

THROUGH REVOLUTION AND BEYOND:
Mobilization, Demobilization, and Adjustment
in Central America

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- BEYOND THE BARRICADES: NICARAGUA AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE SANDINISTA PRESS, 1979–1998.* By Adam Jones. (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, Research in International Studies – Ohio University Press, 2002. Pp. 308. \$30.00 paper.)
- MOTHERS OF HEROES AND MARTYRS: GENDER IDENTITY POLITICS IN NICARAGUA, 1979–1999.* By Lorraine Bayard de Volo. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Pp. 293, \$24.95 paper.)
- AFTER THE REVOLUTION: GENDER AND DEMOCRACY IN EL SALVADOR, NICARAGUA, AND GUATEMALA.* By Ilja A. Luciak. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. Pp. 297. \$27.95 paper.)
- LOST VISIONS AND NEW UNCERTAINTIES: SANDINISTA PROFESIONALES IN NORTHERN NICARAGUA.* By Inger Lundgren. (Stockholm: Department of Sociology, University of Stockholm. Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, 2000. Pp. 258. \$57.50 paper.)

Assessment of the revolutionary experience in Central America continues as scholars examine how revolutionary organizations and institutions, civil society, and individuals experienced the turmoil of mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s and then adjusted to the end of revolution, armed struggle, and political peace in the 1990s. These books, three of which focus on Nicaragua and the Sandinista experience and one of which encompasses El Salvador and Guatemala as well, reveal much about the lived revolution and its aftermath. They explore how citizens and activists became mobilized into revolutionary collective action, their understanding of how political participation altered their sense of themselves, and how the passing of Central America's revolutionary moment has transformed their efforts, life conditions, and organizations.

Adam Jones's *Beyond the Barricades: Nicaragua and the Struggle for the Sandinista Press, 1979–1998* is a straightforward history of the Sandinista

daily newspaper *Barricada* from its birth to death. From extensive access to its files and back issues to dozens of interviews with key figures at the revolutionary paper, the author lays out the paper's evolution, from its inception marked by the capture of the plant of the Somoza-owned *Novedades* through nineteen years of evolution. The newspaper, owned by the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), evolved from its early mission as a propaganda organ with a mobilizing and educative mission into a paper with a more professional journalistic mission during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Jones relates how *Barricada* remained loyal to the party and revolution while developing a cadre of experienced, talented journalists under the leadership of editor Carlos Fernando Chamorro and the protection and advocacy of FSLN directorate member Bayardo Arce. Basically unsubsidized and supporting itself with circulation, state advertising revenues (shared with other papers), and a profitable printing business, the paper helped finance the FSLN (rather than the reverse). The revolution's demise cut circulation deeply, and losses of state printing contracts and state advertising during the Alemán administration destroyed the paper economically and forced it to close in 1998.

Jones's most significant contribution concerns the struggle for control of *Barricada* during the early 1990s as the FSLN went through a power struggle and its subsequent self-criticism after losing the 1990 election. At the peak of its editorial quality, the paper identified with the Sandinista Renovation Movement that struggled to democratize the party. For this, editor Chamorro and many others were sacked (others resigned) by the victorious hard-line wing of the party, led by Daniel Ortega, and were replaced in October 1994 by Tomás Borge and a new editorial team. The paper returned to its mobilizing mission, declined in editorial quality, and collapsed economically.

The theme of loss and how to cope pervades Inger Lundgren's *Lost Visions and New Uncertainties: Sandinista Profesionales in Northern Nicaragua*. This social-anthropological study of Sandinista middle sector workers in the provincial city of Estelí after the end of the revolution examines the effects of lost influence, status, political vision, and party support after it was ousted from power, and the ramifications for economic resources, family, and social standing. Lundgren based her ethnography on extensive interviews and observations while living among Estelían Sandinistas from 1991 to 1993. She portrays in detail their adjustment to the political earthquake that shook their world after the end of the revolution.

After reviewing the history of Nicaragua's middle sector, Lundgren defines Nicaragua's middle class as "those who are salaried employees and perform non-manual labour" (37). Sandinista *profesionales* constitute a university-educated or otherwise-trained subset of the middle

class who served the state or party during the revolution (and who were distinct from non- and anti-Sandinista professionals with similar backgrounds and occupations). Most Sandinista professionals lost their revolutionary-era public sector jobs under the new government of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro beginning in 1990. Lundgren's chapters examine the character of the professionals, their life and world in Estelí, family and gender, their lost trust and new uncertainty, the dramatically altered sense of the nation and their identity within it, and means of coping with these changes. The book addresses the impact of political change on the worthy losers after a regime change—those who served their nation and party yet ultimately lost and missed out on the great *piñata* that benefited their leaders.

Lorraine Bayard de Volo's *Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs: Gender Identity Politics in Nicaragua, 1979–1999* follows the trajectory of the organization of mothers of children fallen in the uprising against Anastasio Somoza, during the ensuing contra war, and on into the post conflict years of the 1990s. Bayard de Volo lived in Matagalpa in 1991–1993 and interviewed fifty-five members of that chapter of the national mothers' organization and observed the local group's activities. Combining these and other interviews with documentary evidence, Bayard de Volo chronicles the mothers' movement, individuals within it, and its gendering within the context of Nicaraguan society and politics. The book addresses a lacuna in the study of Nicaraguan women's politics because much previous research has concentrated on women as combatants, women's policy issues, or the Association of Nicaraguan Women Luisa Amanda Espinosa (AMNLAE) and its relationship to and eventual separation from the FSLN.

Asking how revolutions are gendered, Bayard de Volo explores how "women as mothers were mobilized as symbols and political actors by both the Sandinistas and anti-Sandinistas" (xv). The book alternates between the wider view of the organization within society and the narrower views of the Matagalpa group and its identity and individual women's experiences. Early chapters explore the use of maternal identity to organize women, how individual women developed their individual and common identities, and how the contra war of 1984–1990 changed the group and its links to the FSLN. Later chapters examine the paradoxical growth of feminist organizing in the administration of the "avowed antifeminist" Chamorro, and the strains on and eventual splitting of the Matagalpa chapter that resulted from benefit-seeking new members and the schism within the FSLN.

Broadening the view from Nicaragua alone, Ilya A. Luciak's *After the Revolution: Gender and Democracy in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala* examines gender equality within the political parties born from the revolutionary movements of Central America. He focuses on how

gender in/equality has affected the transition to democracy both within the post-revolutionary parties and in the national political systems. He compares the experiences of women in Nicaragua's FSLN, Guatemala's National Revolutionary Union (URNG), and El Salvador's Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN), but places the greatest emphasis on the Salvadoran case. He builds upon and incorporates a substantial literature on democracy and democratic consolidation, as well as on women in Central America's revolutions.

Luciak reviews the history of women in each movement and their progress in the peace accords of the 1990s. The most original material consists of a comparative case study of female and male revolutionaries in three communities of El Salvador drawn from interviews of ex-combatants. Another chapter examines how party elites ("vanguards") managed the dual challenges of addressing gender inequality as they transformed their military organizations into political parties. Another compares the performance of women in the postrevolutionary left parties within and among the three countries. Gender equality issues vastly complicate the process of transforming a guerrilla movement into a political party in each country, and the results and progress for women within the parties differ widely. Local effects, international forces, the historical moment at which demobilization occurred, gender role biases of males and females at both leadership and rank-and-file levels, and resources all shape the various outcomes in the three countries. *After the Revolution* provides insight into the process of post-conflict democratization, especially on the left, and explains why women have advanced further toward equality in the El Salvador's FMLN than elsewhere.

For believers in the transformative potential of the region's revolutionary movements, a sobering evaluation emerges from these works. Nicaragua's Sandinistas perhaps achieved the most by governing from 1979 to 1990, but also lost the most in the post-revolutionary world. As chronicled here, post-1990 Sandinista party schisms and their centralizing aftermath have left a legacy of bewildered and disaffected former loyalists along with vanished or broken organizations. On the other hand, these detailed studies of Sandinista *profesionales*, mothers of those fallen in Nicaragua's wars, postrevolutionary parties and treatment of women, and the history of the newspaper *Barricada* all reveal elements of the rich legacies of the revolutions and insurrections in building civil society, social capital, individual talent, and awareness.

Although there is little in these works that explicitly addresses these themes per se, each book provides rich insight into civil society and social capital formation. As organizations mobilize people, whether guerrilla groups, political parties, states, or voluntary associations, they form social capital at the institutional level (such as *Barricada*, the leadership

of the mothers of Matagalpa, or the myriad agencies and programs promoting development). They also form social capital at the individual level (belief in the nation, loyalty to the political system, organizational and communications skills, interpersonal trust, ideology, orientations toward the state and one's fellow citizens, and gender role expectations). Great historical events and movements such as insurrections, revolutions, and regime transformations dramatically alter the landscape for individuals and institutions, and both must adjust in order to survive. These works chronicle, macro- and microscopically, the building, adjustment, decline, and accommodation of the revolutionary projects of Central America. They provide us intimate views of the long-term evolution, survival struggles and the adaptation of institutions and individuals to sweeping historical change. In doing this they build our understanding of Central America, and they contribute significantly to the literature on the effects of revolution.