

Reviews

derived its income principally from indirect taxes and excises as far back as the 18th century (Kahan 1985: 332). My major difficulty with this apparent misunderstanding of tax policy is that it implies that out-migration had nothing to do with the continually rising ratio of population to land, with extremely high birthrates, high illiteracy, the continuation of what were even then broadly regarded as the most inefficient methods of cultivation in Europe, and high volatility in grain and land prices. I am arguing, in other words, that a finding that the state's interest in supporting the commune was rooted in an overwhelming attachment to land taxes is a gross over simplification - both of the policy and of the role of state agencies in shaping peasant out-migration.

This is an interesting book, in sum. But its claim to be an adequate "recontextualization" of the peasant experience during Russian industrialization is overwrought.

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Nationalism, Localism, and the Role of Intervention: A View of Rural Mexico

Rural Revolt in Mexico: U. S. Intervention and the Domain of Subaltern Politics,

edited by Daniel Nugent, foreword by William C. Roseberry. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (1998), xxii, 384 pp.

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The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917 (or 1910-1920, according to those researchers who claim the Revolution really ended when Francisco "Pancho" Villa signed a peace treaty with the Mexican government in Sabinas in 1920) is a source of endless fascination. Eclipsed in notoriety by the carnage and publicity of World War I and by the subsequent and better-known Russian revolution, it nevertheless represents an incredibly complex multi-dimensional struggle: of a people with two successive dictatorships, one long-lived (Porf'rio Diaz) and the other of short

Reviews

duration (Victoriano Huerta); of exploited against exploiter; of a nation with and against itself, moving toward nationhood. Outside forces invariably enter into revolutions, and the primary outside force, in this case, was, and still is, the United States, whose intervention in the Revolution was only piecemeal.

The new edition of the 1988 book edited by the late Daniel Nugent - scholar, journalist, and playwright - is about this, but it is about a great deal more:

The basic premise is that rural revolt and popular protest in Mexico are best understood in simultaneous relation to the particularities of local or regional experience, the national-historical context of Mexico, and the broader dimension of U.S.-Mexican relations. (Nugent, 1998, p. 2)

The centerpiece is the great Revolution (or, from another perspective, the Revolution of 1910-1911 followed by the civil war of 1913-1917/1920). From here, however, it moves backward and forward in time, from the localized roots of revolution in the French occupation of the 1860s (Alonso's chapter) or even the Caste Wars of the 1840s (Joseph's contribution) to contemporary resistance movements (Kearney and Gilly). The "rural revolt" of the title includes not just peasants but indigenous peoples of both the north and south. Unlike accounts that concentrate on the roles of "great men," Nugent's book speaks not just of the Revolution of Diaz and Huerta, Villa and Zapata, Carranza and Obregon, but that of local peasant communities, and the continuing struggle of Mixteca and Mayans of Oaxaca, Chiapas, and the Yucatan. It is the last that brings the book into the present, not just in the 73-page -largely contemporary chapter on Chiapas that concludes the book, but also in Kearney's much briefer chapter on Mixtec political consciousness. In these, "subaltern politics" are writ large.

What, however, are "subaltern politics"? The word "subaltern" is used rarely in discourse within North America, but Nugent's use of the term ties the localism of particular peasant action in defined areas of Mexico to the globalism of peasant movements everywhere. What Guha (1988) refers to as "subaltern politics" are the politics of the ordinary people: "While elite mobilization is vertical, subaltern or popular mobilization is horizontal" (Nugent, 1998, p. 19) Elite and subaltern politics are both concerned with domains of power. The difference may lie in the murky distinction between state and nation (Womack, 1986), and in the relation of domination to subordination, especially as played out through the interaction of "ruling" and "subaltern" classes in Mexico. In the military expression of subaltern political consciousness in the Revolution, it is notable that two of the largest and best-remembered military units, Villas's Division of the North and Zapata's Liberation Army of the South, were truly people's armed forces - although, as Katz indicates in this volume, it was in the north, bordering on the U. S., that peasant guerrilla units, paid in money instead of land, were transformed into regular armies.

Intervention

Dimensions of U.S. intervention on a national scale are well-known. To a large extent these revolve around the two Wilsons, Henry Lane Wilson, Ambassador to Mexico under President Taft, and President Woodrow Wilson, who "took office on March 4, 1913, scarcely two weeks after the assassination of Madero, and immediately started a new policy toward Mexico." (Aguilar Camin and Meyer, 1993, 44). It might be said, more directly, that President Wilson was left to clean up the mess that Ambassador Wilson had left behind. While there is some disagreement about the precise extent of U.S. influence, there seems to be consensus that then-President Taft, under Ambassador Wilson's influence, and deterred only by Secretary of State Knox, was disposed to any action short of invasion that would result in the removal of Mexican President Madero and the installation of insurgent General Victoriano Huerta. Immediately following the assassination of President Madero and Vice-President Pino Suarez in February, 1913, the office of the Presidency of the Republic devolved upon Secretary of Foreign Relations Pablo Lascurain, who submitted his resignation 56 minutes after taking office, setting a new record for brevity of government. The president, vice-president, and secretary of foreign relations having been disposed of, the secretary of interior, Victoriano Huerta, was next in line - the third president in a single day (Aguilar Camin and Meyer, 1993).

Reviews

As with so-called “diplomatic” interventions in Mexico, the 20th century military interventions of the United States are well-documented, including the U.S. occupation of Veracruz in 1914 and General Pershing’s 1916 “Punitive Expedition” into Chihuahua, in response to General Villa’s raid upon Columbus, New Mexico. However, the extent of more subtle U.S. economic influence, in the various sub-regions of Mexico, and especially rural areas, is much in debate. Exploring this aspect of U.S.-Mexico relations is one task taken on by Nugent’s book. Because the emphasis of the book is upon rural peasantry and rural mobilization, little mention is made of some important pre-Revolutionary connections between Mexico and the U.S.A. Pre-Revolutionary opposition to Diaz, for example, was largely divided between the followers of Madero and the supporters of the Flores Magon brothers and their Partido Liberal Mexicano (also known as the magonistas, referring to one of the two strongly nationalist and anti-U.S. political parties, formed just prior to the Revolution). The PLM was headquartered in Los Angeles, California, where none other than “Mother” Jones, by request of Manuel Calero, then Mexican Minister of Justice, tried to get the brothers to return to Mexico in late 1911 (Langham, 1981). The Flores Magons and magonismo are allotted just one paragraph in Nugent’s book. Baja California, is mentioned in the context of Mixtec political action, with nothing said about possible impacts upon mainland Mexico of U.S. (and British) attempts to turn the peninsula, whose peasant population was negligible at the turn of the century, into a virtual economic colony (or by William Walker’s “filibuster” invasion of La Paz in 1853) (Pinera, 1995).

Beyond these understandable omissions or condensations, however, considerable attention is given to U.S. intervention, and to the difficulty of discerning direct links between such intervention and peasant rebellions, particularly in the Revolutionary period:

peasants did not rise up in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to resist the presence of U.S. troops in Mexican territory, nor against U.S. capital’s penetration of mining, petroleum, industry, or agriculture. Rather, the identifiable objects of peasant ire were the hacienda, the conversion of land into a commodity, the exactions made against them, and their economic and political oppression; in other words, all that invaded and destroyed their autonomous universe through direct, physical, and palpable intrusions (Gilly, 1998: 327).

Geography does make a difference. In general, in an era of relatively poor transportation, U.S. intervention appears to have been greater in areas near the long border: the U.S. supplied arms to Villa’s Division del Norte prior to his 1914 defeat in Celaya and, later, allowed Carranza’s forces to cross U.S. territory to engage Villa. These actions, favored by political geography, were certainly not incidental to the conduct and outcome of the struggle.

The perceived extent of U.S. influence is a function of the area studied, as well as one’s perspective. Among writers in this book, Knight sees private sector U.S. influence outweighing that of the official public sector before 1940. In fact, some U.S. landholdings and economic interests were relatively modest in scale, but others were much larger.

In certain areas, U.S. influence was mediated, rather than direct. In contrast to the situation in the north of the Republic, for example, North Americans owned no henequen plantations in Yucatan. Joseph’s chapter reminds us that a principal – albeit indirect – agent of change in the political economy of the peninsula after 1902, mediated through regional elites, was the alliance between Cyrus McCormick’s International Harvester Corporation and the Yucatecan exporting house of Molina y Cia. Collaborating U.S. corporate interests and local planter factions successfully resisted the Revolution until a year after Huerta’s surrender to Constitutionalist armies in August, 1914. Yucatan, which for centuries had seen itself apart from the rest of Mexico, had witnessed several earlier secessionist struggles – but the prime consumer of its prime product, henequen, was the United States. In 1915, with arrival of the Revolution seemingly inevitable, the planters alliance, in order to maintain the traditional, socially exploitative plantation culture, initiated a final, abortive, separatist revolt.

Knight presents “yanquifobia” as confined to urban upper and educated middle classes at the turn of the century. More general anti-U.S. sentiment came in with the Revolution – but by no

Reviews

means everywhere. As Alonso indicates, within two months after General Pershing's "Punitive Expedition" entered Chihuahua, for example:

peasants were collaborating with the Americans, selling their labor and supplies to the troops, and furnishing the invaders with military intelligence. Moreover, in response to a "suggestion" from General Pershing, (they) had formed a local militia which was to cooperate actively with the U.S. military in the destruction of local villista forces. Elsewhere initial hostility to U.S. military intervention was similarly transformed into active collaboration with American forces in the campaign against villismo (Alonso, 1998: 208).

Thus, while Pershing failed to capture Villa, he helped destroy the Villa movement.

Why did the peasants, the base of Villa's support, turn against him? Initially, Villa, an offspring of hacienda peons was a much more sympathetic figure to Mexico's peasants than hacienda-bred Carranza, and won their loyalty. The key to the peasants' defection seems to rest in Villa's failure to carry out agrarian reform. The Wilson administration had earlier enabled Villa to buy his arms in the U.S. and, most critically, to sell his goods there. Katz suggests

It is also possible that Villa feared massive land reform might antagonize the United States and thus prevent his acquisition of the arms and supplies that were so vital to his movement. While Woodrow Wilson repeatedly insisted that some kind of land reform would have to be effected in Mexico, his representatives who dealt with Villa were far more conservative than Wilson and had close links to many of Mexico's landowners. It is probable they communicated to Villa their view that an immediate land reform would arouse opposition north of the border (Katz, 1998: 255).

Localism and Nationalism

Beyond the first three chapters, the contributions to Nugent's book are predominantly regional: given the relative weight of U.S. intervention in the north, it is reasonable that five focus on either Chihuahua (Osorio, Lloyd, Koreck, Alonso, and Katz), or Villa's exploits in the north. Of the remainder, one treats Yucatan (Joseph) and the last, Chiapas. A chapter on the Mixtec appears halfway through the book, contrasting the passive resistance of Mixtecs in their native Oaxaca with the active resistance of the Mixtecs who have migrated northward.

Further, Morelos and Zapata's movement are barely mentioned. This may be due to the popular wisdom that the Revolution in Morelos, in being village- rather than hacienda-based, was unrelated to U.S. interests. In contrast, Hart's (2000) findings indicate that at least half these Morelos villagers were hacienda employees, that Morelos was Mexico's largest sugar producer at the beginning of the twentieth century, and that the U.S. Platt Amendment - by giving favorable treatment to Cuban sugar - closed the doors to the primary export outlet for that region of Mexico. The resulting unemployment among hacienda workers, then, unlocked long-standing resistance to the plantations and brought the first Zapatista revolution to Morelos.

Thus, considerable localism is represented in Nugent's book, which, given the state of Mexico in 1910, seems reasonable. It is argued that Mexico had failed to form a true national identity a century after the War of Independence. Turner (1968), Knight (1986), and Alonso in the Nugent volume seem agreed that at a grassroots level Mexico in 1910 was more of a community and regional mosaic than a nation:

The bulk of the population was illiterate; communications were poor; ethnic, linguistic, and vertical differences mitigated against the formation of a nationalist "horizontal comradeship" and the influence of the church worked against the secular, political imagining of community (Alonso, 1998: 212).

Thus, "subaltern politics," in the Mexican case, appear intimately tied to the relationship between localism and nationalism. This seems to have been particularly true of the north, far from Mexico's capital and close to the U.S. border. Villa's nationalist ideology is unquestionable; the issue is how much of it was shared by his supporters. But, if the anti-imperialism of Villa that inflamed the 1916 raid on Columbus was not contagious among the peasants of the north, neither were they anti-nationalist:

Reviews

peasant visions of how a national society should be organized may differ from those advanced by dominant groups and classes, but peasant resistance to elite forms of imagining a national political community should not be confused with antinationalism. (Alonso, 1998: 211)

Peasants and Indigenas, Rural and Urban, Then and Now

In 1910, Mexico's only form of (relatively) rapid communication was by rail, and that primarily with coastal ports and the U.S.: Don Porfirio's rail network was radial, designed for importing and exporting rather than internal communication, and it served the armies of Villa, Carranza, and Obregon very well. The network also served growth rather than development: at the turn of the century, Mexico was less than 15% urbanized, and peasants of rural areas, isolated as many were except on market days, lived in a different world. The rural-urban distinction was real, and stark. It still is, in many areas. North Americans have an understandable tendency to forget that the U.S. and Mexico are within a tenth of a percentage point of each other in degree of urbanization: about 75 %. The difference lies not in that one country is urbanized and the other rural: it is in what the rural people do. In the U.S. hardly any are engaged in subsistence agriculture; the bulk of their activities are the same as those of urbanites. In Mexico, rural people are still largely agrarian in both economy and culture.

Like the U.S., Mexico, home to 40% of the total indigenous population of the Western Hemisphere, denies its pluralism in the pursuit of unity. In its love-hate relationship with its indigenous population, Mexico has discovered that even more effective than "blaming the victim" is having the victims blame each other: peasants vs. indigenes. As Alonso indicates, the Constitution of 1917, one of the most revolutionary documents of this century, while explicitly including rural peasants, gave no recognition to rural Indians.

In contrast with the mestizo peasants of the north, the indigenous peoples of Chiapas and Oaxaca, the people treated by Kearney and Gilly in Nugent's book, were those least touched by either the Revolution or U.S. intervention between 1910 and 1920. It took the better part of two decades for the land reforms of the Constitution of 1917 to reach much of Mexico, and some areas were not reached at all. In the interim, microeconomic U.S. intervention became macro: relatively untouched by micro-scale U.S. intervention nearly a century ago, indigenas are now being impacted by U.S. macroeconomics. It is these areas, especially in Chiapas (Hilbert, 1997; Stea, Elguea, and Perez-Bustillo, 1997), that are now prime sites of rural revolt in Mexico, of subaltern politics, and of U.S. intervention in the rural domain.

Concluding Remarks

Eleven writers have contributed to this expanded edition of Nugent's 1988 book. The book is divided into four sections, the last of which includes but one chapter: "Popular nationalism and anti-imperialism in the Mexican countryside," "Class, ethnicity, and space in Mexican rural revolts," "U.S. intervention and popular ideology," and "Resistance and persistence." In the absence of introductions to these sections, the rationale for the division is less than transparent, since there is considerable overlap in subjects and treatments.

But this is a relatively minor flaw, since the book is, in other respects, a densely-worded treasure trove of information, representing a new view on a subject with a long history. Certainly, researchers in this field will find the listing of 36 archives and primary sources and 27 pages of bibliography quite useful. This book, providing interpretations of thorny subject matter by such experts as Alonso, Hart, Katz, Knight, and others, is well worth the time of a wide range of readers, and should be accorded a hearty welcome.

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Reviews

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