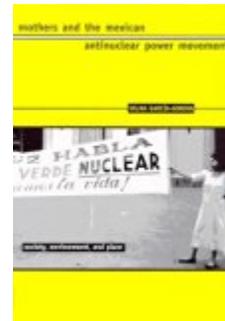


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Velma Garcia-Gorena. *Mothers and the Mexican Antinuclear Power Movement*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999. xii + 187pp. \$46.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8165-1874-6; \$21.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8165-1875-3.

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Naysayers of Mexico's Nuclear Power Program

As a case study of the opposition to nuclear power plants in Mexico, *Mothers and the Mexican Antinuclear Power Movement* is a unique contribution to the literature on social movements in Latin America. Political scientist Velma Garcia-Gorena utilizes the three dominant models of social movement theory in her analysis, asking the question, "... can the Mexican antinuclear movement be considered a New Social Movement?" (p. 13). A second concern is whether or not the movement had an impact on democratization of the Mexican political system. Most of the book is a narrative account of the genesis, development, and decline of grassroots opposition to nuclear power in Mexico. The last two chapters offer gender and class analysis in the movement, and discuss the theoretical classification of the antinuclear groups that mobilized to challenge the startup of the power plant in Veracruz.

The story is a short one: When construction began on Mexico's first nuclear power plant, located at Laguna Verde, Veracruz, in the 70s, little opposition to the plant could be detected; in fact, the citizens who were aware of the plant's rise supported it on the twin benefits of increased local employment opportunities and as a symbol of progress. Opposition to the plant arose in the wake of the 1986 accident at Chernobyl, when Laguna Verde was close to completion. Established groups of environmental activists turned their attention to the behemoth threat on the Gulf of Mexico, and several local organizations sprung up in opposition, including cattlemen, fishermen, and the Madres Veracruzanas. During 1987 and 1988, the opposition mobilized and campaigned to stop the plant's

debut. Failure to meet that goal propelled antinuclear activists into a new role as watchdogs of the plant's safety record. Local opposition groups faded away; by 1991, only the Madres Veracruzanas continued to monitor Laguna Verde.

The *Comite Antinuclear de Madres Veracruzanas* consciously modeled themselves on the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* of Argentina. Claiming their special status as child bearers and protectors of the family, the *Madres Veracruzanas* maintained autonomy from other opposition organizations, adopted ritualized protest methods, and a symbol of their solidarity - a red ribbon. They eschewed violent actions, claiming that their dignity prohibited such tactics. Similarities with the Argentine *Madres* seem superficial, though. While noting the difference in social class between the two mothers' groups, *Madres Veracruzanas* were from the middle and upper classes; *Madres de Plaza de Mayo* were generally from the working class. Garcia-Gorena makes no further comparative effort. It begs to be done, especially in view of the *Madres* self-identification and the author's periodic references to the Argentine mothers.

Mothers and the Mexican Antinuclear Power Movement really is the story of more than one organization, however. Unlike Marguerite Guzman Bouvard's riveting monograph, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo*, which has as its primary focus the birth, growth, development, and evolution of the mothers' movement, Garcia-Gorena covers all the major

groups caught up in protest against Mexico's first nuclear power plant. The activities, tactics, successes and failures of all the organizations fighting Laguna Verde receive just as much ink, if not more, than the Madres Veracruzanas.

Garcia-Gorena presents the narrative chronologically; source materials include personal interviews with activists and newspaper coverage of the events. Throughout the text, she weaves material on the Mexican political system and relates aspects of the antinuclear movement's campaigns to her larger theoretical concerns. All theoretical issues are presented in explicit terms, especially in Chapter Nine, which provides a synthesis of feminist theory applied to mothers' movements, holding the Madres Veracruzanas up for examination. The prose is clean and cogent, making this a good choice

for all levels of undergraduate reading. Undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars will be disappointed by the absence of pictorial augmentation in the book. Early in my reading, I fled to my map file to retrieve one that would show Palma Sola, Juchitan, and Laguna Verde in relation to the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps the economics of publishing prevented the printing of even a single photograph; one has to suspect that during her extensive personal contact with the antinuclear movement, Garcia-Gorena took pictures of demonstrations, protesters, and movement leaders.

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