

CONTESTED ARENAS: Recent Studies on Politics and Labor

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- THE STATE, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA: VOLUME I.* Edited by Jean Carriere, Nigel Haworth, and Jacqueline Roddick. (New York: St. Martin's, 1989. Pp. 319. \$45.00.)
- SHAPING THE POLITICAL ARENA: CRITICAL JUNCTURES, THE LABOR MOVEMENT, AND REGIME DYNAMICS IN LATIN AMERICA.* By Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991. Pp. 877. \$75.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)
- LABOR AUTONOMY AND THE STATE IN LATIN AMERICA.* Edited by Edward C. Epstein. (Boston, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1989. Pp. 305. \$44.95.)
- TESTIMONIOS DE LA CRISIS: REESTRUCTURACION PRODUCTIVA Y CLASE OBRERA.* Edited by Esthela Gutiérrez Garza. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1985. Pp. 198.)
- ORGANIZACION Y LUCHAS DEL MOVIMIENTO OBRERO LATINOAMERICANO (1978-1987).* Edited by Mario Trujillo Bolio. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1988. Pp. 297.)

The five books under review here adopt different and sometimes contradictory analytical approaches, yet most of them emphasize the crucial political impact of labor in shaping environments with an unstable balance of social and political forces. Although these studies focus primarily on organized labor and its relationships to political parties and the state, they depart from more traditional labor studies in portraying the relationship between the labor movement and state elites as shaped by ongoing and persisting conflicts over political control and autonomy. A shared analytical emphasis on the two central concepts of control and autonomy appears to be defining what might be called a new institutional approach to the study of labor movements in Latin America.

Three of the edited collections deal with the labor movement throughout Latin America. Mario Trujillo Bolio's collection consists of essays discussing eleven case studies that were originally presented at a 1986 conference at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City. The collection edited by Jean Carriere, Nigel Haworth, and Jacqueline Roddick is the first in a series of four volumes that adopt "a comparative

perspective which does not assume the existence of a history or a logic of conflict in advance of the historical data," focusing instead on historical processes of working-class formation or "self-creation" (p. 16). Epstein's collection more consistently pursues a common analytical focus in an effort to tie together nine case studies (on Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay), bracketed by two brief comparative essays written by the editor.

The modest goal of Trujillo Bolio's *Organización y luchas del movimiento obrero latinoamericano (1978–1987)* was to review recent transformations in the makeup of the working class and their impact on the labor movement. For the most part, the essays provide a schematic overview of these changes but offer no substantial analytical insights. A few essays have the advantage of dealing with cases on which little other information is available: Trujillo Bolio on Nicaragua, Eliseo Ruiz on El Salvador, Arturo Santamaría Gómez on Latin American workers in the United States, and Jorge Turner on Panama. But these contributions provide only rather journalistic accounts of recent changes. More interesting points are raised by Oscar Castillo R. in discussing recent organizational efforts among white-collar workers in Peru and by José María Calderón Rodríguez on industrial restructuring and its recent impact on the labor movement in Mexico. Overall, the essays in *Organización y luchas del movimiento obrero latinoamericano* will prove of limited use to area specialists.

The collection edited by Carriere, Haworth, and Roddick, *The State, Industrial Relations, and the Labour Movement in Latin America: Volume 1*, is more ambitious in that its essays (on Paraguay and the five Andean countries) are intended to revise past labor historiography by providing greater analytical precision on labor's trajectory in Latin America. As a whole, however, the case studies in this collection are not innovative enough to meet these aims, and the studies largely confine themselves to a rather superficial overview of their subject. Nigel Haworth contributes a competent review of the historical trajectory of the labor movement in Peru, arguing that Peruvian trade unions began to operate from a much stronger position after 1968. In contrast, labor in Chile was generally successful in countering its own structural weakness through effective alliances with political parties. Jacqueline Roddick's long historical essay traces the political impact of the "struggle for unity" led by labor rank and file in Chile since the early twentieth century. She asserts that "by the 1920s, the fundamental character of [the] labor movement was formed. Still fragile at the point of production, its great strength was its ability to compensate for this vulnerability through a series of criss-crossing social and political networks which existed outside the factory" (p. 193). This political mobilization transcended sectoral cleavages, allowing workers to recreate their unity as a class. According to Roddick, even after the 1973 coup, "for all the determination of governments and economists to root out politiciza-

tion of the labour force, with every resource afforded by the law, Chilean workers remained members of a set of political networks, organized at a national level, and capable of mounting a general strike. No decree could abolish the social institution of the matrix itself" (p. 210).

The State, Industrial Relations, and the Labour Movement in Latin America includes four other articles. Daniel Pécaut focuses on Colombian labor, arguing that "spread over many small factories, faced with employers who refused to countenance the formation of unions and lacking a trade tradition, the industrial workers put their faith in legislation and intervention 'from above'" (p. 270). Pécaut also provides an overview of the relationship between competing federations, patterns of labor unrest, and changes in the labor force in the 1960s and 1970s. Andrew Nickson contributes an adequate descriptive history of organized labor in Paraguay, concluding that "by comparison with its counterparts in other Latin American countries, the failure of the labour movement in Paraguay to promote progressive social change can be explained by its small size and the limits to its freedom of action imposed by the long-lived Stroessner regime" (p. 95). This collection also includes sketchier essays by Charles Nurse on Ecuador and by Jacqueline Roddick and Nico van Niekerk on Bolivia. Systematic cross-national comparisons will not be forthcoming until the fourth and final volume of this series is published.

In *Labor Autonomy and the State in Latin America*, Edward Epstein seeks to develop the related concepts of autonomy and control as a common analytical thread running through the case studies in this collection. Epstein contends that political developments in Latin America have been shaped by a constant struggle between labor and state elites over control and autonomy. This constant struggle helps explain shifts in state policies as well as changes in trade-union structures and strategies. For Epstein, "relative labor autonomy results when those controlling the state are either politically weak or under strong challenge from groups not sharing their overall policy preference, and where the existing class-based social cleavage finds increasingly visible expression through politicization of the question of income distribution" (p. 285). Epstein's brief introduction and conclusion compare the case studies, seeking to provide measurements (strike data) for a more rigorous assessment of the relative autonomy of labor in the cases covered in *Labor Autonomy and the State in Latin America*.

The essays are intended to corroborate these arguments. Haworth reappears to argue that 1968 was a watershed for organized labor in Peru, allowing workers to gain political autonomy and overcome their past structural weakness. Jaime Ruiz-Tagle examines General Augusto Pinochet's offensive against organized labor in Chile after 1973: coercive state policies were deployed against trade-union leaders, but these measures unexpectedly enhanced new forms of mobilization among local unions and the rank and file in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Maria Helena Moreira

Alves examines new forms of labor mobilization in Brazil after the 1970s, showing that they involved innovative forms of collective action that disrupted existing institutional arrangements. The remaining case studies in this collection are more standard. Epstein reviews the dynamics of Peronism in Argentina, Rocío Londoño Botero addresses the shift away from decentralized bargaining by Colombian unions after the 1970s, and Francisco Zapata links the stability of institutional arrangements among labor, employers, and the state in Mexico to successful economic growth. Martín Gargiulo's informative essay reviews the recent history and current political alignments of labor in Uruguay. Linda Fuller contends that labor in Cuba since the revolution has experienced growing organizational independence, although she acknowledges that the extent of effective autonomy and rank-and-file participation is hard to gauge. In her view, "there can be absolutely no doubt that maintaining and increasing production continue to be primary tasks of the Cuban unions" (pp. 147–48). Finally, Charles Davis and Kenneth Coleman focus on Venezuela, contending that despite institutional linkages to ruling elites, the labor movement has been unable to generate more favorable state policies.

The collection edited by Esthela Gutiérrez Garza, *Testimonios de la crisis: reestructuración productiva y clase obrera*, addresses a different set of issues. Its essays seek to establish a stricter theoretical framework for studying the recent transformations undergone by organized labor. The studies by Gutiérrez Garza and Adrián Sotelo Valencia frame a general discussion of the labor movement (organizations, wages, strikes) in Mexico within a materialist approach that emphasizes current changes as the outcome of a crisis of accumulation and regulation. Luis Gómez Sánchez applies similar arguments to a more specific discussion of recent trends in the electronics industry. The three remaining essays are more interesting in their detailing of changes in the labor process in specific industrial complexes in Mexico: Jaime Rogerio Girón focuses on the cement industry, Arnulfo Arteaga on automobiles, and Laura Palomares and Leonard Mertens on electronics.

Although all three collections call for more innovative approaches to studying labor in Latin America, they actually present rather traditional labor studies that lack a consistent comparative framework. These contributions demonstrate that labor has played an important role in modern political developments, but they are less helpful in explaining or even systematically describing the comparative dynamics of institutional arrangements between labor and the state. In *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier have undertaken "to construct a model of political change and regime dynamics in Latin America that builds upon an analysis of the dialectical interplay between labor control and labor mobilization" (p. 745). Their earlier work (1978, 1979) began to

outline the contours of such a model, and area specialists have been eagerly anticipating publication of this ambitious study for the past decade. Collier and Collier thus have taken up the challenge of reshaping the analytical and methodological basis for comparative study of dictatorship, democracy, and political cycles in Latin America. The intellectual scope of this effort alone warrants a detailed review of their effort.

The fundamental premise of *Shaping the Political Arena* is that at different "critical junctures" in the twentieth century, the eight Latin American countries included in this study (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela) have all experienced a qualitative transition from exclusion to incorporation of labor. Prior to incorporation, repression was the primary response of state elites to challenges by workers and the labor movement. Moving away from this coercive strategy, elites initiated incorporation in "the first sustained and at least partially successful attempt by the state to legitimate and shape an institutionalized labor movement" (p. 783). Incorporation encompassed state regulation of capital-labor relations as well as state efforts to regulate labor's presence in the political arena via control or mobilization or both. Although elites adopted "different strategies of control and mobilization of the popular sectors" in response to actual or potential working-class militancy, no systematic relationship existed between the strength of labor movements and the emergence of populism (p. 161). For example, the labor movement was strong in Argentina and Mexico, but countries like Venezuela and Uruguay experienced incorporation despite the weakness of existing trade unions.

Shaping the Political Arena contends that "initial incorporation occurs in relatively well-defined policy periods" (p. 783). Incorporation is not intended as a general theoretical concept but as a time-bounded "definition of the initial incorporation period . . . grounded in specific issues of [a] particular historical transition" (p. 784). The political processes and types of organization that characterized these well-defined periods have involved distinct patterns or differences and similarities among the eight case studies. These patterns later shaped national political dynamics, the authors explain, because "to understand the heritage of state incorporation, it is useful to consider the generalization that in Latin America, labor movements tend to become politicized, and if, under state incorporation, this politicization is not promoted by the state during the incorporation period, it tends to occur later from within society in a way that may readily escape state control" (p. 750).

Collins and Collins distinguish among four types of incorporation. The primary distinction involves whether incorporation was led by the state (as in Chile and Brazil) or by political movements or parties. In turn, party-led incorporation involves three variants: electoral mobilization by the traditional parties (Uruguay and Colombia); labor populism (Argen-

tina and Peru); and radical populism (Venezuela and Mexico). Each of these four patterns led to distinct institutional arrangements that varied in stability and degree of political integration. An integrative party system emerged in Mexico and Venezuela but not in Brazil and Chile, where incorporation resulted in a multiparty polarizing system. Uruguay and Colombia developed relative electoral stability but growing social conflict, while Peru and Argentina moved toward stalemated party systems. The dynamics of this typology can best be illustrated by reviewing the two polar opposites: the populist model of Mexico and Venezuela and the state-incorporation model seen in Brazil and Chile.

The distinct institutional arrangements that accompanied each of these two models shaped postwar politics. In Mexico and Venezuela, political elites successfully incorporated labor into a populist alliance. Populism involved a bargain between forces from above (state elites) and forces from below (labor and the peasantry), and "the terms of exchange between the actors reflected differential power relations" (p. 169). The legacy of this model of incorporation was

a party-political system that was integrative, not polarizing; that was one-party dominant or two-party with centripetal tendencies, not multiparty with centrifugal tendencies; that institutionalized something approaching a "coalition of the whole," not fractionalized, unstable coalitions; and that embodied important conflict-limiting mechanisms permitting the formation of consistent policy with some gradual, pendular swings, not accelerating zero-sum conflict that led to policy-vacillation and immobilism. (P. 571)

In Brazil and Chile, in contrast, state elites pursued no stable populist bargain. Their actions were aimed instead at creating corporate controls that restricted labor's political participation. This model resulted in a lack of effective mechanisms for conflict resolution, and the absence of institutional linkages between labor and political parties led to electoral fractionalization and "polarizing, rather than integrative" party systems.

Patterns of incorporation diverged primarily as an outcome of the relative strength of traditional oligarchies. Brazil and Chile both had strong oligarchies and entrenched clientelistic control of rural areas. Urban middle sectors, dissident elites, and military groups eventually challenged this oligarchic hegemony in offensives that culminated in the 1920 election of Jorge Alessandri in Chile and the 1930 coup of Getúlio Vargas in Brazil. But even under these new regimes, the oligarchy remained strong enough to limit the scope of reforms and prevent the political mobilization of labor by state elites. Worker mobilization was significant enough that labor was perceived by elites as a potentially serious threat, but organized labor remained too weak to demand greater political participation effectively. In their latter years, the Vargas and Alessandri-Ibáñez regimes assailed oligarchic domination and introduced more substantial reforms, but state elites continued to avoid labor mobilization, maintaining the corporatist

and repressive aspects of their behavior. Populist alliances in Brazil and Chile were adopted only fleetingly, "for electoral purposes, but not for governing purposes" (p. 379).

The oligarchy was considerably weaker in Mexico and Venezuela, where land concentration generated tensions that disrupted clientelistic ties with the peasantry. Unstable oligarchic rule was followed by centralized dictatorships (under Porfirio Díaz in Mexico and Juan Vicente Gómez in Venezuela), which accentuated opposition from both the peasantry and contesting elites. Although internal conflicts among the dominant class were more pronounced than in Brazil and Chile, elites in Mexico and Venezuela had the ability to mobilize labor and the peasantry as political resources (p. 196). Hence efforts to promote electoral democracy had a different meaning in Brazil and Chile than they did in Mexico and Venezuela. According to Collier and Collier, in Brazil and Chile, "liberalism and electoral politics had been the political institutions of oligarchic domination" (p. 117). But in Mexico and Venezuela, electoral democracy was perceived as a direct challenge to oligarchic domination. These features defined Mexico and Venezuela as "the two cases in which at the onset of the incorporation period a populist, as opposed to an accommodationist, alliance was most clearly a viable alternative" (p. 124).

These differing patterns of incorporation determined the future stability of political arrangements. State-led incorporation in Brazil and Chile produced (among the eight countries in this study) "the most fractionalized party systems, the least cohesive political centers, sharp episodes of polarization, and substantial policy immobilism in the heritage period" (p. 507). The absence of effective political representation of workers led to the politicization of labor by the left, the political reactivation of the working class as an autonomous force, and the disintegration of official unionism. With minor variations in timing and political characteristics, the lack of strong and stable institutional ties between labor and the state in Brazil and Chile led to "a multiparty, polarizing regime," with parties "unable to serve as instruments of control over the popular sectors" (pp. 526–27).

In Mexico and Venezuela, in contrast, incorporation led to the development of what Collier and Collier term a "hegemonic, integrative party system," which allowed political challenges to be absorbed through existing institutions. In Mexico political conflicts and economic instability delayed full institutionalizing of political participation by labor until the 1930s, when President Lázaro Cárdenas relied on labor support to gain greater autonomy from the army, international and domestic capital, and other political leaders. Cárdenas's radical populism was followed by a conservative shift, however, when state elites established more effective labor controls to restrict "autonomous mobilization from below" and enhance "controlled mobilization from above" (p. 197). Thereafter, Mexican

trade unions became “a vehicle for support mobilization as well as control. Unions and union leaders played a very complicated game of intermediation between the state and the working class.” Charrismo, the institutional system of labor control that prevailed in Mexico, existed “as a model of discipline without representation and of coercion without support mobilization,” but merely as “a malfunction of the hegemonic pattern” (p. 585). Ultimately, the patterns of incorporation in Mexico resulted in “a party that embraced a coalition of the whole and enjoyed a number of hegemonic resources: it embodied a progressive ideology, it held the partisan loyalties of the popular sectors, and it bound the functional organizations of the popular sectors to a conservative state” (p. 574).

In Venezuela populist incorporation followed the death of Gómez in 1935. Despite an ambiguous transition under Eleazar López Contreras (1935–1941) and Isaías Medina Angarita (1941–1945), state elites successfully mobilized labor by 1948. As in Mexico, radical populism was followed by a conservative shift, with a repressive crackdown on labor between 1948 and 1950. President Marcos Pérez Jiménez continued to rely on repression as the main means of controlling labor after he failed to emulate Juan Perón in founding a sympathetic labor movement. But although the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship generated a broad opposition, political conflicts in the late 1950s were not accompanied by growing polarization. Instead, Venezuela’s two main political parties, Acción Democrática and COPEI (Comisión de Organización Política Electoral Independiente), moved toward the center and “became multiclass parties with converging social bases of support,” while labor unions remained subordinated to the leadership of these parties (pp. 615–17).

According to Collier and Collier, these contrasting legacies determined the relative ability of state elites to implement their policies successfully as well as the long-term resilience of civilian rule. In Brazil and Chile, growing polarization and the strong political impact of social forces constrained and undermined state policies. During the 1950s and 1960s, “politics became increasingly zero-sum, [and there was] policy vacillation due to the center’s inability to find a stable coalition as a basis for consistent policy-making” (p. 528). This structural instability prevented the implementation of successful stabilization policies and eventually brought the end of the regimes of João Goulart and Salvador Allende by military coups in “parallel, but not identical, processes” (p. 541).

In contrast, state elites in Mexico and Venezuela possessed the political resources “to achieve price stability” and “to sustain themselves in the face of the challenges of new leftist parties and political movements in the 1950’s and 1960’s” (pp. 527, 591). According to Collier and Collier, such resources included politically incorporating labor and popular sectors (but not the left) into ruling coalitions, using consensus rather than coercion as a means of eliciting popular support, and deploying effective

mechanisms of control over labor and other popular organizations. In Mexico the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) co-opted labor and the peasantry via patronage and benefits, while ideological resources played a centripetal role in allowing state elites to manipulate the symbols of a social revolution in their claim to legitimacy. Finally, state elites in Mexico and Venezuela exhibited greater adaptive skills in responding to periods of unrest by periodically adjusting state institutions to enhance the government's ability to channel popular demands.

In the four remaining cases presented in *Shaping the Political Arena*, the incorporation of the labor movement was carried out by political parties rather than by authoritarian regimes, but the legacy of incorporation was political instability. As elsewhere, initial incorporation in these countries was followed by a period of conservative opposition (often promoted or supported by sectors of the dominant class), geared toward either demobilizing labor or halting social reforms. Yet subsequent institutional arrangements failed to develop the stability and adaptability of those in Mexico and Venezuela. In Uruguay and Colombia, centrist political parties developed a stable electoral majority, but the lack of strong institutional ties to labor undermined these governments' ability to channel and control popular pressures. Institutional ties between political parties and labor were stronger and more effective in Argentina and Peru, and these countries developed a "stalemated party system" rather than stable electoral majorities. In all four countries (in contrast with Mexico and Venezuela), labor tended to be left out of ruling coalitions.

In Uruguay and Colombia, in Collier and Collier's analysis, no close linkages were developed between labor and either the state or traditional political parties, leading to a pluralist labor movement that was likely to be more confrontational and less restrained (or subject to effective mechanisms of control) than the movements in Mexico and Venezuela. In Uruguay incorporation was initiated between 1903 and 1907 under José Batlle y Ordóñez, who was nonetheless unwilling to sacrifice the unity of the Colorado party in pursuit of stronger ties with labor (inroads into the labor movement were also prevented by the anarchist opposition). By 1916 a conservative shift under the Feliciano Viera regime ended these policies, but they left an enduring legacy. Stability characterized the period from 1942 to 1958, when labor activities were geared toward pressing management through strikes and to promoting indirect gains by pressuring the Colorado party. This strategy collapsed, however, from the combined impact of an economic crisis and rationalization efforts between 1959 and 1973. Furthermore, although Uruguayan political parties continued to dominate elections, their inability to channel pressure from the popular sectors led to growing unrest and conflict that culminated in the 1973 coup.

Colombia experienced greater instability than Uruguay prior to the

late 1950s, but thereafter traditional parties showed greater endurance. Incorporation began in 1930 and was tied to the reforms initiated by the Liberal party. The initial period of incorporation ended with a Conservative backlash against labor after the resignation of Alfonso López Pumarejo in 1945 and was followed by violence, social polarization, and political instability until the end of the regime of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1957. With the establishment of a bipartisan coalition government in 1957–58, Collier and Collier perceive a gradual “removal of potentially conflictual issues from the political agenda,” leading to a “bureaucratic and technical approach to national problems” (p. 463). In the process, ties between labor and political parties were weakened, thus enhancing the autonomy of trade unions and encouraging labor to adopt a more confrontational stance toward state elites. Yet the political system was never challenged as it was in Uruguay, partly due to the weakness and fragmentation of the Colombian labor movement. More important, this situation reflected the specific dynamics of the Colombian party system, in which unrest was ignored as long as it did not translate into a significant electoral challenge and the “arrangement of decision-making power made it difficult for new political movements to break into the system” (p. 679). Throughout the 1980s, Colombian state elites successfully drew on this institutional stability to implement stabilization policies.

An integrative party system also failed to develop in Peru and Argentina, according to Collier and Collier. Although these countries did not experience a labor shift to the left (as occurred in Brazil and Chile) due to the political integration of trade unions under APRA and Peronism, institutional arrangements collapsed soon after the period of incorporation. Electoral restrictions on APRA and Peronism caused politics to become “a difficult game” in Peru and an “impossible game” in Argentina. Strong personal leadership played parallel roles in the two countries, creating political cohesion in the early stages of incorporation but maximizing the difficulties of finding accommodation in the aftermath of the conservative shift. Political instability in both countries led to endemic policy failures. Political bans played different roles, however: in Argentina, they helped Perón maintain his dominance over a movement with solidified bonds to labor; but in Peru, such bans led APRA toward growing conservatism and weakened its ties to labor. In both countries, coups in 1962 were followed by elections in 1963 that were won by middle-class parties, but their rule was undermined by the militancy of the labor movement. Again in both countries, the military became concerned about ensuring internal security and sought to promote national development and eliminate the instability of the institutional party system. Growing labor unrest led to a crisis of social domination, culminating in a coup in Argentina in 1966 and another in Peru in 1968.

Collier and Collier thus offer a complex portrayal of the role of labor

under populist regimes, depicting populism as entailing a bargaining process that renders the political arena a field of conflict among state elites, dominant economic elites, and popular sectors. It is true that trade unions in populist regimes often surrendered significant autonomy in exchange for state favors and material gains. But populist reforms involved not just co-optation but a substantial redistribution of power that strengthened the ability of labor (and sometimes the peasantry) to make demands effectively. Although state elites in populist regimes sought to regulate labor mobilization and subordinate it to their own political agenda, mobilization quickly acquired a dynamic of its own. For these reasons, dominant economic sectors regularly challenged populist arrangements, accentuating the political tensions that accompanied the emergence of these regimes. In short, “genuine populism . . . was not a static or equilibrium condition but contained within it a political dynamic and contradiction that made it most unstable” (p. 197).

Collier and Collier also emphasize the “relative autonomy” of political processes, arguing that most analysts have overemphasized the role of socioeconomic transformations in the region (p. 768). Socioeconomic factors like urbanization may have played a crucial role in shaping political developments at the turn of the century, but institutional arrangements like populism were essentially political artifacts produced by political entrepreneurs (like Cárdenas in Mexico or Perón in Argentina). Likewise, the legacy of incorporation varied according to the relative success of political elites in constructing a political system that could legitimately shield the state from the potential ravages of labor, popular mobilization, or social polarization. Thus in Collier and Collier’s view, institutional stability in Mexico or Venezuela can be understood better as an outcome of comparative political advantages rather than as a product of the wealth derived from economic resources.

Given this emphasis, it comes as no major surprise that Collier and Collier analyze the labor movement primarily in terms of its institutional political impact. *Shaping the Political Arena* strives to detail exhaustively the factional conflicts and political events that followed labor movements as they oscillated periodically between weakness and strength, acquiescence and unruliness, unity and disarray. In turn, Collier and Collier often employ these examples of labor shifts to explain the constraints and opportunities faced by state elites in different stages in their political trajectories. For example, labor mobilization and unrest are cited as important variables in explaining the endorsement of Alessandri by the Chilean electoral college in 1920 (p. 112), the rise of Cárdenas in Mexico in 1935 (p. 237), and endorsement of the AD-COPEI coalition in Venezuela in 1961 (p. 434). Elsewhere the inability of labor movements to mobilize at crucial turning points is used to explain the end of the *trienio* in Venezuela, the subsequent con-

solidation of the AD government there (p. 434), and the conservative shift under the Gómez regime in Colombia (p. 458).

But in all these instances, *Shaping the Political Arena* provides little causal explanation or inquiry into the structures, ideas, and forces that allowed labor to engage in mobilization or prevented it from doing so. Collier and Collier tend to treat labor as a nebulous homogenous entity that materializes once in a while to vote, follow a strike, or acquiesce with passivity, without any substantial explanation of these changing behaviors. Although such actions are recognized sporadically as significant by Collier and Collier, they nevertheless leave many questions unanswered. What were the major shifts over time in the type of organizations that served as vehicles for labor demands? Did any major shifts take place in the relationship between the rank and file and the leadership of existing trade unions? Why were calls for general strikes successful in some instances but not in others? How did the political perceptions of workers change over time? Did significant variations occur in all these areas among different sectors of the labor force? It may appear that these questions begin to pose unfairly an alternative research agenda that falls outside the scope of the present study. After all, at almost nine hundred pages, *Shaping the Political Arena* is already pushing the boundaries of what can be accomplished within a single volume. Yet the problem is that in failing to address these questions systematically, Collier and Collier's study tends to eliminate labor as an actor and an agency of change. As a consequence, the dynamics of political change tend to become teleologically explained—the political terrain shapes the political terrain.

One might argue that given past tendencies to represent political dynamics as an epiphenomena of socioeconomic causation, restoration of autonomy to political processes is essential for a better understanding of change. But mirroring the previous reductionism, such an effort to assert the primacy of (institutional) political processes over socioeconomic causation again tends to force complex and interacting processes through the analytical sieve of a single discipline, as if historical forces actually aligned themselves according to the strict matrix dictated by disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences.

Shaping the Political Arena also fails at times to be consistently rigorous in analyzing causal relationships. For example, the rise of populist regimes is explained largely as an outcome of the relative stability of property relations in rural areas, but no comparative data are provided to evaluate the extent to which rural relations were disrupted among the different nations in the study. For this reason, when Collier and Collier argue that Mexico and Venezuela prior to incorporation constituted the most viable environments for populism, the reader has little basis on which to assess the accuracy of this statement empirically. Why was Venezuela in

1935 more fertile terrain for populism than Chile in 1930 or Brazil in 1935? How can researchers test the inherent hypotheses, with either quantitative or qualitative data? In the absence of such analyses, explanations tend to revert to a tautological mode: the patterns followed by each country are explained by the patterns with which they started.

Along the same lines, how can one be certain that incorporation took place under Batlle in Uruguay but not under Hipólito Yrigoyen in Argentina—or even under Guillermo Billinghurst in Peru? Collier and Collier argue that Batlle favored the right of workers to strike, often supported labor demands, and introduced a solid body of legislation mandating an eight-hour day, a six-day workweek, protective laws for children and pregnant women, old-age pensions, and free public education. But the difference in legislative regulation between Yrigoyen and Batlle was one of degree rather than qualitative, and many of Batlle's attitudes toward strikes and labor unrest were also characteristic of Yrigoyen. It is true that Yrigoyen opposed trade unions restricting the "freedom to work," but so did Batlle. In the absence of a more rigorous comparison of these cases, the very concept of time-bounded incorporation eventually lacks a satisfactory means of empirical verification.

Thus Collier and Collier's model creates further reservations. According to their model, incorporation involved clear periods and patterns, all entailing distinct subsequent trajectories. But country specialists will be likely to object that *Shaping the Political Arena* tends to artificially impose analytical boundaries on situations and trends that were actually characterized by greater diversity and ambiguities. Furthermore, the model tends to abstract these political sequences from the discrete historical periods in which they took place. For example, within the model, the 1906–1914 period of incorporation in Uruguay is treated as comparable with the 1930–1935 period in Colombia. Such bracketing is likely to raise objections because it tends to minimize the interactive characteristics of these processes of change. But did political models in different countries influence each other in their success or failure? Did timing influence the choices available to elites and popular sectors? Did the two world wars and the aftermath of each have a similar impact throughout the region? And if so, then why? Although Collier and Collier touch on some of these issues, the very nature of their model discourages a systematic analysis of such topics.

Despite these reservations, *Shaping the Political Terrain* represents a major contribution to the field. Less than a decade ago, Ian Roxborough (1984) called for the development of a model of change in Latin America that would make a sustained effort to account for the role of subordinate classes in shaping political dynamics. Collier and Collier have attempted to construct such a model in a study that undertakes to provide a systematic comparison of the dynamics between labor movements and the state across a wide spectrum of Latin American countries. Their model is likely

to become strongly influential in the field, regardless of whether scholars try to corroborate or challenge its findings. Moreover, in Collier and Collier's effort to demonstrate the effectiveness of their comparative model in accounting for political events, cycles, and trends, their study has incorporated considerable historical detail from the secondary literature. This accomplishment alone will ensure that *Shaping the Political Arena* becomes a major reference work for specialists and social scientists. In sum, their study has advanced a new theoretical synthesis for future comparative inquiry in Latin America.

Taken as a whole, these five books stimulate a few final observations about the study of labor in Latin America. In the new approach to the institutional politics of labor, a tension between control and autonomy is emphasized as shaping the trade unions' relationships with state elites and with political parties. Most often, labor's subordinate position within a regime (or ruling coalition) is emphasized by highlighting the absence of autonomous mobilization and the efforts made by labor to regain autonomy. This tension regarding labor autonomy tended to be treated in recent labor studies as a constant feature of institutional arrangements. But usually neither autonomy nor control is developed conceptually or operationalized systematically. For example, in Collier and Collier's study, one can find no definitions of autonomy and control in the conceptual glossary at the end of the book. What does control represent? Through what organizational or institutional mechanisms do state elites achieve control? How do these mechanisms differ from those allowing autonomy? How do we know an autonomous labor movement when we see one? Without greater conceptual and operational clarification of these terms, labor movements tend to be presented as constantly struggling for control and pursuing autonomy in a portrayal that begins to recall the older image of labor as involved in a heroic march onward.

It is also striking that recent labor studies originating in the social sciences (as opposed to the humanities) have paid little attention to the social construction of political symbols, discourse, and identity—issues that have been addressed more directly by historians. Populism, for example, tends to be portrayed in the social sciences as an institutional compromise involving the projects generated by state elites from above and the pressures raised by popular sectors from below. But the political identities of elites and popular sectors appear as already constituted, with the dynamics of populism involving sectoral and factional alliances and negotiations rather than a problematic reformulation of these identities. This formal approach tends to portray processes of "incorporation" as an outcome of institutional constraints rather than as changing and socially negotiated boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

The absence of identity and discourse as fields of analysis is also directly related to other dimensions missing from recent labor studies on

Latin America (in this case, primarily in the social sciences but also in the humanities). For the most part, these studies lack any treatment of gender and race as crucial mechanisms of stratification, political identity, and social change (for example, the huge Collier and Collier study mentions women only marginally in five paragraphs). Such lacunae suggest that many of these books have chosen to address the major debates that shaped our disciplines in the 1970s but not the intellectual agenda that should shape labor studies in Latin America during the 1990s.

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