Their analysis is firmly grounded in the early history of Nicaragua, with emphasis on U.S. intervention, the Somoza dictatorship, and the history and objectives of the FSLN. It is based on recent interviews with key players such as Edén Pastora (“Comandante Cero”), a leader of the insurrection, and eyewitness reportage by knowledgeable journalists (Shirley Christian, Christopher Dickey, Stephen Kinzer, Alan Riding). It also refers to relevant scholarly studies, such as David Nolan's *Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (1984) and Anthony Lake's *Somoza Falling* (1989)—the latter particularly illuminating because it takes us inside the Department of State and National Security Council to show how U.S. foreign policy is made. (The omis-