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Steve Striffler. *In the Shadows of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995.* American Encounters/Global Interactions Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002. xi + 242 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-2863-6; $79.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8223-2836-0.

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Published on H-LatAm (December, 2002)

The United Fruit Company in Ecuador

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In the Shadows of State and Capital examines the shift in agricultural production on the Tenguel hacienda on the southern Ecuadorian coast, from cacao in the early twentieth century to banana production under the United Fruit Company (UFCo) during mid-century to contract farming in the last part of the century. This is an excellent example of the emerging field of "new peasant studies" which, rather than emphasizing class struggles and political organizations, provides a historical and ethnographic analysis of agrarian restructuring focusing instead on "politically engaged human actors" (p. 5). Based largely on oral life histories, local "popular" archives, and company records, Striffler examines how subaltern struggles contributed to capitalist transformations and historical changes that brought an isolated part of Ecuador from the margins to the center of a global economy. The result is a fascinating and compelling study of how local struggles shape global economies, and vice versa.

The book is divided into two parts, with the first part analyzing the emergence of the United Fruit Company banana plantations in the aftermath of the cacao economy during the 1920s and the second part focusing on the evolution of contract farming after agrarian reform in the 1960s. Rather than discounting the United Fruit Company as a negative force in Ecuador, Striffler (as well as the subjects of this study) recognize the advantages that the company brought–including better wages, better benefits, and improvements to the area's infrastructure (p. 47). In fact, Striffler argues that "the 'penetration' of foreign capital was never as smooth and one-sided as the metaphor often seems to imply" (p. 29). In popular memory, the period of economic growth in the 1950s, which resulted from a banana boom when Ecuador became the world's major producer, is contrasted with the previous cacao period in the 1920s, which was a "time of slavery," and the subsequent modernizing agrarian reform programs in the 1960s which, for the peasants, led to debt, disorganization, and the loss of land to local capitalists (p. 138).

Striffler explains how in Ecuador the UFCo employed both paternalism and such traditional forms of control as pro-management unions to limit peasant dissent at the same time peasants negotiated fragmented state struc-

tures to their eventual benefit. Specifically, rural communities took advantage of a 1937 Ley de Comunas to organize themselves in such a way that would eventually allow them to wrestle control of land away from the UFCo. Although Ecuadorian state structures were weak, Striffler argues that it is their presence, and not their absence, that is significant (p. 79). Far from being victims, these subalterns negotiated state structures to their own benefit.

Part 1 of the book ends with a 1962 strike that rocked UFCo's control over the plantations, but Striffler refuses to stop the history at this point. "To stop the historical narrative at just the moment when subordinate groups have achieved some long-sought-after goal," Striffler writes, "is not only populist, and dangerously so, but bad history. It is to replace processes with events" (p. 110). With this, he sets the stage for the emergence of contract farming in the banana zones from the 1960s through the 1990s. This is not a triumphalist history of oppressed peasants overcoming the odds of government and capitalist repression to emerge victorious at the end. Peasant invasions of United Fruit Company land in the 1960s led to the multi-national corporation's departure from Ecuador, but the subsequent failure of cooperatives and the emergence of contract farming actually left the workers worse off than before. Yet Striffler insists that "we must, in short, begin to understand how the *failed* (yet conscious and organized) struggles of subordinate groups shape historical processes" (p. 17).

Part 2 of the book begins with an analysis of the 1964 agrarian reform program which resulted in a misapplication of highland models and assumptions regarding land tenure to banana plantations on the coast with disastrous results. Government-formed cooperatives collapsed, resulting in a series of problems including debt, disorganization, and corruption, and leaving the workers in a worse position than previously under the UFCo. In addition, changes in the mode of production began to alter forms of peasant consciousness and organization, including moving from a reliance on national labor to peasant federations (p. 168). "If the first half of the book demonstrated how popular organizations transformed a particular system of production," Striffler writes, "the second half outlines the opposite: namely, how a new system of production, backed by the state, transformed popular organizations and struggles" (p. 127).

In the final chapter, Striffler reflects on why in the 1990s this region on the Ecuadorian coast, which has such a rich history of popular organizing, has almost no popular organizations. He notes how difficult it is to organize contract farmers against distant corporations such as Dole Fruit that own no land and are only a vague presence in the region. Furthermore, the lack of a permanent labor force excludes workers from forming unions under Ecuador's labor law, something that has also seriously hindered labor organization on flower plantations in the highlands. This hinders the development of worker consciousness, which also has influenced the nature of their goals and desires.

Striffler's sophisticated interpretations of the interactions between government officials, international corporations, local capitalists, and subaltern actors make this a landmark book which will earn it a place in leading studies of a new peasant history. This well-written and compelling book crosses many borders between history, anthropology, sociology, and political science. It will be of value to anyone interested in ethnographic, labor, economic, and international relations issues during the twentieth century not only in Ecuador, but throughout Latin America.

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Citation: Marc Becker. Review of Striffler, Steve, *In the Shadows of State and Capital: The United Fruit Company, Popular Struggle, and Agrarian Restructuring in Ecuador, 1900-1995.* H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. December, 2002.

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