SHADES OF PEACE AND DEMOCRACY:
Social Discontent and Reconciliation in Central America*

David Carey Jr.
University of Southern Maine

TERROR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE: CAMPESINO RESPONSES TO POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN GUATEMALA, 1954–1985. By Rachel May. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001. Pp. 234. $26.00 paper.)

SANDINISTA: CARLOS FONSECA AND THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION. By Matilde Zimmermann. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000. Pp. 288. $54.95 cloth, $18.95 paper.)

THE REAL CONTRA WAR: HIGHLANDER PEASANT RESISTANCE IN NICARAGUA. By Timothy C. Brown. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001. Pp. 321. $29.95 cloth.)

MORAL VICTORIES: HOW ACTIVISTS PROVOKE MULTILATERAL ACTION. By Susan Burgerman. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001. Pp. 186. $29.95 cloth.)

GLOBALIZATION ON THE GROUND: POSTBELLUM GUATEMALAN DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT. Edited by Christopher Chase-Dunn, Nelson Amaro, and Susanne Jonas. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001. Pp. 254. $72.00 cloth, $26.95 paper.)

REPRESSION, RESISTANCE, AND DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION IN CENTRAL AMERICA. Edited by Thomas W. Walker and Ariel C. Armony. (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000. Pp. 301. $60.00 cloth, $22.95 paper.)

After traversing the twenty-kilometer road that leads from the Pan American highway up into the central highland town of San Juan Comalapa in Guatemala, one of the first breaks from the verdant scenery is a mural painted on the cemetery walls. In 2002, teachers, artists, students and other community members sketched and painted the history of their town and people; the result stands as a testament to Mayan resistance. For the recent past, it depicts Guatemala's civil war, the poverty

* This essay has benefited from the insights and critiques of Allen Wells, Judith Maxwell, Aldo Lauria-Santiago, and Kirsten Johnson.

Latin American Research Review, Vol. 40, No. 1, February 2005
© 2005 by the University of Texas Press, P.O. Box 7819, Austin, TX 78713-7819

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and racism that were among its causes, and Maya-Kaqchikel responses to violence and economic injustice. Because it would have elicited harsh and probably fatal retribution, a mural with such stark political and historical overtones in a Mayan community was unimaginable just ten years ago. Yet members of this community felt safe enough to engage in a public expression of the past and chart a course for a more peaceful and inclusive future. Like these Mayan activists, Western scholars also benefited from the cessation of state-sponsored (both domestic and foreign) violence and armed insurrection in Central America.

Since the 1970s, the diverse range of Central America's political processes—democracy, military rule (with varying degrees of repression), insurgency movements, genocide, revolution, foreign intervention and invasion—arguably has been unmatched by any other region in the world. Remarkably, by the 1990s, each nation's disparate experiences converged into democratic experiments and market-oriented economies. These monographs attempt to explain this shift with a particular focus on the potential for continued democratization and lasting peace in the region. The literature assessing the processes of social discontent and reconciliation in Central America continues to grow. Indeed, sparked by the 1979 victory of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN or Sandinistas), the Central American "crisis" garnered international attention in the 1980s and scholarly writing about the region exploded. The books under review here, which include chapters written by Central American experts who forged their reputations during the earlier period—Susanne Jonas, Thomas Walker, John Booth, Carlos Vilas, Kay Warren, Edelberto Torres-Rivas—build on that corpus of literature to deepen analysis of such topics as civil society, economic development, and democratization and pursue nascent research fields like human rights, transnational networks, and the peace processes of the 1990s. Their geographic focus is on the nations that held center stage in Central America's drama: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

RISE OF INSURGENCY

Ironically, the nation with perhaps the least "fertile soil for the proliferation of Left groups" (Zimmermann 2000, 166) was the only one where revolution prevailed. Matilde Zimmermann's *Sandinista* provides not just a thorough study of the FSLN's ideological and military leader Carlos Fonseca, but also (as all good biographies do) offers insight into the country's social and political history during her subject's lifetime. Zimmermann shows how Fonseca sought to channel and explain social discontent with the combination of two philosophies: Marxism—from the Cuban revolution and particularly Ernesto "Che" Guevara's writings and life—and nationalism, from Nicaragua's history of resistance

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

embodied in Augusto César Sandino. After Fonseca's death in 1976, the FSLN became more moderate. But the urban masses that virtually liberated cities without FSLN participation in 1979 pushed the Sandinistas closer to Fonseca's vision. Nonetheless, since less than 5 percent of those who participated in the insurrections were peasants, this ideology was not necessarily shared by all.

In many ways, the FSLN marginalized (and in some cases even repressed) rural and indigenous peoples, who in turn resisted the revolution. Timothy Brown's provocative and well researched *The Real Contra War* makes a valuable contribution in this regard. By using both documents from the Fuerza Democrática Nicaragüense (FDN), who accounted for 80 percent of all armed resistance to the Sandinistas, and oral history interviews with FDN combatants, Brown shows that 95 percent of the FDN *comandos* were indigenous *campesinos*. Because the Sandinistas expropriated their land to form cooperatives, removed their children to indoctrinate them in lowland schools, criticized Catholicism, instituted a socialist, not democratic, government, and abused members of their communities, most highland peasants defied "yet one more in a thousand-year-old string of attempts at subjugation by outsiders" (10). In fact, *comandos* began to resist the FSLN even before the overthrow of Anastasio Somoza Debayle in 1979. Brown's observation that in resisting the Sandinistas, highland indigenous people were rejecting assimilation, resonates with Mayan struggles against acculturation in Guatemala. But when he describes the highland peasants as a homogeneous group, despite informants' comments and archival evidence that intimate complex identities and realities, Brown falls victim to the same myopia for which he criticizes the Sandinistas.

Even though she argues that Fonseca eventually came to understand the importance of including, even emulating, indigenous lifestyles and people, Zimmermann agrees with Brown's assessment that the FSLN never fully grasped the importance of ethnic identity in Nicaragua. One indication of this divide is Tomás Borge's description of Sumo and Miskito peoples as a "population [that] was politically and even economically primitive . . . Many of them didn't know how to speak Spanish, and I don't think they ever understood very well who we were . . . We were truly alien beings to them" (81). Zimmermann's and Brown's books reveal how the ethnic and geographic division of Nicaraguan civil society both fueled a revolution and brought about its downfall.

The Sandinistas learned from their mistakes and developed a more sophisticated understanding of ethnicity, however. When they established indigenous autonomous regions and an indigenous congress, at least they recognized diversity as encompassed by linguistic groups. Indeed, the FSLN's innovative autonomy law allayed Miskito resistance to the revolution. The Sandinista case highlights that Central American

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

nations cannot address their past and current challenges without a more transparent understanding of ethnic relations.[1] This lesson is especially poignant in Guatemala.

As truth commission reports from both the United Nations (UN) and the Catholic church show, nowhere in Central America was the intensity and duration of civil war as devastating as in Guatemala, where 200,000 (predominantly Maya) people were killed and one million displaced.[2] Rachel May's erudite *Terror in the Countryside* looks at how two cycles of political violence (1958–1972 and 1972–1985) spawned (and then nearly eradicated) rural organizations in Guatemala and how these organizations adapted to these threats.[3] She convincingly argues that ideologies became more radical, resilient, and indigenous; organizational structures became more democratic, flexible, participatory, and Mayan; and mobilization strategies became more concerned with protecting, educating, and empowering members. For these reasons, May posits, "The lessons learned during the worst periods of political violence uniquely qualify these organizations, these representatives of Guatemalan civil society, to take a leading role in the democratization process" (145).

CIVIL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIZATION

The verve and composure with which indigenous, women's, labor, and other grassroots movements have emerged from violence and civil war in Central America are nothing short of heroic. These groups do not represent monolithic homogenous populations or demands. Often divisions emanating from ethnicity, geography, class, goals, and ideology

1. This is convincingly elucidated in Jeffrey Gould's *To Die in This Way* (1998), Greg Grandin's *The Blood of Guatemala* (2000), Edgar Esquit's *Otros poderes, nuevos desafíos* (2002), and Richard Adams and Santiago Bastos's *Las relaciones étnicas en Guatemala, 1944–2000* (2003)

2. Comisión para el Esclaracimiento Histórico (CEH), *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio Tz'inil Na'tab'al* (1999); Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)—Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI), *Guatemala, nunca más: Impactos de la violencia* (1998). For similar studies on El Salvador's civil war see Belisario Betancur, Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, and Thomas Buergenthal, *From Madness to Hope* (1993); and Americas Watch Committee, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror* (1991). The figures in Guatemala are almost certainly conservative. During recent exhumations of mass graves, forensic anthropologists found that more than half the victims uncovered were not registered in *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio Tz'inil Na'tab'al*; see Jill Replogle's *Dallas Morning News* article, "Uncovering Guatemala's Secrets (2004).

3. A number of recent monographs shed considerable light on how complexities of ethnic and class relations affected mobilization and organization in Guatemala for the period prior to that undertaken in May's study, see Esquit, *Otros poderes*; Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala*; and Cindy Forster, *The Time of Freedom: Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sowed dissension and opposition, but at times the common condition of exploitation forged national and transnational alliances with the capacity to challenge hegemonic political and economic forces. Efforts to understand the development and impact of civil society unite these books.

May's study ends in 1985, the first time in fifteen years that nonmilitary presidential candidates competed in relatively fair (if not representative) elections. *Globalization on the Ground* edited by Christopher Chase-Dunn et al. picks up where May leaves off, affirming her assertions. A number of the authors in this volume attest that civil society was not only crucial to democratization in Guatemala, but also to the peace process. Recent works including Susanne Jonas's authoritative *Of Centaurs and Doves* (2000) and Rachel Sieder's (ed.) *Guatemala after the Peace Accords* (1998) adeptly examine the Guatemalan peace process. But the scholarship being reviewed here (including three articles by Jonas) both expands on that analysis and moves beyond it by exploring such issues as the long-term effects of neoliberal economic policies and the legacy of violence (caused in large part by economic and political injustice) in Central America. In her article "Pan-Mayanism and the Guatemalan Peace Process" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), Kay Warren identifies the popular left and Mayanist organizations as central to the process because they were among the "best organized groups" (156).[4] Despite their restricted access to negotiations, Mayan groups developed strategies for implementing the 1996 Peace Accords before they were even signed and contributed to "new modes of political organizing and community building" (162). Because Mayan leaders addressed Guatemala's central crises, the dialogue that emerged was radical. For example, in an effort to bridge ethnic divisions, some Maya argued that addressing Ladino poverty should be a top priority since it fueled the racism of poor Ladinos. In *Terror in the Countryside* May deftly illustrates that a "Maya renaissance" emerged in the early 1970s and later spawned "Maya nationalism" (121), and the Comité de Unidad Campesina (CUC) began to unite Maya and Ladinos under a banner of equality during the 1970s and 1980s—important precedents for deconstructing racism in the 1990s. As Mayan intellectual and activist José Serech points out in his article "Development of Globalization in the Mayan Population of Guatemala," (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001) these approaches contribute to a Mayan vision of "constructing a future for our past" (171).

Globalization on the Ground and *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* (edited by Thomas Walker and Ariel Armony),

4. For an in-depth and engaging exploration of the Pan-Mayan Movement in Guatemala see Kay Warren, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (1998).

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

are especially valuable because they eschew minimalist definitions of democracy. For example, the authors argue that elections and military subordination to civilian rule are not adequate measures of democracy. In addition to the considerable attention dedicated to civil society, these scholars—especially Nelson Amaro in "Decentralization, Local Government, and Citizen Participation" (Chase Dunn et al. 2001) and Shawn Bird and Philip Williams in "El Salvador: Revolt and Negotiated Transition" (Walker and Armony 2000)—emphasize the importance of citizen participation and representation at the municipal level, as well as enhancing the political power of municipalities vis-à-vis the state.

Since, as Douglas Kincaid points out in "Demilitarization and Security in El Salvador and Guatemala" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), military regimes subordinated public security to national security, a crucial factor in maintaining and extending democracy and peace is citizen security. In *Moral Victories*, Susan Burgerman illustrates that despite UN emphasis on public safety and protection in El Salvador and Guatemala, these nations continue to face security concerns. In Guatemala, common crime has increased and become more violent, especially in the capital, and in El Salvador the repatriation of young refugees who had joined gangs in places like Los Angeles, California has made San Salvador more dangerous. Moreover, despite efforts to promote civilian police over military intervention in domestic affairs, as Jennifer Schirmer reveals in *The Guatemalan Military Project* (1998), the military continues to envision itself as the protector of democracy and to consider repression a necessary tactic for maintaining peace. Evidence of the lack of public security in Guatemala can also be found in the over four hundred lynchings that have occurred since 1996, taking the lives of 240 people and injuring over 720 more. The authors in *Linchamientos* (2003) have performed a tremendous service by offering complex analyses that go beyond explanations that emphasize the legacy of the thirty-six year civil war and the perceived bankruptcy of the judicial and police systems. Clearly, insecurity threatens democracy and peace; for many Maya (and other Guatemalans) security is more important than democracy, which helps to explain why the dictator Jorge Ubico (1931–1944) lives on in popular memory as one of Guatemala's greatest leaders.

Paradoxically, despite being the poorest nation in Central America, Nicaragua does not suffer from endemic violent crime, as do El Salvador and Guatemala. It is also the most democratic of the three nations. In part, thanks to the Sandinista's reign, previously marginalized peoples are benefiting from the nascent democracy. Because they were overlooked in the 1995 census and thus nearly disenfranchised in the 1996 elections, indigenous peasants from Nicaragua's highlands organized themselves to register to vote in what one senior election observer characterized as "'the most heartening example of grassroots

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

democracy in action' he had ever seen" (Brown 178). According to Brown, their votes were influential in the 1996 presidential victory of Arnoldo Aleman, the first Liberal to rule Nicaragua in nearly twenty years. In "Nicaragua: Transition through Revolution" (Walker and Armony 2000), Thomas Walker credits the FSLN with reestablishing democracy (despite U.S. behavior) and argues that the vigorous civil society, free press, and electoral laws give "cause for some hope for the survival of democracy" (86).

One unlikely civil sector contributor to both insurgency and peace movements was the economic elite—or at least certain segments thereof. In his recent book *Revolution and the Multiclass Coalition in Nicaragua* (1996), Mark Everingham argues that only when segments of the capitalist class realized they were too weak to overthrow Somoza did they collaborate with the FSLN. Although Zimmermann agrees that the economic elites were impuissant, unlike Everingham she downplays the importance of cross-class alliances by insisting that spontaneous popular insurrections were the key to the FSLN victory. Regardless of their role in the military victory, capitalists developed close relations with the Sandinistas during their rule, as Rose Spalding delineates in *Capitalists and Revolution in Nicaragua* (1994). In fact, due in part to these intimate relations and also to the class make-up of the FSLN vanguard, Brown agrees with scholars such as Carlos Vilas that the Sandinistas' victory was "less a revolution than a changing of the palace guard" (207).

What the Nicaraguan case evinces, and what a number of the authors considered here develop, is that although elites commonly upheld the status quo, at times they also became important agents of change, especially when concerned about their investments in light of their nation's status as an international pariah. Building on his earlier work, William Robinson adroitly argues in "Neoliberalism, the Global Elite, and the Guatemalan Transition: A Critical Macrosocial Analysis" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001) that Central America's neoliberal economic reforms and internationally sponsored peace negotiations of the late 1980s and 1990s emboldened transnational economic elites to displace or transform the state-protected oligarchy in each nation. Even though this transition was delayed in Guatemala and the economic elite embodied in the Comité Coordinador de Asociaciones Agrícolas, Comerciales, Industriales y Financieras (CACIF) resisted the Peace Accords until extremely late in the process, eventually CACIF members realized their investments would suffer if the Accords failed because rural areas would remain unstable (due to insurgent control) and Guatemala would continue to be an outcast. In *Moral Victories*, Burgerman argues that for similar reasons, beginning in the late 1980s, a group of Salvadoran capitalists also pressured the military to negotiate an end to civil war in their country. Much like Elisabeth Wood does in *Forging*

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Democracy from Below (2000), Zimmermann, Robinson, and Burgerman establish direct connections between popular mobilization and the economic elites' motives for abandoning repressive strategies for a peaceful settlement.

Often natural disasters or political intrigue catalyzed civil society and resulted in unlikely alliances. A key turning point in Guatemala was President Jorge Serrano Elias's attempted *autogolpe* in 1993 because it not only aligned powerful factions of the elite but also consolidated popular sectors. As Warren observes in "Pan-Mayanism" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), "A surprising alliance of business elites, union groups, students, and indigenous leaders convinced the military that such a regime would lack international and national legitimacy" (148). In turn, Jonas argues in *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* as well as in *Globalization on the Ground*, that the experience gained by grassroots organizations in their opposition to the Serranazo emboldened them to demand participation in the peace process. Rachel McCleary provides a fine account of the Serranazo in *Dictating Democracy* (1999), but by exploring the role of international and domestic actors in the peace process, Burgerman (*Moral Victories*), Jonas and Walker in "Guatemala: Intervention, Repression, Revolt, and Negotiated Transition" (Walker and Armony 2000), and the contributors to *Globalization on the Ground* go much further than McCleary. For example, although much of *Moral Victories* focuses on international organizations, Burgerman asserts that civil sectors were instrumental in pushing for peace in El Salvador and Guatemala. In learning from El Salvador's mistake of excluding civil sector input from the 1992 Peace Accords, Guatemala—in large part because of the efforts of the Catholic church—attempted to solicit more feedback from popular organizations, although some groups like the Maya continued to be marginalized despite these efforts. Even though civil society had no vote at the table, it did have a voice.

Surprisingly, despite the focus on civil society in these works, only a few seek direct input from popular classes. Brown, and to a lesser extent May and Zimmermann, interviewed peasants and others from working-class and poor origins, but much of the literature under review here seems slanted toward elite perspectives (that is, if Central American opinions are included at all). One exception is Patricia Bayer Richard and John Booth's article "Civil Society and Democratic Transition" (Walker and Armony 2000) drawn from survey questionnaires. Yet, although their findings support qualitative analysis found elsewhere (e.g., "working-class and poorer Central Americans are willing to use confrontational or disruptive political tactics in pursuit of their goals" [246]), analysis of quantitative data of this type rests on the scholars' interpretations, and inevitably obscures the nuances of interviewees' opinions. Elisabeth Wood's *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (2003), which

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

revealed that peasants often supported the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) for moral and emotional, not necessarily economic reasons, is a fine example of the rich, complex insights that can be accessed by allowing popular classes to articulate their views. Certainly, popular voices and perspectives have informed analysis of Central America's crisis through the genre of *testimonios* as well as through historical explications coming from communities themselves, but the silence of these voices in the books under review here tends to erase agency.[5] For example, Alejandro Portes's assertion in "Theories of Development and their Application to Small Countries," (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001) that "external actors and events have . . . transnationalized the Guatemalan peasantry" (238) portrays Maya (and Ladino) *campesinos* as passive recipients of change; accounts from people like Rigoberta Menchú, Rosalina Tuyuc, and others indicate otherwise.[6]

Women's perspectives, plights, and contributions also receive scant attention from most of these authors. May recognizes this dearth in *Terror in the Countryside* and laments that she did not have greater access to female subjects. Burgerman and a number of authors in *Globalization on the Ground* and *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* laud women's movements in Central America, such as the Guatemalan war widows' association CONAVIGUA (which, among other efforts, continues to facilitate the exhumation of mass graves in the central highlands), as important players in civil society, but seldom do they examine them in depth.[7] Likewise, Brown estimates that females constituted about 7 percent of the *comandos* military force and a far greater percentage of their support system, yet he only dedicates a five-page chapter and occasional textual references to women. Of the books under review here, *Sandinista* best addresses gender. Zimmermann examines women's concurrent critical roles and exclusion from positions of power in the revolutionary movement. Despite Fonseca's efforts to emancipate women (which at times even he contradicted), the realization on the part of some leaders that women "were not inferior to the men in any way" (195), and the exemplary leadership, courage, and intelligence of a number of women in the organization, the FSLN never respected women as equals, as evidenced by the

5. For example, *testimonios* include *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984) and *Hear My Testimony* (1994). Historical explication coming from communities themselves include *Nab'ab'l qtanam: La memoria colectiva del pueblo Mam de Quetzaltenango* (1994), *Nosotros conocemos nuestra historia* (1992), and *Se cambió el tiempo* (2002).

6. Likewise, María Teresa Tula embodies an example of working class efforts to develop transnational connections in El Salvador in Lynn Stephens, ed., *Hear My Testimony* (1994).

7. Jonas and Walker's chapter "Guatemala" (Walker and Armony 2000) is a refreshing exception to this observation.

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

selection of only one woman to serve on the National Directorate from 1966 until the 1990s. Further analysis of the role of gender in social discontent, democratization, and peace negotiations in Central America can contribute to more complex and lucid understandings of how these processes both oppress and empower women.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

One of the greatest challenges facing democratic regimes in Central America today and a paramount factor in explaining the eruption of insurgency movements since the 1960s is economic disparity. For example, egregiously unequal distribution of land, especially in Guatemala and Nicaragua, stands out as a cause of revolution. Almost unanimously the authors in *Globalization on the Ground* and *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* agree that neoliberal economic policies of the 1990s exacerbated economic injustice in Central America. In turn, May delineates how liberal economic policies engendered violence in Guatemala. These critiques are not new; Robert Williams's classic study *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America* (1986) showed how export agriculture contributed to Central America's economic crisis in the 1970s and 1980s and laid bare the social costs of following these economic strategies. Since Central America has moved away from autocratic military rule in recent years, it has become clear that increasing disparity of wealth undermines democratic development. As Robinson in "Neoliberalism," (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001) and Carlos Vilas (who worked with the Sandinistas during the 1980s) in "Neoliberalism in Central America" (Walker and Armony 2000) show, instead of ameliorating economic inequality, neoliberal reforms reinforce structural poverty. Yet as Robinson argues, democratization "requires a radical redistribution of wealth and power" (201). Thus, although democracy and neoliberal economics are often packaged together, they have a parasitic relationship. For this reason, indigenous, women's, and environmental movements, unions, peasant and other grassroots organizations, and even (to a lesser degree) segments of the business community have all protested these economic reforms. As these groups increasingly develop networks that supersede both national and issue-specific boundaries—a process that is empowering the globalization-from-below-movement—they are emerging as the most viable challenge to global elites, especially since, as Robinson notes, the left has failed to offer a counterhegemonic alternative.

By the 1990s most Central American leaders were touting the potential of non-traditional agricultural exports—broccoli, fresh cut flowers, baby carrots, blackberries, strawberries—at the expense of the production of domestic foodstuffs. *Maquiladoras* also attracted foreign

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

investment, but the jobs created further trap (predominantly female) employees in a cycle of poverty, dependency, and often violence. Despite these failings, the region's leaders espouse the benefits of free trade and close relations with the United States. (In 2001 El Salvador adopted the dollar as its official currency.) Glaring evidence of the inability to develop more just economic relations can be found in the fact that family remittances account for one of the largest sources of hard currency on the isthmus. For example, as Richard Stahler-Sholk points out in "External Actors: Other States" (Walker and Armony 2000), from 1978 to 1994 Salvadorans working in the United States sent 4.5 billion dollars back to their families, 1.2 billion more than the total U.S. aid to El Salvador during the same period. These contributions (which simultaneously indicate the extent of economic exile) continue to grow; in 2003 Salvadoran remittances reached $2.1 billion.[8] The economic and political influence of Central American migrants in the United Stated and their contribution to civil society in Central America promises to be an especially relevant and fruitful area for study, in part because, as Portes articulates in "Theories of Development" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), they form a transnational network.[9] Likewise, refugees constitute an important subset of this informal transnational network of migrants. By the late 1990s many who fled war had returned to their homes in places like Guatemala and El Salvador; they too have significant if, as of yet, understudied effects on civil society and the economy.[10]

The obvious deviation from neoliberal economics is the Sandinista effort to develop a "mixed economy." As Walker points out in "Nicaragua" (Walker and Armony 2000), within a few years of the Sandinista victory, "Nicaragua became much more self-sufficient in domestic food production than at any time in recent memory" (73). Considerable growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita from 1979 to 1984

8. Marion Lloyd, "Presidential Rivals Wage Bitter Fight in El Salvador," *Boston Globe* 21 March 2004, p. A4–5.

9. By comparison, Mexican President Vicente Fox believed Mexican migrants in the United States to be a powerful enough bloc to warrant conducting part of his 2000 electoral campaign in California. Likewise, in an effort to influence national politics (and violate national sovereignty), the United States threatened to block work visas for some 300,000 Salvadorans if the FMLN won the March 2004 presidential elections; see Lloyd, "Presidential Rivals."

10. A few scholars have begun to examine the plight of returning refugees and their impact on Guatemala; see North and Simmons, eds., *Journeys of Fear* (1999); and Taylor's, *Return of Guatemala's Refugees* (1998); Manz's *Paradise in Ashes* (2004) is also a welcome study of this phenomenon from an anthropologist who has been researching and accompanying the community of Santa María Tzeja in flux for over twenty years. For El Salvador see Edwards and Siebentritt, *Places of Origin* (1991); and Compher and Morgan, eds., *Going Home, Building Peace in El Salvador* (1991).

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(at a time when the region's GDP was declining by 14 percent) facilitated the expansion of innovative and effective social policies. By 1985 however, the contra war and U.S. economic strangulation (which included isolating the Sandinista government from World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans) took their toll on the economy and social programs. In a harsher tone than Walker, Zimmermann derides the FSLN for favoring factory owners and large landholders to the detriment of agricultural and industrial workers in an effort to encourage private enterprise. For Zimmermann, this shift (not simply U.S. intervention) explains the Sandinista's 1990 electoral defeat.

Despite evidence that capitalism is failing and coming under increased criticism worldwide, and even though these authors assail neoliberal economic policies and offer brief overviews of opposition to them, few of the authors explore alternatives to the dominant paradigm. None engages the ideas for sustainability and justice coming from the Zapatista movement in Mexico or the World Social Forum, which (except for its recent meeting in India) generally convenes in Porto Alegre, Brazil. As Christopher Chase-Dunn and Susan Manning correctly point out in "Globalization from Below in Guatemala," (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), the cost of opposing globalization is higher for small countries such as those in Central America. Nonetheless, one area ripe for study is the participation of Central Americans in these alternative forums. For example, a number of Maya from Guatemala went to Cancun, Mexico in September 2003 to voice opposition to the World Trade Organization.[11] Given that one of the strengths of *Globalization on the Ground* and *Repression, Resistance, and Democratic Transition in Central America* is an examination of transnational links among individuals and popular organizations, an exploration of the role of Central Americans in the globalization-from-below movement and in turn the influence these forums have on Central American discourse seems an apt extension of the authors' analyses.

INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCES AND PEACE PROCESSES

Transnational networks highlight the role that international actors played in Central America's wars and peace processes. In *Moral Victories*, Burgerman argues that the FMLN had better international connections than the Salvadoran government, which helps to explain why they were the first insurgency movement to enjoy official relations with the UN. However, shifting international relations affected these standings; the collapse of the socialist bloc and the Sandinistas' electoral defeat in

11. Amavilia Simon, personal communication, 10 September 2003.

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1990 undermined the FMLN's international support. Except for Brown, who was the State Department's Senior Liaison Officer to the FDN (the largest of the contras groups) in the U.S. embassy in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, the authors are highly critical of U.S. policy in the region. Burgerman convincingly shows that as U.S. intervention and aid increased in Guatemala and El Salvador so did human rights abuses. In his article "External Actors" (Walker and Armony 2000), Stahler-Sholk also offers a sharp critique of the "U.S. hegemonic project in Central America" that indicts both U.S. contributions to the civil wars and postbellum policies. As FSLN commander Dora María Téllez poignantly noted a few years after the 1990 U.S.-backed Unión Nacional Opositura (UNO) victory over the Sandinistas: "The gringos haven't really given much aid—they've just threatened to!" (133). Stahler-Sholk also succinctly analyzes the influence of smaller countries such as Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. In turn, Zimmermann examines how Cuba and Chile (under Salvador Allende, 1970–1973) influenced Sandinista ideologies and strategies. In Brown's study, other less well-known international connections also emerge, such as the ties between the contras and one of Guatemala's most bloody dictators, General Fernando Romeo Lucas García (1978–1982).

As Burgerman so adeptly portrays, no single actor determined the fate of the Peace Accords in El Salvador and Guatemala; rather, a convergence of domestic and international forces succeeded in ending hostilities. While Burgerman highlights and lauds the UN role in the peace process, her most valuable contribution is the concise analysis of how disparate parties, actors, and organizations contributed to a multilateral coalition for peace in these war-torn nations, and how transnational communication networks played a crucial role in spreading the word about human rights abuses. Because of its narrow geographical focus, Burgerman's monograph provides more in-depth analysis than Edward Cleary's fine broader study *The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America* (1997), which also attributes the success of human rights movements to transnational networks, but places greater emphasis on the role of Latin Americans and their increased political savvy and technical skills than Burgerman does. When the UN mediated in El Salvador's civil war, it marked the first time in its history that the Secretary General's Office directly intervened in an internal conflict—a significant expansion of the UN's mandate. The UN Observer Mission in El Salvador was one of the first UN peace operations that had developed fully its human rights component. The importance of including civil sectors in the process and working with local non-governmental organizations were among the most valuable lessons the UN learned in El Salvador and applied to Guatemala. As Jonas and Walker argue in "Guatemala" (Walker and Armony 2000), the UN lent legitimacy to the peace process

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

and ensured that it was irreversible. But perhaps the UN's most significant impartation was in making human rights paramount in peace negotiations. Burgerman concludes that the Guatemalan peace process, "produce[d] a human rights mandate that was broader and more inclusive than any that had preceded it" (122). In "External Actors: The United Nations and the Organization of American States" (Walker and Armony 2000), Jack Child adds, "the effort also changed the nature of the UN peacekeeping and the attitude of various nations toward the organization" (167). These authors illuminate that the 1992 Salvadoran and 1996 Guatemalan peace accords marked an important turning point in the history of the UN. Yet in light of her findings that the role of civil society was key to the success of peace negotiations and that only a combination of local, national, and international forces and actors made this outcome possible, it is surprising that grassroots voices do not have a place in Burgerman's study. More alarming still is the absence of any consideration of Rigoberta Menchú's role in attracting people outside of Guatemala to its civil war and genocide.

Although Burgerman does not ignore contentious issues (such as the indigenous rights accord in Guatemala), at times her optimism and methodology (in part because few indigenous voices make it into her text) obscure some of the serious flaws of the peace accords. In this way, *Globalization from Below* provides invaluable critiques—especially in light of (although not directly addressed by the authors) the 1999 defeat of a popular referendum that would have implemented many of the Peace Accord reforms, including indigenous rights. For example, In "Pan Mayanism" (Chase-Dunn et al. 2001), Warren contends, "Mayanists hold that the accord process was seriously compromised by secrecy, limited Maya input, and disregard for indigenous norms of consultation with communities and elders" (149). In general, the texts under review complement each other well and unwittingly buttress and challenge each other's assertions.

CONCLUSIONS

These books are welcome additions to the already rich body of literature on Central America. In addition to deepening analysis of and asking new questions about the effects of the region's political and economic crises, especially the impact of war, these authors also point to new directions for evaluating the prospects for lasting peace and democracy. The edited collections draw largely from the expertise of senior scholars in the field, and if the single-author monographs portend future scholarship, the quality of research and writing on Central America will continue to be laudatory. The analyses and insights here go a long way towards providing a framework with which to

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

understand these nations today. As the authors evince, peace and democracy in Central American are neither guaranteed nor doomed, but are certainly enigmatic. In Nicaragua, the FSLN has failed to win a presidential election since 1984 and in El Salvador the FMLN was soundly defeated in the March 2004 presidential elections. Both phenomena can be attributed in part to the failure to live up to party ideology and U.S. pressure to defeat these leftist parties, and in Guatemala voters squashed the November 2003 presidential bid of José Efraín Ríos Montt, the paradoxically popular dictator who presided over much of the genocide in the early 1980s. Studies such as these continue to help students and scholars of Central America understand the beguiling events unfolding there.

Perhaps this new scholarship's most lasting legacy will be the assessment of civil society and its effect on democratization and economic development. Notably, the highland Maya who painted their history on the cemetery walls in San Juan Comalapa did not end their story with depictions of the civil war and the subsequent Accords; rather, they concluded their presentation with images of a future where everyone would have equal and sustainable access to education, technology, water, and other resources. The strength and resilience of the region's civil society and its critique of social and economic disparity is a sharp warning that Central American leaders who continue to pursue neoliberal economic reforms and the Central American Free Trade Agreement do so at their own peril. Since, as these authors indicate, civil war, repression, violence, even genocide did not break civil society, but rather strengthened it, it seems unlikely that these movements and organizations, which are increasingly becoming transnational, will allow economic and political elites to silence their voices or ignore their concerns.

REFERENCES

Adams, Richard and Santiago Bastos
2003 *Las relaciones étnicas en Guatemala, 1944–2000.* Antigua, Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica.
Americas Watch Committee
1991 *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights Since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero.* New Haven: Yale University Press.
Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales en Guatemala (AVANSCO)
2002 *Se cambió el tiempo: Historia de vida y tradición oral de San Bartolomé Jocotenango, Quiche.* Guatemala City: AVANSCO.
Betancur, Belisario, Reinaldo Figueredo Planchart, and Thomas Buergenthal
1993 *From Madness to Hope: The Twelve-Year War in El Salvador.* Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador. New York: United Nations.
Cleary, Edward
1997 *The Struggle for Human Rights in Latin America.* West Port, CT: Praeger.
Comisión para el Esclaracimiento Histórico (CEH)
1999 *Guatemala: Memoria del silencio Tz'inil Na'tab'al.* Guatemala City: CEH.

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Compher, Vic and Betsy Morgan, Eds.
1991 *Going Home, Building Peace in El Salvador: The Story of Repatriation.* New York: Apex.
Edwards, Beatrice and Gretta Tovar Siebentritt
1991 *Places of Origin: The Repopulation of Rural El Salvador.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
Esquit, Edgar
2002 *Otros poderes, nuevos desafíos: Relaciones interétnicas en Tecpán y su entorno departamental (1871–1935).* Guatemala City: Magna Terra.
Everingham, Mark
1996 *Revolution and the Multiclass Coalition in Nicaragua.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
Forster, Cindy
2001 *The Time of Freedom: Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
Gould, Jeffrey
1998 *To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880–1965.* Durham: Duke University Press.
Grandin, Greg
2000 *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation.* Durham: Duke University Press.
Hostnig, Rainer and Luis Vásquez Vicente, Eds.
1994 *Nab'ab'l qtanam: La memoria colectiva del pueblo Mam de Quetzaltenango.* Quetzaltenango, Guatemala: Centro de Capacitación e Investigación Campesina.
Iglesia Guatemalteca en el Exilo (IGE)
1992 *Nosotros conocemos nuestra historia: 500 años de resistencia indígena, negra y popular.* Guatemala: IGE.
Jonas, Susanne
2000 *Of Centaurs and Doves: Guatemala's Peace Process.* Boulder, CO: Westview.
Lloyd, Marion
2004 "Presidential Rivals Wage Bitter Fight in El Salvador," *Boston Globe* 21 March, p. A4–5.
Manz, Beatriz
2004 *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope.* Berkeley: University of California Press.
McCleary, Rachel
1999 *Dictating Democracy: Guatemala and the End of Violent Revolution.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
Menchú, Rigoberta
1984 *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala.* Edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. London: Verso.
Mendoza, Carlos and Edelberto Torres-Rivas
2003 *Linchamientos: ¿Barberie o "justicia popular"?* Guatemala City: Colección Cultra de Paz.
North, Liisa and Alan B. Simmons, Eds.
1999 *Journeys of Fear: Refugee Return and National Transformation in Guatemala.* Montreal: McGill University Press.
Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (ODHAG)—Proyecto Interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI)
1998 *Guatemala, Nunca más: Impactos de la violencia.* 4 vols. Guatemala City: ODHAG.
Replogle, Jill
2004 "Uncovering Guatemala's Secrets: Forensic Anthropology Finds Civil War Victims, Tells Their Stories." *The Dallas Morning News,* 18 March.
Schirmer, Jennifer
1998 *The Guatemalan Military Project: A Violence Called Democracy.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Sieder, Rachel, Ed.
1998 *Guatemala after the Peace Accords.* London: Institute of Latin American Studies, University of London.

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Spalding, Rose
1994 *Capitalists and Revolution in Nicaragua: Opposition and Accommodation, 1979–1993.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Stephen, Lynn, Ed.
1994 *Hear My Testimony: María Teresa Tula, Human Rights Activist of El Salvador.* Boston: South End Press.
Taylor, Clark
1998 *Return of Guatemala's Refugees: Reweaving the Torn.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Tula, María Teresa
1994 *Hear My Testimony: María Teresa Tula, Human Rights Activist of El Salvador.* Edited by Lynn Stephen. Boston: South End Press.
Warren, Kay
1998 *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Williams, Robert
1986 *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Wood, Elisabeth
2000 *Forging Democracy from Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2003 *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2005.0002 Published online by Cambridge University Press