

Reinventing Revolution: The Renovation of Left Discourse in Cuba and Mexico.

By EDWARD J. MCCAUGHAN. Boulder: Westview Press, 1997. Notes. Index. xiii, 207 pp. Cloth, \$59.00.

Reinventing Revolution is a fascinating survey of the thoughts of Mexican and Cuban intellectuals on the challenges of globalization, neoliberalism, and alternatives to capitalism. For his new study, McCaughan conducted interviews with 74 intellectuals in Mexico and Cuba during 1992 and 1993. The interviewees are drawn from a (generously defined) community of progressives, leftists, and socialists. The Mexicans, understandably given their oppositional status, are almost entirely university scholars (such as Pablo González Casanova and Jaime Tamayo); opinion makers and intellectuals in parties of the Left, especially the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Pablo Gómez and Elvira Concheiro); or cultural critics such as Carlos Monsiváis. The Cubans include leading figures within the Cuban Communist Party (Dario Machado); social scientists associated with institutions such as the Centro de Estudios sobre América (Julio Carranza, Haroldo Dilla, and Rafael Hernández); a few “dissidents” such as the social democrat Vladimiro Roca; and a group of historians and economists (Jorge Ibarra, Niurka Pérez, and Margarita Viera), some of whom (Juan Antonio Blanco is the most prominent) work in nongovernmental organizations.

McCaughan examines how the Cuban and Mexican Lefts have responded to a major paradigm crisis. The collapse of the Soviet Union, globalization, and the establishment of a hegemonic neoliberal worldview in economic matters have shattered the self-confidence and assumptions of the Left. The centrality of the state as the engine of economic activity has been undermined, political pluralism and liberal democracy have replaced faith in party-state systems, and the goal of participatory and substantive democracy has been subordinated to a strategy of elite-negotiated pacts designed to preserve “governability.”

McCaughan identifies three broad ways in which the Mexican and Cuban Lefts have responded to these changes. Some currents have assimilated elements of economic and political liberalism while, especially in Cuba, the core features of the older socialist orthodoxy still retain the support of many leftists. The depth of the Left’s crisis, however, has encouraged the development of what McCaughan calls a “renovator” Left, in which policymakers and intellectuals are struggling to renew socialist strategies that repudiate Marxist and liberal orthodoxies while preserving the antisystemic thrust of the Left’s moral, political, and economic agenda.

It is Latin America’s location on what Emmanuel Wallerstein terms the “semi-periphery” that makes this region a particularly fertile area for the development of innovative strategies for challenging capitalism. McCaughan argues that the central role played by the state in the historical transition of the region from peripheral to semi-peripheral status makes it difficult for antistatist revolt to be totally convincing. The strength of national cultures based on social solidarity, community, and social rights constitutes a further impediment to the creation of a neoliberal hegemony. Moreover,

McCaughan argues, renovative discourses on the Left are stronger in Mexico and Cuba than in many other areas of Latin America where, as in Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay, the Left suffered stunning defeats in the 1970s and 1980s.

This is essentially a study of discourses and the world of intellectual opinion makers and activists. McCaughan lets his interviewees speak at length and readers interested in sampling the complex, cautious, agonized, and often creative ways in which left-wing intellectuals are trying to come to terms with globalization and the collapse of *socialismos realmente existentes* will find this book enormously useful.

Historians, though, may also experience a degree of frustration. While the 74 interviewees are briefly introduced, the details of their individual trajectories are inadequately sketched. Certain moments in the political and intellectual history of Mexico and Cuba are mentioned. In Cuba the role played by the Philosophy Department of the University of Havana and the journal *Pensamiento Crítico* (both early victims of Cuban attempts to limit debate) is underlined in a number of places in the book. In Mexico the significance of the generation of 1968 and of such journals as *Punto Crítico* also rate mentions. But it is only in the last and very stimulating chapter that the author stands back to provide explanations for the relative influence of newer and older discursive strategies in Mexico and Cuba. The historical peculiarities of the Left's evolution in the two countries deserves much more attention.

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Dance in the Cemetery: José Carlos Mariátegui and the Lima Scandal of 1917.

By WILLIAM W. STEIN. Foreword by Gonzalo Portocarrero Maisch. Lanham, Md.:

University Press of America, 1997. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index.

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On the night of Sunday, November 4, 1917, a touring Swiss dancer named Norka Rouskaya performed a dance in the Lima cemetery to the strains of Chopin's Funeral March before a small, rapt audience of young artists and intellectuals. Although the event was conceived as a fanciful bohemian thrill and perhaps rebellious challenge to bourgeois society, the next day the dancer and her coterie were arrested by the authorities and accused of sacrilege and desecration of a sacred space. The affair quickly burgeoned into a cause célèbre, unleashing a polemic between conservative and liberal elites over its meaning in a country experiencing the social and political convulsions and economic tremors unleashed by the First World War. One of those arrested was José Carlos Mariátegui, at the time a journalist and writer for *La Prensa*, who, it turned out, was the intellectual author of the deed.

Anthropologist William Stein, who has written widely on Peru during his career, ably dissects the incident and the meanings, often unconscious and ignored, that it had on the principal actors themselves. More to the point, he interprets the dance in the cemetery as a "tectonic experience," a "precipitant or catalyst that transformed [Mariátegui's]