

Nor does the book help us understand how Mexico's model of industrial capitalism not only coexisted with but actually sanctioned an endemic mass exodus of rural populations to the United States. Moreover, in Moreno's tendency to treat the Mexican working class primarily as a potential consumer's class, the reader is left wondering how the encounter between U.S. capital and Mexican workers occurred at the point of production. In fairness to Moreno, Mexican white-collar employees do make a brief appearance in these pages, mostly when Sears's welfare and training programs are discussed. Still, another case study—in addition to Sears's—involving manufacturing production would have provided important insights into Mexican blue-collar workers' response to the various versions of state-promoted industrial development—cum-revolution and the definition of a “middle ground” by U.S. and Mexican capitalist interests.

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**Deference and Defiance in Monterrey:  
Workers, Paternalism, and Revolution in Mexico, 1890–1950**

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*Deference and Defiance* offers a sophisticated study of the complex and fractured relations between a regional employer class, its workers, and the national state in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution (1910–17). The book details the dynamics of industrial growth, labor conflict, and local politics as the city of Monterrey, in the northern state of Nuevo León, grew from 80,000 in 1910 to a population of 350,000 in 1950. After covering the decade of postrevolutionary recovery and consolidation, the book focuses on the “revolution from above” under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40) when a centralizing “revolutionary” state implemented the most radical social reforms enacted in the Americas in the 1930s. In challenging established structures of power, the leftist Cárdenas faced intense hostility from the local and regional elites, especially in Nuevo León, and Monterrey saw dramatic clashes between a deeply conservative and violently antilabor bourgeoisie and the national government and its local allies (ten were killed and dozens wounded over several years). At the height of the conflict in 1936, the president would even publicly threaten, at a mass rally in Monterrey, to confiscate the factories of his local employer opponents (1–2, 218).

The cohesive and productive business class of Monterrey, Mexico's preeminent industrial center, not only emerged unscathed from this unequal conflict but subsequently served as the financiers of the conservative opposition party Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), founded in 1940. After sixty years as a pariah, the PAN and its backers would emerge victorious with the election of Vicente Fox as president in 2000, thus overturning a ruling party establishment whose local consolidation of power is explored in this book. In its most compelling finding, *Deference and Defiance* argues that the survival of this regional employer class was based, in good part, on the durable alliances it had forged with certain groups of local workers, combined with a firm hand that contained but could not eliminate the rebel workers allied with Mexico City, hence the title's juxtaposition of deference and defiance.

To understand these patterns, the book scrutinizes four companies that in the 1930s employed seven thousand in a city with thirty to forty thousand wage earners in industry, transportation, and construction. A comprehensive and detailed comparison of labor relations at two Mexican-owned companies—a brewery whose workers epitomize deference and a steel mill where “red” workers personify the opposite pole—is complemented by a systematic but less extensive examination of the U.S.-owned ASARCO smelter and a glass works owned by the same family as the brewery. In crafting a company-specific analysis, *Deference and Defiance* argues against across-the-board generalizations that necessarily fall apart, given key distinctions in their “ownership and managerial styles, their work regimes, and their peculiar relations to the state” (6).

The story of the contest for workers’ loyalties in Monterrey, and how they are constructed, is narrated in all of its firm-level detail with due attention to skill levels, regional identifications, and personal and family ambitions. We come to understand the sources of undeniable working-class strength, such as the enduring hold established by communists and radicals among some groups of workers, while grasping the enormous fragility of this local achievement within a “revolutionary” but capitalist regime. Yet a narrative of courageous workers against reactionary bosses fails to capture the reality in Monterrey, where even the local communists admitted the existence of “a strong and very large faction of *obrerros blancos*” (procompany workers) (235). *Deference and Defiance* is distinctive in its embrace of the stories of those workers (by industry, skill, gender, and behavioral orientations) who not only did not join strikes or government-allied unions but supported the local “white” company unions and actively participated in mass antigovernment rallies during the twenties and thirties.

Snodgrass pays particular attention to the tactics and maneuvers of all parties in the murky interface between workers, employers, and the state (all parties divided among themselves). Under such conditions, he argues, labor relations became “overtly political, hotly contested, and saturated with long-term implications” (183). While the steel mill’s dependence on national government orders protected a “red” union, the central government’s support for independent labor organizing in Monterrey was intermittent at best. Thus the dominant local employer class synchronized its “managerial policies in rhythm with the ebbs and flows of government labor policy in an ongoing effort to shield its workers from unionization” (62). The employer-worker ties at these companies, Snodgrass argues, were characterized by a *sui generis* system of tight social control *and* the give-and-take of an alliance. He glosses this mix under the somewhat unrevealing term *paternalism*, although its dynamics are well illustrated in these pages.

Like most recent analysts, Snodgrass breaks with retrospective teleologies that emphasized the integration of labor into the state and the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). One advantage of this in-depth regional study is to demonstrate that institutionalization occurred in tandem with mobilization, among all parties and at all levels of power. The resulting labor struggles during the 1920s and 1930s played themselves out in the intersection between the local and national, and were decisively influenced by the legal and institutional framework established through the country’s evolving system of labor law, “a crucial yet understudied” topic (3) that is now gaining renewed attention in Latin American labor history (John D. French, *Drowning in Laws: Labor Law and Brazilian Political Culture* [2004]). The political story that engages Snodgrass helps us better understand the complex mix of contradictory forces and tendencies that would find an organic expression in the power of the PRI, which directly incorporated organized workers even

when it couldn't legitimately win local elections in Monterrey. The intensity of conflicts among the local groups and individuals allied with Mexico City is clearly demonstrated, and the book shows how this factionalism resulted in a system of "quotas of power" in the PRI that emerged in Monterrey after the 1930s. There is sophistication and subtlety in his exposition of the political maneuvers and ebbs and flows of these internal disputes among the local PRI's "reds" and "radishes" (red on the outside, white on the inside). He also highlights the roles they played within the larger structuring conflict that pitted a "monolithic" public Monterrey against Mexico City (the power of regionalism is consistently emphasized in this work, even if not fully realized analytically).

Snodgrass gives his generalization substance by effectively using an impressive array of sources: U.S. consular reports, government labor department holdings, state (but not federal) labor court archives, labor ministry inspection records, newspapers, interviews, and industry and even bank records. Among the recent English-language books on labor in Mexico, *Deference and Defiance* stands out as among the best and most rewarding and deserves a wide audience.

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