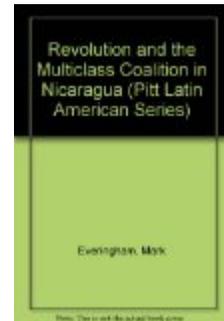


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Mark Everingham. *Revolution and the Multiclass Coalition in Nicaragua*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996. xvi + 218 pp. \$19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8229-5590-0; \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8229-3933-7.

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Published on H-LatAm (April, 1998)



The Nicaraguan Revolution and Revolutionary Theory

A decade ago, when I read John A. Booth's *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution*, I was mildly disappointed by his neglect of theoretical causes of revolution. Now that I have read Mark Everingham's *Revolution and the Multiclass Coalition in Nicaragua*, which attempts to put the Nicaraguan revolution in theoretical context, I am ready to conclude that with regard to the Nicaraguan revolution, the less theory the better. To be fair, Everingham deserves praise for contributing, in the first two chapters, a cogent literature survey of revolutionary theory and of dependency. The principal problem is that in the attempt to be comprehensive (among those summarized are Easton, Frank, Goldstone, Gurr, Huntington, Lipset, Moore, Poulantzas, Przeworski, Sckocpol, Tilly, Wallerstein, and Wickham-Crowley), the Nicaraguan revolution still appears to Everingham, a professor of social change and development and political science, to be "unique." Most historians, perhaps because of their distrust of theory, had already arrived at that conclusion.

Historians of revolution, following Crane Brinton's classic *The Anatomy of Revolution* (1938), in which he discusses common elements in the English, French, American, and Russian revolutions, have not failed to search for parallels among Latin American revolutions. Throughout this book Everingham makes numerous comparisons between the Nicaraguan revolution and others. The problem here, and it is a serious one, is that the reader is not provided with a definition of revolution that could be used to make a meaningful comparison. The failure to

distinguish between genuine social upheavals with significant changes in the balance of political power and social classes on the one hand and mere movements against authoritarian rule on the other leads to confusion.

Although Everingham appears to believe that what happened in Nicaragua in 1979 was a significant social upheaval, it helps little to compare such movements as the overthrow of Alfredo Stroessner of Paraguay in 1989 and the movement against Augusto Pinochet in Chile in 1990 with the Sandinista revolution. With more justification, Everingham compares Nicaragua with Cuba and Mexico. Even in these cases the comparison is often superficial. For example, in comparing the Nicaraguan and Mexican revolutions, Everingham repeatedly refers to the alliance of the business elites with the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua and with the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship in Mexico. In the effort to show that business elites of Nicaragua were unusual in joining popular classes against Somoza, he appears to assume that business elites were uniformly supportive of Diaz. However, a significant segment of business elites in Mexico in 1910 were unhappy with Diaz and joined with other classes in the revolution to overthrow him. It is enough to remember the role of Francisco Madero to make the point. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the drive to fit a particular event in the theoretical literature and the lack of definitional precision get in the way of an understanding of the Nicaraguan revolution.

Nevertheless, there are two significant contributions

of this book. As the title indicates, Everingham's thesis is that business elites in Nicaragua were sufficiently dependent on the Somoza dictatorship since about 1950 that they could not, as a class, support the revolution. His careful analysis of banking, agribusiness, commerce, and industry and their halting attempts to find a political position apart from the Somoza dictatorship goes beyond previous studies of Nicaraguan politics and business before 1979. Everingham makes excellent use of the political diary of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro and extensive interviews of representatives of the Nicaraguan business elite of the 1970s to clarify the relationships of various business groups to the Somoza dictatorship.

A second contribution is the lengthy discussion of the success of the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional as compared with the failure of the Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional en El Salvador. The decision to compare the two cases is valid and could be an important step in understanding Latin American revolutions. Everingham discounts the dictatorship argument, suggesting that the absence of an easy target in El Salvador—a hated personalist dictator like Somoza—was not the crucial factor in the failure of the FMLN. The failure of the Salvadoran revolution, he concludes, was a result of the inability of the revolutionaries to crack the solidarity of the business elites. Unlike Nicaragua, the business elites of El Salvador remained solidly behind the government and the military.

While I believe this comparison of El Salvador and Nicaragua is much needed, I am not at all convinced that

Everingham's interpretation is correct. It leaves out too much. For example, the degree of anti-Americanism in Nicaragua in 1979, a heritage of a perceived too close relationship between the United States government and the Somoza dynasty and the presence of United States Marines on Nicaraguan soil for many years, had no counterpart in El Salvador. Also, there is the issue of timing, not discussed at all by Everingham. While one might argue that the momentum of the FSLN victory might have carried over to the FMLN, which is certainly what both movements hoped for, the counterargument that the FSLN victory led to greater resistance by business classes in El Salvador and a greater commitment by the United States to insure that the next revolutionary effort did not succeed is even more persuasive. A comparative analysis of the FSLN leadership with that of the FMLN might also provide insight into the contrasting results of the two movements. That is also missing. Lastly, the vast difference between the appeal to Nicaraguans of Augusto Sandino, who was a Nicaraguan patriot first and no ideologue, and the lack of appeal of Farabundo Marti, a Communist, to the vast majority of Salvadorans, must have had something to do with the failure of the FMLN. Everingham's discussion of the two significant movements in neighboring Central American countries is highly useful, but it is not necessarily convincing.

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Citation: Charles L. Stansifer. Review of Everingham, Mark, *Revolution and the Multiclass Coalition in Nicaragua*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. April, 1998.

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