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Kevin J. Middlebrook. *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State, and Authoritarianism in Mexico.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8018-4922-0; $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8018-5148-3.

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Middlebrook's study is a mature, well-researched and well-written narrative and analysis of the complex and incessantly changing relationship between Mexico's labor organizations and the state from the codification of the revolution in the 1917 constitution to the neoliberalism of the 1990s. The author follows the vicissitudes of the labor movement, the establishment of the state-labor alliance, and the unending effort of strategic labor unions to break away from state-sponsored confederations in order to constitute independent and democratic movements. In addition, Middlebrook examines the challenges these movements have posed to the traditional state-labor alliance which has been the cornerstone of Mexico's authoritarian regime. The scholar has been at his job since the 1970s, and thus has had ample time to read extensively, to reflect on the issues at hand, and to interview labor leaders, firms' managers and leading Mexican politicians (including Carlos Salinas de Gortari) at different points in time to produce an authoritative account of his subject.

The book's central concept is that of postrevolutionary authoritarian rule, examined through state-centered and society-centered analyses. The author seeks to link "an analysis of national-level labor politics to developments in specific industries" in order to highlight "the relationship between socioeconomic change at the workplace level and union involvement in political activities." (P. 110) Middlebrook distinguishes between the Mexican variant of authoritarian regime and authoritarianism in non-postrevolutionary contexts. When all is said and done, the difference between one and the other is what will determine the character and the ease with which each regime will move toward democracy. The postrevolutionary authoritarian regime has greater obstacles to overcome than a regime which has always lacked legitimacy vis-vis the country's labor and mechanisms by the means of which the state and labor become interdependent.

The periodization of Middlebrook's book helps to overcome the fragmented knowledge we often have of Mexico's history when focusing exclusively on segments of time like the revolution of 1910-1917, the presidential periods or the singularly most important labor movements or strikes. This division of history, for instance, has mistakenly led historians to seek explanations for the state labor politics in the president's reputed conservative, liberal or populist attitude to labor when, as Middlebrook is at pains to emphasize, the problem is multicausal. Thus, the revision of statistical data between 1938 and 1993 allows the author to argue that presidential labor policy was not the principal determinant of the level of strike activity. The importance of the industry in which workers sought to strike was the influential factor on state administrative controls: the state was more adamant to prevent strikes in the strategically important federal industries than in smaller and local ones. Middlebrook's argument on this and other issues he tackles is strengthened by his case studies. They test the applicability of his concept in concrete historical junctures and illustrate the advantages of analyzing the state-society nexus both from below and from above.

After having acquainted readers with his conceptual and methodological apparatus in chapter one, in the following chapter Middlebrook examines the historical trajectory of the Mexican state and the labor movement from the days when each genuinely needed the other in order to strengthen its respective position and win over their common adversaries of the revolution. It was in the course of codifying the revolution through the 1917 constitution that the state-labor relationship was institutionalized and the state's tutelary role in labor affairs defined.

The labor movement was weak and divided in Mexico after the revolution. In order to offset its weakness vis-a-vis employers and state governors opposed to labor legislation, disparate labor unions saw in the Confederacion Regional Obrera Mexicana (Mexican Regional Labor Confederation, CROM), formed in 1918, their defender.

After all, the CROM enjoyed state protection and a number of federal legislators was sympathetic to the labor movement. Thus, during the 1920s the battle that the labor movement fought was for the national labor law, for the expansion of federal administrative authority at the expense of local economic and political power-wielders and their administrators.

Because of its state sponsorship, the CROM enjoyed a disproportionate power in national politics which did not correlate to its strength as a labor confederation. In fact, its politics was divisive and counterproductive to the creation of a strong national independent labor movement. It held power as long as it enjoyed the political and financial backing of the state. It lost it in 1928 after the president-elect Alvaro Obregon was assassinated and CROM leaders were accused of having instigated the murder.

The long awaited federal labor law was enacted in 1931 but by then state power was firmly centralized in the federal government, and local bosses and their administrations were brought under the umbrella of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (the National Revolutionary Party, PNR), the forefather of the present-day Partido Revolucionario Institucional (the Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI). Middlebrook does not say much about the changes wrought by the creation of the party of the state, devoting due space to the enduring effects the federal law had on labor as it restricted its right to strike, prohibited union involvement in political affairs and legalized "separation exclusion clauses" in collective contracts. These contracts have required employers to dismiss any worker who loses his or her union membership. Indeed, as Middlebrook asserts, if the social legislation of the government was the basis on which to mobilize mass support for the postrevolutionary regime, the 1931 labor law limited the effectiveness of this strategy. By structuring the rules of state-labor interaction, the labor code established legal authority and institutional criteria which permit state officials to exercise political control over different forms of labor participation.

In chapter three Middlebrook accounts for the longstanding weaknesses of Mexico's labor unions which undermined the viability of any project other than the state-sponsored "official" labor movement, ensconced in the CROM during the 1920s, the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico (Confederation of Mexican Workers, CTM) in the 1930s, and since then in the Congreso del Trabajo (Labor Congress). Labor's weakness during the 1920s is explicable by the fact that its milieu was an agrarian society. In addition, industrial activities were limited in size and dispersed geographically. In tandem with limited size and dispersion, labor faced hostile forces to organized labor's tactics, encouraging thus "the emergence of a more pragmatic, accommodationist labor leadership committed to a nonconfrontational working relationship with the political elite." (P. 77) But as labor leaders found advantages in cementing a close relationship with the state, the state fortified its own alliance with labor which was crucial over and over again to guarantee the state's show of strength: Ardenas flexed his political muscle with the labor's support when he wanted to get rid of Calles and his cronies, and Avila Camacho's victory over a strong opposition presidential candidate in 1940 was secured with the labor movement firmly behind him. The CTM's conduct during the 1930s established the pattern for its participation in all subsequent presidential successions. The state rewarded the CTM's subservience by establishing a pattern of regular subsidies to the "official" labor movement even after it adopted policies far less favorable to workers' interests from the ones which had forged the linkage.

The turning point in state-labor relations came during the period 1947-1951, known as the "charrazo." Discontent with the restrictions imposed on the labor movement and rubber-stamped by the CTM, a group of dissident unions seceded from the CTM in 1947-1948 to form an opposition labor alliance. The new coalition "threatened to eclipse the CTM and deprive the government of a reliable base of labor support." (P. 107) The president was the conservative Miguel Aleman (1946-1952) who did not wait long to act to eliminate the political and economic challenge to his administration. The Cold War anticommunism provided Aleman with the political pretext while modernization of Mexico's transportation system to launch an industrialization project was his ultimate end. Middlebrook tells this dramatic story well, illustrating it on the case of the independent-minded Mexican Railroad Workers' Union.

In order to limit the union's political influence and ties to leftist opposition parties and to reduce its workplace bargaining leverage, i.e. resistance to the restructuring of the railroads, the government took advantage of intraunion struggle for political leadership and supported the more conservative one. Jesus Diaz de Leon, the chosen leader, was fond of rodeos and horsemanship, charreria in Spanish. Hence, his action was dubbed charrazo. Thereafter, leaders like him who have acquiesced to the government's actions which disregard the interests of the workers have been known as charros. Most importantly, the charrazo had far-reaching negative consequences for the railway workers and national labor pol-

itics as such. Rewriting the union's statutes, control over union governance and the rank-and-file was centralized. Following the charrazo, the railway union broke its ties with other national industrial unions with which it had created an independent anti-CTM coalition and joined in the government anticommunist drive. Furthermore, it eliminated the longstanding prohibition against union officials holding elective positions while in office. However, the discontent which the charrazo provoked among the rank-and-file grew and erupted in a widespread railroad worker revolt in 1958-1959. Even though workers won a significant wage increase and temporarily democratized union governance, the political damage the charrazo had done to the opposition labor coalition in the late 1940s was irreversible.

While the first part of the book is devoted to the examination of the construction of the postrevolutionary Mexican regime, in the second part Middlebrook takes the analysis one step further and surveys the way organized labor responded to the economic changes that were brought about by the import-substituting industrialization from the 1940s onwards and the industrial restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s. The first strategy designed to promote rapid economic growth resulted in the "Mexican miracle." But as the GNP grew, so did the economic and social inequality. The "official" labor movement supported the government's economic policy despite the fact that "import-substituting industrialization sometimes produced changes in workplace conditions that threatened to undermine state-subsidized labor organizations' control over the rank and file." (P. 210) Middlebrook demonstrates the phenomenon with the case of the automobile industry where the shift from assembly operations to manufacturing in the 1960s and 1970s produced the breakdown of existing labor controls and permitted the rank-and-file opposition movements to win power. In the plants where these reform movements were successful, the rank-and-file increased its participation in union affairs and the workers' influence over aspects of the production process, achieving more effective representation of worker interests in the changing industrial environment.

In the following chapter Middlebrook examines economic challenges posed by the most recent industrial restructuring to organized labor politics. However, the environment in which the next phase takes place–economic crisis and a shift in national development strategy of integrating the Mexican into the global economy–produces different results for labor's bargaining power. In the first place, in the early 1980s the state privatized many of the enterprises it had previously owned. In preparing the sale to private investors, "the government often forced upon workers significant cuts in wages and fringe benefits and contract changes that substantially reduced unions' influence in enterprise affairs." (P. 256) The same occurred in private firms. Yet this fundamental reorientation of national development strategy challenged the bases on which Mexico's social pact had rested since the 1950s for it eroded what had long been the principal advantage of some of Mexico's largest and most influential unions to use their political leverage to win concessions from state managers in negotiations over wage and fringe benefit levels and contract terms. Industrial restructuring undermined the mobilizational capacity and bargaining leverage of government allied and more politically independent unions alike.

It was in this unfavorable climate for labor that the CTM's long-standing weaknesses turned into a gradual loss in its standing vis-a-vis the state. The CTM's limited mobilizational potential, due to the comparatively small size of affiliated unions in non-strategic economic activities, and the frequent lack of effective representational structures linking local labor leaders with rank-and-file union members compounded the CTM's difficulties in responding more effectively to government economic policies that harmed workers' interests. No wonder then that the most modernized enterprises from among the transnational automobile industry and the maquiladoras on the US-Mexican border have preferred CTM-affiliated unions. After an initial opposition, met with violence, the CTM endorsed the post-Fordist labor relations arrangements and labor contract flexibility terms which have heightened managerial control over the production process.

Middlebrook ends his rivetting study by positing the conditions which would be necessary to strengthen the labor movement and reinforce its bargaining power. Yet the author presents an environment which unfavorable for labor: employment has been falling in the manufacturing sector, in the most dynamic manufacturing activity–the in-bond processing industry (maquiladora)–unionization rates are low while in the commercial activities and the service sector unionization is more difficult. How, then, can unions be strengthened in the workplace where the managerial flexibility has increased, at industry and on the national level to ensure effective representation of rank-and-file interests? Ideally, by forging strong links between labor organizations and political parties committed to promoting democracy the regime change could be influenced. However, the obstacles for this to happen are numerous: the present-day leadership obstructs rank-and-file initiatives and itself is not com-

mitted to democratic change; a long history of hegemonic party rule makes unions reluctant to form alliances with partisan political organizations. Furthermore, since the 1970s major leftist parties have turned their attention to electoral strategies rather than upholding urban and rural workers' interests. In the light of all the obstacles labor encounters, Middlebrook is not optimistic about labor's ability to promote democratization in Mexico. For even if there were competitive elections, the central problems remain: the state's control of labor activism and labor movement democracy.

The book's comparative framework strengthens the author's argument. In the final chapter Middlebrook draws on the Nicaraguan and the Russian cases when examining labor's role in democratization of postrevolutionary authoritarian regimes. Both cases support the notion that "[b]ecause postrevolutionary authoritarian regimes generally develop distinctive ideologies that give workers a special place in postrevolutionary society and offer the labor movement important institutional advantages and material benefits, labor has a stronger interest in preserving elements of the status quo than it does in most other authoritarian regimes." (P. 317) Neither in Russia nor in Nicaragua did the labor movement unequivocally support a democratic transition. The Mexican "official" labor movement with vested interests in the PRI-state has not acted differently from its counterparts in Central America and Europe.

Paradox of Revolution is thought-provoking and delivers what it promises. The title of the book refers to the historical experience of popular mobilization and socioeconomic transformation which "most commonly eventuate in a new form of authoritarian rule." (P. 1) In all of the known cases of revolutionary change, the elites that seized the state's power expanded and centralized it. In Mexico, following a successful consolidation of a governing coalition in which peasants and workers played a central part, the revolutionary elite relegated them to a subordinate position. But having reviewed at great detail the Mexican case, and brought to bear the cases of Russia, China, Cuba, Vietnam and Nicaragua among others, is the authoritarian outcome of revolutions such a paradox as Middlebrook sustains? Have not we seen time and time again a dissonance between the concept and reality? Hence, does not reality force us to reexamine our concept, in which case the authoritarian rule resulting from revolutions may not be such a paradox after all?

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