

McPherson, Alan (2006) *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945*, Potomac Books (Washington, DC), xv + 207 pp. \$45.00 hbk.

In only 145 pages, Professor McPherson provides a very readable, knowledgeable and highly perceptive survey of relations between the United States and the nations of Latin America, especially relating to the period since 1945. The overall historical theme that links the United States with its neighbours is seen as steadily growing interdependence in the form of 'intimate ties' but marked by recurrent conflict exemplified by 'bitter struggles'. The cause of the friction arises from the existence of an asymmetrical relationship that has reflected the disproportionate economic and military power wielded by the United States. In addition, the 'Anglo-Saxons' of the north have generally shown attitudes of cultural arrogance and disdain towards the 'Latinos' of the south.

The material and arguments that Professor McPherson presents are fairly conventional, but the titles of his chapters are different and refreshing to those contained in most textbooks. After a brief introduction, entitled 'Unequal Interdependence', covering the formative period from 1783 to 1944, 'Chills' deals with the onset of the Cold War from 1945 to 1958; 'Blowbacks' highlights the interventionist policies of Kennedy and Johnson during the 1960s; 'Dirty Wars' examines the 1970s and in particular the vexing issue of human rights; 'Wreckages' considers the 1980s, a most destructive decade, especially for the people of Central America; and 'Transnationalisms' looks at recent developments dating from the end of the Cold War. Each chapter is well organised into sub-sections, and is informative and insightful. In such a relatively brief work, however, US policy sometimes appears as somewhat monolithic in both its motivation

## *Book Reviews*

and execution. While assessments are fair, a more forgiving approach is accorded to Democratic rather than Republican presidents. The exact direction of US policy toward the region tends to become lost in the final chapter on 'Transnationalisms', but the author brings us right up to date with his well-informed analysis of pressing contemporary issues affecting the whole hemisphere such as economic developments, the environment, drug trafficking and immigration.

The book offers not only excellent introductory reading material for students, but is also useful for classroom use in providing an appendix of 31 pages containing 23 primary documents. The selection of documents is varied. It starts with an extract from 'The Blue Book' on Argentina, published in 1946, and ends with a speech delivered in 1996 by Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Joseph Smith  
*University of Exeter*

Copyright of *Bulletin of Latin American Research* is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.