

probably, also enthruse them to find out more about a continent which continues to be generally disregarded in most European and American universities.

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Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre (eds.), *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America: Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830–1940* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996), pp. xxi + 279, \$40.00, \$14.95 pb.

Brazilian journalist Ernesto Senna was one of very few people in late nineteenth-century Brazil who had anything positive to say about the *Casa de Detenção* in Rio de Janeiro. He might have found the food good and the surroundings pleasant, but other contemporary reports by experts and inmates analysed by Marcos Luiz Bretos, one of the contributors to this pioneering volume, only found fault with the prison environments and, even more importantly, their philosophical underpinnings.

Unlike Argentina with its model penitentiary and expectations of rehabilitating prisoners, Brazil's system rested on racism, corporal punishment, and a belief in the inherent criminality of its inmates. As Ricardo Salvatore cogently observes, Brazil's system rested on both the reality and, after 1888, the legacy of slavery and a majority non-white population, while Argentina's more optimistic philosophy was linked to the presence of an immigrant European population that was rapidly diluting the country's non-white population. Without racism as an inhibiting factor, perfectability was possible.

Regardless of the racial differences, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Chile, and Costa Rica were all trying to modernise social relations at the same time that their export economies demanded the modernisation of relations of production, and cities dealt with rapid growth of population, industry, commerce, and, at least to elites, criminality. Modern prison construction and reform was seen as an integral part of modernisation efforts. In the case of Mexico, the drive for penal modernity had to be tempered due to the backlash of political and social instability engendered by the Revolution. The Porfirian model of economic and social development led to social revolution rather than tranquility, yet the post-revolutionary government, according to Rob Buffington, soon acknowledged that Porfirian preoccupation with prison reform was well intentioned. What had distorted these efforts was not liberal ideology, but rather too much power in the hands of the central government. Fine tuning and decentralisation would take care of any problems.

Today most of these countries have deplorable prison conditions. The dreams of the *fin de siècle* and early twentieth-century criminologists either withered away or were never implemented due to insufficient funding, politics, lack of will, racism directed at the lower classes, and gender prejudices.

For those interested in the history of the penitentiary, as well as seeking a theoretical explanation for social control policies directed at poor men and women in Latin America, *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America* is a welcome addition to the burgeoning literature on the history of Latin American

criminology. The editors have provided an excellent introductory essay, and the quality of the subsequent essays are generally quite high. Other topics covered in this volume are the history of female prisons in Chile, the plight of political prisoners in Mexico and Brazil, the links between prison reform and public health reforms in Costa Rica, and how racism undermined modest prison reforms in Lima.

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Jonathon R. Barton, *Political Geography of Latin America* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. xvi + 243, £45.00, £14.99 pb.

Political geography is experiencing a resurgence within geography, partly on the coattails of changes in cultural geography. Modern political geography has extended beyond the imperial and military geopolitics that dominated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While it is still concerned with the roles of nation-states within the wider global economy, the new political geography is also interested in the forging of national, regional and local identities and the roles played by different racial, ethnic and gender groups in shaping nation-states.

In the introduction Barton reviews recent changes in political geography. Perhaps because the changes have been so recent, the review quickly switches to a discussion of wider development issues. This discussion includes a succinct review of the development theories that have been dominant in Latin America during this century, and this sets the scene for much of the book. Adopting a political economy approach, the book is essentially about mainstream development issues. Hence, a subsequent chapter focuses on the impact of globalisation, the debt crisis and structural adjustment packages and also examines regional groupings. The next chapter then shifts down to the national scale, briefly looking at the origins of the nation-state and the character of Latin American politics, before examining spatial inequalities and issues of urbanisation and land reform. While these topics would be found in any standard development text, in the penultimate chapter Barton gives greater emphasis to the role played by subaltern groups in forging their own identities and promoting social movements for change. In the conclusion he speculates that they will have an increasingly important role to play in shaping nation-states.

The text covers a lot of ground, perhaps too much in the short space. While one can sympathise with the author's wish to be comprehensive in his coverage of the topic, some of the contemporary issues could have been considered in greater depth, while the review of geopolitics which extends back to the pre-Columbian period could have been much shorter. The book is well illustrated and it contains some useful and up-to-date tables. It is a welcome addition to undergraduate texts on development in Latin America. Unfortunately, many will not realise that the book covers much broader issues than its title suggests, and I'm afraid the term political geography, particularly in a Latin American context, still suffers from its association with geopolitics.

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