rejecting the state as a whole is taken as a given. Perhaps written in this language for effect, this approach sits at odds with some of the other essays which show how, in the case of Uruguay or Chile or Mexico, anarchists at certain times made political judgements as to how and on what terms to engage with the state to advance their cause or the well-being of non-elite people. Secondly, the volume raises questions about the diffusionist model of anarchism, wherein anarchism begins in Europe and spreads to other parts of the world, in this case Latin America. Elements of this are reproduced in Moya's epilogue (p. 333), as well as in other essays. Baer somewhat inverts this relationship. On the other hand, as Craib deftly shows in a provocative section on 'misplaced' ideas (pp. 288–9), attempting to find the directionality of anarchism might be a false start. Both of these differences in interpretation call attention to questions of defining anarchism historically and geographically, and the difficulty of drawing discrete lines around the category.

This is a welcome contribution to the history of anarchism, labour, and social and cultural history, as well as on the use of different scales of analysis for historical research. *In Defiance of Boundaries* will surely be a foundational volume on thinking comparatively and transnationally on Latin American anarchism for years to come.

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Ryan M. Alexander, *Sons of the Mexican Revolution: Miguel Alemán and his Generation* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2016), pp. ix + 245, £32.50, pb.

This book is a substantial account of the career of Miguel Alemán, President of Mexico 1946–52, a key figure in the formation of the regime of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) which ruled Mexico for over a generation. Ryan Alexander traces Alemán's family background in Veracruz, his student days in Mexico City, and his ascent of the greasy pole of Mexican politics from the Governorship of Veracruz – where he established a dynasty – to the presidency. Along the way are some useful observations about architectural modernism, urban planning, and the Green Revolution. As president, Alemán oversaw a decisive shift away from the popular, agrarian and anticlerical emphasis of the revolutionary generation (1910–40) towards what has been called the 'preferred revolution' (preferred, not least, by the United States, with which Alemán forged close and profitable relations), involving industrialisation, urbanisation and political centralisation.

Like many political biographers, Alexander exaggerates the novelty – and the positive achievements – of his subject. Alemán did not 'set [Mexico] on the path towards rapid industrialisation' (p. 1); that path had already been laid down. He was not the first president 'to fuse the interests of government and big business' (p. 11): Calles and Abelardo Rodríguez preceded him. Alexander does not ignore the 'ugly side' of PRIísta politics but he accentuates the positive and takes a swipe at the so-called 'scholarly consensus' which, supposedly, stresses the self-seeking authoritarianism of Alemanismo (pp. 6, 9). (Steve Niblo is cited here, but there is no sustained critical engagement with Niblo's excoriating analysis of Alemanismo.) While recognizing Alemán's reputation for graft and money-making, which included (probable) collusion with the Axis (pp. 63, 70), Alexander dances around the subject, claiming – rather implausibly – that 'corruption' is indefinable (p. 168) and arguing that, since graft

cannot be precisely quantified, it is not even worth attempting some ballpark figures. (A rough résumé of Alemán's assets – including his 'gem' resort located on the 'glimmering [*sic*] bay' of 'his beloved Acapulco' [pp. 15, 101, 185] – would be both feasible and helpful.) As for Alemán's cronies, 'it is no secret that these men derived unprecedented financial perquisites' (p. 177); in other words, they made stacks of money illicitly.

The coverage of Alemán's career is oddly unbalanced. We learn a lot about his student days, shared with 'relatively poor' college chums in Mexico City, all of them 'idealistic', imbued with a 'common sense of purpose and unity' and 'an ethos … remarkably different from that of their predecessors' (pp. 19, 26, 45, 76). Since the evidence is drawn from these same PRIísta wannabes, the upbeat note comes as no surprise. While Alexander's account offers a useful case study of one of Rod Camp's famous political *camarillas*-in-formation, it is both coy and schmaltzy. Alemán is 'magnetic' (p. 1), a devotee of Plato and Erasmus (p. 30: the source is Alemán's self-serving autobiography); he and his youthful colleagues 'acted on a coherent, sincere vision of national development' (p. 5) – that is, when they're not drinking, dancing, and 'pursuing young women' or, in less predatory fashion, 'serenad[ing] them with their guitars' (pp. 20, 39). But, we are assured, 'Miguel' [*sic*] was not known for 'indulging in excessive drinking' (p. 24). His wife, it is coyly stated, was later 'known for her domestic proclivities' (p. 50); a cynic might suggest that she stayed at home so that her playboy husband could swan about with movie stars and mistresses (pp. 14, 70).

Alemán's relations with the United States are also reduced to personal anecdotes and detailed discussion of the inner workings of US politics which, though sometimes interesting, is tangential to the main story. Again, the sources – which Alexander follows like a tenacious but blinkered plough horse – are partly to blame. Just as the endless anecdotal evidence is culled from the transcripts of interviews with Alemanistas, most from the archive of the Fundación Miguel Alemán (not many skeletons to be found in that cupboard), so the bilateral relationship is based on the Truman presidential papers, hence the myopic concentration on US politics and the minutiae of state visits (the transcripts provide 64 per cent of the references for Chapter 2, the Truman archive over 80 per cent of those for Chapter 5).

Conversely, there are some big gaps. The political economy of Alemanismo is discussed in broad – sometimes tendentious – terms. Statistical data are rare and often vague; it is not clear if annual growth figures take population growth into account (pp. 10, 84). ISI (import substitution industrialisation), we are told, involves the production of 'non-durable consumer goods' (would that be food?); it demanded economic 'self-sufficiency' (p. 82); yet Mexico's export performance under ISI was 'robust' (pp. 82, 86, 178). (It was not.) There is no proper discussion of inflation (a key phenomenon of the 1940s), of real wages (Bortz is not cited), or of sharply declining welfare in the later 1940s (i.e., on Alemán's watch). The notorious *charrazos* – the imposition of state control on the major industrial unions in the late 1940s – are mentioned (pp. 158–9), but do not get the attention they deserve. Growing inequality is also mentioned in passing (p. 92) – but there is not a single chart, table or Gini coefficient (perhaps these count among the 'dry and abstract economic indicators', which the author disparages, p. 11); rather, we get some very general observations of James Cockcroft, accompanied by a crude compression of 40-plus years of Mexican economic history (pp. 107–8, 174).

In part, this is again due to the unbalanced use of – in this case, secondary – sources. Alexander scarcely uses the three major studies of the 1940s/early 1950s written by Torres and Medina (though two are cited); nor does the work of Basurto (on

sindicatos) or Loyola Díaz (the decline of radicalism) or Servín (Henriquismo) appear. Gillingham and Smith's recent *Dictablanda* is mentioned, but there is no reference to the crucial political changes initiated by Alemán – not least in his home state of Veracruz – by way of eliminating internal (PRI) primaries and imposing central executive control. Indeed, throughout the book, grassroots politics figures very little and the Church not at all; while the political schmoozing of the PRI elite – often as recalled and recounted by that elite – takes centre stage. In short, while this book offers some useful information about a key political figure – and the cronies who surrounded him – and, in doing so, sheds light on postwar Mexican politics, its unbalanced and often uncritical use of sources, coupled with its oddly charitable take on Alemán himself, and its neglect of political economy, all detract from the cogency of the interpretation.

Finally, while the style is clear and jargon-free, it is often wordy and inelegant. Organised labour viewed the post-1945 scenario 'as an aperture into renewed activity' – later, it becomes 'an aperture which spurred the working class' (p. 12, 91). The official party 'expanded into an expansive corporatist entity'; Alemán 'did attempt some half-hearted attempt to reform the tax system' (pp. 45, 85). Several minor queries arise. 'Pacifist' does not mean 'peaceful' (here applied to a street demonstration) (p. 42). Alemán in 1946 was hardly 'the undisputed figurehead of national politics': his authority was disputed – which is why he purged the Left – and he was certainly no 'figurehead' (p. 48). The students who blew up Alemán's statue in the UNAM campus in 1968 did not wantonly 'vandalise' it (97, 113); they were making a reasonable political protest. Mexico has never been a 'single-party' state (pp. 4, 6, 7). The place where Alemán's father was killed – Mata de Aguacatillo – derives from '*mata*' (a 'bush'), not 'the slaughter [*matanza*?] at Aguacatillo' (p. 25). As students, Alemán and his cronies did not name their magazine '*Eureka*' because of 'their desire to discover new possibilities' (p. 33), but by pure accident (Alemán himself tells us). Uruchurto should be Uruchurtu, Hueyapam de Ocampos should be Hueyapan de Ocampo (pp. 26, 62). 'Proscribe' is the opposite of 'prescribe' (p. 35). Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (b. 1651) was not a 'sixteenth century' nun (p. 35). The author refers to 'two maritime invasions' of revolutionary Mexico launched by the United States (p. 67), but I am aware of only one (Veracruz, 1914). Several footnotes, citing archive and date but not document number, are plainly inadequate, as are references to entire books when a single quote is involved (e.g., p. 223 n. 81, p. 224 n. 9). Lastly, the author insists on parading his sensitivity: economic 'developments', when they are not 'disturbing', are recurrently 'troubling' (pp. 11, 12, 54, 89); as are the Cold War and Alemán's labour policy (pp. 17, 157). On the other hand, aspects of PRIísta policy are 'appealing', 'laudable', and 'admirable' (pp. 7–8, 179). *Pace* Lord Acton, I hardly think such authorial finger-wagging and backslapping enhance our historical understanding.

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Guy Pierre, *La Crise de 1929 et le développement du capitalisme en Haïti: Une perspective de longue durée et une conjoncture perdue* (Montreal: Les Éditions du CIDIHCA, 2015), pp. 548, pb.

Guy Pierre, a Haitian historian who now lives in Mexico, has written a remarkable book. Although ostensibly about the impact of the Great Depression on Haiti, it is