
Angela Vergara. *Copper Workers, International Business, and Domestic Politics in Cold War Chile*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. xii + 240 pp. ISBN 978-0-271-03334-1, \$60.00 (cloth).

The Chilean copper industry has become one of the most heavily studied export sectors in all of Latin America. Chilean copper mining has been examined in the context of economic development, labor relations, state economic policies, foreign investment, corporate culture, as well as gender relations, to name just some of the perspectives. Such attention is justified on several levels. For most of the twentieth century, copper served as the mainstay of the national economy while giving birth to one of the country's most influential labor movements and triggering an intense national debate over foreign control of its wealth that contributed to the triumph and the destruction of Salvador Allende's socialist government as well as the rise of the neoliberal dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Little wonder then that so many scholars have been drawn to study this industry which seems to lie at the center of so many of the social, economic, political, and historical debates about Chile and the developing world. Angela Vergara's book on the copper workers at the Anaconda Corporation's Portrerillos and El Salvador mines is enriched by this wealth of scholarship, while it adds to our understanding of the industry and its importance.

Vergara focuses her attention on mining camps from the end of World War II through the presidency of Salvador Allende. The author places the evolution of copper workers as a community and a labor movement within the context of larger forces that influenced their history, including the American copper giant and its drive to raise production and profits, the vagaries of the global copper market, and the policies of the state that were shaped by domestic political struggles, international economic realities, and, ultimately, the growing power of the workers themselves.

The post-war world held great promise for Chilean copper workers. Subject to the harsh and isolated life of the mines and camps while enduring the rigid labor discipline of American mining companies, the workers now had the legal mechanisms in hand to organize and address these problems. Those tools were the product of progressive labor legislation passed by the center left political coalition that governed Chile during the late 1930s and early 1940s. But the better organized copper miners also faced formidable challenges. A strike for higher wages in 1945 triggered a wave of labor unrest across the country and repression from an increasingly authoritarian government. Although copper workers continued to develop their organizational structures and secure limited gains from the copper companies and the state, the next government found itself under growing pressure from the American copper corporations who insisted that Chilean taxation and regulation would force them to downsize their operations. In response, the government brokered a new arrangement with the copper companies, reducing their tax burden in return for promises of increased investment. However, the deal failed to provide the expected boost in output and revenue. That disappointment gave new life to calls for a larger state role in the industry and demands for nationalization. The miners employed their enhanced organizational power to back this effort, citing their central role in this critically important industry and presenting themselves as defenders of the national patrimony in contrast to past political leaders who had been willing to appease foreign corporations.

This growing nationalization debate climaxed in 1970 with the election of the socialist government and the subsequent takeover of the copper sector. For Allende's allies, the nationalization meant more than a government run industry. They envisioned a truly socialized mining sector with full worker participation in the mines and in administration. New mechanisms for worker participation enabled miners to break down barriers between management and labor, creating a greater sense of community. Yet the drive for worker control largely bypassed

traditional unions, setting off frictions within the labor movement. At the same time, supervisory personnel, fearing that they were losing status and power, launched strikes that damaged the cohesion of the mining community and the stability of the Allende regime. Eventually, those problems and deep divisions within the national body politic opened the way for the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet that rolled back socialist economic policies and crushed organized labor. Yet the copper workers would rise again and play an important role in the unseating of the Pinochet regime. However, their victory has brought mixed blessings. In the new era of elected governments, state-owned copper mines began a drive for modernization and productivity improvement that substantially reduced the number of permanent mine workers in the public sector and left the copper miners with far less power than they had once wielded.

Vergara effectively weaves together the plentiful supply of existing scholarship on the Anaconda workers and mixes it with new data of her own, especially concerning corporate efforts to modernize both mines and towns in the post-war era and developments during the period of socialization in the early 1970s. There are points at which the author might have done more with this material. For example, in explaining how in the post-Pinochet era the mining camps have been dismantled and workers relocated to nearby towns and cities, she also notes the diminished power of unions. But she does not clearly make a connection between the fact that the camps, while designed to enhance corporate control, provided a locational focus for the emergence of a miners' community and worker organizational efforts. By contrast, the dispersal of workers to outlying homes no doubt diminished that concentrating effect and the power of the unions. Nevertheless, her work helps readers better understand the complex interaction between foreign corporations, a nation state dependent on their activities, and a work force struggling to establish and defend their rights while also seeking a larger role in their industry and in defining Chile's future. Ultimately, like so many working people around the globe, the story of the Chilean mine workers is one of both triumph and tragedy. A story of heroic sacrifices by countless individuals to shape a better world for their community and a brighter future for their nation.

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