

IN THE NAME OF HISTORY:  
A Disciplinary Critique of Orlando Fals Borda's  
*Historia doble de la costa*\*

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Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda's recently completed major work, the four-volume *Historia doble de la costa*, presents historians and social scientists studying Latin America with what the author calls a "revolutionary challenge."<sup>1</sup> In Fals's view, the *Historia doble* offers a way of researching, writing, and disseminating a history capable of stimulating the democratic transformation of Third World societies. This essay will take that challenge seriously and explore its implications from the perspective of the discipline of history. The first section will survey Fals Borda's intellectual and political development and his evolving critique of his own methods and results. The second section will develop a critique of the *Historia doble* in terms of the "internal logic" of history as a discipline. The essay will conclude by arguing that Fals's democratic goals are paradoxically subverted by his chosen means and that historians would do well to reconsider the democratic promise of their own methodology.

Yet the issues raised in the *Historia doble* and in this disciplinary critique transcend the question of how to develop a transformative, democratic history. More and more social scientists are turning their attention to historical subjects, and many historians are attempting to incorporate social science theory and methods into their work, tendencies that have been especially pronounced in Latin American studies for some time. As a result, it is widely assumed that traditional disciplinary boundaries between the social sciences and history are being dismantled. But the curious fact remains that even the most celebrated historical writing by social scientists is often received coolly by historians, and vice versa. Historians often grumble that history written by social scientists is "forced" or insufficiently attentive to "context." They complain that such history often fails to incorporate archival work with "primary sources," is filled with "jargon," or distorts historical "reality" in its efforts to "model" or

\*A preliminary version of this essay was presented at the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Association of Colombianists in Cartagena, 1-5 August 1988.

"theorize." Social scientists, for their part, often find work by historians "too descriptive," "unsystematic," or insufficiently "analytical." They are frequently frustrated by historians' failures to situate their work in comparative or theoretical contexts.

These judgments ultimately reflect different assumptions about the most appropriate and productive ways to engage in the study of social change. Those assumptions, in turn, generate particular disciplinary strengths and weaknesses, qualities that are usually interrelated. Writing history in one tradition or the other thus involves fundamental intellectual trade-offs. Improved mutual understanding of what is gained and what is lost should increase tolerance and comprehension of interdisciplinary dialogue between historians and social scientists.

Unfortunately, historians have been less consciously concerned and less articulate about the logic of their methods than their social science counterparts have been. Historians even debate whether their work is best characterized as a "method" or a "craft." This discussion will attempt to resolve that problem by borrowing a page from the "new social historians" and looking at what historians actually do—how they conduct their research, praise and criticize their colleagues, and train new historians—in an effort to discover an internal logic in their activities.

Many historians, perhaps the majority, will find themselves disagreeing with elements of the logic I describe, especially the notion that it contains inherent democratic tendencies (however unfulfilled in actual practice). Such critics must either deny that any logic permeates what historians do or find a more persuasive way of explaining why historians, despite all their other differences (of area, temporal, and thematic specialization and of philosophical and political positions), exhibit in their procedures such remarkable fidelity to the disciplinary canons described in this essay.

Critics in the social sciences will undoubtedly find the contrast I draw between their methods and those of historians deficient on other grounds. As a generalization, it fails to appreciate the scope and subtleties of their own methodological debates and lumps together disciplinary methods that actually diverge on many of the issues raised in the essay. In response, I can only insist that for purposes of distinguishing between the ways that social scientists and historians write history—as revealed in the ways they define problems, prepare themselves for research, evaluate scholarship, decide on expository strategies, and train new social scientists—the methodological differences I examine are important and useful.

In this sense, then, the critique of Fals Borda's work takes as its larger purpose the pursuit of more meaningful dialogue between historians and social scientists as they proceed in their common endeavor to discover and interpret the past.

FALS BORDA'S DEVELOPMENT, METHODS, AND SELF-CRITIQUE

One of Fals Borda's virtues is his willingness, rare enough among scholars, to engage in public self-criticism. On occasion over the years, he has subjected aspects of his work and ideas to critical scrutiny, usually in an effort to assess the degree to which his increasingly radical political goals have been served by his methods and actions as a scholar. For example, in his widely read *Ciencia propia y colonialismo intelectual* (published in 1970 and updated in 1987), Fals reflected on his first major effort as a social scientist, a study of the *campesinos* of the Colombian Andean municipio of Saucío.<sup>2</sup> On comparing *Peasant Society in the Colombian Andes* with his current concerns, Fals found "una distancia grande entre el tratamiento del campesino . . . enmarcado aún en el análisis de observación participante, y el planteamiento de la posibilidad de que de la acción misma pueda obtenerse conocimiento científico. [E]n lo primero, se insiste en una diferenciación alta entre teoría y práctica, mientras que por el otro lado se advierte la posibilidad de que por la acción en la praxis se haga una síntesis de las dos, aunque dándole a la práctica un papel determinante."<sup>3</sup> These words were written in 1985, when Fals had already published the first two volumes of the *Historia doble*, the work he hoped would demonstrate the virtues of the second mode of investigation.

More revealing, perhaps, is Fals's critique of another of his early books, *Subversion and Social Change in Colombia* (1969). He accused himself of having failed, at least in the first edition, to adequately "cuestionarse a si mismo sobre sus grupos de referencia—el saberse ubicar socialmente, como diría Marx. . . ." Fals went on to specify what that self-questioning meant for the social scientist by listing three main sets of questions "que deben ser absueltas por el hombre de ciencia":

1. Sobre el *previo* compromiso (pacto): ¿Con qué grupos ha estado comprometido hasta ahora? ¿A quiénes ha servido consciente o inconscientemente? ¿Cómo se reflejan en sus obras los intereses de clase, económicos, políticos o religiosos de los grupos a que ha pertenecido?
2. Sobre la *objetividad*: ¿Cuáles son los grupos que no temerían que se hiciese una estimación realista del estado de la sociedad y que, por lo mismo, brindarían todo su apoyo a la objetividad de la ciencia?
3. Sobre el *ideal de servicio*: . . . ¿cuáles son los grupos, movimientos o partidos políticos que buscan servir realmente al conjunto de la sociedad, sin pensar en si mismos sino en el beneficio real de las gentes marginadas que hasta ahora han sido víctimas de la historia y de las instituciones?<sup>4</sup>

These questions, which he had posed as early as 1970, were presumably "absueltas" for Fals by the time he began to write the *Historia doble*.

In the meantime, Fals's political experience widened and his radical politics crystallized. He collaborated with Germán Guzmán and Eduardo Umaña Luna in writing the first serious study of La Violencia, the period of civil commotion that enveloped Colombian society between 1946 and 1966 and claimed some two hundred thousand lives. The radical premises

of *La Violencia en Colombia* shook the Colombian establishment.<sup>5</sup> Fals also founded the sociology faculty at the Universidad Nacional in Bogotá, where he collaborated with and was deeply influenced by fellow sociologist and Colombian-priest-turned-revolutionary Camilo Torres. Fals then organized an institution called "La Rosca," which was dedicated to the novel principles of revolutionary scholarship and political action that are the focus of this essay. Finally, he immersed himself in the galvanizing experience of real "participant-activist investigation" during the extraordinary agrarian mobilization that erupted during the early 1970s in his native region, the Atlantic coast of Colombia. That experience seems to have greatly influenced his decision to write a book focusing on the struggle for the land over four and a half centuries in his "patria chica." The result was the *Historia doble*. Its first volume, *Mompox y Loba*, appeared in 1980, followed by Volume 2, *El Presidente Nieto*, in 1981, Volume 3, *Resistencia en el San Jorge*, in 1984, and Volume 4, *Retorno a la Tierra*, in 1986.

At various points in the *Historia doble*, Fals criticized some of the results of his labors and method. For example, at the end of the first volume, he confessed that his original focus on the issue of regionalism remained "hacia el final, relegado a segundo plano, porque el primero lo toma el señorío. . . ." He also noted that the materials on Mompox and Loba pertaining to the national period (the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) "que deberían ser incluidos en este volumen," could not be incorporated. This outcome, he asserted, was not his fault but a result of "los sucesos represivos de comienzos de 1979 . . . en los cuales nos vimos envueltos inesperada e injustamente mi esposa María Cristina Salazar y yo." Fals promised that these materials would be integrated into other volumes of the series "si no ocurren nuevas interrupciones." These problems aside, he was still not completely satisfied with "el estilo" or "la forma de presentación" of the work. Neither was "totalmente de acuerdo con lo que yo aspiraba. . . ." <sup>6</sup>

Style and presentation were clearly the most remarkable, innovative, ambitious, and problematic characteristics of the book. Fals had presented his history in two separate discourses, which he called "Canal A y B," pages of print arranged side by side that were intended to be read simultaneously as one proceeded through the book. Channel A, on the left, contained "el relato, la descripción, el ambiente, la anécdota." Channel B, on the right, contained "la interpretación teórica respectiva, los conceptos, las fuentes y la metodología de aquello del canal A y, a veces, resúmenes de hechos." Each channel could be read through separately, he averred, but the information would be more complete if they were read simultaneously.<sup>7</sup>

Although Fals did not address the subject fully in *Mompox y Loba*, his decision to write a double, two-channel history of his subject obeyed a deep philosophical and political logic that he had developed during the

course of the 1970s in a series of papers presented to sociologists. The implications of this political philosophy, manifest in the revolutionary style of a "double" history, will be a central focus of the remainder of this essay. At this point, however, it is important to note that in Fals's view, the history resulting from his research and method needed to be presented on three different levels to realize its full transformative potential. The levels were determined by the intellectual sophistication and training of the workers, "peasants," and intellectuals involved in the struggle for the land and regional liberation. The first, most elemental level should be "bien ilustrado y sencillo." It was to include pamphlets, "comics," and audio-visual materials and was to be aimed at the "bases," the mass of workers and "peasants" who were to be involved or were already involved in struggle. This level is not formally present in the *Historia doble*, although Fals approvingly notes the judgment of a French reviewer of the first volume that much of the information in the book (presumably in Channel A and the scores of photographs scattered throughout the volume) could serve as the basis for constructing this rudimentary level of communication. The second level, "más complejo y completo," was to be aimed at the "cuadros" of the organization. Members of these "cadres" have a more advanced political and theoretical understanding, are more firmly committed to the revolutionary struggle, and play the role of grass-roots organizers. It would seem that Channel A of the *Historia doble* is designed to correspond closely to the needs and capabilities of these cadres. Finally, the third level of communication, the most analytical and theoretical, is intended for "los intelectuales comprometidos, los universitarios, profesores y funcionarios." This level seems to correspond closely to Channel B of the *Historia doble*.<sup>8</sup>

By the time the second volume of the *Historia doble* appeared in 1981, however, Fals had apparently become aware that simultaneous reading of these two channels did not work very well. In his "Advertencia" to Volume 2, he advised his readers to read each channel of each chapter separately, one after the other.<sup>9</sup>

A final example of self-criticism is found at the end of Volume 4. Here Fals, now a veteran of a sustained research and writing effort of almost a decade, reflected most deeply on the pitfalls of the methods he employed in the work. Although these comments focus on the day-to-day challenges faced by activist-intellectuals who were attempting to catalyze, extend, radicalize, and sustain the struggle for the land waged by rural workers in Colombia's coastal region during the 1970s, they could apply just as well to the *Historia doble* as a whole. Fals advances this self-critique by citing with approval the observations of León Zamosc, a fellow sociologist and student of the agrarian mobilization of the early 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Zamosc had pointed out certain tensions in Fals's method, the so-called "investigación-activa-participativa," abbreviated by its practitioners as "IAP."

Zamosc tiene razón . . . al sostener que una de las tensiones principales de la IAP ocurre entre el conocimiento científico y la ideología. . . . Hubo cierta tendencia a ajustar las elaboraciones sociológicas . . . a la percepción de la gente sobre su propia situación, y a producir trabajos inmediatos. Esta perspectiva inmediatista hizo que se perdiera en parte [según Zamosc] "la posibilidad de identificar las tendencias que existían y anticipar sus efectos eventuales en el reflujo posterior del movimiento campesino. Transcender la ideología existente al definir la problemática de la investigación y chocar con ella al presentar los resultados es, por lo tanto, el sino del investigador comprometido."<sup>11</sup>

#### THE HISTORIA DOBLE VIEWED FROM THE DISCIPLINE OF HISTORY

Fals Borda's efforts at self-criticism raise several critical themes: the question of the relationship of theory and practice ("science" and "commitment"); the question of "ubicación," or the conscious positioning of investigators vis-à-vis their objects of investigation and their audiences; and the question of the "divulgación" or dissemination of committed scholarship. In this section, I will address these issues from the perspective of the discipline of history, the branch of learning that claims to have developed the methods most appropriate for understanding and conveying knowledge about the past. The section also explores related issues that are raised in dramatic form by the *Historia doble* but not considered by Fals in the passages of self-criticism cited above. Discussion of all these issues revolves around the three main pillars of the historical method as practiced by professional historians today: first, insistence on mastery of the historiography of a place and time as a prerequisite for all research; second, insistence on critical evaluation and citation of all primary sources; and third, insistence on the dialectical interconnectedness of all aspects of social change. These interlocking concepts inform what I term the "logic of the discipline of history," a logic that sharply differentiates history from the social sciences.

Like many social scientists who engage in the task of writing about the past, Fals ignores or violates each of the three principles of the historical method. Viewed from the perspective of the discipline of history, his work thus deforms the past, renders it uncritically, and makes it of doubtful utility for sound social action. Be that as it may, readers of the *Historia doble* cannot fail to be impressed by the magnitude of Fals's endeavor, the scope of the research effort it entailed, and the wealth of empirical information that the work contains, particularly on popular culture and resistance.<sup>12</sup> Whatever one's judgment of the analytical and interpretive value of the work and the merits of its method in turning history into a powerful tool for social transformation, the value of much of the new information presented by Fals on a largely neglected subject is beyond dispute.<sup>13</sup>

Historiography

The relative neglect of the coastal region in Colombian historiography raises the first issue in this disciplinary critique. Professional historians insist on mastery of the historiography of a time and place as a prerequisite to research. This principle is confirmed in the way historians train their graduate students, who are expected to read everything of importance in the secondary literature on their field of specialization, be it modern Japan, early antiquity, colonial Latin America, or, in an extreme case of a highly developed field, the southern United States.<sup>14</sup> Graduate students in history must then pass a comprehensive examination on this material before they are allowed to begin dissertation research.<sup>15</sup> Historians call this analysis of the secondary literature on the history of a time and place the practice of historiography, or “the study of the study of history.”

Historiography is what might be called history’s “sociology of knowledge.” It insists on explanations of how past observers and schools of thought—each influenced by historical events, by class, gender, ethnic, and national allegiances, and by intellectual trends and cultural biases—interpreted a given historical reality. Historians believe that mastery of the historiography of a time and place must precede research for several reasons. First, because only by evaluating all that is publicly known and accessible about a given social reality can one undertake truly new and productive research. Second, this kind of mastery alerts historians to all preexisting “facts” and alternative interpretations that must be addressed and either subsumed, modified, or disarmed in any new interpretation of events. Third, as part of the intellectual history of the object of study, previous work is an element of the interconnected social totality (the third pillar of the historical method, discussed below). Fourth and most important to this discussion, such mastery makes historians conscious of the fact that they themselves are influenced in their perceptions of the past by the same kinds of social and cultural forces that have affected their predecessors.

For all these reasons, but especially the last, the study of historiography is essential to the process of *ubicación* discussed earlier. It forces historians to ask themselves why they propose to study a given subject in a certain way, with certain goals, at a certain point in time. Had Fals asked himself these historiographical questions (in addition to his three sets of questions cited above), he might have adopted a less personally voluntaristic attitude toward his own work, one less marked by what one critic terms “regional chauvinism.”<sup>16</sup> By locating his work historiographically, he might have recognized and conveyed more fully the social origins of his project. Fals leaves the impression in the *Historia doble* that his decision to undertake the work largely obeyed personal moral and

political imperatives, his love of the culture of his "patria chica," his concern for its just social development. These personal motivations, however, leave unexamined the social and historical origins of the work, which can be revealed through the kind of historiographical analysis outlined above.

One can begin by noting the relative neglect of the history of the Atlantic Coast region in modern Colombian historiography. Such neglect cannot be fully explained by some kind of *cachaco* (highlander) chauvinism nor by a centralist conspiracy on the part of the professional historical establishment in Bogotá. Rather, during the period in which a professional historiography developed in Colombia (roughly the last four decades), it could be reasonably argued that other regions of the country (particularly the coffee zone and the large industrial centers of Medellín and Bogotá) and other themes (especially the issues of economic development and the *Violencia* of the mid-1940s to mid-1960s) have deserved greater attention than the regional history of the Atlantic Coast. Fals's own research trajectory during that period would indicate that the same priorities have been true of the social sciences as well.

By the late 1960s, however, the pattern of social and political conflict in Colombia was changing, along with that of economic development, and new research imperatives, most obviously the agrarian struggles of the Atlantic Coast, acquired new urgency. Understanding trends in scholarship in this historiographical way, I submit, provides a salutary effect on the hubris of the scholar. In Fals Borda's case, such an understanding points away from his personal volition and toward the forces of capitalist expansion and social conflict as reasons responsible for the *Historia doble*. Does not this reading of the social origins of the book do more to further Fals's professed goal of empowering popular forces through scholarship than his professions of moral intent and exaltation of the role of intellectuals as social catalysts throughout the book?

Fals, however, ignores historiography.<sup>17</sup> This criticism does not imply that in the course of his research for the *Historia doble* he did not sample a significant amount of the literature dealing with the past four and a half centuries of coastal Colombian and Latin American history. It means that he did not read that literature comprehensively and systematically, did not evaluate it critically, did not distinguish earlier interpretations from his own, and failed to situate himself socio-historically vis-à-vis his subject and his audience. Each of these breaches of the historiographical method helps to illuminate important problems in the work. They can be illustrated by discussing two of the book's central themes: first, the interpretation in the second volume of Juan José Nieto, the Liberal "caudillo" of Cartagena who briefly became the president of Colombia in 1861; and second, the thesis developed in the first volume,



and reiterated throughout the other volumes, of the importance for the entire coastal history of what Fals calls the region's "amphibious culture."

Fals's detailed study of Nieto brings to light important information and analysis, specifically this coastal political leader's popular origins and his involvement with Masonic thought and organizations of his era. Viewed historiographically, however, Fals's central thesis on Nieto is problematic. Fals focuses on what he perceives to be a paradox: the fact that the "caudillo" he studies is not a caudillo at all but a politician who reads and writes serious books, is influenced by complex ideologies and suffers their contradictions, tries to mediate and respond to antagonisms between social groups, and continually attempts to cloak his personal, class, and regional interests and commitments in the garb of altruism and patriotism. Fals is thus surprised to find that his "caudillo" does not conform to the stereotype he has read about in great contemporary Latin American novels.<sup>18</sup> But for the historian familiar with the basic nineteenth-century historiography of Latin America and Colombia, these qualities are not surprising. They can be found in almost all the great political and military figures of the period, including Colombian politicians like Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, Rafael Núñez, Rafael Uribe Uribe, and Rafael Reyes.<sup>19</sup>

An even more serious flaw emerges from Fals's reading of the career of Juan José Nieto. His effort to demonstrate in Nieto the qualities of a unique regional culture leads him to downplay the fundamental historical and class dimensions of his subject's story. Fals emphasizes Nieto's alleged tolerance, fidelity to his lower-class and artisan followers, and nonviolent, antimilitary values while neglecting the class and political contradictions of mid-nineteenth-century Colombian liberalism that Nieto so fully embodied. The first of these contradictions lies in liberalism's democratic political promise, which seduced its artisan adherents, versus the reality of its free-trading economics, which slowly destroyed the vitality of artisans as a class. The second resides in the promise of capitalist development, which seduced the progressive elite represented by Nieto, versus the reality of economic dependence, which bound Colombia to relying on the export of primary commodities in an unequal world capitalist division of labor.<sup>20</sup>

As for Fals's overarching thesis on regional culture, he continually asserts (as opposed to actually demonstrating) a causal link between his "cultura anfibia" and a regional political culture that he defines as uniquely tolerant and averse to violence. I find far more plausible, however, a hypothesis regarding the origins of coastal Colombian political culture suggested by the vast literature on slavery in the Americas, particularly the relationship of slavery to national culture in Brazil.<sup>21</sup> Where slavery existed, as on the Colombian Atlantic coast, elite fear of slave revolt and the ruling class's structural need to reproduce a paternalistic ethos of mutual tolerance and aversion to violence combined to suffuse the real-

ity—and the myth—of the widely shared cultural values that Fals celebrates. Moreover, contrary to Fals's assertions, his evidence does not indicate that the "cultura anfibia" he describes generated mutual tolerance and aversion to violence. Rather, it seems to have had the directly opposite effect. Much of the violent popular resistance he describes was activated by encroachments by big landowners and foreign corporations on the *playones*, the sometimes submerged, highly fertile riverside tracts that the popular classes viewed as part of the public domain.

These two examples raise fundamental questions. How valuable, even on its own terms, is a history that seeks to arm the popular classes for democratic struggle by emphasizing regional values when those very values seem to have been created by a slaveholding ruling class as a means of social control? How does one evaluate a history with democratic goals that stresses the popular dimensions of a political leader who, despite his lower-class origins, ended up aligning himself with the regional ruling class and succumbing to the antidemocratic contradictions of nineteenth-century Latin American liberalism?

Finally, what are the implications of a regional popular history that completely ignores the most important regional and national political figure of the second half of the last century, the other "caudillo" from Cartagena, Rafael Núñez? As is well-known, Núñez served as president of the nation not for a moment but for a long period that extended far beyond his actual four years in office. Moreover, the movement he led, the Regeneration, deeply influenced the economic, institutional, and legal life of Colombia from the late nineteenth century until the present day.

The *Historia doble's* curious neglect of Núñez and, it turns out, of the entire period of national history from 1860 almost to the present has several explanations, all of them related to Fals's notion of how the committed intellectual ought to conceive history and return it "systematically" to the "people." For Fals, the fact that popular forces did not independently affect the history of Colombia during these years implies that this whole long history can be essentially cast aside. Moreover, Fals finds in Núñez an especially attractive candidate for historical exclusion. As one of the architects of the Constitution of 1886 (which Fals correctly criticizes as centralist and undemocratic), Núñez has already received much emphasis in what Fals calls "la historia oficial," written by "científicos de la clase alta" who use "archivos y bibliotecas de academia" and ignore the popular element. It was thus convenient and logical for Fals to ignore the greatest politician of this period and turn his attention instead to popular culture. This research endeavor unearthed rich material on religious brotherhoods, popular music, and local festivals and suggests how these popular forms incorporated elements of cultural resistance to ruling-class domination.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, the neglect of basic economic and political processes during almost a century of national history creates serious problems for the *Historia doble*. These difficulties entail not simply the historiographic problems of coverage, mastery of secondary literature, periodization, and others that will be considered below in the discussion of the third pillar of the discipline, the interrelated nature of historical change. They also involve issues that affect understanding of the central themes of Fals's work itself. The pivotal period (1880–1920), which began with Núñez's famous call for the "regeneration" of the nation, encompassed a titanic struggle between liberals and conservatives to define the very nature of modern Colombian society. The Regeneration developed a systematic critique of cosmopolitan liberalism, and its political economy, particularly its monetary policy, contained nationalistic components that made it frankly unacceptable to the world capitalist order. Liberal opposition to the Regeneration culminated in the greatest civil war fought in nineteenth-century Latin America. Then, the consolidation of ruling-class consensus following the war ushered in a long period of stable, monopolistic bipartisan rule favoring the rapid expansion of export capitalism. This process continues today and is central to Fals's theoretical and political concerns, not least because the growth of export capitalism generated a massive alienation and colonization of public lands. Thus the period 1880–1920 witnessed the transformation of Colombian society from a conglomeration of regions with fragmented, stagnant economies into a viable nation-state with a burgeoning capitalist economy. Moreover, that process firmly established the economic, social, and political parameters within which the whole history of twentieth-century class conflict has evolved.

It thus seems reasonable to ask whether the regional popular majority to whom Fals directs his book do not deserve an analysis of the formation and nature of the historical framework that structures and often impedes their democratic struggle and the forms of popular resistance that Fals describes. Should they not be allowed to share in a historiography that helps explain how and why the struggle to establish an institutional framework conducive to developing capitalism in Colombia carried tens of thousands of their forebears to their deaths, led to dismemberment of the nation (and a substantial part of the coastal region), and established the basis for modern class struggle in which rural and urban workers would exercise a determining influence on the history of the nation beginning in the 1920s.<sup>23</sup> In sum, is it sufficient to treat only moments of popular mobilization in history?

### *Primary Sources*

The second pillar of the disciplinary logic of historians, the emphasis on primary sources, often appears to scholars outside the discipline,

especially social scientists, as an irrational disciplinary fetish. There is no doubt about the importance that historians attach to primary sources. They require that neophyte historians build their doctoral dissertations around them. They reserve their highest praise for work that incorporates newly discovered or newly understood primary material. These attitudes are clues to the inner logic of the discipline. Much of historians' training revolves around learning to "read" primary sources, that is, learning how to correct for their innate distortion of reality. Historians understand that all primary material (like the secondary material scrutinized by their critical historiography) emanates from sources colored by interests of self, group, gender, class, and so on. For historians, then, there really are no "facts," much less the "datos-columnas" around which Fals develops much of his imagined narrative and interpretive constructs.

Most social scientists who write history neglect primary sources or use them uncritically, as sources of "facts." Fals, to his credit, does not neglect primary sources. Actually, his studies have uncovered or generated a significant amount of new primary material. Nevertheless, he often fails to subject this material to critical scrutiny.

Sometimes Fals seems to be unaware of the distorting effect of his sources. Yet it is just such an effect that may best explain the curious emphasis on the colonial period in his study. To a historian's eye, that emphasis is explained at least in part by the richness and accessibility of documents on the colonial period in the standard historical repositories. The availability and bias of colonial documents may also explain how the organization of the first volume got out of hand. Unable to find sufficient information to develop his thesis on regional culture, Fals ended up concentrating on the minutiae of elite property transfers and inheritance. This plethora of detail contrasts with the already noted dearth of information on the period from 1860 to 1920, or even to 1960. This crucial period has unfortunately been much neglected in Colombian historiography, largely because of the lack of preservation and organization of documents like those abundantly available for the colonial period. Finally, for the contemporary period (1960 to the present), the oral sources used by Fals afforded him ample material, a fact that helps explain his rich empirical and analytical treatment of the social movement of this period.

In sum, despite Fals's exaggerated claims for the method he dubs "investigación de baúl," the very structure of the *Historia doble*, particularly the relative weight assumed by its various chronological periods, seems to derive from the existence and accessibility of primary sources of a "traditional" order. Fals's "investigación de baúl," an approach familiar to local historians that consists of asking inhabitants of the region if they have old photographs or documents, might have been expected to help fill the documentary void in the book for the hundred years after 1850. In reality, it seems to have contributed little to the study. This disappointing

result appears to be partly due to the probability that the kind of “documentos de baúl” that interest social and economic historians most—account books, business records, diaries—either were not found or failed to interest Fals’s research team. Yet these kinds of sources, in addition to those found in local registry and notarial archives, have furnished the primary information for the few, but often excellent, histories published on late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Colombian history.<sup>24</sup>

At other times, Fals positively celebrates the bias in his sources, as he does in the case of oral history and popular testimony generally. Historians have had little trouble generating and incorporating popular oral sources into their methodology. But those who rely heavily on oral testimony have developed strict procedures for subjecting this primary source to the canons of their discipline. Historians identify and date oral testimony, and they often tape and transcribe it verbatim. Notes, tapes, or written transcripts are then deposited in archives open to the public, where they are available for use and for reevaluation by other investigators. Although Fals has deposited his material in a public archive, many of his primary sources (not only the oral ones) are not identified and dated precisely in the book, and their interpretive use is not specified (Fals often resorts to a simple listing at the end of chapters). This approach gravely complicates or makes impossible the task of reinterpretation. Even worse for the historian is Fals’s custom of interpreting, ordering, and elaborating most of the oral material used in the book (a doubly disconcerting practice by one who asserts that rural peoples operate according to a rationality distinct from everyone else).<sup>25</sup> While such a procedure accords with Fals’s political philosophy and project, it thoroughly contaminates precious primary material for historians by making it impossible to distinguish what belongs to Fals from what belongs to his informants.<sup>26</sup>

Ironically, the most useful part of the *Historia doble* for historians is found in Volume 4, when Fals momentarily abandons his task of analysis and inserts in Channel A a kind of personal diary of events based on his almost two years of activism in the agrarian struggles of the early 1970s. Here, in his old role of participant-observer, Fals furnishes the uncontaminated primary material sought by historians, material that richly describes the details of land invasions, the attempts by Fals and his fellow “intellectuals” to inject themselves into the struggle, and the factionalism in the movement, particularly the tactics of ultraleft organizations in attacking Fals and the group around him.<sup>27</sup>

### *Interrelatedness*

The third principle of the disciplinary logic of historians is the insistence on the interrelatedness of all aspects of social change. It is this concern with historical totality that most sharply distinguishes history

from the social sciences, all of which base their methods on the idea that it is more meaningful and efficient to consider a slice of social reality (the economy, the polity, the ideas or actions of social groups) and then proceed to specify patterns and measure dynamic characteristics over time. Social scientists are interested in generating or testing universal theory about their narrow thematic domain across time and space. Historians, in contrast, focus their attention on change in whole societies, usually world cultural regions or individual nations, over relatively long periods of time. Although historical primary research may be specialized, the goal of historians' training and scholarship aims at mastery over what is known about the past of a given culture and society—its language, literature, science, technology, economy, polity, social structure, and intellectual life. Historians are thus less concerned than their social science colleagues with universal theory and are notorious for failing to engage in the kind of abstract cross-cultural, cross-temporal comparison that social scientists routinely perform. But on their own terrain, historians are uniquely well-equipped to deal specifically with the subtle, manifold, and dialectical interconnectedness of a bounded social life through time. This disciplinary forte has surprisingly democratic political implications that should be of particular interest to those who, like Fals Borda, are concerned with placing their scholarship at the service of popular democratic struggle.

Insistence on the interconnectedness of social change means for historians that everything affects and is in turn affected by everything else (by values, perceptions, ideas, technology, economic and social change). But interconnectedness also means that everyone affects historical change and is in turn affected by it. This simple and obvious notion (which social scientists share in some measure with historians but choose to relegate to a lower priority in their pursuit of other disciplinary objectives) has had revolutionary implications for the discipline of history over time. One index of this process is a secular evolution in the definition of primary sources. When historians began to define themselves professionally in the nineteenth century, primary sources were conceived of largely as documents created by the state and men of affairs. Over time, however, the principle of interconnectedness has worked to widen and deepen the definition of sources. As a result, for some time now, the greatest prestige in the discipline has been accorded to the "new social historians" who work on the popular frontier of historical research using sources as mundane as the baptismal records of common people or daily police logs that record definitions and frequencies of "criminality."

Another revolutionary—and inherently democratic—effect of the principle of interconnectedness derives from the manner in which historians choose to present their research. Here the record of democratic progress is more uneven and might even be said in one sense to have

fallen from the literary heights reached by the master historians of the nineteenth century. But throughout history's life span as a profession, historians have largely insisted on adopting narrative rather than more obviously analytical modes of discourse. And unlike their social science colleagues, they have stubbornly resisted using or inventing language outside the domain of an audience they define as "literate lay people." The preference for the narrative mode no doubt reflects many considerations—including perhaps the influence of ancient, popular, and universal traditions of oral transmission. In this context, however, I am stressing the dual connection between narrative discourse and the principle of interconnectedness. If everything affects everything else, as historians insist, then the best way to proceed would seem to be to advance one step at a time, chronologically, assessing the influences of change in one sphere on all others and the impact of the dialectical reverberations that result. And if everyone affects history and is in turn affected by history, then it stands to reason that historians must try to write for the general reading public and listen to its responses.

This brief review of some of the methodological and political implications of professional historians' insistence on the principle of interconnectedness, especially its popular and democratic tendencies, should suffice to demonstrate the real similarity between the historians' disciplinary tendencies and the goal announced by Fals Borda in his *Historia doble*: to enlist scholarship in the cause of popular democratic struggle. At the same time, however, it should be equally clear that for historians, Fals's extraordinary methods in pursuit of this goal, particularly the idea of writing the book in two channels, tend to violate the deep disciplinary logic of historians and threaten to destroy its democratic promise.

To be sure, historians have not solved the problem of how to communicate effectively with the popular majority that they ideally define as their audience. As noted above, historians may even have retrogressed from the level of their nineteenth-century forebears, whose emphasis on narrative and literary technique carried their work to a broad audience of educated laymen, a stratum seriously limited at that time by questions of literacy and property. Part of this regression in the twentieth century may have resulted from the "scientific" appeal of the "hard" social sciences and government support for them, processes that have led some historians to partially abandon their commitment to narrative and even to the principle of interconnectedness. Such charges have often been leveled at "cliometricians" (historians who concentrate on measurable, statistical data). Even some practitioners of the "new" social history have been accused of neglecting "politics" in their emphasis on the lives of the "poor."<sup>28</sup> Finally, the question of the size and scope of an audience defined as "literate lay people" clearly means one thing for historians in the developed world, where levels of literacy and formal education are

high. It means quite another for historians in the underdeveloped world, whose "popular audience" might include a majority with elemental reading skills but even so would encompass few readers who have had the advantage of a secondary or university education.

Nevertheless, all historians must continue to try to come to terms with the question of how to remain true to disciplinary canons that demand paying attention to historiography and evaluating primary sources yet also require reaching a wide popular audience. Many historians, disillusioned by their failure to accomplish the latter, retreat into the arcane and specialized discourse that typifies many of the discipline's professional journals. Others compromise the canons of historiography and primary sources in their efforts to produce popular readers, pamphlets, films, and videos. But those who persist in the struggle to somehow reconcile all three of the mutually supporting logical pillars remain most true to their disciplinary calling. They are also adhering to a democratic calling because insistence on evaluating historiography and primary sources is fundamental to the task of constructing a democratic society. The citizenry of such a society must learn how to discern bias in all existing understandings of its past. In doing so, citizens become capable of judging how things got to be the way they are and of making intelligent political decisions on how best to improve them. But because all perception is governed by questions of class, gender, ethnicity, and so on, only by diffusing knowledge about the past to the majority can truly popular and democratic goals be realized in political action. Thus the historian's ongoing professional dilemma—the need to continue to hew to all three disciplinary principles despite a manifest failure to communicate with a truly popular audience—also defines and limits the democratic promise of the historical method.

Because Fals Borda, like most social scientists, does not share these disciplinary principles, his ideas on generating historical knowledge, processing it for revolutionary praxis, and returning it systematically according to the mental and political sophistication of target populations strike the historian as elitist, manipulative, and inherently undemocratic.<sup>29</sup> As has been shown, Fals's procedures deprive his audience and himself of critical knowledge of alternative explanations (historiography) and empirical information (primary sources) about the past. Because his selection of information and interpretation is subject to no independent outside control, his method constantly tends, in his terms, to subvert the cause of "science" in the name of "political commitment"—his own as well as those of his group, his region, and his class.

But if historians are confident of the merits of their critique of Fals's work as history, the question of popular diffusion remains problematic for them. On the one hand, historians must acknowledge their own failure to meet the demands of this disciplinary principle. On the other,



Fals's *Historia doble* appears to address the issue fully and imaginatively. For both reasons, historians should evaluate most carefully the goals, means, and effects of Fals Borda's extraordinary efforts to present his research to the public.

Fals's two-channel technique assumes that some individuals are more able to think abstractly and theoretically while others more readily grasp the concrete, descriptive, and anecdotal. To be sure, Fals does not consider these attributes to be inherent but formed through experience as well as education: "campesinos" who struggle for existence against the forces of nature are more attuned to thinking concretely while "universitarios" are more adept at abstract thinking. Ideally, Fals's investigative methods and his two-channel approach for diffusing the results are designed to build a bridge between these mental worlds: "intellectuals" participate in popular struggle and have their work reviewed by popular activists and thus learn to appreciate the goals and thought of "campesinos." Conversely, "campesinos" share their popular history with "intellectuals," who "enrich" it and return it to them "systematically," and thus learn to appreciate abstract and democratic social theory.

Viewed from the discipline of history, however, these seemingly attractive propositions for solving the problem of popular diffusion raise serious questions. Historians have no trouble accepting the idea of distinct mental worlds governed by experience and education; as discussed in terms of historiography and primary sources, this concept lies at the core of their whole methodology. But historians reject the idea of dichotomizing abstract and concrete modes of thought and discourse. Unlike social scientists, historians do not begin with the abstract (social theory) and then try to apply it to the concrete (through case studies). They seek to simultaneously master the abstract (which they call secondary interpretation) and the concrete (the empirical knowledge within these secondary sources) and then proceed to gather more empirical knowledge (by abstracting from and interpreting primary sources) to produce new (abstract) interpretations. These conclusions are usually presented in a narrative form that combines analysis and description in chronological movement. For historians, all description is also abstract because it is selective and has as its goal the production of abstract meaning. Conversely, all abstraction is descriptive because it is based on concrete knowledge. Consequently, while historians must concede the point that they need to learn how better to present their work in a manner consonant with the vocabulary and concerns of the popular majority, they categorically reject the idea of two mental universes, abstract and concrete.<sup>30</sup> This philosophical and disciplinary position is revealed most clearly in historians' stubborn preference for narrative exposition that subtly incorporates these two indivisible mental dimensions.

## CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to demonstrate the democratic tendencies of each of the three elements of the method used by historians and to show how Fals Borda, in violating each element, unwittingly subverts the democratic intent of his history. This paradoxical result is encapsulated in the two-channel format that he elected to use in the *Historia doble*. In positing a separate mental world for intellectuals and popular forces, in creating a false dichotomy between the abstract and the concrete, his book mirrors the terrible dichotomies of modern Colombian history: the rural versus the urban, the axe versus *papel sellado*, the *ruana* versus the *corbata*, the *país nacional* versus the *país político*. The final irony for historians is that in his concerted attempt to overcome these antidemocratic dichotomies in his book, Fals has unintentionally, expositively institutionalized these contradictions within it.

I have argued the converse elsewhere: that historians have much to learn from social scientists.<sup>31</sup> The weaknesses of the historical method are closely related to the strengths stressed in this essay. In particular, inattention to social theory, the emphasis on the principle of interrelatedness, and the failure to frame research comparatively can all make it difficult for historians to identify and justify important problems for research and to weigh elements of historical causation. Each of these problems can be attenuated or overcome through dialogue with social scientists.

Moreover, as has been emphasized, historians have not solved the transcendental problem posed by Fals Borda in his *Historia doble de la costa*: how to write socially responsible history that is true to the democratic struggles and goals of the majority. But in rejecting in their work the dichotomy between the abstract and the concrete, between analysis and narrative, between the methods of the social sciences and those of the humanities, historians would seem to have within their grasp the means to reach that goal. Armed with the tools and methods of a discipline that has evolved logical, effective, and democratic methods for generating, analyzing, and diffusing knowledge about the past, historians seem to lack only the will to make that goal a reality.

## NOTES

1. Orlando Fals Borda, *Historia doble de la costa*, 4 vols. (Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores, 1980–1986).
2. See Fals Borda, *Peasant Society in the Colombian Andes* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1955).
3. Orlando Fals Borda, *Ciencia propia y colonialismo intelectual* (Bogotá: Editorial Punta de Lanza, 1987), 122.
4. *Ibid.*, 56.
5. *La Violencia en Colombia* (Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo, 1963).

6. *Mompox y Loba*, 166B-67B.
7. *Ibid.*, "Advertencias."
8. This material comes from a talk given at the Tercer Congreso Nacional de Sociología in Bogotá in 1980, published as "La ciencia y el pueblo: nuevas reflexiones" in *Ciencia propia*, chap. 9. The quotations appear on pages 113 and 114. See also *El Presidente Nieto*, 59B-61B.
9. *El Presidente Nieto*, "Advertencias."
10. Zamosc's judicious analytical treatment of the agrarian movement of the early 1970s, published in English as *The Agrarian Question and the Peasant Movement in Colombia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), provides a revealing counterpoint to Fals's more descriptive and ideological treatment of the same subject in Volume 4 of the *Historia doble*.
11. *Retorno a la tierra*, 192B.
12. The study begins with a vivid description of a regional culture that Fals calls "anfibia" y "triétnica," which evolved through the pre-Columbian and colonial eras to meet human needs in the watery land mass known as the *depresión momposina* (vol. 1). The study includes descriptions of the violent formation and evolving labor systems of the great estates (mostly cattle) in different parts of coastal Colombia during the colonial and national periods. It emphasizes the chronic struggle, passive and overt, for the land and for access to water resources by subsistence farmers and fishermen marginalized by that process (vols. 1, 3, and 4). The study also makes an excursion into biography and political history that focuses on the career of a mid-nineteenth-century coastal "caudillo" (vol. 2). Sprinkled throughout all four volumes is an extraordinary amount of detail on regional themes (flora, fauna, architecture, poetry, music, and dance) and regional personages, elite as well as popular. Also found throughout are a variety of historical hypotheses and interpretations ranging from theories on the origins of particular coastal cultural traits (nonviolence) and myths (*el hombre-caimán*) to explanations of the ebb and flow of land concentration, capital investment, elite cohesion, and popular resistance. Finally, the study places great emphasis on social science concepts and European social theory.
13. Those seeking a comprehensive summary and a thoughtful critique of the work can turn to the extensive reviews by historian Mauricio Archila, which appeared in the *Boletín Cultural y Bibliográfico* 2 (1984):111-14 and 7 (1986):107-11.
14. This exhaustive mastery of a primary field is then complemented by a more cursory, but still considerable, amount of reading in the historiography of related fields.
15. In contrast, budding social scientists are trained first in a branch of social theory (such as rural sociology or macro-economics), and once they are judged to have mastered it, they can begin to produce "case studies" to test "universal theory" that may range across the cultural areas of the globe and backward in time. As noted at the outset of this essay, these differences in training are profound and reflect radically different assumptions about the nature of social inquiry. They produce scholarship that exhibits different strengths and weaknesses. The resulting intellectual trade-offs imply that the social sciences and history should exist in a symbiotic relationship, that fruitful discourse across the disciplines is enhanced by full appreciation of the logical wellsprings of disciplinary practice, and that the most valuable work in history may be that which comes closest to approximating the logic of the social sciences without compromising history's own logic. The converse may also be true. For fuller discussion, see Charles Bergquist, "Literatura e historia: ¿cordura o locura?" *Revista de Estudios Colombianos* 4 (1987):15-23.
16. See Mauricio Archila's review cited in note 11.
17. At one point in *Ciencia propia*, Fals reveals that he is aware of the existence of the "study of the study of history" (p. 127), but nowhere in this book or others I have read does he discuss or come to terms with the concept of historiography as it is understood by historians.
18. Obviously, such novels are particularly suspect as historical sources, not only because they derive their historical information largely from the oral tradition to which Fals accords such importance but also because novelists give themselves license to imagine the past.

19. For a standard bibliography on the Colombian leaders and a synthesis of historical knowledge on this era of Colombian history, see the second volume of *Manual de historia de Colombia*, edited by Jaime Jaramillo (Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, 1986).
20. On Colombian liberalism, see, among others, Jaime Jaramillo, *El pensamiento colombiano en el siglo XIX* (Bogotá: Editorial Temis, 1964); Gerardo Molina, *Las ideas liberales en Colombia, 1849-1914* (Bogotá: Editorial Tercer Mundo, 1973); and William McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia, 1845-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
21. For example, Brazilian historiography emphasizes several points: that Brazil won its independence without engaging in a long and bloody war; that the ability of Brazilian elites to engage in compromise avoided fragmentation of the nation and the frequent civil wars that plagued the republics of Spanish America during the nineteenth century; that Brazil managed to abolish slavery without a civil war of the kind that occurred in the United States; and that in the twentieth century, Brazil has witnessed neither social revolutions like those occurring in Mexico nor chronic violence like that in Colombia, while its experience with authoritarianism under the "populist" regime of Getúlio Vargas and later under the military regimes of the post-1964 period has been "softer" and "milder" than those in Argentina, Uruguay, or Chile. The best-known work in this historiographical tradition is sociologist Gilberto Freyre's classic, *The Masters and the Slaves*. Among historians, the most systematic and prolific writer in the tradition is José Honório Rodríguez. Lately, however, this whole tradition has been challenged by a new generation of Brazilian historians who emphasize the class origins and mythical dimensions of so-called Brazilian national character. See, for example, the nineteenth-century synthesis by Emília Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
22. One good example among many is the material collected in *Retorno a la tierra*, chap. 5. The most thorough work on Núñez and regional politics during this period is James Park, *Rafael Núñez and the Politics of Colombian Regionalism* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985).
23. This assumption, at least, is the thesis advanced in my own work: *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886-1910* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1976) and *Labor in Latin America* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), chap. 5. Fals's efforts to conceptualize this period seem confused and contradictory. He posits a process of "autodestrucción" of the regional ruling class (vol. 3, chap. 6, chan. B, sec. B), one that reaches "su climax a finales del siglo XIX y comienzos del XX" (vol. 3, p. 146B). That effort is followed by a "combinación de funciones económicas en grupos dominantes" (vol. 3, chap. 6, chan. B, sec. C, p. 153B), an "época" that apparently extends all the way up to the violence of the mid-twentieth century (vol. 3, p. 157B). Symptomatic of Fals's difficulties in conceptualizing the whole period (1865-1930) is his extraordinary decision (vol. 3, chap. 5) to abandon temporarily the conceptual Channel B of his two-channel format and "combinar aquí la teoría con la descripción" (vol. 3, p. 96).
24. Good examples are Marco Palacios, *El café en Colombia, 1850-1930* (Bogotá: El Ancora, 1983); and Roger Brew, *El desarrollo económico de Antioquia desde la independencia hasta 1920* (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1977).
25. See, for example, *Ciencia propia*, 106-7.
26. Descriptions of these procedures appear often in Fals's work (for example, *Resistencia en el San Jorge*, 29B-31B), but their implications for the rendering of oral sources are perhaps most fully revealed in the following passage: "Hay, pues, en la tradición y cultura campesinas elementos positivos y negativos hacia el cambio social que abren posibilidades para transformaciones revolucionarias en el conocimiento y en la acción. . . . En muchos casos es fácil determinar algunas de las fuentes y canales de la alienación que impiden una acción consecuente campesina, aquella proveniente de la difusión de valores burgueses. Se puede, por tanto, equilibrar el peso de estos valores alienantes mediante una devolución enriquecida del mismo conocimiento campesino, especialmente de su historia y realizaciones, que vaya llevando a nuevos niveles de conciencia política en los grupos. Así se va transformando el sentido común de éstos para hacerlo más receptivo al cambio radical de la sociedad. . . ." See *Ciencia propia*, p. 113.

27. *Retorno a la tierra*, chap. 8.
28. See, for example, the critique by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History," *Journal of Social History* 10 (Winter 1976):204–20.
29. For a systematic presentation of Fals's political philosophy translated into these methodological procedures, see *Ciencia propia*, chap. 9.
30. Even on its own terms, moreover, Fals's two-channel discourse appears to be seriously flawed in both conceptual and mechanical terms. These problems seriously undermine the desired effect on its audience and thus tend to subvert Fals's stated political goal. First, it is not really clear whether Fals thought some readers would actually want to, or be able to, read only one channel or whether he thought they could and should read both, although it seems that he hoped all would eventually read both so that their information "would be more complete." Second, whether trying to read either channel or both, one immediately confronts the problem of inconsistency. Channel A contains analysis, as well as the other things Fals promises (see the analytical "informes" produced in Channel A in vols. 1 and 2). Channel B includes not only discussions of theory and concepts but what Fals calls summaries of "facts." When this theoretical material does not fill the allotted pages, Channel B serves as a repository for most of the hundreds of photographs in the book, all of which would be expected to form part of Channel A. In short, the static in both channels makes their separate voices indistinct and confused. If one tries to read both channels (either simultaneously, as Fals originally intended, or separately within chapters, as he suggests at the beginning of vol. 2), one encounters new problems and questions. As Fals seems to admit tacitly at the start of that volume, reading simultaneously presents so many mechanical and conceptual problems (as one flips back and forth, delves alternately into two supposedly different discourses and loses the thread of the argument in the process) that it seems better to read the channels separately within chapters. But this approach involves so much repetition that the reader begins to question the concept and mechanics of the two-channel format itself. Moreover, if the two channels are to be read sequentially, why not order them sequentially, eliminate the repetition, and thereby save everyone the time and material cost entailed in the two-channel format?
31. See Charles Bergquist, "Latin American Labor History in Comparative Perspective: Notes on the Insidiousness of Cultural Imperialism," forthcoming in the Canadian journal *Labour/Travail*.