

time telling the "story" of Venezuelan women's role in their country's political process and providing a useful periodization. The book is particularly strengthened by the author's intimate knowledge of the organizations, seen through numerous interviews she conducted in Venezuela. Friedman also provides a nice selection of illustrations.

Hopefully, Friedman's book will inspire others to continue to examine gender issues in Venezuela. For example, a book on women's roles during the dictatorship of Juan Vicente Gómez begs to be written. Indeed, Friedman's book might have included more on the pre-1936 period than the two and a half pages in Chapter 2. An examination of Venezuelan women who have remained outside of organized movements also merits study. For example, we see little on poor women until Chapter 6. What of the role of nationality? In the post-WWII era, Venezuela has seen waves of immigrants from European countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal as well as from neighboring Latin American countries such as Colombia. And what about the role of race? Another potentially rich topic to explore is the participation of women in the regime of current Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. While he has shaken traditional Venezuelan politics, have women's roles changed, or does *machismo* continue to be stronger than any political transformation?

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TIMOTHY J. POWER: *The Political Right in Postauthoritarian Brazil: Elites, Institutions, and Democratization.* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

More than fifteen years after the return to civilian rule, why do starkly unequal political and social structures persist in Brazil? In a detailed examination of the impact of military dictatorship on democracy, Timothy Power puts his finger on important answers to this question. While some theoreticians suggest that so-called conservative transitions from authoritarianism can be beneficial to democracy, Power clearly establishes the Brazilian case as a significant counter-example. Authoritarian rule and the slow transition (1964-1985) not only asphyxiated democratic expression; they also provided right-wing politicians with disproportionate influence and the ability to stay entrenched in positions of power at least into the late 1990s. Instead of a fully consolidated democracy, Brazilians experience "a perverse situation in which, instead of the right accommodating itself to the rules of the new democracy, the rules of the new democracy must accommodate the right" (p. 239). The Brazilian right blocks the kind of legislative initiative

needed to reduce cronyism and promote social change, for example, the long overdue implementation of meaningful agrarian reform.

In an engaging, jargon-free style, Power draws a detailed sociological and political portrait of the right wing in political parties and the Congresso Nacional. The research is impressive, including three major surveys of parliamentarians over eight years, analysis of electoral and demographic data, study of political biographies and other documentary sources, and highly illustrative interviews. (As an historian, I lament only that the author does not explicitly target such prominent right-wing leaders as Carlos Lacerda and Antônio Carlos Magalhães.) Power specifically focuses on "ex-authoritarians," the veterans of the official pro-military party ARENA (Aliança Renovadora Nacional), renamed in 1979 as the PDS (Partido Democrático Social), and contrasts them with the members of the anti-authoritarian MDB (Movimento Democrático Brasileiro). In 1987, with militarism still fresh in the minds of Brazilians, nearly forty percent of the crucial National Constituent Assembly came from the ARENA-PDS club. In the mid-1990s, twenty-five percent of the Congresso still hailed from this group. These politicians generally represented the politically and socially backward sectors of the populace (primarily in the Northeast), were highly individualistic, shunned ideological debate and activism in order to concentrate on the distribution of patronage, ignored the need for greater accountability to the public, and opposed efforts at political reform that would limit the extremely powerful executive branch and thereby fortify the national legislature. Ex-authoritarians thus contributed significantly to the continued undermining of parties and parliament. Brazil remains a country of ineffective political institutions and a weak democratic ethic.

A political scientist, Power employs historical perspective to examine the legacies of militarism and ex-authoritarians—a refreshing approach in a field where authors chasing the "moving target" of current events and intellectual fashion too often forget to retest old theories or link the present to the past. Power furnishes an excellent overview of how the dictatorship emasculated the Congresso and constantly manipulated the electoral rules to preserve the ARENA-PDS majority and, in effect, guarantee the survival of this cohort after redemocratization. The regime's democratic façade was a farce, and in the New Republic the heady hopes for social and institutional reform disintegrated as the Congresso, essentially powerless, failed to act. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Brazil's political and economic performance was depressing. Displaying little loyalty or discipline, politicians formed a multitude of sham parties and frequently switched membership. The right's dominance in the impoverished Northeast assured its disproportionate hold on congressional representation, thus reducing the influence of more

populous and progressive states such as São Paulo, and voters continued to face a confusing system of electoral rules. Corruption and irresponsible use of public monies flourished. As it had under the military, the executive originated most of the important legislation. For the average Brazilian, executive privilege meant an increasing emphasis on economic stabilization at the expense of basic social reforms. Expressing a certain nostalgia for the authoritarian era, the political right could not even lobby effectively for its natural political allies among capitalists. In sum, the right remained "passively anti-democratic" (p. 219) and frustrated attempts at building a national democratic political consensus.

Why is the right so anti-institutional, and how does it survive in a country where the electorate is increasingly urban, educated, and progressive? Power adopts the Weberian concept of political learning to illustrate how authoritarianism schooled an entire generation of conservative politicians in anti-democratic, anti-programmatic politics. He maneuvers adeptly through the ideological and methodological minefield between the Weberian and rational choice camps and, to his credit, suggests that the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. He is also very clear about his data, illustrating, for example, how the right indeed did experience some democratic learning in the 1990s. Ultimately, the key to understanding the right is its ability to flock to the government in power and to transform itself in the process. (For instance, Power describes the Partido da Frente Liberal, an offshoot of the ARENA-PDS, "as a machine built to support governments" in the same style as its clientelistic predecessors of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s.) Thus, for example, a large group best described as the *direita envergonhada* (the abashed right) successfully redefines itself as a centrist force, distancing itself from its own authoritarian past and purposefully obfuscating ideology and electoral politics.

Although Power is a progressive and passionately pro-democratic, this book is far from a diatribe against the right. On the contrary, it is one of the most serious studies of the Latin American right to appear in recent years. While many in the academy prefer to study only people who share their ideological sympathies, Power has done his field a great service by focusing on an unpopular but key group, whose history helps to clarify Brazil's. Power states the goal of a democratic polity should not be to purge rightists, but to lead them to buy into democratic practices and act as real, professional legislators with national policy in mind and not just bargaining for resources (pp. 143, 174, 205).

Power leaves us with the sensation that Brazilian political culture and political institutions will not change. The "prospects for sustainable democracy are weak," he warns, adding that despite socioeconomic

improvement in recent years, we should not forget the lessons of Brazil's "dismal roller-coaster ride" of the late 1980s and early 1990s (pp. 20, 222). Furthermore, his analysis of such typically Brazilian political formations as the *bloco* –the temporary cross-party coalition in the Congress– suggests that perhaps the Western democratic concept of "party" should be completely abandoned in the study of Brazil. "Most parties have national committees that exist only on paper. They are usually totally devoid of resources, have little or nothing to do with the financing of campaigns, and sometimes do not even maintain a headquarters in Brasília" (p. 111).

Like Brazilian social inequality, the country's political field is full of paradoxes that may force us to rethink political theory in Latin America. One of the few drawbacks is that Power does not delve more deeply into these paradoxes –for instance, how the generals' introduction of more democratic rules actually allowed the regime to prolong its existence, how such rules became less attractive after the return to democracy (pp. 64, 66, 118), how democracy can remain so weak even when the right is demonstrating a degree of political learning (pp. 138-39, 170), how right-wing-supported candidates continue to win the presidency despite the increasingly progressive background of the electorate, and how the genius of authoritarianism was perhaps its long-term ability to undermine democracy by doing so behind a democratic façade instead of attacking it directly (p. 3). Are rightists really even right-wing? In Power's portrayal, they seem to be more accurately classified as opportunists and power-grabbers –and statist who like government jobs!– more than anything else. But these faults do not detract from the great value of the book. By taking on a study of the Brazilian right, Power has helped chart a new path that, although it may lead us to yet more unpromising news about democracy, in the long run can also help improve it.

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