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- ³ Chichester and London: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975, 73s.
- ⁴ Rubem Alves, "Las ideas teológicas y sus caminos por los surcos institucionales del protestantismo brasileño", en Pablo Richard (ed.), *Historia de la teología en América Latina* (San José, Costa Rica: CEHILA/DEI, 1981), 364-65.

Humberto García Muñiz. 2010. *Sugar and Power in the Caribbean. The South Porto Rico Sugar Company in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, 1900-1921*. San Juan, PR: La Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico/Kingston-Miami: Ian Randle Publishers. 540 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8477-1129-1.

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This is an excellent business history of the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company (SPRSCO), a New York-based multinational corporation that established two of the largest and most successful sugar-producing complexes of the Americas, Guánica Centrale in Puerto Rico and Central La Romana in the Dominican Republic. With the exception of Oscar Zanetti's book on the United Fruit Company in Cuba¹, this is the only in-depth study of a U.S.-owned sugar company in the twentieth-century Caribbean. Based on Puerto Rican historian Humberto García Muñiz's doctoral dissertation, this is a transnational study that draws on an impressive variety of archives in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. It is also comparative in that it analyzes the operations of a single company in two different settings: the protected market of colonial Puerto Rico and the ostensibly sovereign Dominican Republic that, during the period under consideration, experienced a US customs receivership and then US military occupation. Puerto Rico's inclusion within the US tariff system created favorable conditions for the establishment of SPRSCO there and the expansion of Puerto Rican sugar production for the US internal market. In contrast, excluded from US protective tariffs and, for the most part, from US markets, the Dominican Republic sold to the world market. Yet the US played an important role in shaping the context within which both sugar economies evolved.

Sugar and Power provides useful understanding of actors and

conditions in the Puerto Rican and Dominican sugar industries in the late nineteenth century, before SPRSCO appeared on the scene. It then analyzes the factors of capital, management, technology, land and labor that permitted SPRSCO's expansion in the Caribbean. The book is impressive for its meticulous piecing together of information on the firm's funding and the biographies of the Board of Directors and managers. The author deciphers the financial, organizational and management networks that led to the incorporation of the Company in 1900 and its operations in Puerto Rico, beginning in 1901, and the Dominican Republic from 1910 on. García Muñiz stresses the importance of German capital in New York (and German sugar brokers in Puerto Rico) in financing SPRSCO, and he explores the Company's relation to the Sugar Trust of US refiners. He insists on the importance of a new class of professionals—chemical engineers, sugar chemists, fabrication superintendents, etc., trained at Louisiana State University—who, known as Louisiana “sugar tramps,” circulated throughout the Caribbean and whose technical know-how was essential to the US multinational and most other sugar companies. Finally he shows how white Barbadians, skilled in biological technology, developed genetically improved cane varieties that boosted the productivity of the centralizing, modernizing sugar cane operations of the early twentieth century. García Muñiz also traces why and how corporate and productive structures evolved over time in response to changes in sugar regulations, the technology of sugar production, world market conditions, and the First World War.

After explaining conditions in the US that led to the formation of SPRSCO, the author traces the history of the Company in first Puerto Rico and then the DR. Established by SPRSCO in an area of plantations consolidated by Puerto Ricans in the nineteenth century, Guánica Centrale relied on the provision of sugar from *colonos* and a labor force of Puerto Rican migrants from the interior. Within a few years, Guánica—the largest sugar factory in Puerto Rico—outstripped its supply, so in 1910 SPRSCO determined to establish a new plantation in the DR, in the eastern province of Seibo, that would ship sugar to Puerto Rico for processing. Seibo was a frontier region of recent commercial agriculture (cacao, tobacco) into which new sugar interests from San Pedro de Macorís were expanding. The advent of the US company from Puerto Rico and its influence on the land policy of the US occupation government precipitated the rapid surveying and privatization of communal lands and peasant displacement. García Muñiz notes that the timing of plantation consolidation (earlier in Puerto Rico, later in the Dominican Republic) had specific social consequences. From 1913 to 1917, SPRSCO's Dominican plantation in Romana was a *colonia*, with two ships a day ferrying raw sugar to Guánica Centrale, and many Puerto Rican technical

employees and laborers working on the Dominican estate. Then in 1918, SPRSCO built the Dominican Republic's largest sugar mill, Central Romana, to service the plantation which, by the mid-1920s, had accumulated 144,000 acres of land (in comparison to the 53,000 in Puerto Rico) and depended on a work force comprised no longer of Puerto Ricans but rather of British Caribbean (*cocolo*) and Haitian migrants.

The rigorous comparison *Sugar and Power* makes between SPRSCO's operations in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic sheds new light on the structure of the two sugar industries. The Puerto Rican sugar economy supported a small, politically influential local business class made up of Puerto Rican owners of sugar *centrales* and large *colono* landholders. In the Dominican Republic no *colonato* system of cane supply and no local sugar bourgeoisie developed; instead ambitious Dominicans filled intermediary roles as land speculators and labor contractors who facilitated the SPRSCO's land consolidation and acquisition of foreign workers. García Muñiz emphasizes that Puerto Rico experienced a labor surplus and the DR a labor scarcity, which resulted in a divided workforce of immigrants in the DR. The different composition of the labor force influenced labor protest in each country, which was quite well organized and vocal in Puerto Rico and weak in the Dominican Republic.

Sugar and Power illuminates not only the structure of the sugar industries in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, but also how the enormous US company SPRSCO relates to the wider history of sugar. The author makes clear what the main sugar policies were and whose lobbying influenced them in all three countries. The book also attributes agency to the locals who interacted with the multinational corporation in various ways and sheds light on economic relations and flows of capital, employees and laborers between the US, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

One of the main contributions of this stimulating study is its deep research in five countries (US, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Barbados, and Great Britain) and the range of the sources, which include government documents, company records, many local and family archives, and interviews. Informative tables with essential statistical information, maps, and photographs ground the study. In plumbing his diverse sources, the author engages in a rich, multi-faceted exploration of various issues that emerge, such as conflict over land among sugar corporations and the *gavillero* war (1917-1922) of bandits-guerrillas in the eastern DR that came out of it. García Muñiz also explores the impact of the World War I on Caribbean sugar companies, and particularly how the US government's attack on German capital in the US, its colonies, and occupied and intervened states (Puerto Rico, Cuba, the DR and Haiti) compelled SPRSCO to sideline its German investors, "Americanize" its

Board of Directors, and implement corporate restructuring.

This book stays very close to the Columbia University doctoral dissertation from which it originates. At times this reader wished for a little more analytical distance. Given that the title is “Sugar and Power,” I would have liked the author in his conclusion to explicitly address the various dimensions of power in relation to SPRSCO and its activities in the Caribbean. In methodological terms, *Sugar and Power* deserves to be read alongside Jason M. Colby’s study of the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica and Guatemala, which also takes a transnational and comparative approach to business history.² Colby labels the UFCO “corporate colonialism”; one wonders if García Muñiz would agree with this optic. My sense is that the complexity of his findings might lead him to somewhat different conclusions concerning SPRSCO. Finally, since Cuba also experienced major sugar expansion through US investment and played a preponderant role in the Caribbean sugar economy, I would have welcomed the author’s observations on Cuba compared to the DR and Puerto Rico, based on a reading of the secondary sources. But given the magnitude of the author’s undertaking, perhaps this is too much to ask.

To conclude, *Sugar and Power* is a magisterial investigation of one of the most important multinational companies in the Caribbean and *the* major player in the twentieth-century sugar economies of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. It makes a significant contribution to US business history and the history of the Puerto Rican and Dominican sugar industries writ large. The book is obligatory reading for anyone wanting to understand the Caribbean sugar industry in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the role played by US interests and managers. There is a richness and rigor to the empirical material, and chapter conclusions do a fine job signaling major points. Based on extraordinary research and admirably clear in its presentation of the multiple aspects of its subject, this book sets a needed foundation for research on Caribbean sugar economies and societies and the influence of US multinational companies.

Notes

- ¹ Oscar Zanetti *et al.*, *United Fruit Company: Un caso del dominio imperialista en Cuba* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1976).
- ² Jason M. Colby, *The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).