

Finally, a common criticism of this genre of labor history is that it all too often reflects the goals and aspirations of the leadership, not the rank and file. If Zamora's work proves no exception, it provides a nonetheless illuminating view of working-class culture along the border at the turn of the century.

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The Civil War in Nicaragua: Inside the Sandinistas. By ROGER MIRANDA and WILLIAM E. RATLIFF. New Brunswick: Transaction, 1993. Notes. Index. 308 pp. Cloth. \$32.95.

Sandinista Economics in Practice. By ALEJANDRO MARTÍNEZ CUENCA. Boston: South End Press, 1992. Notes. Index. 178 pp. Paper. \$12.00.

Inside is the key word in the subtitle of the first of these two books. Coauthor Roger Miranda, former chief of the Defense Ministry Secretariat and top aide to Comandante Humberto Ortega, was a member of the inner circle that ruled Nicaragua from the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza in 1979 until Miranda's removal to the United States in 1987. Much of his account is based on the top-secret documents he carried out with him. William Ratliff, a senior research fellow at the Hoover Institution, also has been a keen observer of the scene since 1979. His earlier work, *Castroism and Communism in Latin America, 1959–1976: The Varieties of Marxist-Leninist Experience* (1976), provides the background for his analysis; the spark that set off the Sandinista revolution was struck in Cuba in January 1959 when Fidel Castro's guerrilla forces ousted Fulgencio Batista.

One might expect an extreme bias from an affiliate of a conservative university think tank and a defector to capitalism. Not so. Ratliff and Miranda tell it like it is: the Sandinista defeat in the election of 1990 confirmed the obvious failures of the National Directorate of nine comandantes that promised so much and delivered so little.

The authors lead us “behind the curtain which no outsider could penetrate” to show the personalities and power struggles among this clique of nine: Tomás Borge, Humberto and Daniel Ortega, Bayardo Arce, Jaime Wheelock, Carlos Núñez, Henry Ruíz, Luis Carrión, and Víctor Tirado. Their analysis is firmly grounded in the early history of Nicaragua, with emphasis on U.S. intervention, the Somoza dictatorship, and the history and objectives of the FSLN. It is based on recent interviews with key players such as Edén Pastora (“Comandante Cero”), a leader of the insurrection, and eyewitness reportage by knowledgeable journalists (Shirley Christian, Christopher Dickey, Stephen Kinzer, Alan Riding). It also refers to relevant scholarly studies, such as David Nolan's *Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (1984) and Anthony Lake's *Somoza Falling* (1989)—the latter particularly illuminating because it takes us inside the Department of State and National Security Council to show how U.S. foreign policy is made. (The omis-

sion of Richard Millett's seminal study, *Guardians of the Dynasty* [1977], should, however, also be noted.)

The book concludes with an authoritative discussion of misguided U.S. involvement in Central America from the Carter administration to the Reagan era, when the stalemate between the White House and Congress made it impossible to develop or maintain a consistent, long-range policy. Emphasis is placed on U.S. backing of the Contras, the leadership and support for which, in the authors' view, came not from former officers of Somoza's National Guard but from a broad-based and popularly supported movement of disenchanting campesinos. The authors also deal with the Soviet military buildup and the Nicaraguan junta's apprehension about a U.S. invasion, based on the observed experiences of Grenada and Panama. International organizations were slow to come to Nicaragua's aid because of the uncertain investment climate and the failure to reform the banking system and privatize the economy. This failure, more than any other factor, led to the popular defeat of Daniel Ortega's hardliners by Violeta Chamorro's UNO coalition in 1990.

Sandinista Economics in Practice, by Alejandro Martínez Cuenca, former minister of planning and budget in the Sandinista government, presents another "insider's critical reflections," on not only the economic but also the political scene before, during, and after the Sandinista takeover. The text takes the form of a dialogue between Martínez and his Chilean international trade adviser, Roberto Pizarro, who was "present at the creation" and is now an insightful and unsparing critic of the regime.

Martínez Cuenca considers the revolution's fundamental problems to have been false optimism, great inexperience, and little appreciation of the limits imposed by an economic process that, facing the international reality, would have to demand efficiency and productivity. His evaluation of the Sandinistas' performance may be summarized as follows: the leaders were so obsessed with defeating U.S. military strategy that they failed to understand that economic and diplomatic considerations, in the contemporary world, are as powerful as military actions. Thus the combined weight of the cutoff of economic aid and diplomatic isolation from the West defeated them. Their focus on military responses and their lack of experience with the realities of trade and investment led to an economic debacle that a major devaluation and stringent budgetary measures could not reverse.

In spite of enormous obstacles to economic reform, Nicaragua today—like almost every other country in this hemisphere, to a greater or lesser degree—is striving to develop a market economy and free international trade. One can agree with these authors that the danger exists that the United States will lose sight of its strategic concerns in Latin America and that once again, de Tocqueville will be proven right—U.S. democracy will be unable to conduct a foreign policy in its own and the region's long-term interests.

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