Review: New Authoritarianism in Latin America

Reviewed Work(s): The New Authoritarianism in Latin America by David Collier

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NEW AUTHORITARIANISM IN LATIN AMERICA

David Collier, editor: *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America.* (Princeton, N.J. Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. 456. $25.00.)

In terms of published materials, this excellent volume is a "state of the art" presentation of one of the main currents of research and thought on the subject of the evolution of Latin America's political economy. Its focus is primarily the ideas of Guillermo O'Donnell and, to a lesser extent, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the two most important Latin American political theorists in the eyes of most North American scholars of Latin American politics.

In this volume, besides essays by O'Donnell and Cardoso, six scholars provide thoughtful commentaries. Two are Latin Americans, José Serra and Julio Cotler, and the other four are North Americans—Albert O. Hirschman, Robert R. Kaufman, James R. Kurth, and David Collier.

Attempting to explain the coming of military governments to four of the most advanced Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay), O'Donnell developed the concept of bureaucratic authoritarianism (BA). Boiled down to the bare bones of its reasoning, O'Donnell identifies three factors which came to bear on the fragile Latin American political system. First, there is an increasing importance of technocratic roles in the society, in part because these technocrats link the Latin American societies into advanced capitalist production on the international level. Secondly, there was a political stage of populism in the more advanced countries during which people were organized behind a set of economic demands that were impossible to meet within the framework of a peripherial, dependent capitalist system. These demands led to political crisis, a newer version of the revolution of rising expectations. Thirdly, there was a set of problems connected with the exhaustion of economic growth that came at the end of the import-substitution industrialization cycle. Confronted by these economic problems, and wanting to promote industrialization and attract foreign capital, orthodox (Industrial Monetary Fund) economic policies were adopted that heightened the political crisis. At this point the civilian technocrats made an alliance with the interventionist, technocratic elements of the Latin American militaries. Supported by the foreign-oriented internationalist bourgeoisie, a coup would take place which would be followed by bureaucratic authoritarian rule.

The characteristics of these new systems include a repressive demobilization of the popular sectors (particularly the labor unions) in an effort to create the favorable investment climate felt necessary to attract foreign capital. Central roles in the governing went to apolitical technocrats and military men. The economic growth that does take place in these systems is heavily concentrated in a few hands while the lower sectors may, in fact, be impoverished.

In his introductory essay, Collier reviews the main points of O'Donnell's schema and states that the purpose of the volume is to discuss four

sets of questions. First, what are the alternative ways the concept can be used? Secondly, how can the ideas be refined? Third, what can this set of propositions tell one about Latin American countries that don't have this system of rule? Finally, how will the systems evolve?

In what also amounts to an introductory essay, Cardoso skillfully explores the concept of authoritarianism but always with the eye of the skeptic. He speaks of the possible degree of compatibility between different political regimes and differing organizations of the state rather than of economic determinism. Finally, he concludes that used cautiously, bureaucratic authoritarianism is a good description of current military governments in the advanced South American countries but that it is too vague to be an explanation, there simply is too much that doesn't fit the O'Donnell ideas of how these systems came to be. His tone is very similar to his protests against the overly deterministic use which many North American scholars have made of his dependency theorizing.

Hirschman's essay, "The Turn to Authoritarianism in Latin America and the Search for Its Economic Determinants," is a wise meditation, ambivalent in its conclusions, modest in its claims, but important reading. As an economist long sensitive to the political currents of Latin America, he appears to be ready to lay part of the blame for the demise of Latin American democracy on the doorstep of the economists. They have helped provoke the crisis by raising the consciousness of the population about economic problems. "This strange process of ideological escalation (which caused frustration in Latin America) may well have contributed to that pervasive sense of being in a desperate predicament which is a precondition for radical change" (pp 85-6). He also has some interesting thought on why Colombia and Venezuela have so far been able to escape bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Serra engages in some overkill in attacking what he calls "three mistaken theses regarding the connection between industrialization and authoritarian governments." First, he aptly demonstrates that the idea of superexploitation, found in the work of writers such as Rui Marini, is simplistic and overly deterministic. Then he attacks, as does Hirschman, O'Donnell's idea that the difficulties in the deepening *(profundización)* of the industrialization process, are particularly fraught with tensions. (O'Donnell defines deepening as situating, through backward linkages, intermediate input and capital-goods industries, once the last-stage industries, which turn out consumption or final-demand goods, are established.) Most of the authors in this collection seem to agree that this may have happened in Argentina but not in the other countries. After spending 36 pages on that topic, Serra moves on to refute the claims of those who believe that the rationality of the bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes lead to economic growth. He doesn't find much rationality and disputes some aspects of the growth.

Kaufman provides a long and revealing discussion of the economic and social problems to which the bureaucratic-authoritarian leaders address themselves. To accomplish this he first analyzes the character of the four military governments that emerged in the South American cone

during the 1960's and early 1970's in terms of their principal economic policies and political changes. Then he tries to trace backward from these governments to the specific economic crises of the type O'Donnell describes. Here he ends by suggesting that social contradictions are likely to develop most intensely within competitive systems—and the more profound the contradictions, the harsher the governmental responses. Kaufman also discusses the sorts of economic changes that followed the emergence of these new governments.

Cotler's essay titled "State and Regime: Comparative Notes on the Southern Cone and the 'Enclave' Societies," is, at least to this reviewer, the least successful work in the book. The problem is twofold. First, he is more interested in staying within his own framework of analysis than he is in dealing with O'Donnell's ideas. Second, he is quite concerned with discussing the superiority of Mariátegui's ideas on Peru over the ideas of Haya de la Torre than with the mainstream of this volume. While this reviewer shares the preference for Mariátegui's analysis, the essay does little to advance the argument of the volume.

The other essay which is disappointing, although for quite different reasons, is Kurth's attempt to compare the literature on industrial change and political change in Europe with the Latin American experience. Using the ideas of Alexander Gerschenkron and the abundant research on European economic history, he tries to suggest what the lessons are and to identify possible areas of research. It is difficult to be sure why this essay didn't work out well. Certainly Kurth demonstrates a knowledge of European literature and he also knows Latin America. It may be a problem of differences in experiences, particularly since there is no European equivalency of the United States hegemony over Latin America. It may be that the study of economic history is so much more advanced in Europe than in Latin America that the analysis seems lopsided. In any case, the essay is often provocative but never convincing in terms of its relevance.

Appropriately, O'Donnell's essay is insightful and interesting. At the same time, one wishes it were more directed at dealing with some of the criticisms made in the other essays even though this might have produced a work with a less coherent theme. Essentially, the Argentine political economist concentrates on the tensions existing in bureaucratic-authoritarian states. To look at this matter, one obviously has to deal with possible sources of change and, hence, the future. In probing the soft spots of bureaucratic-authoritarian systems, O'Donnell sheds a great deal of light on his perspective and confronts a number of interesting questions. He also presents a detailed set of characteristics for bureaucratic authoritarianism, some of which would not be agreed to by other writers in this book.

In his concluding essay, Collier makes a number of hardheaded observations. For example, he refers to the "striking diversity" of ways in which the term "bureaucratic authoritarianism" is used and feels it should only be retained as what he calls a "zone word." He also offers a slightly different set of characteristics for those countries in the zone. He suggests that the populist stage in various states needs further study. He

is also helpfully agnostic on the matter of how much we know about the sources of bureaucratic authoritarianism.

Taken as a whole, this is an admirable set of essays. Collier deserves much of the credit since he organized it, doubtless prodded the authors, and, finally, produced the book. One wishes other conceptualizations in political development would be subjected to the same degree of scrutiny by scholars of this quality. The other aspect of the book which the reviewer found refreshing was the willingness of most of the essays to face up to the limitations of the concept.

—MICHAEL J. FRANCIS

GREEN/MARITAIN

Julien Green and Jacques Maritain: *Une Grande Amitié: Correspondence (1926-1972),* ed. Jean-Pierre Piriou. (Paris: Plon, 1979. Pp. 217.)

It would be indeed difficult to find as moving and eloquent a document of a friendship between two writers as this book presents. Jacques Maritain and Julien Green, as the editor Jean-Pierre Piriou notes, had much in common. They seemed made for each other. Both Catholic converts brought up in Protestant families, both careful craftsmen of the French language in its classical purity, both devoted patriots of France as well as the United States, their friendship grew from the beginning out of a mutual concern (tempered by a discreet *courtoisie)* for the things that really count in life.

The title echoes an early memoir by Raïssa Maritain *(Les Grandes Amitiés: Souvenirs* [New York, 1941]), which chronicles the early lives of the Maritains—especially their relationships with Péguy, Psichari, Bergson, and Bloy. The photographs of Green and Maritain on front and back covers make for a most attractive presentation, and Piriou has included an informative introduction, an index of names, and a brief remembrance by Julien Green entitled: "Jacques Maritain Vivant."

There are interesting notes on important figures in the world of French letters. One learns of a little-known religious current in Lautréamont. One learns that Max Jacob's response to the conflict of spirit and flesh was daily practicing confession and Communion. But this correspondence is remarkably free of literary gossip; it is focused on the preoccupations shared by the two writers throughout their long careers: the dilemma of the Christian novelist, the liberal movements within Catholicism associated with Vatican II, the contemporary applications of Thomist theology effected by Maritain's writings.

The meditations on the Christian novelist are significant addenda to the existing passages from Green's *Journal* and Maritain's aesthetics *(Lettre à Jean Cocteau, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry,* and *The Responsibility of the Artist)* that treat of this ageless problem. Green here continues to argue for the ultimate impossibility of a clear solution—the novelist naturally seeks to preserve mystery—whereas Maritain holds up Green's