

Malcontents, Rebels, & Pronunciados: The Politics of Insurrection in Nineteenth-Century Mexico. Will Fowler. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. ISBN: 9780803225428

Will Fowler has assembled a collection of well-researched and provocative essays that analyze the pronunciamiento (a written protest or petition generally drafted as a list of grievances), in Mexico. Pronunciamientos occurred throughout Latin America, but this collection focuses on Mexico in order to probe why Mexicans employed the pronunciamiento to such a large extent. Indeed, in the period 1821-1876, over fifteen hundred pronunciamientos (admittedly ranging widely in effect and importance) occurred in Mexico. Fowler's useful introduction provides background information and context. Pronunciamientos, Fowler asserts, were "the way of doing politics" (x). However, people often err in assuming that pronunciamientos were coups d'état in different clothing. Hardly! Fowler contends, following his earlier volume *Forceful Negotiations*, that pronunciamientos were more like lobbying, although they could "degenerate into sanguinary revolts" (xxiv). In addition, pronunciamientos were not used exclusively by one social class, but by all types of individuals and institutions at the local and national levels. Ultimately, people used pronunciamientos to cope with and overcome the crisis of governance, and notwithstanding the fact that pronunciamientos worsened the crisis, it became the preferred means to negotiate for change. Fowler's introduction sets the stage for the twelve wide-ranging essays that follow.

Terry Rugeley opens with a discussion of southeast Mexico where, he contends, "faced with anarchic conditions and lacking a clear political future, people had to find their own way" (2). Rugeley discusses four different types of pronunciamientos: "from without" "from within" "from above" and "from below." Rugeley found an absence of pronunciamientos from below, but noted that successful elite projects had to offer something to the lower classes. Rugeley concludes that pronunciamientos from within the southeastern provinces enjoyed the strongest chance of actually changing something. Catherine Andrews then provides fascinating analysis of Felipe de la Garza's failed pronunciamiento in Nuevo Santander, which had "the dubious honor of being among the first military rebellions in independent Mexico" (22). De la Garza challenged Iturbide, but his pronunciamiento did not attract much support outside his province and was, consequently, short lived. Andrews demonstrates that pronunciamientos from within could succeed at the local level, but needed external support to succeed at the national level.

The next two essays deal with two institutions: the military and the clergy. Juan Ortiz Escamilla surveys the military and pronunciamientos in Veracruz where the army "claimed to be the sole owner of national representation by way of the pronunciamiento as a response to the lack of social order that was perceived to have resulted from popular participation" (43). Escamilla asserts that civil servants had very little ability to enforce the law, that almost anyone could be a warlord, and that military units "became the main social and political agitators of the region" (64). Anne Staples analyzes the clergy and pronunciamientos, noting that it can be difficult to confirm the participation of the clergy in pronunciamientos. Staples argues that the clergy who participated in pronunciamientos did so for a variety of reasons and concludes that "the military was not necessarily in cahoots with the church, and that there was not a uniform response by the church, and that what benefitted the military did not necessarily benefit the church" (86).

Linda Arnold and Sergio A. Cañedo Gamboa analyze the failed pronunciamiento of Ramón García Ugarte in San Luis Potosí. Arnold argues that "arming a sufficient number of men and

building coalitions may be key factors between distinguishing between a failed pronunciamiento and a successful one” (91). Pronunciamientos may have begun as lists of grievances, but they quickly grew into larger affairs that needed men and men (often raised by forced loans). Arnold concludes that García Ugarte was definitely a patriot as well as a federalist and a malcontent who believed his intentions were good. In other words, while his use of the pronunciamiento was self-serving, García Ugarte was no less a patriot. An important point, insofar as some people linked themselves to pronunciamientos as a cynical means of gaining power. Gamboa also examines García Ugarte’s pronunciamiento, but focuses on the authors of the plan to demonstrate that ideas mattered and often gave pronunciamientos a larger purpose. Indeed, the intellectual component was important, insofar as some averred that pronunciados were robbers who sought to pillage the treasury. No, says Gamboa. Pronunciados were often motivated, by higher ideals (in this case, the heartfelt desire to restore the Constitution of 1824).

Raymond Buve’s essay, which focuses on Tlaxcala, examines the involvement of town councils. (Buve contends that local issues trumped national issues). In addition, Buve reinforces many of the themes previously discussed. In particular, Buve asserts that Tlaxcala “provides a noteworthy example of the various ways in which the pronunciamiento, an act of rebellion in order to negotiate, became part of a political culture that rapidly adapted to the realities of a malfunctioning constitutional nation-state” (145). Guy Thomson’s engaging essay offers a discussion of Puebla. Thomson notes that Puebla was a magnet for rival caudillos, a laboratory of Liberal reforms, and at the center of violent national conflict. However, he cautions that Puebla (both city and province) were not passive victims of the political and military ambitions of leaders from other parts. Rather, they “specialized in seconding or opposing the actions of leaders from elsewhere, who sought Puebla’s parties or territory for promoting their causes nationally” (151). Puebla, Thomson concludes, “both reflected and contributed to the wider ideological, party, and personal conflicts that divided Mexico” (151) and was not, as it has been previously portrayed, a Conservative, clerical, and reactionary bastion.

Josefina Zoraida Vázquez and Will Fowler examine serial pronouncers. Vázquez offers a lengthy biographical treatment of Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga, his career, and his rise to power and echoes Arnold’s analysis of García Ugarte. For all that Paredes was deeply interested in power, he nevertheless held genuine political beliefs. Will Fowler analyzes perhaps the most famous serial pronouncer: Antonio López de Santa Anna. Santa Anna’s use of the pronunciamiento, Fowler asserts, allowed him “to claim that he was obeying the ‘will of the people’” (207), although Santa Anna was both a user and a crusher of pronunciamientos. Fowler employs Santa Anna as a lens to engage broader themes, arguing that a study of Santa Anna’s pronunciamientos “forces us to interpret the practice as one that had more in common with electioneering or straw-polling than it did with staging a coup” (210). Fowler demonstrates how pronunciamientos could (and often did) evolve; that pronunciados could not know at the beginning which initial demands would have to be dropped or changed; that pronunciados had to be nimble and flexible; and that a pronunciado had to negotiate not only with the government posing, but also his supporters. Pronunciados, Fowler asserts, perhaps too strongly, were more like electoral candidates than a revolutionary.

Pronunciamientos eventually began to trail off, the theme Erika Pani investigates. Pani asks readers to consider why there were no pronunciamientos during the French Intervention and

argues that the decline after the French left Mexico reflects “the polarization of politics that ensued from the proclamation of the 1857 Constitution and the subsequent civil war” (251); that there was a different type of political legitimacy; and that the Constitution of 1857 was “transformed from a controversial, often unpopular document into the flag of Liberalism and patriotic resistance” (251). The final essay, Eduardo Flores Clair’s, discusses the socialist uprising of Julio López Chávez. Clair’s essay provides something of a counterpoint to Pani’s. While Pani is undoubtedly correct that people began to view the Constitution of 1857 in a different light, there were many uprisings following the French Intervention and one could argue that the bloodshed of the War of Reform and French Intervention had not stopped people from continuing violent practices. Furthermore, in contrast to the thesis of pronunciamiento decline, Clair’s contends that this uprising was a pronunciamiento. Clair highlights not only the different types of social participation evident, but also the use of a freedom ideology.

All in all, this is a compelling volume. There was some repetitiveness and there were a few points where the conclusions felt a bit too strong. Consider, for example the somewhat problematic comparison of pronunciados to electoral candidates. In 1876, Porfirio Díaz ran for president against Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. When he lost the election, Díaz took up arms and eventually gained the Presidency. Díaz’s behavior as a pronunciado does not really look like his behavior as an electoral candidate. But this is a small quibble. This volume has a wide-ranging series of essays that should prove useful in both graduate and upper-division undergraduate classrooms and appeal to anyone interested in Mexican and Latin American history as well as the relationship between violence and politics.

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