

us with a much more detailed guide as to how significant, and how irreplaceable or otherwise, truth commission materials have been in domestic atrocity jurisprudence in Chile. We already know, however, that direct witness testimony, and exhaustive re-examination of contemporaneous court, human rights organisation, and forensic records have been equally if not more central to the current prosecution universe.

Discussion of reliance on Rettig Commission material by Spanish courts (in Chapter 5) should perhaps treat overseas domestic courts as ‘third-country’, rather than as international, courts. It should also be borne in mind that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, also mentioned in the chapter, has no mandate to pronounce directly on the substance of criminal cases at all, being solely concerned with ruling on state compliance or otherwise with regional Convention obligations. These observations weaken the book’s contention that ‘late justice’ in Chile is in essence built on the foundations provided by its Truth Commission efforts. Any such contention with regard to the ‘Valech Commission’ – Chile’s second Truth Commission, which documented recognised cases of survivors of torture – is moreover untenable since an explicit 50-year embargo on public, including judicial, use of Commission materials was built into its legal mandate. This characteristic should perhaps have been mentioned in the book’s discussion of this commission. Overall, while there are useful accounts here of recent developments in one of the classic transitional justice case studies, the challenge of crafting a transferable framework for evaluating truth commission impact remains.

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Luis van Isschot, *The Social Origins of Human Rights: Protesting Political Violence in Colombia’s Oil Capital, 1919–2010* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015), pp. xxviii + 297, \$39.95 pb, \$34.95 E-book.

Luis van Isschot makes a remarkable contribution to the field of twentieth-century Colombian history with his book, *The Social Origins of Human Rights: Protesting Political Violence in Colombia’s Oil Capital, 1919–2010*. This book is a masterful narrative that interweaves and integrates the history of Colombia’s iconic oil capital, Barrancabermeja, with the history of human rights in Colombia. Van Isschot’s central argument is that the history of human rights movements must be written from the local context and from the ground up. While he does not discount the importance of international actors and of the global context that allowed for human rights movements in Colombia to gain recognition and legitimacy in the 1980s, van Isschot demonstrates persuasively that human rights activism during the decade of the 2000s in Barrancabermeja was fundamentally shaped by the city’s long history of civic and union activism.

The book’s first chapter begins by providing the early history of the region of Magdalena Medio, where Barrancabermeja is located, to explain how this town and region were located on the periphery and on the frontier of Colombia’s nation-state formation. The author then focuses on how Barrancabermeja from 1910 to the 1960s became a place of vibrant union activism and of nationalist politics; Tropical Oil Company’s dominant presence in the region as a major foreign economic actor facilitated the unionisation of workers because of the enclave type of social and economic relations in the region. Indeed, van Isschot points out that Tropical Oil

made little to no investment in the infrastructure of Barrancabermeja nor in social well-being programmes for its Colombian workers and yet provided special housing and privileges for its non-Colombian work force, which led to widespread resentment towards the company. The Colombian state, he explains, adopted a contradictory position: on the one hand it supported oil workers' right to present complaints against the company and, on the other, it sent the army in to Barrancabermeja to arrest workers and to repress strikes. The author, whose research is meticulous and thorough, covers all angles of the historical development of Barrancabermeja, when a greater focus and development of the discussion of the relationship between the state and the unions might have been more fruitful to understanding the origins of the Colombian state's paradoxical position vis-à-vis human rights movements in the twenty-first century.

The Colombian state took on a greater relevance to the politics of the region when the process of handing over the oil concession to state control began in 1951 during Colombia's civil war and with the creation of the Empresa Colombiana de Petróleos (Colombian Petroleum Company, ECOPETROL). Van Isschot argues persuasively that the marginalisation of workers and their claims unleashed a wave of civic and union protests; it also led to greater cooperation between peasant, workers and student movements in Barrancabermeja. The national political context of the National Front of the 1960s, which essentially obliged Colombian citizens to vote every four years for either the Conservative or the Liberal party, led to the exclusion of popular-based movements that had previously been channelled through partisan mechanisms and rendered partisan politics a largely clientelistic affair. In Barrancabermeja *paros cívicos* became the mechanism by which political and social-economic grievances were aired; van Isschot informs us that, principally in the 1960s and 1970s, these protests were organised around the state's failure to provide basic services such as water, roads, education and healthcare. During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s guerrilla groups such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, ELN) altered the fabric of Barrancabermeja's political life with its radicalisation of some individuals and groups on the Left. The other consequence of the emergence of these armed political actors was the displacement of large numbers of peasants from rural areas of Magdalena Medio to Barrancabermeja bringing with them – as van Isschot compellingly shows – issues of violence.

The next two chapters document how, in the 1980s, human rights gradually came to top the main agenda of civic protest in Barrancabermeja; the growing number of massacres carried out by the paramilitaries in the Magdalena Medio region as well as the complicity of some branches of the Colombian state with these human rights violations brought human rights to the forefront. The rise of human rights organisations was intimately linked to the decline of the power of the Unión Sindical Obrera de la Industria del Petróleo (Workers' Petroleum Industry Syndicated Union, USO) as a result of its brutal repression; in other words, activism based on union membership and class solidarity failed in its objectives and came at a tremendous human cost. In Chapter 3, van Isschot sheds light on the unique challenges that Colombian human rights organisations faced in the 1970s and early 1980s vis-à-vis other human rights organisations that were challenging dictatorships in respect of their human rights violations. In the case of Colombia, a formal democracy that relied on frequent use of state of emergency legislation, the attribution of blame was more difficult. In this

section of the book, van Isschot weaves in the life stories of human rights defenders who were killed for the cause and gives us a window into Barrancabermeja's particular brand of political radicalism. Implicit in the life stories is the close connection between political radicalism and a free and tolerant approach to life, sexuality, and *la rumba* that Barrancabermeja fostered. The murders of these leaders are poignant not only because of the individual loss of life, but also because the reader understands that the paramilitaries carried out the relentless repression of an inclusive, combative and tolerant political culture. Particular attention is given to the organisation *Corporación Regional para la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos* (Regional Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, CREDHOS) established in 1987. Van Isschot argues compellingly that CREDHOS played an important role in depoliticising victims of human rights violations; it shifted the discourse by arguing that they were citizens and civilians in need of state protection rather than subversives/sympathisers with guerrillas who were complicit of violent actions and thus deserving of their fate.

Van Isschot's book is a multi-layered work that lends itself to many angles of interpretation because of its sophisticated and nuanced analysis of Colombian violence. It successfully shows the connection between the different periods of violence throughout the twentieth century and more recently; sadly, despite the courage of Colombian human rights defenders and the vibrancy of Barrancabermeja's political culture of resistance, the assassination of leaders of grassroots organisations continues. The one quibble that this reviewer has with the book is that it is too short (which will however enable it to be assigned more frequently for class study) for the richness of its research and for the arguments that it makes explicitly and implicitly. In particular, for readers who are not entirely familiar with Colombian twentieth-century history this book should have explained more so that the reader could digest its profound implications.

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John Abromeit, Bridget María Chesterton, Gary Marotta and York Norman (eds.), *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing, 2016), pp. x + 354, £70.00, hb.

This book is a timely addition to studies on the nature, history and transformation of populism in Europe and the Americas. It originates in a 2011 conference motivated in part by the rise of the Tea Party movement in the United States and right-wing populist parties in Europe. The victory of Brexit in Great Britain and Donald Trump in the United States in 2016 further highlights the need for and value of this comparative work.

The volume is organised in 18 chapters covering a wide range of populist experiences in Europe (Germany and the Balkans) and the Americas (the United States and Latin America) from the nineteenth century to the present, preceded by an introduction outlining the theoretical framework. Based on Richard Hofstadter's insights, the essays seek to address how populist ideas and practices, originally linked to 'progressive ideals such as popular sovereignty, political inclusivity, and egalitarian anti-elitism', have been 'effectively appropriated by parties that embraced conservative