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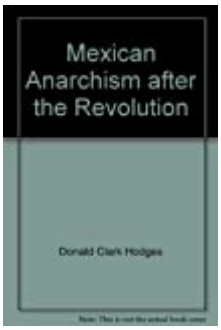

Donald C. Hodges. *Mexican Anarchism after the Revolution.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995. xiv + 251 pp. $17.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-292-73097-7; $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-292-73093-9.

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Published on H-LatAm (January, 1997)

Donald C. Hodges is the author of several books on the politics of Mexico and Nicaragua, founding editor of *Social Theory and Practice*, and professor of philosophy and political science at Florida State University. Many readers will have read several years ago Hodges's and Ross Gandy's interesting book *Mexico 1910-1982: Reform or Revolution?*.

Mexican Anarchism after the Revolution claims to be a history of anarchism in contemporary Mexico. But, in reality, this book is really two things. The first half of the book is a biography of Ruben Jaramillo and a political history of his radical movement in Morelos from the 1930s to the 1960s. The second half of Hodges's book is a fundamentally confused and confusing essay on Mexican political theory and leftist organizations. This review will take up these two parts of the book in that order.

What is new, interesting, and valuable in this book is Hodges's account of Ruben Jaramillo's peasant movement in the state of Morelos. Using interviews with participants and previously unpublished documents, Hodges has written an important chapter in Mexican social history and political movements.

The story is a fascinating one that goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century. William O. Jenkins, an American, became the owner of the gigantic Civil and Industrial Company of Atencingo, Puebla, not far from the old Zapatista territory in Morelos. Jenkins, who also managed this sugar plantation, was a despot who sometimes used pistoleros or gun thugs to control the peasants and sugar mill workers.

Jenkins's employees, Celestino Espinosa Flores, his wife Dolores Campos de Espinosa (Dona Lola), and their son Rafael Espinosa Campos, organized the independent, underground Sindicato Karl Marx to fight Jenkins and the company. When Celestino died and Rafael was murdered by Jenkins's thugs, Dona Lola continued to lead the labor union. Eventually Dona Lola and the union successfully pressured the Mexican government, which eventually wrested 115,000 hectares of land from Jenkins in 1934 and his last 8,000 hectares in 1938. Jenkins held on to the sugar mill, and in 1945 his gunmen killed Dona Lola.

The organizers and activists in the Karl Marx union included followers of the anarchist Ricardo Flores Magon and members of the Mexican Communist Party. One young man who became active in the movement was Ruben Jaramillo, who would later gain national attention as the leader of a broad movement for land reform in Morelos. Jaramillo, originally influenced by Flores Magon, became at various times a Communist, a Mason, and a Methodist preacher, but throughout remained a leader of the peasant land reform movements of Puebla

and Morelos.

In 1943 Jaramillo recruited peasants, including former Zapatistas, to a radical land reform movement, and published the "Plan de Cerro Prieto" to explain the rebellion. After a failed attempt at armed uprising, Jaramillo organized the Agrarian Labor Party of Morelos in October 1945, ran as its candidate for governor, and lost. In 1952 Jaramillo and his Agrarian Labor Party joined the Federation of Peoples Parties that supported Gen. Miguel Henriquez Guzman in his campaign for president against the official candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Two years later, in March of 1954, Jaramillo led an uprising, attacking the village of Ticuman. The movement was suppressed, and Jaramillo was jailed, but later released under an amnesty granted by President-designate Lopez Mateos in 1958.

Still Jaramillo did not give up his organizing activities. In February of 1960, Jaramillo organized a series of peasant land seizures which came into conflict with the interests of politically connected businessmen. Not only had Jaramillo threatened the economic interests of leaders of the PRI and big business, but he had also expressed sympathy for Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution and threatened to embarrass the Mexican government by asking for funds from John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. The state was no longer prepared to put up with him. In 1962 Jaramillo, his wife, and their three children were kidnapped and then murdered at the ancient city of Xochicalo by Mexican Army officer Jose Martinez, who was supported by the head of the state judicial police, Heriberto Espinosa.

In this book, Hodges explores the political biographies of Jaramillo and his associates and publishes the previously unknown Plan of Cerro Prieto. The story is a good one, but unfortunately Hodges's explanation and interpretation of events are not. Hodges, who sees Ruben Jaramillo as an anarchist, attempts to make Jaramillo the bridge between the anarchism of Ricardo Flores Magon and the Mexican new left of the 1960s and 1970s, which he also sees as anarchist. But the problem is that the facts of Jaramillo's biography simply will not bear the weight that Hodges wants to put on them. Jaramillo, an inspiring radical, appears to have no consistent ideology, as his wanderings between the Masons, Methodism, Mexican nationalism, and Communism clearly indicate. And he was certainly not an anarchist, as his membership in several political parties, participation in elections campaigns, and calls for the nationalization of property would indicate.

The problem is that, as we see in the second half of this book, a panorama of Mexican political theory and practice, Hodges uses the word "anarchism" to mean any radical political theory or leftist organization that appeals to him. For Hodges, "anarchism" means simply, "What I like" or "What I support." And Hodges likes all sorts of political theories and social movements, which he then defines as anarchist. These include the genuine anarchism of Ricardo Flores Magon, the radical peasant communalism of Emiliano Zapata, the peasant rebellions of Genaro Vazquez and Lucio Cabanas in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1959 Cuban Revolution, the Stalinist Communist Party's so-called third period, from 1929 to 1935, Mao Tse-Tung's Communism of the Long March of the 1930s and the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, Trotskyism, the Mexican terrorists of the September 23 Communist League, and finally, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). For Hodges, all of these different movements become expressions, albeit not always complete expressions, of what he calls anarchism. So the reader will not think I am exaggerating, let me give a few examples of Hodges's interpretations:

*Hodges writes that the National Liberation Movement led by former Mexican president Lazaro Cardenas represented "the legacy of Ricardo Flores Magon" (p. 81).

*"...the Cuban Revolution contributed to reviving vestiges of Magonism latent in the [Mexican Communist] Party" (p. 86).

*Lucio Cabanas's Revolutionary National Civic Association "...qualifies as 'anarcho-Castroite' [sic] because of its reliance on direct action and struggle for a new social order" (p. 103).

*"In adopting Guevarism as their credo, [Lucio] Cabanas and [Genaro] Vazquez unknowingly committed themselves to a philosophy of guerrilla warfare with an anarchist dimension" (p. 105).

*"Most of Mexico's leaders in urban guerrilla warfare eventually joined the umbrella organization, the September 23 Communist League. They also subscribed to its unique mix of anarchist and communist themes" (p. 130).

*"Maoism stands out among the heterodox marxisms as having the greatest affinity for anarchism" (p. 139).

*"The anarchist character of the popular defense committees [such as the Chihuahua Popular Defense Committee] should be evident" (p. 146).

*"Like the guerrillas in neighboring Guatemala, the

EZLN embraced a Maoist strategy with a strong dose of anarchism." (p. 193).

In a chapter on anarchist political theory, Hodges suggests that Spanish anarchist Abraham Guillen, Trotskyists Jose Revueltas, Manuel Aguilar Mora, and Adolfo Gilly, the Catholic theologian and philosopher Jose Porfirio Miranda, the communist philosopher Enrique Gonzalez Rojo, the Viennese priest and educator Ivan Illich, and the socialist publisher Manuel Lopez Gallo all somehow contributed to the Mexican anarchist current. Hodges ends his book with a postscript on the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and the Chiapas Rebellion of 1994 in which the Subcomandante Marcos and the EZLN, which Hodges likes, are also defined as anarchist.

This blurring of all intellectual and political distinctions is both bad history and bad political theory. Hodges wants to argue that throughout Mexican history there has been a significant anarchist undercurrent that reappears in all moments of crisis to provide inspiration to revolutionary movements. The problem is that this is simply not true. If anarchism means anything, it means a rejection of political parties and the state. Anarchism was a revolutionary theory of Proudhon and Bakunin, of Kropotkin and Malatesta, which stood for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, religion, and the state. But anarchists rejected the organization of political parties as the means to do so. Strongest in Eastern and Southern Europe, and particularly in Italy and Spain, anarchism became an important ideological current in Latin America, including Mexico.

In Mexico, anarchism was introduced in the mid-nineteenth century and perhaps became the dominant radical current by the early twentieth century. Ricardo Flores Magon, his Mexican Liberal Party, and his newspaper *Regeneracion* evolved from liberalism to anarchism, and played an important role in the opening phase of the Mexican Revolution. But during the course of the Mexican Revolution, the nationalist forces succeeded in absorbing and neutralizing both the Mexican Liberal Party and the anarcho-syndicalists of the House of the World Worker in Mexico. Anarchism then virtually ceased to exist as a political current, Hodges's claims notwithstanding. The partial survival of anarchist ideas in the movements in Morelos in the 1930s or among a few Communist Party members even later is interesting, but does not have the significance Hodges wants to attribute to it.

Mexican anarchism was more or less eliminated from the Mexican political spectrum during the 1930s by the rise of nationalism and Stalinist Communism, never to reappear as a significant force. Certainly other Mexican political currents such as Stalinist Communism, Maoism, and Trotskyism were all in different ways utterly antithetical to any genuine anarchist theory or political movement. All advocated building political parties, struggling for state power, and attempting to build some new kind of state. Nearly all believed in creating a parliamentary political party and participating in elections. None of this could be farther from anarchism.

Most disturbing to me, however, are the ethical and political issues raised in the book. Several times Hodges expresses his admiration for Mexican revolutionary groups that engaged in kidnappings and assassinations. At times Hodges seems to delight in this use of such violence, which he calls "direct action." Hodges seems to miss the point that these groups, some of which were inspired by Che Guevara's *foco* theory, turned to kidnapping and violence as a substitute for the organizing of peasants or workers, as an alternative to building social movements for democracy or social justice. Such "direct action" violence was the antithesis of a genuine mass revolutionary movement such as had occurred, say, during the Paris Commune or the Russian Revolution.

In this book, Hodges explains that he himself rejoined the Communist Party in 1968, apparently thinking it important to locate himself in the current of anarchists working within the Communist Party (p. 189). In his own mind, Hodges justified his membership in the Communist Party in terms of his support for the Cuban Revolution and his anarchist principles. But Hodges joined the Communist Party to support Cuba just at the moment when Cuba supported the Soviet Union in the violent suppression of the Czechoslovakian reform movement. Communism was, from the 1930s to the 1960s, a world movement that included the murderous dictatorships of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China and Vietnam. One has to wonder, and to ask Donald Hodges, what kind of anarchism is this?

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Citation: Dan La Botz. Review of Hodges, Donald C., *Mexican Anarchism after the Revolution.* H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. January, 1997.

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