

work in Africa analogous to North America or Europe? Are we talking about the same kind of work in different places?

What I felt was missing was a longer discussion or reflection about points of comparison or common themes emerging from the chapters. There are many fascinating points that emerge from the chapters that merit further consideration. Some of these are discussed in the concluding chapter by Cooper, where he argues that the study of worker agency should not be limited to collective action, but should include migration, education, or utilizing kinship ties. There is room for more reflections. The chapters are organized to cover different kinds of work and employment, but often people worked in many different kinds of jobs over one lifetime or even at the same time, as Dmitri van den Bersselaar discusses in relation to office workers in Cameroon taking on additional jobs during periods of economic decline as the value of their salaries dwindled.

It is inevitable that errors creep into a book whose scope is this wide. For instance, reference is made on p. 501 to a railway strike in South Africa in 1922/1923, when what really took place then was a strike and armed uprising by white miners known as the Rand Revolt. The chosen focus of some chapters arguably overlooks important issues. The chapter on the relationship between the ILO and Africa – examining the shift from the ILO virtually ignoring the continent to offering development and technical assistance – unfortunately entirely overlooks the role of the organization in the anti-apartheid movement. Newly independent African states successfully used the ILO as a forum to condemn and isolate South Africa internationally and in 1964 the ILO unanimously adopted a policy to work towards the elimination of apartheid.

There is a great deal to recommend in this volume for Africanists and labour historians alike and I expect that it will become the standard work of reference on the topic for years to come. Indeed, the book is appended what is termed a “select” bibliography but in fact runs to eighty pages and this is enormously helpful both for scholars and anyone approaching the topic for the first time.

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SOLIZ, CARMEN. *Fields of Revolution. Agrarian Reform and Rural State Formation in Bolivia, 1935–1964.* [Pitt Latin American Series.] University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh (PA) 2021. xiv, 266 pp. Ill. Maps. \$50.00.

Unless I am mistaken, the agrarian reform that followed the Bolivian National Revolution of 1952 has been ignored in Brazil both as a historical phenomenon and as a topic of political debate. This is probably not the case in other Latin American countries. However, there remains the impression that the place of agrarian reform in Bolivia has not yet been properly highlighted in relation to other similar experiences in Latin America. Although there are parallels with reforms carried out in Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, and Chile, *Fields of Revolution* demonstrates that the “Bolivia case” was unique. Nevertheless, Carmen Soliz’s main

objective is not to celebrate historical novelties, but to explain the radical nature of the Bolivian agrarian reform, whose effects can be felt in Evo Morales' electoral successes.

From the perspective of a history from below, there are two protagonists in the book, both recipients of the discourses and land distribution policies of the agrarian reform: indigenous populations (*comunarios*) and workers (*colonos*) subject to unpaid work in exchange for restricted access to small plots of land. The thesis of the book is clear: the demands and struggles of indigenous peoples and peasants to obtain land not only defined the paths for agrarian reform, but also profoundly restructured the relations of property, work, and power in Bolivia.

The author's focus allows a broad review of studies that, *mutatis mutandis*, attribute agrarian reform exclusively to government initiative – whether in the person of President Victor Paz Estenssoro (1952–1956, 1960–1964) or in the actions of the National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Both rose to power after a popular uprising that enshrined the National Revolution of 1952, allowing Paz Estenssoro to assume the presidency following the opposition's attempts to prevent him from assuming the position he had obtained at the ballot box. At most, the success of the agrarian reform was imputed to left-wing militants and unions, but they often appear under the sign of clientelist manipulation and subordination. Soliz examines instead how MNR policies needed to be negotiated and adapted to local demands.

The nationalist government took almost immediate steps to change the ways in which rural labor was paid through a wage-earning policy. It also abolished serfdom (*pongeaje*), in which women (*mitanis*) and men (*pongos*) were forced to provide free services to landowners. The later defended the practice as part of the “uses and customs” and a form of “redemption” of the *indios* (usually a derisory term), when it was actually a hierarchical system in ethnic-racial, class, and gender terms. The radical changes in the *colonato* system and in compulsory labor were anchored in a past of debates and conflicts around reforms that connected the agrarian question to the indigenous question. However, conservative, indigenist, leftist, and nationalist groups subordinated land distribution and labor legislation in different ways to the economic and “civilizing” imperatives of productivity, modernization in the countryside, and the “rehabilitation” of peasants and indigenous people as members of the nation.

Despite official goals, the decisive step towards agrarian reform came with the creation of hundreds of unions that were formed soon after the revolution. It was up to them to establish contracts between workers and employers and ensure their compliance, but a rather peculiar responsibility rested on their shoulders: the appointment of local authorities. What happened, according to Soliz, was a deep democratization of the state apparatus and the erosion of old formal and informal political instruments that had ensured the domain of the large landowners. By dismantling the local councils controlled by the “notables” and placing them in the hands of the unions, Paz Estenssoro undermined the powerful Bolivian Rural Society, forging an alliance with the peasants. Unions and community authorities not only consolidated their legitimacy among local populations, but they also forced the government and the MNR to go further, making them abandon their initial reluctance to implement agrarian reform. The decisive role of peasants in shaping a new balance of power in Bolivia was manifested in their refusal to renew labor contracts with employers. Such a refusal was not defensive, as it conveyed a very clear message to the government. Labor laws and wage guarantees were not enough: peasants and indigenous people demanded land.

Pressure from below and the Trotskyist activism of the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR) for expropriation of land without compensation for the owners led the government to enact agrarian reform in 1953, making illegal any large estates, understood as a significant extension of unproductive land. Thus, small and medium properties, as well as large ones considered efficient, were spared from the law's clutches. In addition, expropriations had to be compensated within twenty-five years through bonds issued by the Agriculture Bank (Banco de Agricultura). This decree and other legal norms regulating agrarian reform in Bolivia found precedents elsewhere in Latin America. It was not unaffected by the direct influence of the Mexican and Guatemalan experiences, but, unlike (and also because of) what had just happened in Guatemala, where the CIA carried out a coup in 1954 preventing land distribution in the country, the Bolivian government trumpeted its agrarian reform as a moderate, technical and legalistic measure.

It could have been that way, but that was not what Carmen Soliz found in court cases and in an amazing set of documents, many previously untouched. In practice, even acting in the name of the law but repeatedly anticipating court decisions, the unions expanded the distribution of land far beyond legal determinations, expropriating not only large estates and unproductive farms, but also properties of a smaller size. The legal disputes reveal that the federal authorities lost control over the implementation of the new agrarian policy, as it was also up to the unions, acting as mediators in local conflicts, to define how and to whom the land would be distributed. Like the former *colonos*, the landless, non-resident, and temporary workers obtained their own share of the land, and the monetary compensation fell into disuse. In the demands for land, the determining element to carry out the expropriations was based on the allegation and evidence of the existence of serfdom and abusive working conditions on a given property. Unlike what happened in other experiences of agrarian reform in Latin America, in Bolivia the general principle that led it ended up becoming "land for all".

However, the terrain was difficult. Distribution was uneven among the beneficiaries, because of differences in status and gender among the peasants and mainly affecting women, who were seen as less capable of using the land efficiently. Furthermore, *indios* and *campesinos* were not necessarily interchangeable terms and social actors, but rather had socio-cultural objectives and perceptions that were distinguished by ethnic and class markers. "Land for those who work in it" – a solution that expressed the *colonos*' demand – clashed with the demand of the community: "land for its original owners". Indigenous populations deprived of their lands appropriated the nationalist appeals, but their integration into the nation as Bolivians was not one of racial assimilation, as they preserved their identity as members of the "indigenous race". The struggles for the restitution of their lands had to face the modernizing conceptions of the MNR and of the left, for which the indigenous communities were anachronistic and, like the large estates, hindered capitalist development in the countryside. Another area of tension arose among the *colonos* who disputed and lived on the lands claimed by the *comunarios*. Despite strong obstacles, the legislation, the government, the nationalist party and the magistrates accommodated and yielded to indigenous pressures, even restoring to them lands usurped before 1900, although the *indios* only had legally guaranteed right to the lands they had lost from that year on.

The author concludes that there was a huge transfer of property in the main areas of large estates, where the mobilization of peasants and indigenous people was prominent. The first ten years of the implementation of the agrarian reform took such deep roots that the military governments (1964–1982) continued the pact with peasants and indigenous peoples.

The peasantry became a strong political actor that contributed to the dissolution of neoliberal governments in Bolivia in the 1900s and 2000s.

However, this is not a linear history. The concentration of land has not disappeared, the properties transferred from hands in the valleys and highlands, where agrarian reform flourished most suffered great fragmentation, the military governments proved generous in granting land to private companies in the eastern plains and in the Amazon region. The exploitation of cattle and timber by the new landowners led to the occupation of indigenous lands, but it also gave rise to a new political force that recreated the struggle for land restitution and for the recognition of an ethnic identity articulated with class identity and collective rights. The strength of current social and political movements in Bolivia can only be grasped through an understanding of the historical process that found in 1952 a fundamental milestone in access to land and power.

Fields of Revolution is an extraordinary book about a remarkable history. Without abandoning everyday struggles (James Scott's "everyday forms of resistance"), Soliz does not lose sight of the dimension such struggles acquire in a broad process of protest, organization and collective mobilization (in the author's words, "everyday forms of revolution"). With this approach, unions, political parties, government, and the state are not in danger of becoming either demiurges or epiphenomena. Such institutions cease to be abstractions and gain concreteness in the action of the flesh and blood men and women who constitute them and challenge them based on their own experiences and expectations.

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SINE, ELIZABETH E. *Rebel Imaginaries. Labor, Culture, and Politics in Depression-Era California*. Duke University Press, Durham (NC) 2021. xx, 295 pp. Ill. \$104.95. (Paper: \$27.95.)

Elizabeth E. Sine's imagination is as wide and deep as the subjects of her first book. While *Rebel Imaginaries* may be classified as labor history, she aspires to engage with many other fields. Her book is intersectional in the best sense, always exploring avenues to open other analytical possibilities in her examination of working-class people linked by their many struggles for human dignity. The movements Sine analyzes were incredibly diverse, multi-valent, and sometimes contradictory, all in keeping with her surrealist (her term) approach. Specifically, she examines the working-class population of California – African American, Native American, Mexican, Filipinx, Asian, White people of many ethnicities, and more – and their oppositional cultures that fought inequality based in various systems including capitalism, white supremacy, nationalism, patriarchy, etc.

In the Prologue, "Capitalism and Crisis in Global California", Sine briefly yet provocatively suggests how peoples in California, due to the global economic depression, rose up in protests in 1933. She connects California's uprisings to social movements in Barcelona and Managua, India and Morocco, and beyond. She aptly positions California as a central