significant popular support. In fact, there is some historical evidence that Puerto Ricans find something close to consensus in only two areas: their rejection of violence as a political tactic, and their lukewarm attitude towards political independence. The vote in the most recent plebiscite (in 1993, with 73.6 per cent of the electorate voting), gave the statehood option 49.1 per cent, commonwealth 46.5 per cent, and independence 4.4 per cent. The very data presented by the authors provide a partial explanation. ‘Between 1970 and 1990’, they note, ‘federal transfers to individuals in Puerto Rico — through food stamps and other programs — rose from $500 million to $6 billion’ (p. 267). During that same period, the ‘empire’s’ share of Puerto Rican personal income went from 15 to 30 per cent. Noting the impressive rise in pro-statehood voting, the authors quite correctly understand that it is ‘logical’ that this tends ‘to make statehood a more viable option than independence’ (p. 280). Is it any surprise that even independentista political platforms insist that US citizenship should be retained for a reasonable period after independence?

Certainly, the international community has not shown itself disposed to pick a fight with the choices Puerto Ricans have made. We are told that in 1953 the UN General Assembly voted 26 to 16 in favour of removing the island from the list of non-self-governing territories (p. 173). We are not told that in 1971 the vote was 57 to 26, and in 1982, 70 to 30.

If the independence option the authors favour does not have popular support, how then to achieve the desired political goal? On this the authors end with a note of despair that a native Puerto Rican solution might be in the offing. Only a ‘broad movement’ of the anti-capitalist working class in the US and the world, they conclude, can help Puerto Rico achieve real independence (pp. 315, 339, 340). They end by professing their Marxism (without the teleology, they tell us) and anticipate ‘a radical transformation of existing political, social and economic structures as part of a global anti-capitalist project’ which will eliminate ‘capitalist competition and private control of productive assets’ (p. 332).

It is strange indeed that nowhere is there any discussion of the fact that Cuba, Puerto Rico’s Caribbean neighbour, has done precisely that. Without such, or other, comparative perspectives, the authors’ radical strategy for their island’s future appears as pure ideological wishful thinking. One can only hope that the many who understand that the present associated commonwealth arrangement cannot continue forever and who are unenthusiastic at the thought of the island being the 51st state of the Union will not simply sit around waiting for the day of global deliverance the authors wish for.

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ANTHONY P. MAINGOT


I have a vested interest in the subject matter of this book. I am a historian of El Salvador, and two of the three sections in Almeida’s study revolve around chronological periods that I have either researched previously or am in the process of researching now. I first came into contact with Almeida’s investigations on El Salvador a few years ago when I began investigating the historiography of the period covered by the second section of this book, the late 1960s and early 1970s. During
my research, I came across Almeida’s 2003 article that he wrote in the early stages of his career (he is now recently tenured in sociology at Texas A&M). In hindsight, that article was the precursor to the second section of this book, and it also provided something of an overview of the book’s main argument about the rise and fall of protest waves. I was impressed with that article, and I am similarly impressed by this book. *Waves of Protest* is a well-researched, well-organised and clearly written study that makes a noteworthy contribution to the field of Salvadorean history, and presumably to historical sociology as well, although I am less qualified to assess the latter than the former. Almeida is trained as a sociologist, but he did admirable historical research for this study, and those of us who work solely on El Salvador are sad to see him moving on to another country. Almeida is a promising scholar who has the potential to make a significant mark.

Almeida’s main argument revolves around the relationship between the state and civil society. He contends that protest waves often grow, even necessarily so, in response to liberalisation by authoritarian state managers. The openings created by those managers allow oppositional sectors within civil society – previously alienated by state policies – to mobilise. If those sectors mobilise long enough, they can establish a core of opposition that is not easily suppressed if and when state managers reverse course and return to their authoritarian roots. Almeida ‘brings the state back’ to the study of protest and revolutionary movements. Even though debates over the relationship between the state and revolutionary movements go back many decades now, especially within the field of historical sociology, Almeida’s study reminds us that there remains some argumentative reductionism in regard to a case like El Salvador – a repressive, authoritarian state versus a resisting civil society. Almeida shows us the complexity of the causes of protest, and of an authoritarian state’s ability to reform from within, and even of the need for those reforms to occur before an oppositional civil society can coalesce.

Almeida’s argument is supported extremely well by the era covered in the second section of the book, the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is appropriate that the precursor to this book would be an article focused on that period. Almeida did some impressive original research for this section; my co-author (Héctor Lindo-Fuentes) and I are mining his bibliography and scrutinising his evidence, and we find it all quite impressive. We will be duly citing him.

Almeida’s argument also works well with his first section on the 1920s and 1930s, or at least with the historiographical approach he uses. His basic argument is that an opposition wave emerged in response to a window of political liberalisation and labour reforms enacted by the government. That wave was headed by labour unions and radical political organisations – such as the Communist Party – with roots in the urban areas. The decisive component of Almeida’s argument is that these urban radicals then supposedly made the leap to the rural areas and carried their organisational impetus to the peasants and rural workers – indigenous and ladino alike – of the western countryside. The outcome of their organisational efforts was an insurrectionary wave in late January 1932.

This argument is the traditional approach to the origins of the 1932 uprising. Almeida advances it with some original research in newspapers, but compared to his second section, he relies more heavily on secondary literature. I have disagreed with the traditional approach to 1932; I don’t believe the urban-to-rural leap occurred as substantively as the traditionalists suggest. Instead, I think the origins of the January 1932 uprising lay more in the distinct history of the western region and its rural poor.
I’m not convinced the origins of that revolt have as much to do with openings by reformist state managers as they have to do with the intransigence of rural landed elites and ethnic conflict at the local level. If I’m correct, then the period 1927–32 doesn’t support Almeida’s overarching thesis in *Waves of Protest* as well as does his second section. Other historians of El Salvador, such as Jeffrey Gould and Aldo Lauria-Santiago, disagree with me on this, however, and Almeida employs their work to advance his thesis.

The final section deals with the wave of protests that emerged in the early 2000s in response to the conservative ARENA government’s structural adjustment reforms. Almeida refers to this as ‘protest by globalization’. On its own the section is impressive – it makes a valuable contribution to the sociology/history of El Salvador – but its argument does not cohere well with the prior two sections. The precursor conditions leading up to the protests of the early 2000s – that is, the civil war (1981–1992) – seem too distinct compared to the prior two sections. Because of the war, the traditional power structures were forced to bargain rather than electing to do so for their own reasons, and thus the link between the lesson of this period and the prior two seems vague.

I remain impressed with *Waves of Protest* and with Almeida as a scholar. It is to be hoped that this book will be translated into Spanish and made available in El Salvador, where its impact would be strong. I am already looking forward to reading the results of Almeida’s next project.

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The historiography of Central America has been so improved in recent decades that one might easily talk of it being ‘revolutionised’ in a manner that has conspicuously failed to occur in the region’s political life. The end of the civil wars in the 1990s did not, of course, remove all forms of social conflict, or still less markedly reduce poverty, but it did enable a return to archives that were often reorganised by professionals with advanced training and a fresh sensibility as to the richness and consequence of official and other papers. At the same time, at least one political and scholarly generation had, often at appreciable cost, learned about the insufficiencies of concepts and methods prevalent in the 1970s, and was actively seeking in the Americas and in Europe to generate a more original and inquiring research agenda, beyond the clarion calls of partisanship that had been all but inevitable at times of war, horrible repression and quite open intromission on behalf of powerful external forces. In terms of history and the social sciences, this principally meant a re-interrogation of convictions passed down the structuralist lineage, particularly with respect to dependency, to macro-economic certainties and to hard-edged categories of identity, agency and sociability. Many ideas were up for grabs anew. At the same time, the highly fashionable tide of post-structuralist theory, which had thrust a tenured salient out of cultural studies into seemingly inoculated disciplines like geography, exercised a relatively modest impact on Central American scholars or work on the region, which remained small, poor and almost as marginalised after