

La mística de Sandino. By ALEJANDRO BENDAÑA. Managua: Centro de Estudios Internacionales, 1994. Bibliography. 260 pp. Paper.

In the fractious terrain of Nicaraguan national-political memory, certain “rascally signs” (in David Whisnant’s *précis*) stand out as key sites of political and ideological contestation. Augusto César Sandino, of course, stands among these, his legacy nothing if not rascally. The Sandino constructed in this book is well expressed in the iconography on its jacket: a photograph of a statue of the Hero in his most famously defiant pose atop a dark wooden pedestal, silhouetted jet-black before a brightly illuminated orangey fabric; and above the photo, the book’s title. This is no false advertising; as a political cum scholarly intervention intended to resuscitate and reshape Sandino’s legacy in this crisis-ridden postrevolutionary era, the book falls squarely within the political-ideological tradition staked out by Carlos Fonseca a third of a century ago.

The book divides into three parts. The first, by the Harvard-trained Nicaraguan historian Alejandro Bendaña, consists of a 126-page interpretive essay, based on published sources, on the origins and character of Sandino’s ideology and its relation (or lack of relation) to other ideological currents of 1920s Mexico, Central America, Peru, and Europe. The study addresses two principal questions: What did Sandino think? and When did he think it? Rightly emphasizing the influence of postrevolutionary Mexican ideological ferment in shaping Sandino’s eclectic worldview, Bendaña suggestively affirms Gregorio Selser’s observation of more than 30 years’ standing—that any intellectual biography of Sandino must focus on his three years (1923–26) in and around the oil fields of Tampico. In its emphasis on this Mexican connection, the essay complements the more definitive work of Donald Hodges. Whether it succeeds in reinscribing Sandino’s image with the “universal human values” of socialism, social justice, democracy, sovereignty, dignity, and patriotism, only time will tell.

The next two sections of the book move past Sandino’s ideology to the rebellion he led. Part 2, a 32-page *presentación* by University of Chicago doctoral candidate Richard Grossman, offers a critical reading of part 3, a collection of 44 hitherto unpublished Sandinista documents culled from the U.S. National Archives. Grossman aims to show that the Segovian peasantry took inspiration from and supported Sandino, citing as evidence these documents, along with related archival material. Having worked extensively in the same archives myself, it seems to me that the reading of the evidence presented here is substantially conditioned by a predisposition toward sympathy for the rebel cause and a general lack of critical distance from its subject. The Segovias region envisioned here is largely indistinguishable from Sandino’s Segovias—a region divided into “patriots,” “traitors,” and “invaders.” Other social identities, allegiances, and terrains of struggle—ethnic, party, family, community, gender, patron-client—remain outside the essay’s gaze, which does not transgress the conceptual boundaries laid out in the Sandinista narrative of the period. At the same time, the essay raises some important but neglected questions; for example, what did patriotism actually mean to Segovianos? (p. 158).

The documents in part 3, a valuable addition to the published literature, suggest a social reality messier than the one construed in the essay that introduces them. The rebels' forced contributions, for example (documents 4, 13, 18, 23) might be interpreted, *pace* Grossman, as expressions of Sandino's style of patriotism (pp. 148–49, 158–59); or, alternatively, as expressions of subaltern brigandage, popular protest, labor struggle, ethnic struggle, civil war, personal-political animosity, or any number of other things. If definitive interpretations here necessarily remain elusive, Grossman's essay and the documents do provide useful points of departure for further investigations into this and a host of related rascally questions.

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Sandino's Daughters Revisited: Feminism in Nicaragua. By MARGARET RANDALL. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994. Photographs. Notes. xvi, 311 pp. Paper. \$16.95.

Margaret Randall's interviews with 12 women in this volume add to the literature analyzing the FSLN's rule in Nicaragua and its defeat in the 1990 election. The women range from those who fought with the guerrillas or organized and ran different branches of the administration during the period of Sandinista rule to those who found themselves removed from the power center. Most come from middle-class or wealthy families. Some of their parents supported Somoza. The majority attended Catholic schools, and a few completed college in the United States. Several are poets who worked with Randall when she first visited Nicaragua.

The women speak of the problems that arose as they attempted to build a revolutionary government and adjust to the changes in the power structure after the exit of Somoza. One headed the nation's police; another took charge of its medical program; a Miskito physician turned legislator and factory worker helped to reconstruct her company when the employees left the country shortly after Somoza fell. Following the FSLN's loss at the polls, the company owners returned, and the workers had to hire a lawyer in an effort to retain the plant. This story is typical of the problems of those who benefited from the revolution.

Randall, a lesbian, feminist, and revolutionary, obviously chose women who, at least in part, supported her ideas. She asked questions aimed mainly at eliciting their reaction to women's difficulty in retaining positions of power and influence. The women interviewed emerge as fascinating individuals as they describe their personal backgrounds and their different experiences during and after the Sandinistas' tenure in power. The women comment on allies and antagonists among the party members; both Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario, receive criticism.

The interplay between personalities, male and female, during the long days of trying to organize and promote the new administration while dealing with a war financed by their powerful northern neighbor may give only a limited view of the period, but it raises important questions and issues. All these women experienced