

appendices provides the reader with biographical information about key personalities in Juan Vicente Gómez's Venezuela, as well as key financial information for the regime.

The book is based heavily on archival research; given its focus, it is perhaps not surprising that the main sources of information are Venezuelan government archives, particularly the presidential archive at the Palacio de Miraflores, as well as the private archives of major players in the Gómez regime. The author also makes extensive use of foreign government sources, particularly diplomatic and consular correspondence from US and British archives, to tell the complex tale of intersection between Gómez's government and its opponents inside and outside of Venezuela.

McBeth's work represents a major scholarly achievement in Venezuelan history. It provides the reader with a comprehensive reassessment of the Gómez era in addition to a convincing demonstration of the tenacious opposition that the regime faced. But the very volume and detail of the study cannot help but raise a question: to what extent, how realistic were the perceived threats to the regime? Intentionally or not, McBeth demonstrates very clearly that the obstacles facing those challenging Juan Vicente Gómez for power were very nearly insurmountable. Still, this is an essential book for anyone interested in modern Venezuelan history, and provides interesting insights into the contemporary political dynamics of that country.

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Angela Vergara, *Copper Workers, International Business, and Domestic Politics in Cold War Chile* (University Park PA: Penn State University Press, 2008), pp. xii + 222, \$60.00, hb.

Angela Vergara's book is an important contribution to our understanding of a crucial variable in Chile's life. It is no wonder that in the mid-1960s President Eduardo Frei Montalva deemed copper the country's main tool in its quest for economic and social development, and that a few years later President Salvador Allende referred to the metal as Chile's wage. Indeed, copper represents at least 40 per cent of total export volume and is the main source of foreign exchange. As far as public revenue is concerned, copper is the mainstay.

Copper has been, and still is, a major factor in Chile's economic life, while socially it has formed the backdrop to complicated demographic and labour developments as well as intense debates and major political decisions. It was for some decades a source of complicated negotiations between the Chilean state and large corporations based in the United States. Chilean copper mining comprises three sectors, according to the size of the mine and scale of the mining operations. Medium- and small-scale mines (and some mines are *very* small) are owned and exploited by Chileans, with rare exceptions. Large mines (*gran minería* – that is, mines producing more than 25,000 tons of copper per year) were, until the nationalisation of 1971, operated by large foreign corporations, the most important ones being Anaconda Copper Company and the Kennecott Copper Company. Vergara's book analyses the evolution of two large-scale copper mines, both owned by the Andes Copper Mining Company, a subsidiary of Anaconda.

The book is structured in six chapters that deal with various aspects of large-scale copper mining and its social and political dimensions, and presents a careful exploration of the history of copper and copper workers in Potrerillos and El Salvador from the 1940s to the 1990s. Very thorough research – which covers Chilean sources as well as a wide variety of archives located in the United States – enables Vergara to give a sound account of the local, national and international factors that shaped the history of copper mining, first as a foreign-owned concern (1917–71) and then as a state-owned and state-run enterprise (1971 to the present). One of the book's achievements is the complete account it gives of the complex debates about production conditions that characterised the sector until 1971. The participants in such debates were the workers, the companies and the Chilean state; the main issues were workers' salaries, safety and living conditions, combined with sometimes heated discussions and negotiations about taxes, investment and the organisation of production and sales of copper in the international market.

Vergara's analysis shows how the debates about and within the industry became part of a more wide-ranging discussion as they raised crucial issues about worker's social and economic rights and, perhaps more importantly, about Chile's strategy of economic development vis-à-vis its high level of dependency on the international metal markets. She also considers carefully the role of the national state before and after nationalisation as well as that of the foreign corporations.

One important conclusion is that such was the scope of the conflicts within the industry that they became part of the national debates of the 1940s and 1950s, which not only shaped the politics of the 1960s but also exposed the contradictions and limitations of the Chile's institutions and democratic system as well as the shortcomings of its economic strategy and performance. To that extent, copper played a major role in attempts to reshape the country that started in the mid-1960s, and in their unexpected results a decade later. The book also deals, in its epilogue, with the way that the now-nationalised industry was run after the 1973 military coup. In that context, another very important conclusion is reached: the copper workers played a major role as a labour, political and cultural social sector both before and during the dictatorship.

Ultimately, Vergara's book should be welcomed as an important contribution to the history of a very important component of Chile's social and economic history. Together with the contributions of Janet Finn, this book sheds light on two large-scale mines, two components of the *gran minería* that hitherto have not been the focus of historians' attention. The book might have benefited from a more detailed analysis of the origins of the labour force – and there is a good amount of work on this – and from a more balanced treatment of living and working conditions, however. To this reviewer the analysis of the labour movement, and the repression and living conditions it faced, is much more balanced for the period prior to 1958; the analysis of events thereafter is dominated by a bias towards political factors.

All in all, though, this is a fine book. The chapters are very well structured, the narrative is easy to follow, and it seems that the author has a deep feeling for the subject. Let us hope for a translation and publication in Chile sooner rather than later, for we Chileans need to know more about how copper came to constitute our bread and butter.

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