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Judith A. Teichman. *The Politics of Freeing Markets in Latin America: Chile, Argentina, and Mexico.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. xv + 273 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-4959-0.

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Neoliberal Policies vs. Democracy

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Based on the case studies of Chile, Argentina, and Mexico, Judith Teichman argues that electoral democracy allows for broader societal input into the nature of neoliberal reforms in Latin America (p. 9). The recent collapse of Fernando de la Rua's government in Argentina on December 20, 2001, in the face of a "social explosion," however, severely challenges this argument. Although carried out under a functioning electoral democracy, Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo's austerity measures which were intended to win support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and failed to take into account the needs of the vast majority of people in Argentina. Teichman's book is a sympathetic portrayal of elite efforts to impose market reforms with little thought or concern, either from Teichman or governmental officials, as to how these policies will impact the masses. As a result, I question the author's understanding of democracy as well as the intent and consequences of neoliberal reforms.

Part of my problem with this book emerges out of a methodological divide that is a result of different disciplinary assumptions. Teichman, professor of political science at the University of Toronto, blames the failure of reform in Latin America on an "Iberian legacy of clientelism, corporatism, and patrimonialism" (p. 10). My graduate school training in history was deeply grounded in a dependency theory approach that found such a critique to be antiquated and perhaps even racist, preferring instead to place blame for poverty in Latin America at the feet of an industrial core that held the region at the periphery of economic development. Teichman fails to critique the assumptions of corporatism and never presents alternative perspectives to this hypothesis, which undercuts the theoretical strength and contribution of this volume.

A second, and for me more troubling, methodological concern is the elite perspective Teichman brings to the issue of neoliberal reforms, and more broadly her use of sources. Teichman bases her research on "open-ended interviews with key actors." Of the twenty-eight interviews in Argentina, twenty-nine in Chile, thirty-six in Mexico, and twenty-one from the World Bank and IMF, only a total of nine are with labor union or political party

leaders who might present a critical and sustained analysis of neoliberal policies. The rest are from government officials or private businesses who are deeply committed to these neoliberal policies (pp. xi, 219-20). This elite policy perspective is the polar extreme of my training in social history, and in fact the book hardly acknowledges the impact that these policies have on the general populous. Focusing on elites to the exclusion of other viewpoints blinds the author to the inevitable social explosions, such as the one that recently ripped through Argentina, and precludes her from analyzing such events.

Teichman begins her book with the statement that "market reform has involved fierce political struggles with important contingents of losers and potential losers" which include "state bureaucrats and businessmen, as well as populist party die-hards and trade unionists" (p. xi). It is instructive to note who she excludes from this list. For example, the Mapuche organization Consejo de Todas las Tierras has presented one of the most sustained and vigorous critiques of neoliberal policies in Chile, but yet they are not mentioned once in this volume. If for no other reason than to understand better the challenges that elites face in imposing these policies, Teichman should have interviewed the Mapuche intellectual Aucan Huilcaman or at least referenced his writings. One of the most widely known champions of the anti-neoliberalist cause is the Zapatista movement in Mexico, but Chiapas (which Vicente Fox wants to turn into one giant free trade zone) scores only four brief mentions in passing. Even the seventh chapter of the book which purports to examine resistance to neoliberal reforms casts the issue as one of how elites can best exclude from political discourse any opposition to globalization. This exclusion of alternative perspectives extends to Teichman's use of sources which is primarily limited to conservative publications such as the Latin American Weekly Report and the Mexico and NAFTA Report.

Teichman acknowledges that initial phases of neoliberal reforms, such as those the "Chicago Boys" carried out under Pinochet's brutal dictatorship in Chile, tended to be undemocratic, but she blames this process and the resulting "skewed distribution of benefits and losses" on the enduring authoritarian legacy of Iberian colonization (p. 211). But it is not just the "process" of implementation that is undemocratic, but the "policies" themselves are undemocratic. "It is now incumbent upon elected governments," Teichman states, "to make good on their most important promises" (p. 193). But those "promises" are often ones made to the IMF to cut subsides that hurt the poor underclass the most.

Teichman equates democracy with electoral politics, but fails to present a critical discussion of what democracy means. Her claim that "democratizing regimes in Latin America appear more firmly rooted and more durable, as more and more of them prove capable of surviving economic crises and transferring power through elections" (p. 4) is clearly flawed, as the overthrow of de la Rua in Argentina, Abdala Bucaram and Jamil Mahaud in Ecuador, and Alberto Fujimori in Peru demonstrate. Teichman's statement that "electoral victories won by governments that have carried out market reforms are frequently seen as evidence of the presence of a public consensual support for such programs" (p. 7) is simply superficial and naive. Nicaraguans did not vote against the Sandinistas in this November's elections because they believed the promises of the victorious candidate wealthy businessman, Enrique Bolanos, that to extend neoliberal programs including expanding cheap labor in the maquilas and a cutting of social services would benefit them, but because United States meddling in the elections made it crystal clear that a Sandinista victory was unacceptable.

This book embodies all that is wrong with globalization and neoliberal policies. Throughout the text, Teichman defends failed neoliberal policies, but then presents statistics which demonstrate the failed nature of these policies. For example, Appendix 2 (pp. 221-22) details the negative growth rates, rising unemployment rates, and shrinking wages which accompany these policies. In the text, Teichman states that in Chile "inequality has not changed" (p. 214) but then cites in a footnote a Gini coefficient which demonstrates that indeed the distribution of income has become more skewed over the last twenty years (p. 245, n. 6). Cuba, which is one of the most resistant countries in Latin America to neoliberal reforms, tends to lead the region in such socio-economic indicators as literacy, infant mortality, and life expectancy rates. This book fails to shed any light on why that may be the case.

Teichman concludes the book with the hope that electoral politics will be "able to meet the difficult challenges it now faces" or "the sacrifices of the last decade could be placed in jeopardy" (p. 218). Arguably, mass movements such as those that evicted from power such neoliberal die-hards as Jamil Mahaud in Ecuador in January 2000 and de la Rua in Argentina in December 2001 are examples of democracy in action. The hard fought gains that these democratic movements defend are not the neoliberal reforms that are designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer, but an overturning of these policies in the hopes of a more just and equitable society.

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