

stronger in the absence of solid governing majorities and split into two chambers, did (*pace* Deegan-Krause, p. 226) create a stronger institutional barrier to encroachment in the Czech Republic.

Jason Wittenburg's study of Hungary is more narrowly focused and his puzzle is of a different sort, but it is also linked to issues of general theoretical concern to the democratization process. If the Czech Republic and Slovakia offer profound similarities in (inter alia) their shared history of a common state, their postcommunist institutional structures, and the attitudes of their populations, Hungary constitutes an "unlikely" and "ironic" case for the persistence of political preferences from the precommunist period. Yet despite profound changes in the shape of the economy and the class structure, and with a long-lasting authoritarian regime inimical to autonomous social organization and committed to an overt socialization program to generate "New Socialist Man," the distribution of the right-wing vote exhibited "extraordinary" continuity between the last effectively competitive election of 1945 and the second postcommunist election of 1994. (1994 was significant because the first free election in 1990 was exceptional, not least because so many left-inclined voters voted against the reformed communists as a manifestation of a general desire for regime change.) Existing theories of attitudinal persistence did not resolve this conundrum, since neither expressive nor instrumental approaches would predict Hungarian continuity after the resumption of democratic politics.

Wittenburg finds the answer to his persistence puzzle—continuity alongside high levels of electoral volatility—in the religious life of the community. Unfortunately, there is no space here to question how far 1945 can be taken as a departure point for embedded political preferences that then persisted, save to note that the case is not made simply because 1945 was (mostly) a free election. However, the uncovering of the mechanism is persuasive. Wittenburg reviews the generally familiar story of communist attitudes and policies toward the churches and a catalog of mechanisms similar to those used elsewhere in the region to undermine religious beliefs and practices. His painstaking documentation of the activism, counterstrategies, and resistance of many priests at the local (settlement) level shows how the Catholic Church in particular could foster social interaction outside party auspices. It is in the participation in and maintenance of the *church community*, signaled by children's participation in religious instruction, that the explanation for persistence can be found. In fact, this seems quite compatible with a modified "encapsulation" or subcultural explanation.

The unravelling of one element of sources of the Right is an important contribution to the understanding of Hungary's distinctive development after 1990: a gradual polarization into two left–right blocs, represented by the Socialists (MSZP) and (through its transmutation)

the Alliance of Young Democrats (Fidesz). Religiosity has long been identified as a marker of the Hungarian Right (unlike in Slovakia). I expect that in practice, few would take issue with Wittenburg's categorisation of particular Hungarian parties but would not necessarily follow his argument. If the Right is defined as "the principal opposition to their 'leftist' opponents" (p. 37), then in 1990 Fidesz and the Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) also belong here. Fidesz in particular was bitterly anti-communist. If "post-communist rightist parties are palpably more secular" than their precommunist counterparts, then—given that virtually all parties favored the move to a capitalist economy—what is the basis for distinguishing a liberal bloc as secular and free market?

One should not end on a note of criticism of two fine works. The issue of divergent and congruent paths might also be interestingly applied to Slovenia and Croatia, with similar histories of sharing a common state and no history (unlike Serbia) of independence. Divergent patterns of political socialization could also be explored in Poland, where there remain strong regional differences in religious and secular attitudes to politics. Both authors have provided frameworks of wider potential interest. Their studies are interesting and cogently argued. This reviewer learned a great deal from them, and that is the best test of all.

Power from Experience: Urban Popular Movements in Late Twentieth Century Mexico. By Paul Lawrence Haber. University Park: Penn State Press. 2006. 320p. \$55.00. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707071216

— Heather Williams, *Pomona College*

With social peace in Mexico unraveling just five years after the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was voted from power in 2000, it would seem an apt time for a new book-length study on urban popular movements in Mexico. This is ironic because by the end of the twentieth century, most Mexicans were optimistic about the possibility that competitive, fair elections would settle questions of authority and law and that political parties would aggregate the interests of the electorate. However, half a decade later, disputes over federal elections generated mass demonstrations from primary to final balloting, urban protests repeatedly paralyzed downtown Mexico City, an ongoing war between drug cartels left thousands dead in the north and west of the country, riots in the village of Atenco near the capital turned deadly, human rights accusations marred police and military, and by the dawn of the new Calderon administration at the end of 2006, intractable *plantones* (occupations) and paramilitary violence were bringing federal troops into the sleepy colonial city of Oaxaca.

Paul Lawrence Haber makes his contribution to a rich literature on protest and social movements in Mexico, arguing that the urban poor have never been more important. "The nonunionized urban poor," he writes, "have

become the most populous social class: they are more numerous than unionized workers and the peasantry, and they far outstrip what by Latin American standards is a significant middle class" (p. 1). He profiles two urban movements: the Asamblea de Barrios in Mexico City and the Comité de Defensa Popular in the northern city of Durango. As such, Haber works in the tradition of Jonathan Fox, Jeff Rubin, Joe Foweraker, Robert Bedzek, Judith Adler Hellman, and Maria Lorena Cook among others, echoing their conclusions that workers, peasants, and the urban poor have played a significant role in Mexico's contemporary history, challenging powerful actors through petition, protest, and direct action in neighborhoods, municipal councils, and state agencies. Haber also heeds the lessons of Wayne Cornelius and Susan Eckstein, whose classic urban studies in Mexico of the 1970s showed how the then-ruling party used patronage and punishment to maintain control over the urban poor.

The purpose of this study, Haber states in his first chapter, is to consider what the transformation from urban low-income movement to party politics has meant for the country's democratic transition and its future consolidation. He draws the conclusion that party politics, for the most part, is bad for popular movement organizations: It tends to deplete them of key leaders when they run for public office and often reduces once-autonomous and democratic organizations to patronage instruments of political parties.

Haber's chronological account of the movement organizations in the period he covers is generally very good. He is correct in pointing out the paradox of popular movement decline at the very moment when political opening ought to have made organizing easier. Whereas many observers in the 1980s began to speak of the democratizing potential of "civil society," or of that collectivity of organized groups operating autonomously from the state and making regular demands of it, by the end of the 1990s, these groups seemed nearly irrelevant in politics. The citizens' organizations that had led the cleanup efforts after the 1985 earthquake in Mexico City, when the government's emergency efforts foundered, were a shadow of their former selves a decade later. The popular organizations that had stood up for workers and city residents rendered unemployed and penniless by rough rounds of austerity, inflation, privatization, and government cutbacks in the early 1980s were all but defunct as well. No major organization or trade union or social institution beyond the Catholic Church was large enough to influence votes or the party platforms of the three major presidential candidates in the watershed 1997 and 2000 federal elections.

This study, while empirically rich, suffers from lack of current data and it does not advance social movement theory significantly. The author's principal focus is on the way movement organizations in Mexico City and Durango reacted to the welfare policies of the Salinas administra-

tion (1988–94), and his material all but stops in 1994 with only cursory narrative epilogues at the end of each case study history. Thus, with each of the movement organizations under study in decline by the end of this period, he can offer only two arguments about urban popular movements: first, that they are important to those who participate in and work with them, and second, that they change the culture and political economy in which they exist. These conclusions, which are neither predictive nor empirically disconfirmable, offer the reader no way of understanding what forces overtook the urban popular movement in the post-PRI era, or if in fact urban popular movements were likely to surge again under specified conditions. They also offer no framework for understanding some of the most consequential urban protest events in Mexico's history between 1995 and 1998, primarily focused on the government's human rights record in the southern state of Chiapas, and around the dislocations caused by Mexico's devaluation crisis in 1995 and 1996.

This study will be of use to historians of contemporary urban Mexican politics. However, with regard to the author's own question of how movements and parties interact, new scholarship on urban Mexico would do well to theorize this relationship by synthesizing social movement theory with emerging work on political parties, collective action, and institutional outcomes.

Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America. Edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. 368p. \$65.00 cloth, \$25.00 paper.

DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707071228

— Aníbal Pérez-Liñán, *University of Pittsburgh*

It is not very often that an edited book has the potential to carve a new niche in the field. This may be one of those rare volumes. The collection of essays edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky lays out a promising research agenda, not only for Latin Americanists but for students of democratization in general.

In the 1990s, the new institutionalism emerged as the dominant perspective for understanding the workings of democracy in Latin America. The analysis of electoral systems, parties, legislatures, presidential powers, and—more recently—judicial institutions yielded a vibrant intellectual production that had its most visible constituency in the Political Institutions Section of the Latin American Studies Association. At the same time, colleagues trained in the tradition of political sociology recurrently wondered: how could we *assume* that formal rules are the main explanatory variable in a region where the law is often ignored, distorted, or subverted by powerful political actors?

Informal Institutions and Democracy addresses this challenge by introducing a theoretical framework that bridges