

MICHAEL L. CONNIFF (ed.): *Populism in Latin America*. Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

This is an excellent teaching tool. I have used this collection of articles with undergraduate students, and they found most of the articles clearly written, well presented and very informative. The introduction by Michael Conniff, in which he provides a general definition of populism, is highly recommended, as are his epilogue and bibliographical essay, which suggest new research directions.

The book includes chapters by Joel Horowitz on Argentina, Michael L. Conniff on Brazil, Paul W. Drake on Chile, Jorge Basurto on Mexico, Steve Stein on Peru, Steve Ellner on Venezuela, Ximena Sosa-Buchholz on Ecuador, and William Francis Robinson on Panama. Although there were populist and charismatic leaders in other Latin American countries in the 20th century, the selection does seem to include the most salient examples of this type of movements and leadership.

However, the main problem of this book lies in its pretension to be as relevant as possible to contemporary Latin American politics. This leads the contributors to deal too briefly with the main populist movements and figures in the so-called "classic era," from the 1920s to the 1960s, in order to discuss contemporary developments. Therefore, many chapters become general texts on politics and social developments in 20th-century Mexico/Argentina/Brazil, and so forth. For example, the attempt to include politics in Mexico up to the 1990s leaves space for only four (!) pages for Lázaro Cárdenas's populist policies, while Getúlio Vargas of the early 1950s gets 2-3 pages. Moreover, insistence on including neo-liberal leaders and programs –such as the governments of Alberto Fujimori in Peru and Carlos Menem in Argentina– in the category of populists renders the terms "populism" and "populists" almost meaningless.

This is the second volume devoted to Latin American populism edited by Conniff. In the first one –*Latin American Populism in Comparative Perspective* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982)– Conniff, together with a group of scholars, analyzed Latin American populist leaders and movements basically as a phenomenon of the 1920s-1960s. Within this framework, Conniff himself already emphasized various characteristics of Latin American populism, such as its multi-class basis, strengthening the state's role in economic and social affairs, its efforts to integrate into the political process those sectors which were marginal, a more equitable distribution of the national pie, its reformist and non-revolutionary character, rehabilitation of popular culture, and the defense of popular sovereignty against foreign pressures and exploitation.

The present collection of articles, in its efforts to be as "updated" as possible and include contemporary figures as well, prefers to devote more attention to the "populist style", the populists' use of the media, their attempts to appeal to the largest possible number of voters, and other characteristics which are relevant to populism as well as to many modern politicians in general. In this way, the ambiguous term "populism" becomes even vaguer. A populist leader, in this context, is basically a figure who is able to appeal to large segments of the population, often through effective use of new technologies of the communication media. True, but this is not enough in order to understand all the dimensions of this phenomenon.

Since I consider a certain quest for social justice or at least for a less distorted distribution of the national pie as one of the important ingredients of Latin American populism at a certain time in the past century, I was not convinced by Kurt Weyland's final chapter, "Populism in the Age of Neoliberalism." Weyland rejects the argument that neoliberal policies are incompatible with populism. He focuses on the administrations of Menem in Argentina, Fujimori in Peru, and Color de Mello in Brazil, and claims that these leaders have used neoliberal economic policies in order to appeal to a large and heterogeneous electorate, thus becoming "neopopulists."

The fact that these were popular and charismatic leaders, or that they all attacked the "political class," was not enough to turn them into populists. After all, neoliberal policies are fundamentally contrary to the social and economic tenets put forth by the populist leaders of an earlier period. Weyland himself writes that these leaders "reduced state interventionism in order to give the market freer rein. They opened their economies to foreign trade and investment. In these ways, they completely reversed the course followed by the classical populists of the 1940s to the 1960s" (p. 180). So why insist on the term "populists" or "neopopulists" for the leaders of the 1990s? Indeed, Fujimori found at first massive support by fulfilling the desire of the unorganized masses for inclusion. But, in Argentina, one cannot explain Menem's electoral victory by the manipulation of the unorganized poor in the informal sector. While Fujimori tried to bypass political parties and other intermediary organizations on his way to the presidential palace, Menem used the Peronist party and its affiliated labor unions for the same purpose. Therefore, Weyland's discussion of both the Argentine and Peruvian leaders in the same category, and as populists or neopopulist leaders, is somewhat problematic.

For the purposes of a clear working definition as a research tool and a basis for academic dialogue, I prefer to limit the use of the term "populism" to Latin America of the 1920s to the 1960s. In this respect, Conniff's earlier volume better served this goal. Still, the new book does give the readers a

global view of populist politics in Latin America in the 20th century, and provides a stimulus for further discussion of the topic.

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PETER KINGSTONE: *Crafting Coalitions for Reform. Business Preferences, Political Institutions and Neoliberal Reform in Brazil*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.

If you want to know the truth about a fighter, don't interview him, don't ask what he thinks about life; look at him, instead, when waging combat. I once read something like this in a piece by Norman Mailer. Now, *mutatis mutandi*, this maxim applies to the analysis of business politics as well. In fact, be he a financier, a trader, or an industrialist, the job of the businessman is to make money through the performance of an activity useful to someone else. His station in life depends on this particular kind of activity and the circumstances surrounding it. So when a businessman speak his mind in the public sphere about political or economic subjects, he always has an eye on the micro-scene where, from his point of view, the decisive battles are being fought.

Crafting Coalitions for Reform. Business Preferences, Political Institutions and Neoliberal Reform in Brazil—the great merit of Peter Kingstone is having set for himself a similar interpretative principle, and having stuck to it all through the book he has just offered to us. I must acknowledge this fact. The author had the unique chance of being in the field at the precise moment when things really started changing for the Brazilian business community; that is to say, in the early 1990s, during Collor's short-lived mandate. In this way, the author was able to observe neoliberal reform in Brazil from its inception, and see how business people reacted to it.

The above does not diminish in the least the merit of the work he has done. A number of others have conducted research on the same subject, in the same place and at the same time, but few have seen what Kingstone now shows us. What makes the difference is the analytical point of view that guided his study.

At first sight, business response to neoliberal politics in Brazil (but not only in Brazil...) confronts us with a puzzle. It is currently recognized that, by exposing domestic production to the competition of imports, economic openness would badly hurt large segments of industry. In that case, it would