

Paulo's student magazine) that landed him in jail after 1968 but misses the fact that in that interview CPJ frames the PCB as 'opportunistic' and 'tailist', doubts that 'a peaceful way [to socialism] is possible' and asserts that 'the existence of armed struggle depends on the local circumstances [...] if there were 30 or 50 thousand workers ready to take up arms and take power our task would consist of finding those arms' (*Revisão* (1967), reprinted in *Problemas del Desarrollo*, 1: 4 (1970), pp. 163–70).

The two (related) questions that go unanswered are why the intellectual who wrote one of the first and most elaborate critiques of the feudal thesis in Latin America (alongside Sergio Bagú's *Economía de la sociedad colonial*, 1949) was a disciplined member of the PCB for most of his life, and why was he never expelled? Pericás is probably better positioned than anyone to answer these questions but he fails to do so.

Given the complicated life and work of CPJ, a full-length biography with new archival material is very welcome. It seems Pericás decided to do a 'counterbalancing act' by presenting the readers with aspects of CPJ's life that are less well known. However, the book falls short of its intention to become the 'definitive' biography of CPJ, merely reproducing parts of CPJ's archive and leaving key questions unanswered.

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Randal Sheppard, *A Persistent Revolution: History, Nationalism, and Politics in Mexico since 1968* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), pp. xiv + 374, £59.95, hb

The Mexican Revolution has a long history of near-death experiences. Across the reign of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) politicians, dissidents and intellectuals reported its demise; yet the reports were exaggerated, and the revolution was resuscitated (in thought and word, at least) by new personnel and policies. Mexican governments continued claiming revolutionary credentials well after the last president with any genuinely revolutionary pretensions, Luis Echeverría, had left office. It is this period, the last quarter of the twentieth century, that concerns Randal Sheppard, whose book argues that revolutionary nationalism established 'cognitive boundaries' (pp. 11, 134, 256 et passim) within which rulers and ruled negotiated the exercise of power and the material benefits that came with it. The PRI's fall was agonisingly slow, in short, because hegemony operated in favour of political stability not just in the 1930s, but until close to the very end. It was the mythology of the 'persistent revolution' – perhaps more than violence, strategically pacifying resource distribution, television, fear of the unknown, a lack of options, election rigging or the institutional genius of *no reelección* – which kept a rotten show on the road, in the teeth of poor reviews, a deserting cast and increasingly loud and unimpressed audiences.

Working on this assumption, *A Persistent Revolution* approaches Mexico's history since 1968 with a focus on nationalism and politics rather than economic or social history. The structure mixes incident analysis with overview, prefacing each chapter with a 'snapshot' of a major event or moment, the whole amounting to a chronological structure that balances conjunctures and historical explanation. Thus an introduction to narratives of Mexican history from independence to 1982 is prefaced by the central place of Tlatelolco commemorations in those narratives; the presidential *Informe* of 1982 sets the scene for the austere 'revolutionary realism' of Miguel de

la Madrid. Successive chapters use the 1986 Chihuahua gubernatorial election to introduce political opposition, the 1988 *grito* as a preamble to Carlos Salinas and Solidaridad, the Zapata rising as a path into the fate of agrarian reform and indigenous populations in a neoliberal time and finally the centenary of the revolution to introduce what is in the main the story of Ernesto Zedillo and the PRI's moment of truth. The whole comes together as an accessible history of contemporary Mexico with an interesting focus on political stagecraft, language and ritual.

It is the copious material on the nuts and bolts of late revolutionary nationalism that constitutes Sheppard's original contribution, and which draws out his best writing and anecdotes. The Estela de Luz, Felipe Calderón's vacuous abstraction of a monument to the revolution, is skewered as a fitting emblem for his administration's vacuity, 'modern and shiny but ultimately blank' (p. 258), while the man himself crops up – in a guayabera – delivering eulogies like a PRIísta to Lázaro Cárdenas and Emiliano Zapata (p. 212). In less absurd earlier times, peasants and PRIísta leaders, symbolic carpetbaggers, fight it out over who cares more about Zapata, while the inhabitants of San Cristóbal de las Casas take the more direct route of toppling a conquistador's statue in the run-up to the Zapatista rising (p. 198). The tenth anniversary of Tlatelolco draws Mexico's first march of a united gay and lesbian movement; by the 1980s socialists, PANístas (from Partido Acción Nacional, National Action Party) and members of the clergy are all joining in commemoration (pp. 27–8.) The textbook scandal, the Salinas administration's spectacularly ill thought-out defenestration of assorted national icons, gets a lucid eight pages (pp. 162–70), and forms probably the strongest single piece of evidence for Sheppard's case: that history for eight-year-olds could provoke such protest would seem to argue powerfully for a particularly persistent revolution.

The causal significance and persistence of that revolutionary nationalism, however, is questionable, and an argument that Sheppard oversells. He does so with some telling stories: Carlos Salinas announces the end of agrarian reform in front of a portrait of Zapata (p. 187), Pablo Madero claims his uncle for the PAN (p. 114), and Manuel Clouthier holds up Villa and Zapata as role models to community leaders (p. 125). To these empirical struts he adds hypothetical support in the longevity of the PRI, writing that the 'failure of any actors ... to radically challenge the structure of power in Mexico despite ongoing crises suggests the effectiveness of revolutionary nationalism' (p. 256.) But does it really? There were many other reasons for the absence of successful radical movements in the period, one of them – as one popular explanation of Zedillo's victory had it – precisely those ongoing crises. Moreover politicians say lots of things, and many of them were not revolutionary at all. Zedillo's win in 1994 came with two slogans: one the slightly Godfatheresque '*Bienestar para tu familia*' ('Well-being for your family'), the other the bland (or risqué?) '*Él sabe cómo hacerlo*' ('He knows how to do it'). Mexican presidents traditionally identify with a dead Great Man; Echeverría was the last president to have a revolutionary – Cárdenas – play that role, with José López Portillo choosing Quetzalcóatl, de la Madrid Morelos, and Salinas Juárez. (The latter two choices were perhaps well-calculated: surveys of popular nationalist beliefs tend to rate Juárez, Hidalgo and Morelos far above any later figures.) It is too much to say that the main opposition movements of the period 'either emerged from or sought to locate themselves within the revolutionary nationalist tradition' (p. 256); the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Democratic Revolution Party, PRD) and the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National

Liberation, EZLN) did, but the PAN – who in the final analysis actually won the key elections – made at best sporadic references to dead revolutionaries. Their references and their heroes lay elsewhere, and the fact that they could win without any really popular heroes argues for the greatly reduced salience of the revolution by then. Primary school textbooks did count; but while the scandal was revealing, it was driven not by massive popular protest but rather by squabbles between *vuelvistas* (gathered around the literary magazine founded by Octavio Paz) and their johnny-come-lately rivals at the political magazine *Nexos*, by the characteristic opportunism of union leader Elba Esther Gordillo and by the outrage of the PRD's leaders.

As throughout the book, though, Sheppard's argument is advanced with evidence, albeit largely from the Mexico City press, and this mixture of empiricism, historiographical overview and accessibility makes *A Persistent Revolution* one of the better political histories in English of this period, perhaps the most suited to a general or undergraduate readership. At the same time its sustained coverage of nationalist text and ritual will attract specialists, while its distanced analysis of the last 30 years of opposition speech will make it a piece in the growing revisionist picture of the 'democratic nationalist mythology' of 1968, and the transition from the PRI's state.

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Joseph U. Lenti, *Redeeming the Revolution: The State and Organized Labor in Post-Tlatelolco Mexico* (Lincoln, NE, and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2017), pp. xvi + 355, \$70.00, \$35.00 pb

Joseph Lenti advances the study of Mexican history by focusing attention on state–labour relations during an important period. The 'official', government-allied labour movement provided crucial support to the post-revolutionary regime during and after the massive Mexico City student and popular movement that convulsed Mexico in 1968. Lenti shows that, following the massacre of student protestors at Tlatelolco in October, the government rewarded its labour allies as part of a more general package of material and symbolic measures intended to 'redeem' the promises of the 1910–20 Mexican Revolution.

Lenti highlights the rapid adoption of a revised federal labour law (submitted to the Congress as a legislative initiative in December 1968 and in effect from May 1970) as the principal government reward for labour movement support during the 1968 crisis. The government of President Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970–6) also responded to labour movement demands by establishing the Comisión Nacional Tripartita (National Tripartite Commission, CNT) that offered organised labour institutionalised representation in national economic and social policy deliberations; decreeing emergency wage hikes during a period of rising inflation; and creating the Instituto del Fondo Nacional de la Vivienda para los Trabajadores (National Worker Housing Institute, INFONAVIT) in 1972. In the ideological realm, Jesús Reyes Heróles, newly appointed president of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), promoted procedural reforms that advanced 'collectivism' and reaffirmed the ruling party's commitment to its mass constituencies.

However, Lenti does not discuss several other government initiatives that also significantly benefited workers. These included a 1974 reform of federal labour law that permitted the annual renegotiation of both minimum wages and wages set by