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Juan Sisinio Pérez Garzón

Contra el poder: Conflictos y movimientos sociales en la historia de España de la prehistoria al tiempo presente

Granada, Comares, 2015, 333 páginas

It's a daring author who would try to cover 10,000 years of social conflict in a mere 333 pages, but since the first 8,000 years or so are surveyed in a brief first chapter, after that things are a little bit less rushed. Inevitably, events narrated will be highly selective both in terms of which are highlighted and what is said of them; and explanations will stress some very broad, recurrent processes and some large categories. Across such a long time span, the actors in social conflicts will vary in many ways: they will vary in which social strata participate, in how they are organized, in what sorts of leaders they have, in what beliefs about present oppression and brighter futures they hold, in how they communicate and what sorts of information they have access to, in who their enemies are, in who their potential allies might be, and in what sorts of resources they possess. Are they united by religion, ethnicity, region, gender, political visions? Are they self-organized or organized by others?

Allies and enemies of popular movements make their appearance in this rich study, including systematizers of religious doctrines, landowners, urban merchant elites, agents of states, party leaders, and,

for the most recent years, democratically elected politicians, but the major protagonists in this work are those who rarely appear with individual names in textbooks (if they appear at all): those earning a living in good times and hungry in bad, and subject to the authority of powerful others—whose names we are more likely to know—who can impose rents, taxation, and conscription. And what Pérez Garzón vividly demonstrates is the extraordinary range and variety of their collective action that impedes, alters, or occasionally overturns the plans of the powerful, despite much effort to convince them that they are supposed to be obedient and the not uncommon deployment of violence against those not convinced.

Their movements vary in the broad ideas they develop, in their long term strategies and short term tactics. Movements of the past also vary enormously in the quantity and quality of the information they have left behind. We are not likely to ever know much about the ideas of those who fought for the first 8,000 of these 10,000 years. About the next 1500 or so we get to know more and more, and then a great deal more for the past half millennium.

Theoretically, this work stresses the creativity of human action, especially when collective action is imbued with ideas that make them struggles for something believed to be better. Environing circumstances, from the quality of harvests to technology-induced alterations in daily rhythms, play a big role, but the movements described by Pérez Garzón are not just automatic responses to those circumstances.

Within this broad framework emphasis shifts with the great changes in the quantity and nature of historical evidence. For the very distant past such understanding as we have rests on plausible surmise from limited evidence. But as more people can read and write, as more organizations, including states, keep records, as preserving those records becomes more important, and as an increasingly varied array of social movements make public statements of their claims, historians have more tools to work with. "Ordinary people" begin to be easier to see clearly when they appear in the records of agencies of repression, police and courts first and foremost, on lists of those owing rents and taxes, giving birth, getting married, and dying. They are even more visible when we have the pamphlets they read, the diaries they wrote, the photos they took, the press conferences their leaders organized, and, most recently of all, their websites and Twitter accounts. Pérez Garzón has tackled all these issues splendidly. He skillfully sketches big changes in social organization and the rich variety of ways movements have responded.

For most of this period, most people in most places, Spain included, were peasants, so most conflicts were about rural people in one way or another, and this book clearly demonstrates that there were many ways. It is a work of "history from below," not simply in that it is about the experiences of poorer people coping with the consequences of decisions made by the richer and more powerful but with their ways of taking action together and, as we approach more recent history, with their dreams. Not because people didn't dream earlier but because we don't know what their dreams were. This book is about not only about what happened to those down below, but about what those down below made happen.

This work of synthesis across a varied Spain (including at points Spanish America), across many centuries, and across many kinds of movements is more than a brilliant depiction of variety. It is also a demonstration of how that variety can be addressed with the basic working tools of the analysis of social movements: material interests, capacities for cooperation, opportunities for action, the availability of allies and the presence of opponents, and the development of collective identities. If settled agriculture facilitated social hierarchy along with coerced payments to landowners and taxes to states, at the edges of power there might be communities of runaways and bandits. If religious orthodoxies over the centuries provided tools to encourage submission to authority, heterodox religious doctrines might provide tools to challenge unjustified power. If writing

made it easier for states to keep track of subject populations, it also made it easier to share dreams of change.

The earlier chapters lay particular emphasis on the development of an agricultural surplus, the formation of hierarchies around the appropriation of that surplus, the subjection of the many for the enhancement of the few, and the development of states, sciences, arts, and religions. For much of this period much of the evidence is archeological, but states produce records, religions produce codified ideas, and we begin to see how power is contested, though often through the eyes of the powerful. In the Middle Ages we see the ways in which varied identities (communities of religious adherents, people from one place rather than another, people connected by language and kinship) both enhance the power of those who claim to rule but also provide tools for elites in conflict and for collective action from below as well. Local elites, whether urban patricians or rural landholders, might enlist rural people in challenging the state's tax collectors, but they might also want the state's assistance in repressing peasant rebellion. State authorities or local landed elites might welcome religious authorities who preached submission but might be challenged by religious authorities who held particular actions, or even hierarchy generally, unjust.

Extensions of power triggered their own challenges. In the sixteenth century, for example, the implantation of Spanish rule and coerced labor in the Americas also generated resistance and rebellion by Indi-

ans and slaves; millenarian resistance movements alongside Catholic efforts to teach obedience; complex conflicts among landowners, merchants, and governors; complex, and challenged, racialized hierarchies; and increasing contention between *criollos* and *peninsulares*. Revolt could be triggered by bad harvests, new exactions, elite dissension, and challenging ideas. Revolt was often against powerful people seen as violating the common good, often with elite leadership and often beginning as an attempt to use judicial institutions to attain justice or to press state institutions to act for the common good in hard times.

In the author's analysis the Age of Revolution was multiply transformative, including the hopes and fears inspired by revolutionary France, the French military pressures on Spain, and the loss of mainland Spanish America. He lays particular stress on the diffusion of ideals of both individual and collective emancipation and optimism about the human capacity to deliberately alter institutions to provide for a better future. The industrial revolution figures in this work not only for its development of new sources of wealth and impoverishment but for amplifying belief in deliberately planned social transformation. As in previous centuries, mobilizations could be fueled by hardship and hardship deepened by the exactions of proprietors and state agents as well as harvest failures and business cycles, and opportunities could come in the form of elite struggles, but to these familiar circumstances were added new ideas, especially assertions of citizenship under liberty.

Nineteenth century liberalism appears as a body of revolutionary ideas. Both modernizers and antimodernizers could claim to be patriots and demands for citizenship rights could both support the claims of one or another elite grouping and challenge them and could also be advanced as well by new popular actors making new claims. Debates about better futures were taking place in the newly proliferating newspapers, in the halls of power, in the cafes, and in the meeting halls used by new associations. Republicans began to deploy the language of popular sovereignty and citizen cooperation. Governing elites sought to forge rules for a large, diverse, and changing country, rival elites bid for an increasingly important popular support, particularly as all the new channels of communication increased awareness for large numbers of what those elites were up to. Elite efforts to recruit followers helped forge new possibilities for people to organize themselves, as top-down efforts to direct popular forces into channels desired by rulers met bottom-up efforts to get those rulers to act in the general interest or to remove those rulers. And all of this activity was leaving more records for future historians to sift through in order to discover the broad dreams and the strategic and tactical debates of those hoping to make a better future happen.

The author's nineteenth century story shows the intersections of multiple axes of conflict as Republican organizational networks that included newspapers, schools, and social activities coincided with rural struggles over communal lands, and over

taxes and the hated conscription as well. For the still newer Socialist movements, as well as Republicans, struggles over expanding the meanings of citizenship were local as well as national, and economic justice and political rights were seen as deeply intertwined, suggesting the deep roots of Republican-Socialist partnership so important in 1931 and the equally deep roots of its foes. By the late nineteenth century, the big developments were the increasing transformation of all spheres of life by capitalism, the power of workers' organizations, and the periodic structuring of social conflict by electoral contests, importantly punctuated by efforts to restore submission through state violence, efforts that triumphed in the decades of dictatorship. Pérez Garzón shows how important movements have been in the recent period in opening up new possibilities for social arrangements.

Pérez Garzón's story has no end, it simply stops with the present, with its struggles generated by inequalities within and between countries at a time of new organizational forms enabled by new means of communication. The twenty-first century has seen new claims of rights to counter the precarity embedded in the latest developments of capitalism, including precarious work, precarious claims on education and health care, and precarious identities as vast numbers cross national frontiers fleeing violence and poverty. In the early twenty-first century we see a major emerging divide between those who see their lives as materially and culturally enriched by the deepening web of connection across na-

tional frontiers and others who see themselves as marginalized or even diminished by such transnational processes. We can be sure that social movements will continue to be born and that they will continue to reshape institutions.

What is a latent argument beginning with the liberal explosion from the early nineteenth century on, becomes an explicit one when the author contemplates the twenty-first. Electoral politics and movement politics are deeply intertwined and his parting thoughts, perhaps a bit surprising in a book stressing 10,000 years of varied movements, is a call for democratic citizens to do good through the ballot box rather than just take to the streets. Like many good books in the social sciences its conclusions invite new questions. Why is it that what is done through the ballot box is sometimes not good at all? It is a striking feature of the early twenty-first century that democratic citizens may vote for political figures who intend to contract democracy just as there are social movements opposed to a more democratic world, some of which have made their appearance in this book's pages. This splendid synthesis celebrates the movements that have enlarged democracy, but does it take sufficient note of movements pushing in the opposite direction?

Pérez Garzón's narrative never loses sight of material circumstances. For example, he traces how the European economic crisis of 1866 led to the collapse of insurance companies on which many had depended to be able to buy substitutes so they or their sons could avoid the hated

military conscription; this in turn imbued Republican-connected mobilizations with an especially strong position against conscription. And the narrative never loses sight of the ways in which the institutions of power could provide frameworks for resistance to that power. For example, he tells us how in the late Franco period the Comisiones Obreras were formed inside the official Organización Sindical Española. But in the later chapters there is an increasing emphasis on the creativity of movements in forging connections among themselves and in forging new ideas about what a better future might look like and about how to get there. So we read not just of emerging organizational opportunities but also of the development of a discourse of democracy and of developing linkages with movements of students in the expanding universities, priests for whom Vatican II opened new options, and movements of neighbors and housewives whose permitted meetings to deal with apparently local matters became vehicles for more generalized critique. By the time the narrative moves on beyond Franco, movements are being defined by the author through their broad objectives (feminism, pacifism, environmentalism) as much as by the material position of their often middle-class adherents. One wonders whether the increasing emphasis on movements' imagination as we approach the present is to some extent a byproduct of the increasingly abundant sources through which these movements could leave messages for today's historians.

To a comparativist, the kaleidoscope of movements portrayed in this work poses a

final question. To what extent are the many processes that lead people to challenge power that are analyzed in these pages specifically Spanish and to what extent do the arguments made here apply far more broadly. This theme is posed by the lovely cover image showing determined working people acting collectively at the turn of the last century. It's an Italian's vision. Does this matter?

We have had innumerable studies of particular movements. This fine book helps us think about the many roles movements generally have played in shaping the ways we live and what we think are possible ways to live.

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Luis Aboites

El norte entre algodones: Población, trabajo agrícola y optimismo en México, 1930-1970

México, DF, El Colegio de México/Centro de Estudios Históricos, 2013, 461 páginas

Mario Cerutti y Araceli Almaraz (Coords.)

Algodón en el norte de México (1920-1970): Impactos regionales de un cultivo estratégico

Tijuana, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2013, 358 páginas

En los últimos años una oleada de nuevas investigaciones sobre el algodón, tanto en su vertiente agrícola como industrial, ha iluminado la variedad de experiencias de especialización productiva en esta fibra, y los sistemas de encadenamientos de su cultivo, comercio e industrialización a escala global (véase, Beckert, 2014; Farnie & Jeremy, 2007). En estos nuevos horizontes de debate sobre el cultivo y procesamiento de la fibra que hizo posible la primera revolución industrial, la historiografía agraria mexicanista contribuye con dos obras de gran relieve: un estudio de autor de Luis Aboites (*El Norte entre algodones*); y un volumen colectivo de ocho capítulos coordinado por Mario Ce-

rutti y Araceli Almaraz (*Algodón en el Norte de México...*).

Al estudiar experiencias regionales del cultivo dialogando con procesos globales, ambas obras enriquecen nuestro conocimiento sobre el desempeño general del sector agrícola mexicano en el siglo XX, visto a través de un vector: la economía del algodón, su cadena productiva, y sus entornos político-institucionales, sociales y medioambientales. Tanto por el tema como por su enfoque y marco temporal, así como por el sustento empírico que ofrecen, estas investigaciones consiguen explicar acabadamente el proceso de especialización productiva que conllevó la expansión del cultivo y su industrialización en el norte de