Review

Reviewed Work(s): We Created Chavez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution by George Ciccariello-Maher: **Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution within the Revolution by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos and Yolanda Ferrer**

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Ciccariello-Maher, George. *We Created Chavez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Espín, Vilma., Asela de los Santos, and Yolanda Ferrer. *Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution within the Revolution*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 2012.

Today many engage in dialogue and participate in protests and demonstrations against racism, injustice, and police brutality. Some acknowledge this abuse as historical. *We Created Chavez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution* and *Women in Cuba. The Making of a Revolution within the Revolution* take different approaches on the same topic; power of the people. It is the people who make revolutionary change and create leaders, not the converse. Both books make clear the importance of politicization, an element that if absent can cause grassroots-driven movements to die. Consider, for example, the fate of the Mexican Revolution, an emotional uprising, yet lacking politicization.

We Created Chavez explores the story of "a history from below" (p. 9). This history is "driven by the struggles and the self-activity of the people themselves, a struggle by the people over what it means to be the 'people' versus 'a history from above'" (p. 9). Perspectives from above can easily lead "to the exaggeration of [Hugo] Chavez's role" (p. 9). To counteract this possibility, the author explores the decades-long story of the Bolivarian Revolution, which did not begin in 1998, but was instead a product of struggles unleashed during the 1950s. Following the 1958 overthrow of military dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez, the so-called transition to democracy initiated by Rómulo Betancourt marked a people's struggle for human rights and justice. Although heralded as the "father of Venezuelan democracy," Betancourt kept the country under a state of emergency during much of his tenure (p. 11). Repressive measures accelerated a guerilla war. This was a factor in the disenchanted gravitating toward an electoral process that offered promises to "revolutionize the state" and address popular demands (p. 12). The result was the 1989 Caracazo [Caracas Riots], which were met with government repression.

In addition to an introduction, nine chapters, and a conclusion,

We Created Chavez has two interesting interludes. These vignettes are Venezuelan historical "qualitative leaps," frameworks for ideas and analyses, focusing on the people, the 1989 Caracazo, and the 2002 rebellion that returned Chavez to power (p. 20). Refusing "to remain mesmerized by the figure of Chavez or by the state," the author provides the reader alternative historical snippets that describe Chavez as an "effect, not Creator but creation" (p. 21). "We created him but we will also go beyond him if necessary" (p. 21). For many, to continue the Bolivarian process is to keep re-evaluating the "reality of the battle ahead" (p. 253). Popular support is discussed as a requisite for anyone seeking to occupy seats of constituted power, as is the idea that power is not taken but held. The inherent problems of maintaining a balance between institutionalized power and a popular reservoir of revolutionary energy ready to act against the bureaucratic and military state are thoroughly discussed. Within this framework, Chavez is portrayed as an ally in promoting radical agendas that have facilitated a transformative process in Venezuela.

Women in Cuba, however, takes a more descriptive tone as it relates the story of gender justice within revolutionary Cuba. After a brief introduction, the book begins with short biographies of each of the three authors. Veterans of an evolving Cuban revolution, Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, and Yolanda Ferrer were comrades for decades. Espín and de los Santos were lifelong friends and combatants from their earliest days as university students. After the 1959 victory, Espín and de los Santos were co-leaders of the newly-formed Federacion de la Mujer Cubana (FMC)/ Federation of Cuban Women. Yolanda Ferrer, current general secretary of the FMC, was part of a generation too young to take part in the struggle against dictator Fulgencio Batista. Politically rhetorical, the book pays tribute to the many women cadres of revolutionary Cuba. The first part of the book gives accounts by de los Santos and Espín on interactions between the rebel army, peasants and agricultural workers. The second part of the book addresses the beginning of the FMC. Interviews with Espín and Ferrer describe how political education involved women in the "construction of a new social order" (p. 29).

Although women are the focus of the book, the underlying idea is the relationship between masses of workers and the revolutionary process, with women as an integral, cohesive part, not a special population. The cohesive element is essential to understand because behind the idea of justice-based change is equal liberation for all. Thus, the authors describe the growing participation of women as one of the many parts within revolutionary change. The FMC grew out of the determination of women to participate in the revolution. Espín describes women organizing into necessary revolutionary tasks. Women learned to make clothes for their families and to participate in the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon of the Rebel Army. According to Espín, the women's organization initially came as a surprise, but quickly realized that "it was indispensable" and "an enormous revolutionary force" (p. 28).

Criticism of the FMC came from feminists in the 1960s and 1970s, claiming the federation was reinforcing traditional gender roles by teaching seamstress skills. The correct strategy for Cuba in the development of women cadres, however, was to meet the women where they were. Western feminist models did not apply. In the face of continuing machismo within the revolution, Fidel Castro played a supportive role in breaking traditional perspectives of women. In a speech to the Second Congress of the FMC, Castro explained: "one of the ways our revolution will be judged in coming years is how we have resolved the problems facing women in our society and our country" (p. 33).

Although written in different styles, both books address the basic issue of the people as creators of change. It should not be forgotten that there is power in protest. Considering the legacy of the *Caracazo* in Venezuela, one could argue that uprisings are not to be feared if one is serious about democracy, liberty, and justice.

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Darnton, Christopher. *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014.

Political Scientist Christopher Darnton, an assistant professor at Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, posits two important questions at the beginning of this study: "Why do international rivalries persist despite incentives to cooperate, and how can states resolve these conflicts?" (p. 1). To answer these questions, Darnton examines what he views as causal relationships between international and domestic politics in Latin America and in U.S.-Latin American relations. In *Rivalry and Alliance Politics in Cold War Latin America*, Darnton takes a look at a