

into an institution "possessing the most basic features of bourgeois democracy." The negative correlate of these political changes, however, was the decline of the capitalist bourgeoisie as it increasingly became subordinated to the landed interests, in spite of its continuing economic importance which resulted from the accelerated growth of mining and manufacturing that occurred in the 1870s.

In analyzing the second series of events - the 1891 revolution - Zeitlin uncovers what had remained hidden until the publication of this book, namely, how the civil war produced deep structural fissures within the dominant class. In contrast to better known interpretations of other scholars, Zeitlin sees the struggle as the result of contradictory interests within the bourgeoisie itself regarding the use of state power. The Balmacedistas were the incarnation of an especially powerful segment of the capitalist class consisting of the owners of the copper, silver and coal mines who were then beset by economic crisis and were seeking state assistance for their salvation. Chilean nitrate capitalists, to whom Balmaceda's nationalist policies were aimed, rejected the president's support and joined British capital. Similarly, Chilean landowners, already largely dependent on nitrate revenues, opposed any governmental measures that might affect the nitrate industry and, indirectly, their own economic interests.

The winner of that bloody civil war is a well-known fact, as is the subsequent denationalization of Chile's mining riches and the further underdevelopment that ensued. What is remarkable, however, and what makes Zeitlin's illuminating contribution particularly valuable, is that in challenging established interpretations of those events, he provides us with a more convincing explanation about the much praised "uniqueness" of Chile: "with the defeat of Balmaceda's revolution from above the nature of Chile's unique and composite

social formation was essentially determined: a capitalist democracy in which the large estate was pivotal." Or in other words, the defeat of the Balmacedistas was a decisive but contradictory watershed in Chile's history, for it both stymied capitalist development and buttressed bourgeois democracy. How did this happen? Zeitlin provides a very perceptive explanation: Balmaceda's efforts to further capitalist development "from above" were seen in political terms as being authoritarian, if not dictatorial. His attempts were therefore thought to be a return to the past, to the authoritarian rule of the 1850s: which some "old revolutionaries," then in opposition to Balmaceda, had fought against. Thus, "at a decisive historical moment, not absolutism but parliamentary government, not authoritarianism but democracy, became the paradoxical means by which to safeguard the political hegemony and immediate economic interests of Chile's commanding landlords and capitalists."

In short, Maurice Zeitlin has made a valuable contribution to the understanding of the "mystery" surrounding Chile's uniqueness. His work opens the way for further research that no doubt will follow. In the meantime, it should become required reading for anyone interested in this topic.

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THE BANANA WARS: An Inner History of American Empire, 1900-1934. Lester D. Langley. Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1983. Pp. viii + 255. \$26.00.

The crisis that currently engulfs much of Central America and the Caribbean has thrust a region long neglected by the out-

side world into the forefront of public consciousness. To be catapulted from obscurity to prominence by superpower politics and media sensationalism is not a fate any land or people can withstand without multitudinous violations. While invasion and intimidation, lately the experience of Grenada and Nicaragua, may represent something of an extreme, no less heinous an act is the pedagogic subversion inflicted for centuries by the rich and strong upon the poor and weak. In this regard the nations of Central America and the Caribbean have suffered badly, primarily because the region's complex history is one about which the global audience is largely ignorant. Assigning ill-prepared and inexperienced reporters to cover such a difficult and diverse beat only compounds the problem of meaningful communication, to say nothing about the depredations of an American president whose command performances on television ("We got there just in time") are as persuasive to the undiscerning as they are chilling to the concerned. (If Mr Reagan's analysis of the Grenada situation seems unsettling, recall also his comments on returning from a trip to Latin America in 1982: "I went down to find out from them and their views. You'd be surprised. They're all individual countries.")

Topicality and informational *lacunae* mean that a boom in the published literature will inevitably occur. Over the past two or three years, scores of books have appeared that attempt to illuminate some aspect of the contemporary crisis in Central America and the Caribbean. Several of these contributions have sought, very importantly, to delineate the nature and extent of past American involvement in the region, in order that present us policies be placed in historical context. Although commendable, not every venture undertaken in this vein can be considered successful. Lacking in most is a detailed

discussion of how the architects and executioners of us intervention (presidents and generals, businessmen and soldiers) thought and conducted themselves. Who were the individuals behind the uniforms and speeches? Why did they think and act as they did? What was their view of the world and America's place in it? The need or some kind of collective biography being apparent, Lester D. Langley opens up the field quite nicely with *The Banana Wars*.

Langley, a professor of history at the University of Georgia, focuses his inquiry on us foreign policy in Central America and the Caribbean during the three decades spanned by the two Roosevelts. With an emphasis very much on narrative exposition, Langley documents American adventurism in the region from the invasion of Spanish Cuba in 1898 to the waging of the United States' last great "banana war" in Nicaragua in the late 1920s. The predilection of the United States to intervene militarily in the domestic affairs of other nations is highlighted also by reconstructions of American meddling in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Mexico, and Panama. Langley's intention throughout is to portray "the vision of empire - and the revealing prejudices - held by army, navy, and marine officers who led their commands into alien and often hostile Caribbean societies to quell disorders or 'protect American interests' and ruled as occupiers in these cultures."

By what must surely have been a time-consuming sweep of archival and published sources, Langley conveys a clear sense of the ideology and mindset of the "banana warriors." Whether their role in the conflict was played out in the White House, far from the actual scene of the crime, or called for more on-the-spot participation aboard a patrol boat policing and civilizing the tropics, Americans talked and fought with gusto. The stench of the self-righteous moral and cultural superiority of the United

States rises from every page. Consider, for example, President Theodore Roosevelt's characterization of the Colombians who rejected a Panama Canal treaty as "damned dagoes," and his subsequent admonition that "chronic wrongdoing may require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power." The repeated failure of the United States to relate to its hemispheric partners on an equal footing is striking, with Langley recounting, among other slights, Americans referring to their Cuban allies as "Nigger Generals" or declaring Haiti to be a "public nuisance" inhabited by "niggers speaking French." (One disembarking marine once described the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, as "fairyl-land turned into a pigsty.") Sustained by such negative impressions of people and place, and convinced of the appropriateness of their actions, the protagonists of *The Banana Wars* could easily be mistaken for characters in the fiction of Miguel Angel Asturias and Gabriel García Márquez. They spring, however, not from the fecundity of Latin American literature but from the grisly annals of real life, where their behaviour meant (and their legacy ensures) misery and impoverishment among many for the enrichment and security of a few.

One of the most interesting features of *The Banana Wars* is that Langley, following the lead of fellow historian Robert A. Pastor, moves beyond traditional explanations when attempting to account for the interventionist psychosis of the United States. Langley examines issues not only from the standpoint of economic and security interests but also explores what can best be described as the psychological relationship between North and South. The propensity to intervene in Central Amer-

ica and the Caribbean is so deeply imbedded in the American psyche that the *malaise* is considered natural and correct. It is a grace by which the United States saves the hemisphere from self-mutilation. It is a concept of nationhood that recognizes no sovereignty but its own. It is a perception of self that views all others as inferior and untrustworthy. In 1985 it is an enduring curse that threatens global destruction by propelling mankind toward the nuclear precipice.

A statement made by Augusto Cesar Sandino in 1929 perhaps best summarizes what Langley himself is saying throughout his book. Having pointed out to the United States government, after it had again sent in the marines, that his Nicaraguan insurgents "are no more bandits than was George Washington," Sandino continued: "If their consciences had not become dulled by their scramble for wealth, Americans would not so easily forget the lesson that, sooner or later, every nation, however weak, achieves freedom, and that every abuse of power hastens the destruction of the one who wields it."

Over fifty years later, the United States has still to learn what Sandino meant, for Americans everywhere have yet to understand that the right to rebel against injustice is not exclusively theirs.

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VLADIMIR TATLIN AND THE RUSSIAN AVANT-GARDE. John Milner. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983. Pp. x + 252. \$29.95.

"For Tatlin, art was a subject to be explored and examined." "First and foremost he was