

This claim rests on a superficial reading of the theology. Gustavo Gutiérrez has long seen socialism as creating the context in which the poor will gain “an effective share in the exercise of political power” and thus forge “a truly democratic society” (*The Power of the Poor*, 1983, p. 49). Meanwhile, Sigmund’s narrow conception of democracy—apparently any country with a constitution qualifies—places Duarte’s El Salvador in the family of democratic nations. Sigmund makes much of Juan Luis Segundo’s declaration that revolutionary violence “does not frighten me” (quoted, p. 62), and concludes that this view is tantamount to “a blithe dismissal of a concern for human rights” (p. 77). Yet the currently official (not just liberationist) teaching of the church is that violence is justified in the case of extreme and prolonged tyranny; and in any event the vast majority of liberationist writing calls for the restructuring of society without violent means (see Arthur F. McGovern, *Liberation Theology and Its Critics* [1989], p. 187). Overlooking this kind of complexity, Sigmund’s study becomes, unfortunately, yet another in the line of antiliberationist polemics that fail to do justice to the object of their criticism.

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Latin American Women and the Search for Social Justice. By FRANCESCA MILLER. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliographies. Index. xv, 324 pp. Paper. \$16.95.

A comprehensive view of the history of Latin American women in the twentieth century has been sorely needed for some time, and now Francesca Miller has provided Latin Americanists with a readable account of several key trends in the political history of these women. As its title suggests, this work seeks to emphasize the role of women as active participants in public affairs. The core of the narrative is the history of women’s organizations, conferences, and drives for several political causes of the Right and the Left. While not totally triumphalist in tone, this work is intent on casting a positive and vindicatory light on women, so as to make possible their inclusion in general histories of the area.

The interlocking themes of feminism and political participation are abundantly illustrated throughout the work, but especially in the chapters covering the period between 1938 and 1990, which highlight the role of women’s organizations in promoting social, economic, and gender-view change. Recent studies of the origins of feminism in the early twentieth century and in the 1980s have helped to establish that despite all the internal conflicts this ideology has posed, it has nourished important expressions of female political activism. Miller’s study makes clear that the promotion of women’s causes by women’s organizations has been as partisan and self-conscious as that of other interest groups, and that women have deftly used the tools at their disposal to generate interest in their public roles. Suffrage loomed large on the agenda of the female groups organized in the 1930s; but it is evident from the data that the concerns of women’s organizations expanded into

social and economic issues, which, though they had already surfaced before 1950, could not be activated until the second half of the century.

The wide variety of socioeconomic circumstances in Latin American countries has given women's political activities a significant diversity. Miller imposes some unity and a common thread to the narrative with the theme of the pursuit of social justice, which most women's groups—even those of opposite ideological orientations—have upheld as their overriding concern. The statements and activities of many of the post-World War II organizations Miller cites suggest that many women's associations have gone against the grain of conservative politics and stood squarely in the camp of dissenters, not always beneficially to them or to women's causes. Legitimacy and recognition have not been easy to achieve, and internal splits have slowed the pace of that process. Yet in the 1980s women's issues achieved an irreversible momentum.

This study gathers a significant amount of data distilled from national and international organizations, women's own writings, and recent works by political scientists and historians. There is much to commend in this synthetic effort to present an alternative version of the recent past, although much remains to be done to gain a full view of women's history. As Miller states, "it is critical to distinguish between the mobilization of women . . . and the improvement in the status of women" (p. 138). Miller has focused on the political aspects of that mobilization, congruent with her interest in underscoring the pursuit of an ideal of social justice. Other aspects of women's history—labor, education, health, family structure, rural life—and the degree of change in their status remain to be studied in greater depth. However, those interested in the means women have used to enact their own interpretation of the politics will find much to learn here.

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Latin American Land Reforms in Theory and Practice: A Retrospective Analysis. By PETER DORNER. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992. Tables. Bibliography. Index. ix, 108 pp. Cloth, \$22.95. Paper, \$9.95.

Despite the broad title, this is an essay specifically about the merits of land reform as public policy for economic development in Latin America. After 1959, U.S. fears of regional instability, coupled with an increasingly vocal intellectual disaffection from neoclassical theories of international trade and development, made the concept of land redistribution as public policy appealing to U.S. and international agencies providing technical and financial assistance to Latin American governments. The charter of the Alliance for Progress (1961) expressed this sentiment. Agricultural development economists and consultants were encouraged to focus on the theoretical and applied problems of land tenure reform in Latin America.

In those years, Peter Dorner and his colleagues at Wisconsin's Land Tenure Center (established with AID funds) made an influential "economic case for land re-