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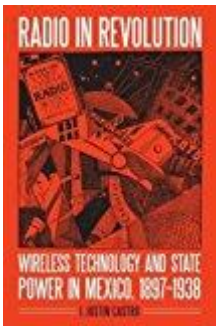

J. Justin Castro. *Radio in Revolution: Wireless Technology and State Power in Mexico, 1897–1938.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. Illustrations. 280 pp. $70.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8032-6844-9.

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Radio in Revolution: Wireless Technology and State Power in Mexico, 1897-1938, provides an important study of an underexplored gap in the historiography of modern Mexico. J. Justin Castro gives a fascinating analysis of the history of technology and mass communication through studying the history of radio. This book also bridges two important periods in Mexican history: the nearly forty-year dictatorship of General Porfirio Díaz (the *Porfiriato*) and the Mexican Revolution. Castro provides a much-needed exploration of the role that mass communication systems played in revolution and in state building in Mexico, a relationship that has implications for revolutions and state-led modernization projects in other parts of the world. Castro's book makes three related arguments: first, during the later years of the *Porfiriato* (1897-1911), radio was a critical means to centralize state power; second, radio played a critical role in the outcome of the Mexican Revolution; and third, the government pursued significant control over radio during the rebellions of the 1920s, which led to a significant consolidation of radio use under government control. While Castro largely tells a Mexican history, he also incorporates the importance that Mexico's diplomatic relations played in the development of radio technology in the country, helping to place this history within a transnational context.

Castro draws on a number of archives and different types of sources to craft his narrative. Recognizing that state building was a process that spanned several government ministries, Castro utilizes sources from Mexican national and state archives, such as records from the offices of the secretary of national defense, the secretary of education, the secretary of foreign relations, and the secretary of communication and transportation. Additionally, he consults various periodical collections from the United States and Mexico. His engagement with secondary literature spans across works on Mexican history, the history of telecommunication and technology, and diplomatic history. Theoretically, Castro draws on James Scott's idea that information can help to render legible a population, and he argues that radio provided a

new and critical means to communicate such information across great distances to the central government. While not citing Antonio Gramsci, in later chapters on state building, Castro seems to use a Gramscian notion of consent building in understanding how the government used radio to integrate Mexico's diverse and dispersed population into a general national identity. Scholars with interests in all of these fields and theoretical approaches will benefit from reading Castro's book.

The book is divided into an introduction, six chronological chapters, and a brief conclusion. Chapter 1 covers the last years of Diaz's regime, explaining how it was in this moment that Mexico began to acquire radio technology from Europe with the objective of establishing communication between the capital and the distant frontier regions. Thus, on the eve of revolution, telecommunication infrastructure was already in place and was being used to centralize the state. Chapters 2 and 3 cover the Mexican Revolution. Here Castro explores how radio technology allowed for the quick dissemination of (mis)information to the multiple armies and to the United States government, and in so doing, facilitated the development of military and diplomatic strategies. Castro presents several convincing examples of how radio provided information on troop strategy and movements, how telecommunication stations were decisive battlegrounds, and how the increased militarized use of radio literally changed the way that the revolution was fought. Chapter 3 also explores how President Venustiano Carranza's government built high-power radio stations in Mexico City and used these for domestic consolidation and surveillance and also as a tool of foreign policy. When the United States stopped allowing Germany to use their cables in 1917, Mexico provided this necessary technology to the Germans, and in turn, secured German funding to continue to develop the national radio network. Thus, Castro argues that radio technology was used during this period as a tool of foreign policy, which in turn strengthened government control over Mexico's telecommunications.

Chapters 4 through 6 explore the debates that arose in Mexican government regarding the control of radio and the use of radio in constructing Mexican nationalism. By the 1920s, more people had access to radio technology and were regularly broadcasting events and shows. Castro argues that while President Alvaro Obregón's government at first pursued more democratic radio policies, rebellions during the 1920s (which capitalized on the liberalization of radio) forced Obregón to rethink this strategy and once again strive to control radio usage. On the one hand, radio could "suddenly put the men of remote villages in contact with the civilization of the most advanced centers of culture" but on the other, the very nature of the technology made it next to impossible for the government to effectively control and censor the messages that these "remote villages" would receive (p. 117). To manage this potential threat, Obregón required all radios to register with the government, thus demonstrating his government's decision to "hinder democratic trends in radio development in the name of state control" (p. 138).

Chapters 5 and 6 explore how state control over radio affected types of programs and uses of radio in the 1930s. Chapter 5 focuses on radio legislation, such as the 1926 Law of Electronic Communications, which allowed for public radio but with strict government control and censorship. Two other important laws that this chapter discusses are the 1931 and 1932 laws on the General Means of Communications, which prevented foreigners from owning and broadcasting over the Mexican airways without explicit government permission, required the use of proper Spanish in all communications, and prohibited the broadcast of any religious message. This chapter also explores radio's official uses through the Secretariat of Communications and Public Works (SCOP), detailing how radio became an important tool in maintaining diplomatic relations with the US and Cent-

ral American nations. Chapter 6 covers the same time period but instead emphasizes how President Plutarco Elías Calles's government used radios to broadcast the ideals of Mexican nationalism through educational programs, pro-government propaganda, and Mexican music programs. Castro also explains how more Mexicans during this time period owned radios and how the government gave radios to unions, schools, and government agencies in an effort to reach lower-class Mexicans who could not afford their own radio device. In this way, argues Castro, radio became "a permanent part of government and modern Mexican culture" (p. 195). Castro writes a compelling history of radio's potential for insurrection, subversion, state building, nationalism, and entertainment purposes, showing how these uses intertwined at times, challenged each other at others, but were all important uses of this technology during this tumultuous political period in Mexico's history.

The shortcomings of ***Radio in Revolution*** do not detract from Castro's overall arguments. The book largely focuses on official uses of radio, and while there is some discussion of more popular, and at times subversive, uses of radio, more discussion of these would have helped in addressing the democratization of radio in the 1920s and 1930s and the government's subsequent efforts at restricting radio's potential. One challenge with a further discussion of more popular uses of radio perhaps is a lack of sources; popular use might not have yielded an extensive paper trail like the official use, which Castro does an excellent job of tracking. One other aspect that is not necessarily a critique of the book but something that a potential reader should be aware of is that Castro assumes a basic understanding of the Mexican Revolution, particularly the various political actors and divisions (which are numerous and extremely complex). A reader unfamiliar with this history will still gain an appreciation for the development of radio during revolution in Mexico but will struggle with understanding the nuance of the different political movements, military alliances, and rivalries during this period. However, with a little outside study of Mexican political history, this book would be appropriate for a wider audience.

Despite these minor critiques, ***Radio in Revolution*** is a well-researched and engaging book that covers an understudied aspect of Mexican historiography, that of the role of mass communication technology in the revolution and the state building that resulted in its aftermath. The text is useful for scholars of Mexican history, revolution, state building and nationalism, and the history of mass communications. It is also a strong example of how to naturally incorporate transnational elements into a history that is largely national, as Castro moves effortlessly between the local, national, and international levels. Until now, radio has been a largely ignored component of the processes of revolution and state building in modern Mexico, but thanks to Castro, we now have a book to fill that gap and to inspire future research in the history of mass communication technology in twentieth-century Latin America.

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