

AGRARIAN CONFLICT  
RECONSIDERED:  
Popular Mobilization and  
Peasant Politics in Mexico and Central America

*Michael W. Foley*  
*The Catholic University of America*

- ROOTS OF REBELLION: LAND AND HUNGER IN CENTRAL AMERICA.* By Tom Barry. (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1987. Pp. 220. \$9.00 paper.)
- LAND, POWER, AND POVERTY: AGRARIAN TRANSFORMATION AND POLITICAL CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AMERICA.* By Charles D. Brockett. (Boston, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1988. Pp. 229. \$39.95.)
- POWER AND POPULAR PROTEST: LATIN AMERICAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS.* Edited by Susan Eckstein. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989. Pp. 342. \$45.00 cloth, \$13.95 paper.)
- TIERRA FRIA, TIERRA DE CONFLICTOS EN MICHOACAN.* By Jaime L. Espín Díaz. (Zamora: Colegio de Michoacán, 1986. Pp. 263.)
- LAS VOCES DEL CAMPO: MOVIMIENTO CAMPESINO Y POLITICA AGRARIA, 1976-1984.* By Graciela Flores Lúa, Luisa Paré, and Sergio Sarmiento. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1988. Pp. 262.)
- CAMPESINOS AL ASALTO DEL CIELO: DE LA EXPROPIACION ESTATAL A LA APROPIACION CAMPESINA.* By Gustavo Gordillo. (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1988. Pp. 282.)
- BLOOD TIES: LIFE AND VIOLENCE IN RURAL MEXICO.* By James B. Greenberg. (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989. Pp. 282. \$35.00.)
- PROMISED LAND: PEASANT REBELLION IN CHALATENANGO, EL SALVADOR.* By Jenny Pearce. (London: Latin American Bureau, 1986. Pp. 324. \$12.95 paper.)
- RESISTENCIA CAMPESINA Y EXPLOTACION RURAL EN MEXICO.* By Blanca Rubio. (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1987. Pp. 195.)

Efforts to explain agrarian conflicts of the twentieth century have yielded a variety of competing theories, each of which can claim considerable plausibility. All the volumes represented here draw on the kinds of theories that have dominated debate since the late 1970s. Nevertheless, although a certain eclecticism is apparent in most of these works, when taken together they argue more for rethinking prevailing theories of

agrarian conflict and popular mobilization than for their easy reconciliation. Several elements of such a rethinking will be considered in this review.

### *Social Theory and Agrarian Conflict*

The difficulty of reconciling divergent efforts to explain agrarian conflict and popular protest has been compounded by the variety of phenomena that scholars have attempted to analyze under these headings. Both the kinds of variables considered and the level at which analysts seek explanation depend to a large extent on what the author intends to explain, be it rural violence (Greenberg), inter- and intracommunal conflict (Espín Díaz), peasant mobilization and protest (Rubio, Gordillo), or rebellion and revolutionary war (Barry, Brockett, Pearce). More profoundly, an explanation's trajectory will be shaped by the decision to focus on the motives for conflict or on the reasons why that conflict surfaces in overt acts of collective defiance and confrontation. This decision in turn may affect scholars' ability to discern and highlight the various factors that might condition the form and the outcome of conflict (see Eckstein's introduction, p. 7). Unfortunately, these issues are rarely sorted out explicitly, resulting in a plethora of studies that appeal to diverse theoretical frameworks and argue conflicting conclusions for similar cases without much hope of resolution.

The effort to explain overt conflict—the aim of most of the studies under review—represents a decision to focus on only one aspect of a larger question: the sources and character of conflict in general. As James Scott (1986) and Steve Stern (1987) have recently argued, most social conflict remains muted, most resistance “silent.”<sup>1</sup> But if this is the case, efforts to explain overt conflict based on the interests of the parties involved do only half the job in that they explain the conflict but do not explain its overt character. Moreover, insofar as such theories represent aggregate-level explanations (that is, attempting to explain protest, revolt, or rebellion on the basis of some general characteristic of a population), they suggest that some unknown variable within the population accounts for the passivity of some versus the activism of others. Thus even the most economic of explanations are typically forced to recognize that other factors shape conflict and the expression of conflict.<sup>2</sup>

1. This assumption is also crucial to the “resource mobilization” school of social-movement sociology. See the helpful review essay by J. Craig Jenkins (1983).

2. The distinction between the motives for conflict and the conditions governing its overt expression is also significant because it calls attention to the importance of bridging the gap between micro-level and “structural” or macro-level explanations. All structural explanations (at least in this field) rest on some assumption about micro-level, or individual, motivated behavior (see Levine, Sober, and Wright 1987). A great deal of confusion about what is

One merit of Susan Eckstein's important collection, *Power and Popular Protest: Latin American Social Movements*, is that she frames the volume's essays in a thoughtful and synthetic effort to deal with these issues. Eckstein's recognition of the complexity of the "causal systems" (Rule 1988, 235) at work in popular mobilization leads to a self-conscious eclecticism:

The case studies in this book show economic relationships, especially changing relationships, to be the principal cause of protest and pressure for change. The means of protest chosen, however, will be shown to hinge on contextual factors: on cross-class, institutional, and cultural ties; state structures; and real, or at least perceived, options to exit rather than rebel. The analyses also demonstrate that politics and religion, as well as concerns based on race, ethnicity, and gender, independently and in combination with economic forces may be sources of disgruntlement that stir defiance. (P. 4).

Although Eckstein's list of factors expands even further, the value of her effort lies in carefully assessing these various elements of explanation and the ways they may interact. Eckstein's eclecticism is not unlimited, moreover. *Power and Popular Protest* shares with most of the work represented here common theoretical strategies as well as a common rejection of other older strategies.

In regard to the causes of conflict, all the authors reviewed here look first to economic issues and then, in varying degrees, to the ways that those issues are mediated politically. The repeated argument is that if peasant rebels and urban protesters take on the state, they do so mainly (if not exclusively) for economic reasons—but economic reasons refracted by the legal, ideological, and institutional setting established by history and the state and interpreted with constant reference to the actions of the state. This complex refraction is not always recognized explicitly, and even less unanimity can be found regarding the kinds of economic issues considered relevant. As Eckstein notes, explanations might focus on tensions inherent in certain relations of production (Paige 1975) or on the more generalized effects of market forces on individuals' lives (Wolf 1969). For Eckstein, production relations may determine the character of the interests and grievances at stake in popular mobilizations, but the more immediate cause of such mobilization will be found in market conditions.

One hears little echo, however, of the notion formerly prominent in

---

and is not a "cause" of conflict might be averted by making the linkages explicit. Eckstein is certainly correct in noting that individual-level explanations often neglect the social context that shapes both the form in which grievances will be expressed and the outcome of their expression (pp. 4–5). But the independent weight of such factors does not mean that we can simply set aside questions of individual decision making. Some of the most careful thinking about the relationship between "structural" factors and collective action has taken place in the context of rational-choice theory, and these theorists are increasingly anxious to take into account the kinds of factors that Eckstein and others assume they ignore. See the invaluable survey by Will Moore (1989).

explanations of peasant revolts that an expanding market system has broken down traditional systems of social control and thus given rise to protest movements (see B. Moore 1966, Wolf 1969). Of the authors reviewed here, Greenberg and Espín Díaz are partial exceptions to this generalization. Also, one hears only the faintest whisper of the psychological theories that were once so central to U.S. research: “relative deprivation” theory has been subsumed under the search for the circumstances and interests that provoke “feelings of [relative] deprivation”; and the J-curve of rising (and sharply falling) expectations has been replaced by explanations focusing on the ways in which periods of relative prosperity tend not so much to “raise expectations” as to squeeze peasant producers and communities.<sup>3</sup>

Although certain cultural and psychological theories have been left aside in the search for the causes (or motives) for conflict and protest, a seemingly endless array of factors appear relevant to explaining the emergence (or nonemergence) of collective action, the form such action takes, and its outcome. Some of these factors were already important in Barrington Moore’s seminal study of the issue (1966). Relationships among peasants (the structure of the peasant community), the relationship of the peasant community to local elites, and the relationship between these two and the state are all invoked to explain the emergence or nonemergence of overt conflict and sometimes to elucidate the character of that conflict. Cultural, historical, and religious factors are believed to provide resources for mobilizing groups or, at times, to become significant obstacles to mobilization. The origins, skills, and ideology of organizers and leaders are sometimes thought to be crucial to the emergence of collective action (see Popkin 1979) as well as to the form it takes. Finally, the responses of elites and the kinds of resources they command can determine the kind of popular action they will eventually have to face and the outcome of that confrontation.

Even within so expansive a theoretical consensus, considerable differences arise in attempting to explain the diverse array of phenomena lumped under the rubric of “agrarian conflict.” The contributions that make up Eckstein’s *Power and Popular Protest* go well beyond this rubric, as the title suggests: June Nash looks at “cultural resistance and class consciousness” among Bolivian tin miners; Daniel Levine and Scott Mainwaring contribute an illuminating comparative study of the political implications of the base Christian community movement in Brazil and Colombia; Marysa Navarro traces the development of the protests of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina; and Manuel Antonio Garretón and Maria Helena Moreira Alves consider the exigencies and liabilities of

3. For Latin American evidence, see John Coatsworth’s survey of rural uprisings in the region from 1700 to 1899 (Coatsworth 1988).

multiclass alliances in popular mobilization against the military regimes in Chile and Brazil, respectively. The concluding essay by John Walton surveys a considerable body of evidence on popular protest in Latin America in the 1980s to advance important conclusions about the impact of the debt crisis on popular mobilization and the subsequent impact of popular mobilization on Latin American states and their bargaining partners in the International Monetary Fund and the First World banking community. Taken as a whole, *Power and Popular Protest* explores major questions about state-society relations in contemporary Latin America and draws attention to the considerable role of popular movements in reshaping those relations in recent years.

Three other essays in this collection, those by Cynthia McClintock, León Zamosc, and Timothy Wickham-Crowley, deal directly with agrarian conflict. Of these, Wickham-Crowley's essay on "the comparative sociology of Latin American guerrilla movements" is the most ambitious. It focuses on the movements of the 1960s, comparing them among themselves and with movements of the 1970s and 1980s as well. Wickham-Crowley locates the immediate origins of these movements primarily in political factors—the demonstration effect of the Cuban Revolution and the "frustrated national revolutions" in Venezuela, Guatemala, and Colombia. The strength of the movements depends on peasant support, however, which depends in turn on the structure of tenure relations (Paige 1975) and more general dislocations imposed by an expanding capitalist agriculture (Wolf 1969). Jeffery Paige's study characterized sharecroppers and migrant laborers as particularly liable to revolt. Wickham-Crowley adds squatters, an important category in many parts of Latin America. At the same time, he finds that the dislocation imposed by expanding coffee production in Colombia explains a significant portion of La Violencia, particularly between 1958 and 1963. Dislocation also explains marked support for guerrilla activity in El Salvador in precisely those areas where the proportion of independent peasant farmers is still relatively high, a finding confirmed in Jenny Pearce's work under review here. Finally, areas with a history of resistance tend to provide more support for guerrilla movements, as do those unburdened with any of a number of features of social and political organization that could deny guerrillas access to peasants.

Wickham-Crowley's study and McClintock's analysis of the rise and seeming decline (in the mid-1980s) of the Sendero Luminoso insurgency treat guerrillas and peasants as belonging in different categories that prompt different questions and different answers (a distinction Charles Brockett and Tom Barry ignore to the detriment of their studies). Nevertheless, both Wickham-Crowley and McClintock understand clearly that the fates of guerrillas and peasants are mixed and that the relative success of an insurgency depends on the congruence between guerrilla

claims and popular grievances. More than Wickham-Crowley, McClintock recognizes that the students and intellectuals at the core of guerrilla movements are often themselves of peasant origin. Her observation applies particularly well to the Sendero Luminoso movement, which originated in a provincial university recently made accessible to peasant students, but the phenomenon is more widespread than Wickham-Crowley allows.

McClintock's study also demonstrates that agrarian structure can be less important as a factor than the combination of falling living standards and militant organization (whatever its origin). The three provinces where mass support emerged for Sendero—Ayacucho, Huancavelica, and Apurímac—were not only the poorest in Peru but had experienced a precipitous decline in living standards in the 1970s and early 1980s. McClintock finds confirmation here of James Scott's argument that a "subsistence crisis" underlies peasant revolt (1976). Scott, however, argued that subsistence crisis leads to revolt only when elites are perceived as somehow responsible for the situation. McClintock offers little evidence that would support Scott's argument that rebellion originates in the conflict between a peasant "ethic of subsistence" and increasing exactions on the part of landlords and the state. The politicization of misery in Ayacucho seems to have been based less on the "moral economy" of the peasants than on the efforts of a well-organized movement to turn generalized discontent into revolt, a finding more in keeping with Samuel Popkin's line of analysis (1979).<sup>4</sup> Thus as Wickham-Crowley's analysis suggests, although economic factors may motivate support for revolt, they do not in themselves explain the revolutionary character of peasant actions.

Zamosc's article, based on the same research as his 1988 book, looks to national-level economic and political changes to explain the emergence of a coherent peasant movement in Colombia in the 1960s. Zamosc traces the rise and decline of ANUC (Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos), the National Association of Peasant Users (of government services). This Colombian peasant movement was initiated as part of a short-lived project of land reform by the Liberal administration of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970). For Zamosc, the emergence of the movement, at least in the form it took, depended directly on government initiative. This initiative stemmed from the conviction of a sizable portion of the elite that agricultural modernization and further industrial development depended on enlarging the internal market and creating a vigorous peasant sector on the margins of the large-scale commercial agriculture that had grown up during the 1960s (compare Grindle 1986). When this mood shifted under the Conservative government of Misael Pastrana, an

4. This conclusion is not meant to deny that some such ideological basis might be found, only to indicate that McClintock provides no evidence of its existence.

already mobilized peasant movement radicalized but then began to fragment in response to governmental manipulation and internal divisions that were regionally and ideologically based. Zamosc makes a two-pronged argument. On the one hand, "The rise of a peasant movement requires more than the aggravation of the agrarian antagonisms; it also needs organizational links uniting the peasants, a strong legitimation of contentious attitudes, and the existence of allies who support and help the peasant mobilization" (p. 111). The government initiative gave Colombian peasants just such resources. On the other hand, conflicts among peasants based on regional differences in the kinds of issues they faced and ideological bickering among their erstwhile allies on the Left prevented the consolidation of the movement.<sup>5</sup>

### *Central America and Mexico: Macro-Level Explanations*

Charles Brockett's *Land, Power, and Poverty: Agrarian Transformation and Political Conflict in Central America* attempts to explain "peasant mobilization" on the basis of both economic and political considerations. He argues that mobilization requires "two changes in social relations. First, traditional patronage relationships must be weakened, for they are the personalized manifestation of peasants' subordination within the status quo. Second, new ties of solidarity must be forged among the peasants themselves" (p. 6). Unfortunately, Brockett presents little evidence that such traditional ties ever played much of a part in the lives of Central Americans, although he takes pains to narrate the development of new solidarities in each country. His account is much more helpful in tracing the "economic transformation" behind the mobilization of the 1970s. But even here, one could ask for more clarity. Under the general heading of "agrarian transformation," Brockett cites such diverse effects of agricultural modernization following World War II as increasing landlessness, decreasing food production, declining real incomes, and environmental degradation. While all these outcomes arguably may have contributed to a sense of grievance, some may have led directly to conflict (such as the dispossession of resident workers and squatters or conflict over the titling of public lands), while others might have merely contributed to a generalized sense of malaise. Brockett makes no attempt to sort out these two effects.<sup>6</sup>

5. In his larger study (1986), Zamosc carefully maps regional differences in the types of conflict peasants faced and shows how these differences helped divide the movement once official support had been withdrawn.

6. By contrast, Robert Williams (like Zamosc) links regionally specific conflicts over land tenure to emerging support for guerrilla movements. See, for instance, his discussion of peasant colonization efforts and the expansion of cattle production in Guatemala (Williams 1986, 134-47).

The same criticism applies to Tom Barry's *Roots of Rebellion: Land and Hunger in Central America*, whose purpose is admittedly more polemical than scholarly. Despite their differences in style, both Barry and Brockett attempt to relate political conflict to agrarian crisis in Central America, and both take an explicitly comparative approach. Barry's book, which draws on various Central American sources as well as his interviews, makes many of the same arguments more clearly than Brockett's does. For instance, where Brockett gives the reader comparisons of "percentage changes" in export acreage from one time period to another (an opaque indicator of "agrarian transformation," at best), Barry shows straightforwardly how much food-crop land was lost to export production over a given span of years. Both use comparative data to show that deterioration in rural living conditions and access to land has been generalized in Central America over the last forty years. Both argue accordingly that analysts must look to specifically political factors to explain the emergence of major insurgencies in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua but not in Honduras and Costa Rica. Brockett adeptly demonstrates the limitations inherent in the reformism of the latter two countries, although he does not speculate on the different sources of "flexibility" in Honduras and Costa Rica nor on the possibility that they might take different trajectories. Both authors take up the question of land reform and note that reform in El Salvador has paid off to some small degree in peasant loyalty to the regime. Barry's analysis of the Nicaraguan reform is particularly valuable in explaining how Sandinista-sponsored peasant and farmer organizations seized the initiative and forced a more pro-peasant and individualistic reform on the government than had been intended up to 1985.

Finally, both Barry and Brockett pay considerable attention to the international linkages that have characterized agrarian transformation and political conflict in Central America. If this approach reflects the new awareness among students of agrarian conflict of the importance of such linkages,<sup>7</sup> the two analysts nevertheless interpret such factors rather differently. Brockett documents the extensive U.S. role in rural development and agrarian reform projects and emphasizes their mixed results. He argues that such projects have contributed at times to the agrarian transformation behind recent upheavals but that the land-titling program in Honduras and reform program in El Salvador have satisfied at least certain peasant demands. On land reform in particular, he finds U.S. actions governed more by concern about "national security" than by the desire to defend any direct economic interest.

7. Generally, however, the stress is on the effect of international politics on a state's ability to withstand sustained popular discontent. Skocpol (1979) first made this factor an important component of her explanation of "social revolutions." This theme is particularly prominent in the essays on the history of agrarian conflict in Mexico assembled by Katz (1988).



Barry, by contrast, awards U.S. economic interests a major role in shaping the behavior of not only U.S. administrations but Central American elites: "Just as the region's agroexport producers are dependent collaborators in international commodity trading, the region's industrialists are the junior partners of foreign corporations. Most Central American industry is controlled by U.S. corporations who append the national oligarchs as local partners" (p. 49). This thesis is scarcely proved by such statements as "four out of five foreign investments" involved joint ventures with Salvadorans and that the "American Chambers of Commerce" throughout the region include many Central Americans. Even the rough economic determinism of Central American politics is not this crude.<sup>8</sup> As usual, Barry is good at providing the specifics of the deals and companies involved; but also as usual, he does not go much beyond insinuation in his efforts to show that transnationals in fact "manipulate both prices and supplies" of commodities (p. 79). His pessimism is the familiar stuff of dependency analysis à la André Gunder Frank: "Product refinement for export is not a solution either, since there's no hope in finding markets in developed countries for processed commodities like ground coffee and milk chocolate because of prohibitive trade barriers and strong domestic lobbies" (p. 162). Is there truly no hope? Barry is industrious at ferreting out the proprietary and contractual relations among business interests in the region. He should apply the same energy to examining international trade statistics. In the end, he shows himself to be a better student of the roots of rebellion than of international political economy.

Economic explanations of political conflict and popular resistance, at least those drawing more on Marx than on Durkheim, entail a theory of motives and the links between motives and specific demands. Conflict springs from the clash of vital interests, and those interests shape the character of the demands that are made. It is therefore incumbent on any proponent of such an explanation to trace as carefully as possible the relationship between interests, conflict, and demands. Brockett and Barry make little effort toward this end. By contrast, in *Resistencia campesina y explotación rural en México*, Blanca Rubio makes a careful attempt to map the changing contours of such relationships and to correlate them with structural changes in the Mexican agricultural economy.

Rubio's theoretical premise is that Mexican agriculture, while engaged in a drawn-out process of incorporation into a capitalist frame-

8. Barry also treats the relationship between the military and the oligarchy in El Salvador as one of straightforward subordination. Quoting a Salvadoran oligarch who claims that "We have traditionally bought the military's guns and have paid them to pull the trigger," Barry adds, "The military has grown more independent of the oligarchy in recent years—for the simple reason that the United States now pays the generals to pull the triggers" (p. 53). Perhaps unfortunately for El Salvador, the reality is decidedly more complex, as Enrique Baloyra (1982) has shown.

work, has not yet succeeded in either definitively displacing peasant agriculture or incorporating Mexican *campesinos* as a fully proletarianized work force. Conflict takes its shape from this situation of more or less permanent “transition” for Mexico’s *campesinos*, but it varies both regionally and over time depending on the character of capitalist development in the countryside. Rubio’s structuralist Marxism entails the usual functionalist confusion of outcome and motive and the tendency to reify the “forces” at work (such as capital and the State), but it also forces her to look closely at the ways in which different social and productive relationships produce different kinds of rural conflict. The third reification of the triad (capital, state, and labor) is in fact thoroughly and carefully differentiated in Rubio’s account.

Rubio’s “map” of agrarian conflict in Mexico from 1977 to 1983 is based on analysis of the exhaustive data collected by the group *Información Sistemática*. Using this data (derived mostly from newspaper accounts), Rubio traces the shift in the prime locus of peasant protest from the Mexican Northwest in the mid-1970s to the south-central states in the early 1980s. This trend corresponds to a double shift in the kinds of demands that characterized the peasant mobilizations of the period: first, a shift from demanding redistribution of previously unaffected land (characteristic of the agrarian movements in the irrigated districts in northern Mexico up to 1976) to demanding restoration of lands acquired by commercial growers, ranchers, and *caciques* at the expense of peasant communities (increasingly important in the central and southern states between 1976 and 1983); and second, a sharp rise in protests directed against repression. Rubio’s epilogue suggests that since 1983 the focus has shifted again, with a significant increase in demands by relatively privileged peasant communities for changes in state policies on prices, credit, and other “productivity” issues, accompanied by a decline in the strength of peasant groups focused mainly on the land issue.

According to Rubio, these changes stem from a combination of economic and political factors related to the unsuccessful expansion of capitalist relations of production in the Mexican countryside. Rubio views 1977 as a significant year because of the attempt by the new López Portillo administration to halt the spiral of land invasions and redistributions in the North, the heart of Mexico’s commercial agricultural economy. Those invasions originated in the failure of the most advanced sector of the agricultural economy to incorporate a genuine agricultural proletariat into a regularized system of production. As commercial farmers began producing crops requiring progressively less labor, the huge surplus army of labor of the Northwestern states of Sonora and Sinaloa revolted, staging increasingly successful land invasions.<sup>9</sup> The distribution of land under the

9. Flores Lúa, Paré, and Sarmiento (p. 43) and Hardy (1984) both argue as well that re-

Echeverría administration, however, combined with the repression launched by López Portillo, put an end to these mobilizations after 1977.

In Rubio's view, the focus subsequently shifted to the more backward areas of "extensive" capitalist accumulation, the central and southern regions, where cattle ranching was expanding steadily at the expense of peasant communities and where producers of tropical export crops relied more heavily on cheap labor than on productivity improvements to buttress their earnings. Here peasant mobilization focused on regaining lands seized by expanding cattle ranchers and on trying to gain legal recognition and bargaining power for resident workers and contract farmers in coffee, henequen, sugar, and tobacco production. Struggles in the last three crops involved the state directly because much of the production in this area was state-controlled to some degree. Struggles with coffee growers and ranchers have resulted in considerable violence: newspaper evidence alone indicates that fifteen campesinos per month have been killed since 1976, and Rubio records numerous massacres. She argues that the "zero-sum" character of the struggle over land and wages in these circumstances contrasts sharply with peasant demands in the Northwest since 1977, which have focused on "productivity" issues and have resulted in little repression, despite the sometimes aggressive tactics of organizers.

There may be much to quarrel with here, both in the undifferentiated view of the Mexican political system and in the close ties postulated between the logic of capitalist accumulation and the actions of the state, in Rubio's interpretation of specific twists and turns in the course of peasant mobilization and the data sources that she drew on. Gordillo, for instance, argues that the growth of an independent peasant movement in Mexico must be understood as resulting from a political transition—the breakdown of the regional political machines that had managed peasant politics through the 1950s (a result of the spreading economic crisis, popular mobilization, and weakening of the older co-opted peasant centrals), causing in some cases a prolonged power vacuum and generating new centers of power everywhere (pp. 215–16). One might also ask for more explicit recognition that agrarian conflict in Mexico is decisively shaped by a unique ideological and legal framework, the powerful heritage of the Mexican Revolution (see Foley 1991). Rubio's work nevertheless offers a rich and nuanced account of the political economy of peasant mobilization, and her effort to chart various kinds of protest in relation to the characteristics of the agricultural economy and the contours of state policy is exemplary.

---

newal of agrarianist rhetoric under the Echeverría administration played a significant role in stimulating peasant action.

*Explaining Conflict from the Bottom Up*

Although the Durkheimian suspicion that agrarian conflicts originate in some generalized discontent appeals somewhat when situations are viewed from a distance, the closer analysts get to actual conflicts, the more important become structural factors embodied in particular interests. At the same time, the closer scholars get to conflict “on the ground,” the more complex and uncertain the effects of such factors appear and the more entangled economic, political, and ideological explanations become.

James Greenberg’s *Blood Ties: Life and Violence in Mexico* offers a close-up look, via the life history of a relatively prosperous mestizo, of violent conflict in the coastal highlands of the state of Oaxaca. Many observers of the Mexican countryside have been confronted with factional conflicts originating earlier in the twentieth century or before and seemingly lacking any motive other than the continuing effect of factional division. Some researchers treat the violence that often attends such factionalism as the anomic expression of a distinctively macho culture, abetted by alcohol.<sup>10</sup> Greenberg, to his credit, problematizes the violence he encountered and attempts to explain why, in particular, the level of homicides rose dramatically over the course of the twentieth century. Although the easy explanation is the increasing availability of firearms (see p. 152), he seeks to uncover how and why the causes of conflict itself have changed.

Greenberg argues in *Blood Ties* that the major changes have been associated with expansion of the coffee economy into the region. Under the guise of the liberal reforms of the late 1850s, indigenous communities and the religious *cofradías* that provided their leadership lost control of their lands to a “torrent” of coffee speculators (p. 188). Greenberg explains, “The present pattern of peasant violence, however, is significantly different from the violence leading up to the Revolution. When coffee plantations first invaded the district, the violence was directed outward—as a defense against the mestizo elites and plantations threatening the Indians’ land” (p. 194). By contrast, most violence since the Revolution has been directed inward. The reasons are still largely tied to questions of land tenure, but they are complex. First, as access to coffee lands became important to Indians and poor mestizos, conflicts erupted between claims based on sale and those based on traditional rights of land use. Neither sales nor usufruct arrangements were regularized in the restoration of

10. This attitude is the thrust, for example, of the sketches in Paul Friedrich’s *Princes of Naranja* (1986), where murder is accepted matter-of-factly as simply a feature of the cultural landscape. By contrast, Greenberg refuses to accept a mainly “cultural” explanation for the tragic events he witnessed and heard recounted, seeking out specific causes instead. William Taylor’s pioneering study, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexico* (1979) had already laid the groundwork for such analysis.

communal lands following the Revolution. Second, corrupt local leaders allied themselves with landowners, blocking communal struggles over adjacent lands acquired, legally or illegally, in prerevolutionary times. The result has been widespread and persistent factionalism, with corruption on both sides often prolonging the strife. Third, the relative autonomy of local elites at the level of the *municipio* (roughly equivalent to a U.S. county) has allowed the state and national governments in Mexico to contain conflict—but it has also helped prolong conflict because issues are seldom resolved, being instead fought only to a standstill acceptable to local authorities. Nevertheless, lurking behind factionalism and political manipulation are unresolved questions of land tenure that a genuinely strong state would have settled long ago.<sup>11</sup>

Greenberg's analysis holds particular interest in calling attention to the ways that such conflicts are understood by community members. He argues that while land tenure questions lie behind most of the violence, out in front in the discourse of community members a scarcely concealed conflict rages between a morality founded on egalitarianism and community responsibility and one based on individualism and distrust. The latter, in particular, "directs attention away from the material underpinnings of contention by transforming conflicts over the right to the use and distribution of resources into sexually charged matters of manhood and honor" (pp. 211–12). Greenberg comes close at times to creating a discursive variant of "dualism," with the reader expected to find the "egalitarian" ("traditional") thread in popular discourse the more appealing variant.<sup>12</sup> He is nevertheless careful to note that both streams of discourse are products of the encounter with an expanding capitalism, and he shows in detail how such "mediations" may themselves shape, fuel, and perpetuate conflict.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most dramatic indication of the accuracy of Greenberg's analysis is the brief concluding story of a recent reversal of these patterns. In 1981 the indigenous community of Yaitepec overcame the

11. For the argument that the Mexican state is in reality a much "weaker" state than usually supposed, see Migdal (1988).

12. One puzzling result of the sharp analytical divide between the two "ideologies" is the classification of *compromisos* (in this context, "compromising commitments") as a part of the "individualistic ideology." The efforts to avoid *compromisos* and the capacity of commitments based on familial, friendship, and business ties to drag bystanders into violent conflict seem to suggest the tangled threads linking the conflicting appeals to which villagers are subject.

13. As Steve Stern has recently argued, "deducing from the general 'structural' features of peasantries their characteristic form(s) of consciousness is hopelessly one-dimensional and ahistorical. . . . It is quite instructive that sensitive students of particular peasantries find the history and complexity of their consciousness far richer than our theoretical postures would imply" (1987, 14–15). More generally, Stern argues that "studies of peasant rebellion should treat peasant consciousness as problematic rather than predictable, should pay particular attention to the 'culture history' of the area under study, and should discard notions of the inherent parochialism and defensiveness of peasants."

reluctance of the village *presidente* and invaded a nearby hacienda with which it had carried on a long and sometimes bloody dispute. This time the invasion succeeded, and the land was divided among the villagers. With the source of factional strife removed (at least for the moment), the women of the village acted to end the alcohol consumption so long associated with violence. A measure prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol and the carrying of guns and knives was passed and was still in effect in 1987, ending the long siege of violence in the village and inspiring similar efforts in neighboring villages. In this instance, the anomic and cultural sources of violence appear to have collapsed in the wake of settling a hitherto unresolved economic and political impasse.

Although Jaime Espín Díaz does not deal with the cultural components of inter- and intracommunal violence, he too sheds considerable light on the diverse patterning of conflict over resources in the Mexican countryside. His *Tierra fría, tierra de conflicto en Michoacán* represents the tradition of Mexican regional anthropology that has consistently given elaborate substance to anthropologists' frequent claims to a historical-structural method.<sup>14</sup> While Espín Díaz devotes too much effort to defining regional studies and claims a larger "regional" focus than is really relevant to his study, his effort to trace the historical evolution of land disputes in the Purépecha highlands of Michoacán illuminates the seemingly intractable complexity of agrarian conflict in the region.

The liberal reform laws of the nineteenth century led to the privatization of formerly communal land throughout peasant Mexico. When communal rights were restored after the Revolution, political authorities led by Lázaro Cárdenas began urging the formation of agrarian committees in the Indian highlands of Michoacán to agitate for the recovery of lost lands. According to Espín Díaz, two general patterns emerged. In some cases, *comuneros* recovered their lands at the expense of outsiders and local (usually mestizo) elites and then resumed traditional patterns of distributing lands on a usufruct basis. In other cases, where privatization had gone further and formerly communal lands were in the hands of community members, agrarianists were pitted against *comuneros*, and the limited lands restored were immediately parcelized among the agrarianists. Both patterns involved considerable and long-lasting strife, with each side bringing in outside forces in an attempt to eliminate its rivals.

The gradual settling of land tenure disputes were accompanied in the postwar period by the rise of pine-resin tapping as a source of additional income for individuals with rights to land on the forested slopes

14. Arturo Warman's "*We Come to Object*" (1980) is probably the example best known to English-speaking readers, but Guillermo de la Peña's work on highlands Morelos (1982, 1989), buttressed by his thorough command of historical detail and social theory, is especially noteworthy.

and for communities as a whole. The renewed industry provoked far fewer conflicts precisely because the resource in question was renewable and its exploitation opened opportunities to all—landholders, comuneros, and day laborers. But reintroduction of the timber industry on a large scale in 1973 established large- and small-scale sawmills and workshops in communities throughout the region, and the resulting competition for timber endangered the forests and provoked renewed conflicts between communities over territory. At each stage, it should be noted, the relations shaping conflict were not just economic but political and social as well: the presence of two administrative-political structures, the municipal presidency and the position of communal “representative,” made prolonged factional strife possible; and familial and social as well as economic ties underlay much of the factionalism and blood feuds characterizing the period of greatest violence.

Blanca Rubio notes that after 1983 the focus of peasant mobilization in Mexico shifted from the south-central states like Oaxaca and Michoacán back to the Northwest, where relatively privileged peasant producers joined forces in often dramatic confrontations with government agencies over prices, access to credit, and other “productivity” issues. Gustavo Gordillo’s *Campesinos al asalto del cielo: de la expropiación estatal a la apropiación campesina* looks closely at the emergence of the militant Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles del Yaqui y Mayo (CECVYM). From the outset, Gordillo undermines the somewhat dismissive classification used by Rubio and others to characterize these struggles. The ejidos in question, initially some seventy-nine grants involving forty-two thousand irrigated hectares and eight thousand *ejidatarios*,<sup>15</sup> gained their now considerable economic and political power in a protracted struggle with the government agencies that had traditionally overseen ejidal affairs and undermined ejidal autonomy. Gordillo recounts this story, reflecting profoundly on the history of state-peasant relations in Mexico since the Revolution and the difficulties of achieving the remarkable degree of internal democracy and *auto-gestión* possessed by the coalition today.<sup>16</sup>

15. An *ejidatario* is the person having official right to use ejidal land, usually the head of a family. Thus the total number of campesinos benefiting from the repartition of 1976 that created these ejidos is estimated at forty-eight thousand. In 1980 a split in the coalition reduced the number of participating ejidos to fifty-six.

16. Gordillo’s vision evidently impressed President Carlos Salinas de Gortari enough to persuade him to ask Gordillo to be the undersecretary for agricultural policy and “social concertation” of the Secretaría de Agricultura y Recursos Hidráulicos (SARH). In this capacity, Gordillo currently serves as chief government spokesperson for the administration’s new agricultural policy. The position appears to be a difficult one for someone who views the autonomy of peasant organizations as essential to revitalizing peasant agriculture. Nevertheless, Gordillo’s advocacy of political “pluralism” in the countryside is wholly in keeping with the rhetoric of the Salinas administration and possibly with the substance of the president’s program of political reconstruction.

Gordillo sets the rise of the coalition within the larger context of economic and political change in the Mexican countryside in an account that varies in important respects from Rubio's findings. According to Gordillo, the emergence of new pressures for agrarian reform in the early 1970s, together with the increasing inability of official peasant organizations and their allies to contain those pressures, coincided with increasingly worrisome shortfalls in the production of basic foodstuffs as commercial farmers shifted to more profitable crops. The Mexican state responded in two ways. First, it attempted to strengthen the ejido system economically through new forms of economic organization—unions of ejidos, the larger *Asociaciones Rurales de Interés Colectivo*, rural credit associations, and agricultural cooperatives—and incorporated these organizations into the ranks of the official peasant wing of the party. At the same time, the state bowed to peasant pressures and expropriated thousands of hectares of prime agricultural land, much of it irrigated, in the northern region. This drama was heightened by the intervention of important parts of the Mexican business community, who allied themselves with the commercial growers of Sonora and forced a repentant state, under José López Portillo, to declare a halt to the agrarian reform. In this context, Gordillo argues, two important changes took place in the peasant movement. First, a movement that had become increasingly unhappy with the traditional organizations broke definitively with the old models and made organizational autonomy its watchword. Second and more gradually, emphasis shifted from the question of land to issues of productivity and effective control by peasants over productive resources.

The *Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles del Yaqui y Mayo* took shape in response to the disintegrative pressures implicit in the 1976 repartition and the everyday procedures of the governmental agencies responsible for supporting ejidal production. With barely 4.5 hectares per ejidatario and no population centers of their own, the ejidos created in southern Sonora in 1976 had to pull together to avoid economic failure. It soon became clear in disputes with the agricultural insurance agency (*Anagsa*) and with the ejidal credit bank (*Banrural*) that the agencies were extracting a substantial portion of ejido earnings in efforts to secure their own operations. In effect, the agencies were blocking the possibility of capital accumulation on the ejidos. Ejidal leaders responded by joining together in the coalition to form several entities: a common fund to provide crop insurance, a credit union to finance production and provide loans to members, an urban program for building population centers for the ejidos, and an office of technical assistance to provide production, financing, accounting, and political assistance to member ejidos on a regular basis. At each stage, the ejidos had to deal with resistance by the official agencies. At each stage, they opted for an approach that stressed the democratic management of resources within each ejido and among



the member ejidos. Gordillo points out that the achievement of autonomy was aided considerably by the disgrace into which the traditional peasant organizations fell when it was discovered, early on, that they had entered into a secret pact with the government during repartition to limit the resources available to the new ejidos.

Gordillo finds important lessons in the coalition's achievements about how peasant organizations more generally might achieve their goals. The coalition combines elements of "polyarchy" (see Lindblom 1977) and auto-gestión, of political and economic democracy. The last element especially ensures that formal democratic procedures like those built into the traditional ejido by Mexican law do not become the basis for the factionalism and maldistribution of scant resources that have been so common in ejidos. Gordillo views the prerequisite for an autonomous peasant organization as economic power, a goal that can only be achieved by organizing a sufficient mass of peasant producers at the regional level. But also needed within this organization are democratic forms and the determination to avoid purely "economistic" criteria in order to create an entity that will not succumb to the disintegrative forces surrounding it. According to Gordillo, the same emphases on autonomous organization and economic power characterize the larger peasant movement as it has developed in Mexico in the 1980s.

*Las voces del campo: movimiento campesino y política agraria, 1976–1984* by Graciela Flores Lúa, Luisa Paré, and Sergio Sarmiento treats much the same period in the development of the Mexican peasant movement as the studies by Rubio and Gordillo. Like Gordillo, the authors are more concerned with the political and organizational aspects of this development than with exploring the economic roots of agrarian conflict. Citing the dualistic character of Mexican agricultural development after 1940 and the growing pauperization of the peasantry (four-fifths of whom commanded scarcely enough land to support their families by 1970), the authors argue that land inevitably became the chief bone of contention. But the emergence of new, militantly independent peasant groups was conditioned more by the failure of the official organizations to meet peasant demands. Moreover, the stance of the Mexican state after 1976, when the López Portillo administration announced the end of the agrarian reform, politicized the movement, while local repression prompted the emergence of regional, then national networks representing peasant demands. Finally, these authors argue, while peasant pressure forced the de la Madrid administration of the 1980s to reopen the possibility of further redistribution, constant denial of petitions and considerable repression forced even those organizations focusing on land to direct their attention to other, more tractable issues. *Las voces del campo* provides a balanced and thorough account. Its emphasis on the political circumstances surrounding the emergence of the peasant movement in Mexico and its organizational

exigencies (particularly the difficulties of forging national-level unity and establishing healthy relations with political parties) is a welcome addition to a literature dominated by economic analyses.

Jenny Pearce's firsthand observations of peasant rebellion in *Promised Land: Peasant Rebellion in Chalatenango, El Salvador* similarly provides a great deal of insight into the difficulties attending the birth of a peasant movement, in this case under extremely adverse circumstances. Although Chalatenango appears on the surface to have been little affected by the export economy that dominates explanations for the conflict in El Salvador, land tenure apparently bulks large in the sources of peasant discontent in this department. The vast majority of the population are minifundistas who have had to supplement yields from their small plots with crafts work or migratory labor on the coffee and sugar estates of neighboring departments. The number of minifundias rose considerably from the late 1940s through 1980, as did the number of peasants renting plots. Moreover, rents were increasingly demanded in advance and in cash—changes suggesting the erosion of both resources for subsistence and any moral ties that might have existed between peasants and landlords.

Peasant rebellion in Chalatenango did not start with cries of outrage at unjust social arrangements, however, but with a slow process of *concientización* and mobilization. Pearce ably documents the spread of the base Christian community movement under church auspices and subsequent efforts to organize peasants made by several competing organizations: the Unión de Trabajadores del Campo (UTC), linked to the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL) via several leaders in Chalatenango; the Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS), originally tied to the Christian Democratic party but increasingly radical and independent in the 1970s; and the Organización Democrática Nacionalista (ORDEN), the paramilitary organization set up by the security forces in the early 1960s under the influence of U.S. counterinsurgency doctrine (see McClintock 1985). According to Pearce,

ORDEN was able to attract peasant support in a number of ways. It gave security and a certain degree of power within a village. It allowed its adherents to carry arms and they were protected by the authorities. . . . Affiliation might also bring job security to wage labourers, and to a more limited extent it might increase opportunities for employment, as members of FECCAS were blacklisted and work [was] given to politically "safe" peasants. Affiliation might bring material rewards in the form of . . . access to credit, agricultural materials and technical assistance. (P. 150)

Moreover, competition within villages might follow along family lines, with one side or the other exploiting existing rivalries to recruit members. In the end, Pearce argues, the strength of the more radical organizations "lay in the inability of ORDEN to solve any of the fundamental problems

facing the peasants. . . . The fundamental economic demands for land, jobs and better conditions on the fincas could not be met by ORDEN" (p. 152).

Organizations and organizers were crucial to the mobilization process, but Pearce is inclined to argue that their effectiveness depended on what they could offer. These offerings varied considerably, from relative security and short-term economic gains to promises of a major restructuring of economic opportunities in the countryside. If in this instance many peasants chose a "long-term investment strategy" represented by the revolutionary organizations (Popkin 1979), the reasons may have had less to do with the relative attractiveness of the alternatives than with intangibles like trust and outrage.<sup>17</sup> The outrage grew to revolutionary proportions as the government responded to strikes and petitions with ruthless suppression. The trust that the radical organizations rapidly gained stemmed partly from the involvement of church people of integrity, like the Jesuit Rutilio Grande, who was gunned down in 1977.<sup>18</sup> Trust was also based on democratic practice. As one organizer explained, "The role of the collaborators [organizers] was to coordinate discussion. They analyzed the situation and contributed—with great caution, due to the mistrust of the peasants—their opinion. The task of deciding on the work to be done depended on the initiative of the peasants. In the case in hand, the 'strike' was planned at the peasants' own wishes, as it was they and not 'the students and priests' who would pay the consequences. This element of mistrust enabled the peasant movement to maintain in practice a peasant style of acting" (p. 156). Pearce shows that this style has been maintained amidst the civil war, as leaders in the "liberated" zones debated whether to focus on the immediate goals of provisioning the revolutionary army or to develop a network of social services reflecting the goals of the movement. As in Gordillo's coalition, the decision was to build from within. Despite her endorsement of the grass-roots strategies adopted, however, Pearce ends *Promised Land* with a pessimistic assessment of the chances for a solution to El Salvador's acute agrarian problems, given the scarcity of resources and the immense human need.

### Conclusion

Can any general conclusions be drawn from the disparate body of work under review here? We might start by observing that some of the

17. To his credit, Popkin did note that trust plays a large role in the success of organizers' efforts to "sell" a particular strategy. But while it is certainly "rational" for peasant "investors" to take into account their impression of the qualities of organizers, it is somewhat harder to account for the qualities themselves on the basis of a purely rational-choice analysis.

18. Pearce shows that to the end of Grande's life, he refused to identify his religious work with organizational efforts and maintained a conscientious distance even from groups that he approved of and worked with (pp. 120–21).

contention over explaining similar phenomena stems from efforts to answer different questions. Thus although Gordillo, Rubio, and the co-authors of *Las voces del campo* all analyze peasant movements in Mexico between 1976 and 1983, only Gordillo addresses the question of why the peasant movement assumed an increasingly autonomous and “productivist” line in the 1980s as opposed to earlier mobilizations under the old peasant centrals established in the wake of the reforms of the 1930s. Rubio is more concerned with discovering why the focus of peasant mobilization shifted from region to region over the period and assumed different forms and different objectives in each region. Finally, Flores Lúa, Paré, and Sarmiento trace the emergence, differentiation, and organizational struggles of a broad spectrum of peasant groups. The difference that each study finds worthy of explanation (between types of organizations, between issues emphasized and regions affected, between independent and official organizations) consequently determines to some extent the kind of answer that each work offers (Rule 1988, 231–33). Brockett and Barry come to similar conclusions about the causes of conflict in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador because they are looking at similar “contrast sets” (using Rule’s term): these three countries versus Honduras and Costa Rica, and the 1970s and 1980s versus the 1950s. For analysts who are eager to construct a unitary theory of agrarian conflict, attention to the precise specification of “dependent variables” and “contrast sets” may appear sterile, but in fact it is the only way to take seriously the commonsense warning that the context in which the question is posed will provide part of the answer. Such an approach also makes clear why no simple theory of agrarian conflict is likely to present itself.

All the authors reviewed here find significant room for economic variables in their explanations, and some would attribute to such variables not just the presence of grievances but their manifestation at certain times and in certain forms. It would be better, it seems to me, to distinguish carefully between the sources of the grievances (or the motives for conflict) and the conditions that shape the emergence and character of conflict and determine the kinds of demands parties make. Moreover, we need to put aside the assumption that political and economic factors can be readily distinguished and separately analyzed, a premise that dominates orthodox Marxism almost as much as it does neoclassical economic thought. With these caveats in mind, several conclusions might be advanced on the basis of the works reviewed here.

First, the evidence is strong that in Latin America, at least, agricultural modernization has produced three general consequences: it has created powerful economic interests that are generally well-organized and usually have strong links to the state; it has generated powerful specific grievances among large numbers of campesinos, who are therefore increasingly (and sometimes immediately) susceptible to organiza-

tion; and it has produced a general decline in rural living standards, which may contribute to discontent and fuel conflict.

Grievances of two different sorts are thus at work here, although the results may sometimes be the same. Nevertheless, those who would forward a mainly economic explanation for conflict should distinguish the arguments associated with each kind of grievance and explore the distinctive logic of mobilization that each entails. Moreover, grievances, whether specific or generalized, give rise to claims based on the specific needs of a given group, which is to say that they will be tied more or less closely to where groups stand or hope to stand in relations of production. Therefore, any serious economic explanation for conflict must at least start by plotting instances of conflict (and the demands at stake) on some map of land tenure and production systems, as Rubio does.

Second, all the evidence nevertheless suggests that the larger political system and elite response to peasant protest are crucial variables in determining the pattern of agricultural relations (and thus when and where grievances are likely to appear) as well as whether, how, and toward what ends peasant protest will arise. The trajectory of agricultural development in Mexico and Central America has been shaped by political structures and decisions as thoroughly as it has by purely "economic" criteria. The intransigence of elites in Central America, moreover, and their relative command of the state in El Salvador, Guatemala, and pre-revolutionary Nicaragua created a situation in which repression itself became an issue, and urban as well as rural opposition groups moved increasingly to remedy not only economic but political injustice. In Mexico, where repression has been relatively decentralized (in keeping with the overall logic of the PRI state political machine), the partial breakdown of this system similarly politicized peasant protest, although in a different context. Peasant groups then took on the Mexican state over a variety of issues, depending on the local context, eventually allying themselves with dissident elements within the labor movement and the new movement of urban poor.

Carried far enough, as in Nicaragua after 1978, the multiclass alliance revolving around distinctively political ends may carry the day, but then the satisfaction of rural demands will depend on who comes to power. Where political opposition is fragmented, as in Mexico, agrarian conflict can continue to appear "anomic" and self-defeating for long periods. But widespread crisis, effective leadership, and strategic victories can sometimes bring unity out of the chaos, as Gordillo's account suggests. In any case, organization is crucial to the emergence of overt claims on a consistent basis. Although specific types of political orientation cannot be thought to spring spontaneously from the distinctive economic relations in which peasants find themselves (Paige 1975), neither can analysts ignore the fact that when faced with intransigent and repressive

responses, campesinos can be expected to adopt ever more radical prescriptions. Outside organizers may facilitate this process, but given any freedom of movement at all, the radicalization of peasant demands appears to depend less on the identity of the organizers than on the quality of elite response to their demands.

Finally, while economic interests and the political considerations intertwined with them may play the most important role in agrarian conflict in Latin America today, it is clear that grievances themselves and factors shaping how those grievances will be expressed can spring from other sources. Ethnic divisions, gender issues, factional and familial rivalries, and plain machismo may generate conflict and shape clashes whose ultimate sources lie elsewhere. Historical patterns of resistance and alliance as well as ideological and cultural factors also shape conflict in ways too often overlooked (Stern 1987). Accordingly, the explanation of conflict must be context-specific, and if this demand entails attention to large-scale economic and political tendencies, it also requires that analysts look ever more closely at the evolution of conflict and the process of mobilization "on the ground."

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### BALOYRA, ENRIQUE

1982 *El Salvador in Transition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

### COATSWORTH, JOHN H.

1988 "Patterns of Rural Rebellion in Latin America: Mexico in Comparative Perspective." In KATZ 1988, 21-62.

### DE LA PEÑA, GUILLERMO

1982 *A Legacy of Promises: Agriculture, Politics, and Ritual in the Morelos Highlands*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

1989 "Commodity Production, Class Differentiation, and the Role of the State in the Morelos Highlands: An Historical Approach." In *State, Capital, and Rural Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Political Economy in Mexico and the Andes*, edited by Benjamin S. Orlove, Michael W. Foley, and Thomas F. Love. Boulder, Colo.: Westview.

### FOLEY, MICHAEL W.

1991 "Agenda for Mobilization: The Agrarian Question and Popular Mobilization in Contemporary Mexico." *LARR*, 26, no. 2:39-74.

### FRIEDRICH, PAUL

1986 *The Princes of Naranja: An Essay in Anthrohistorical Method*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

### GRINDLE, MERILEE S.

1986 *State and Countryside: Development Policy and Agrarian Politics in Latin America*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

### HARDY, CLARISA

1984 *El estado y los campesinos: la Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC)*. Mexico City: Nueva Imagen.

### JENKINS, J. CRAIG

1983 "Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 9:527-53.

### KATZ, FRIEDRICH, ED.

1988 *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

*Latin American Research Review*

- LEVINE, ANDREW, ELLIOTT SOBER, AND ERIK OLIN WRIGHT  
1987 "Marxism and Methodological Individualism." *New Left Review* 162 (Mar.-Apr.): 67-84.
- LINDBLOM, CHARLES E.  
1977 *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems*. New York: Basic Books.
- MCCLINTOCK, MICHAEL  
1985 *The American Connection*. Vol. 1, *State Terror and Popular Resistance in El Salvador*. London: Zed.
- MIGDAL, JOEL S.  
1988 *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- MOORE, BARRINGTON, JR.  
1966 *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon.
- MOORE, WILL H.  
1989 "Rational Rebels: Overcoming the Free-Rider Problem." Paper presented at the meeting of the American Political Science Association, 31 Aug.-3 Sept., Atlanta.
- PAIGE, JEFFERY  
1975 *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World*. New York: Free Press.
- POPKIN, SAMUEL  
1979 *The Rational Peasant*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- RULE, JAMES B.  
1988 *Theories of Civil Violence*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- SCOTT, JAMES C.  
1976 *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.  
1986 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- SKOCPOL, THEDA  
1979 *States and Revolution: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- STERN, STEVE J.  
1987 "New Approaches to the Study of Peasant Rebellion and Consciousness: Implications of the Andean Experience." In *Resistance, Rebellion, and Consciousness in the Andean Peasant World, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries*, edited by Steve J. Stern, 3-25. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- TAYLOR, WILLIAM B.  
1979 *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- WARMAN, ARTURO  
1980 *"We Come to Object: " The Peasants of Morelos and the National State*. Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- WILLIAMS, ROBERT G.  
1986 *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- WOLF, ERIC  
1969 *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*. New York: Harper and Row.
- ZAMOSC, LEON  
1986 *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.