

internal factors, such as failure to abolish the structure of the previous regime or to consolidate a broader local support for the revolutionary project. As Becker claims, the Cuban revolution “forms a gold standard by which other movements are judged” (131); it “was the most successful, longest lasting, and furthest reaching of the 20th-century revolutions in Latin America” (108). Though opponents of the Cuban Revolution usually state their goals in terms of a return to democratic governance, neither social equality nor individual freedoms existed before the revolution. Nevertheless, the author acknowledges the shortcomings of the revolution, especially the fact that its socioeconomic gains have been made at the expense of individual freedoms.

Becker also offers a relatively positive interpretation of the socialist governments that to a great extent defined the political landscape of Latin America at the beginning of the twenty-first century, from Hugo Chávez, in Venezuela, to Tabaré Vázquez, in Uruguay. This view goes against the grain, for as he argues, “despite impressive social and economic gains, one would be hard pressed to find positive stories in the international mainstream media about Latin America’s new socialist governments” (232).

Overall, this is a well-thought-out book that would be enjoyed by anyone interested in learning about the disparate ways by which revolutions (defined in this book as a “broad and vague term to refer to movements that have fought to address societal problems”) have taken place in Latin America (31).

Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
Bogotá, Colombia
acadelo@javeriana.edu.co

ANDREA CADELO

REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

Matters of Reform: Pueblos, the Judiciary, and Agrarian Reform in Revolutionary Mexico. By Helga Baitenmann. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. Pp. 342. \$60.00 paper.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2021.21

A widely accepted interpretation of agrarian reform after the Mexico Revolution is that peasants demanded restitution of village lands that had been illegally taken by large landowners. Nonetheless, revolutionary officials preferred to expropriate land that did not necessarily belong to villages previously and redistribute it to villages in perpetual, though conditional, usufruct in the form of “*dotaciones*.” Instead of restoring land and ownership to villages, *dotaciones* engendered dependence on a paternal state. Thus, scholars such as Frank Tannenbaum, John Womack, and Arturo Warman concluded that the agrarian reform became a mechanism of clientelism that undergirded Mexico’s postrevolutionary authoritarianism.

Helga Baitenmann offers a reappraisal of this view by examining the theory and practice of the agrarian reform programs proposed by the two major revolutionary factions, the Zapatistas and Constitutionalist, particularly as they stumbled through the courts. Baitenmann shows that agrarian reform strengthened the authority of the executive, in particular by encroaching on the judiciary's role in land adjudication. However, this imbalance sprang not from a concerted effort to co-opt peasants' demands, but rather from complications inherent in a "country where land titles overlapped and where, for centuries, legal and illegal transactions had become intermingled" (190).

Early revolutionary Francisco I. Madero called for the return of village lands unjustly taken by haciendas, but restitution claims soon ran into insurmountable problems in the courts. Few had the necessary colonial-era documentation to substantiate claims, and colonial titles were often faulty and sometimes forged. Staked centuries before, boundaries alluded to shifting streams, trees, and cactus. Even when leaders supported peasants' claims in principle, the courts upheld constitutional protections of private property and the separation of powers, thereby preventing expedient executive redress (54). Stymied by the judiciary, villagers simply took possession of lands they considered their own. For large landowners and conservative elites, this was pillage, the epitome of the chaos and disregard for due process engendered by the revolution. For revolutionaries, the court's rulings showed that the judiciary could not produce justice. As Luis Cabrera, architect of Maderista and Constitutionalist land reform, said, "There comes a point when historic injustices must be remedied outside the justice system" (75).

A more pressing complication was that most disputes were not between peasants and haciendas, but between neighboring villages, all of which wielded moth-eaten maps that often bore faint resemblance to current holdings. Even in Zapatista-controlled Morelos, where ancient claims to land took on an almost sacred quality, officials acknowledged that adherence to colonial-era maps often would have meant eliminating modern pueblos (94). Revolutionary leaders, therefore, erected a parallel legal structure in which the executive ruled through agencies such as the National Agrarian Commission. The guiding category was no longer restitution—based on colonial deeds and adjudicated by the courts—but rather dotaciones, which defined the subsistence needs of villages as a "social right."

The inevitable clash over the separation of powers produced what Baitenmann calls "the key to understanding Mexico's revolutionary land reform" (137). In short, a reconstructed Supreme Court skirted the issue by granting the executive broad latitude. Even though it may have skewed the balance of powers, the prevalence of dotaciones did not make peasants any more dependent on the state than restitutions did. Rather "it was only through dotaciones that officials [were] able to grant land to so many population centers" (173).

Next to this central insight, the book's organizing principle, comparing Zapatista and Constitutionalist programs, is significant, though less striking. The main difference

regarded scope. The Zapatista program intended to “restructure property relations” nationally, but remained an “unfulfilled utopia” (200). The Constitutionals hoped to address discrete situations through agrarian reform and only “accidentally” developed policies that redistributed half the national territory. If agrarian reform contributed to authoritarianism, it was not because it rendered peasants clients of the state; rather, the broader process developed to address peasants’ forceful demands compromised (or “transcended,” as revolutionaries preferred) the rule of law in favor of social inequality.

University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, Colorado
Robert.Weis@unco.edu

ROBERT WEIS

ARMED REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

With Masses and Arms: Peru’s Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. By Miguel La Serna. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. ix, 270. Abbreviations. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper. doi:10.1017/tam.2021.22

This is the captivating story of Peru’s Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), a formidable but not widely known revolutionary movement in Cold War Latin America that was overshadowed by the parallel insurgency of the Shining Path during the 1980s and 1990s. It was named after the eighteenth-century leader of a massive Indian uprising in the Andes, whose indigenous forces almost overturned three centuries of Spanish colonial rule at the cost of over a third of the colony’s population. The story of MRTA in the hands of historian La Serna reads like a fiction thriller all the way up to its last-ditch dramatic capture of the Japanese ambassador’s residence in Lima in 1997. Then, it will be remembered, the denouement of MRTA occurred three months later when, under the glare of a worldwide television audience, special forces tunneled into and successfully recaptured the ambassador’s residence, remarkably releasing unharmed almost all the captives while killing their captors.

Rather than a more conventional blow-by-blow account of this 13-year conflict, La Serna has chosen to “humanize” his narrative by focusing on the lives of the individual combatants—rebel leaders, state actors, and the everyday men and women participants. For example, we follow the remarkable figure of Lucero Cumpa who, because of her gender, was at first relegated like her other female companions to a secondary, non-combat role in the rebel army, despite the movement’s advocacy of women’s empowerment and gender equality. We follow Cumpa’s surprising rise to the rank of commander of MRTA’s guerrilla forces, successfully challenging and then breaking through the typically paternalistic, patriarchal, and misogynistic culture of her male colleagues.