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The Challenge of Rural Democratisation: Perspectives from Latin America and the Philippines
by Jonathan Fox

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succeed in 'scaling up'. This part of the problem is fully acknowledged (p. 87), but no solutions are offered.

In his deft descriptions of intellectuals, their ideas, programmes, and the popular movements with which they have highly ambiguous relations, Lehmann successfully leaps over a host of disciplinary boundaries and specifies the possibilities of *basismo*. Though his work leaves this reader pessimistic that success is likely, he provides an excellent overview of a complex and contemporary problem.

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Jonathan Fox (ed.), *The Challenge of Rural Democratisation: Perspectives from Latin America and the Philippines* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), pp. 162, £24.00.

Democracy is not bestowed by governments. It is fought for from below, through the political actions of ordinary people seeking to gain greater control over their own lives. This is the message of the chapters which make up this stimulating book. It is a message which is particularly important in assessing the prospects for rural democratisation in developing countries. In each of the cases presented, the push for democracy comes from the rural workers and not from the state. Political elites fail to respond to social demands and are delegitimised in the eyes of growing sectors of the rural poor. Clientelism is the heart of the problem as peasants and workers demand institutional recognition for their autonomous and representative organisations. This amounts to an assault on the local and regional pillars of authoritarian rule. Not surprisingly, it is resisted with ferocity by landowning elites and their accomplices in the state apparatus (both military and civilian). The stakes are high: land reform and policies to support a free peasant economy. The costs are tragic: between 1980 and 1985, 721 peasants were killed in Brazil; in Colombia, a record 8,256 people were murdered in 1988, at least half of whom were rural workers; in Mexico, over 700 peasants were killed between 1982 and 1987. These grim figures suggest the extremely hostile environment in which the struggle for rural democratisation is unfolding. Nevertheless, within that context small spaces have been opened up which offer some room for manoeuvre. It is in using these spaces and developing new ones that rural movements contribute to the democratisation not solely of their immediate localities, but of society and the system in general.

Fox's concise but broad-based introduction clearly maps out the main contours of the discussion. He states that rural democratisation involves the two interrelated demands of effective representation and regime accountability. How rural movements press these demands is the central focus of the book. Most authors stress the structural constraints which opposition movements must face. Yet they also bring out the ways in which authoritarian institutions are subverted and provide a vehicle for popular mobilisation. State responses to past struggles and expanding bureaucracies provide the site for future revolts. In Brazil, Grzybowski shows how rural workers have conquered, through democratic elections, several regional branches of the state-sponsored national confederation, CONTAG. Their struggles to democratise their union developed in tandem with

the new unionism in the cities in the late 1970s and early 1980s, helping forge links with industrial workers. Similarly, in the Philippines, the Marcos dictatorship promoted a national union which would be supportive of its policies. However, Lara and Morales argue that by the 1980s a radical current had developed within the union and many members left to give their support to the revolutionary movement. Paré makes a similar argument for Mexico, claiming that new peasant movements have contributed to an erosion of clientelistic and corporatist control.

In several of the chapters, autonomous spaces and alternative visions appear as the necessary conditions for rural democratisation. In revolutionary Nicaragua it was the traditional peasant community, or *comarca*, which became the basis for democratising rural civil society and developing alternative social and economic forms of organisation, while forcing the FSLN government to implement a more favourable agrarian programme reform in 1986.

At the same time, the consolidation of rural democratisation is dependent on effective incorporation of grassroots organisations into the political system. As Zamosc argues, the basic logic of peasant movements in Colombia has been to establish linkage with the political system independently of the existing clientelistic channels. Moreover, this popular appreciation of the need for political democracy has had to be addressed by the radical left which has often failed to understand such aspirations.

The more general question of relations between outside advisers and peasant communities is most clearly addressed by Rivera Cusicanqui. In her analysis of indigenous forms of organisation (*ayllus*) in northern Potosí, Bolivia, she criticises the ethnocentric approach to the idea of citizenship being based on the rights of the individual. Such an idea has been used by mestizo elites, whether conservative, liberal, populist, or socialist, to impose Western cultural homogenisation over the indigenous Andean population. In this way, Indians can only assert their 'citizenship' on the terms imposed by the principles of liberal democracy, implying a negation of Indian identity and of the validity of *ayllu* democracy. The issue here is not so much about claiming citizenship rights but rather the very meaning of citizenship in a culturally diverse society. Rivera Cusicanqui concludes by arguing for a multi-cultural form of democracy which respects the right to be different as well the right to representation. The point also has general validity by inviting us to broaden our approach to democratisation to include all struggles against contemporary forms of political and cultural domination, whether characterised by class, gender or ethnicity. In this respect, we need to know more about the internal organisation and dynamics of rural social movements. There are few attempts to show how particular demands come to be formulated, how strategic choices are taken and how leaders are elected. In short, the democratic character of popular struggle is given not solely by the challenge to the authoritarian practices of the oppressors but also by the battle against similar practices within grassroots organisations and between them and outside leaders.

This book moves us beyond case studies of rural social movements by emphasising linkages between rural and national democratisation. On balance, each author recognises that advances are still vulnerable to the entrenched power of political elites and underlines the need for greater articulation with broader projects aimed at social transformation. It is debatable if such unifying projects

currently exist, given the heterogeneity of popular demands in the countries under study. It remains to be seen if and how such demands are articulated in a unified project. In the meantime, peasants and rural workers will continue to defend their spaces and prepare the ground upon which the push for broader changes may depend in the future.

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Carlos R. Miranda, *The Stroessner Era. Authoritarian Rule in Paraguay* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), pp. x + 177, £22.00.

This latest addition to the literature on Paraguay seems to have two goals: to explain the endurance of the Stroessner regime (1954–89) and to study the broader issue of authoritarian consolidation. The question of consolidation of authoritarianism is dealt with only tangentially – suggested rather than analysed – as the author himself acknowledges in the last paragraph of his book.

To explain authoritarian consolidation Miranda emphasises the old twin arguments of political culture and historical tradition. In chapter two, we are told that ‘[t]he consolidation of the [Stroessner] regime was possible only because of the nature of Paraguay’s political culture’ (p. 151). Chapter three, on the other hand, reminds us that ‘[t]he tendency to accept paternalistic leaders with strong authoritarian traits was largely the consequence of Paraguay’s experience during colonial times’ (p. 148). Moreover, ‘[Paraguayan C]itizens surprise themselves whenever they talk about installing a democratic...system. Their past has socialized them into supporting authoritarian rule’ (p. 148). Towards the end, Miranda incorporates a third variable, ‘successful policy making’ which makes the reader wonder whether the suggestion is to explain success by reference to successful policies.

Miranda’s argument is not new – indeed it has been applied to other Latin American countries as well – and this is not the place to address its logical, historical and epistemological shortcomings. Suffice it to say that the author does not come close to providing any body of supporting evidence to substantiate his thesis. The discussion of political culture, for example, is utterly impressionistic and based on inappropriate data which seems to be used simply as a device to back up an already taken position. In fact some of the author’s own statements seem to contradict his views. For instance, discussing the alleged support for the Stroessner regime Miranda argues that ‘[t]he decision to support [it] may have been made because the system seemed to work well but also because it was impossible to uphold an alternative’ (p. 152). Most strikingly, in ‘a country socialized to support authoritarian rule’ Miranda explains the democratising process that followed the coup of 3 February 1989 by telling us that ‘Rodríguez played to the sentiments of the nation by assuring Paraguayans that democracy would be restored’ (sic, p. 143). Equally wanting, the historical discussion does not add anything to what has already been written on the subject, especially by John Hoyt Williams and Paul Lewis.

Chapters four, five and six deal with the ideological, political and economic bases of the Stroessner regime. The treatment is superficial and in some cases hopelessly outdated (industrial statistics of 1963, for example, p. 106), but it is