

## Book Reviews

the participation of ethnic groups in Canada's major institutions such as the economic structure, education and politics. Other chapters include the changes in the immigrants' own institutional practices in regard to kinship, marriage and the family, and religious institutions. The third part is primarily devoted to a discussion of maintenance of ethnic identity through voluntary association, the media and multicultural policy.

The hardships, prejudices and discriminatory practices are vividly portrayed which ethnic groups, "non-visible" as well as "visible minorities," had to endure at different times in the different provinces in their struggle to attain a foothold in the economic structure, to exercise at least some political influence, and to resist pressures of assimilation. In reading the book one cannot help but be impressed by the progress which, since the pre-World War I period, ethnic groups have been able to make in their structural integration. In 1971 the proclamation of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework officially recognized Canada's ethnic diversity and thus lessened the pressure toward cultural assimilation which ethnic groups had previously faced.

Burnet reminds us that neither the multicultural policy nor the human rights legislation has ended the unequal treatment to which particularly newly arrived and racially defined ethnic groups are still subjected. However, as she points out, multicultural policy "has made symbolic ethnicity a matter of pride, and it has given victims of discrimination arms with which to fight." It is a pity, therefore, that the last chapter on Multicultural Canada did not delve further into a critical assessment of the debate to which the policy of multiculturalism has given rise and to which Burnet also contributed. The debate has focused on the divergent, if not contradictory, assumptions, and hence, different emphases, which underlie the two policy objectives of promoting ethnic diversity on the one hand, and of removing cultural barriers against full participation of Canadians on the other. The debate continues to be relevant today despite the recent proclamation of a new Multiculturalism Act and the upgrading of Multiculturalism to a full ministry by the Progressive Conservative government.

Free of sociological jargon, *Coming Canadians* is extremely well written and a pleasure to read. It will be welcome by readers who are interested in Canadian so-

cial history. It should be assigned in social sciences courses at the high school level and in ethnic studies courses at colleges or universities. The book is also a valuable resource for social scientists specializing in the field of ethnic studies.

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## Sandinista II

by Tom Sloan

*A People in Arms by Marie Jakober. Vancouver: New Star, 1987, 303 pages, \$8.95.*

In the years of turmoil that have marked the recent history of Nicaragua, there has arisen among many Canadians a certain spirit of sympathy and solidarity for that embattled people and its controversial government. The sympathy has been shown through visits of friendly delegations, through economic aid efforts by churches and other groups, through constant pressures on the Canadian government to do more to help, and especially through the ongoing activities of non-governmental organizations and individual volunteers working within Nicaragua itself.

Canadian writers have also had their words to say, and one of the most effective of them has been Marie Jakober, a Calgary author, who spent long periods in Nicaragua in the early 1980s studying the country and its people. The first result was the appearance in 1985 of a novel, *Sandinista*, the story of an upper class Nicaraguan family caught in the vise of terror, oppression and struggle that marked the early and middle periods of the revolution against Anastasio Somoza and his cronies at home and abroad.

That book, which won the 1985 Writers' Guild of Alberta novel award, has now been followed by a sequel, focusing on the same family in the final days of the conflict, culminating in the success of the Sandinistas in 1979. The depiction is still one of days full of terror and violence, but also of hope and elation for some, and of increas-

ing fear and despair for others. The Zelaya family is a microcosm of the larger conflict, split asunder by differing responses to it. The patriarch, Alvaro, with one married daughter and her husband, are staunch supporters of Somoza. Another daughter is fighting with the Sandinistas, while Alvaro's wife and teenage son are confused and uncertain. The cast of characters of course goes far beyond the Zelaya family, including guerrilla fighters, journalists, government officials, an American cousin who tries to remain neutral in a medical clinic, and a Canadian medical priest who is murdered by death squads. The common factor is that they are all relations, lovers, friends or acquaintances of the Zelayas.

Jakober paints a sharp, accurate picture of Managua, a city ravaged by earthquake in the early 1970s, a place of ugliness and squalor, as it still is, with, near its center, an oasis of activity and intrigue in the form of the pyramid-shaped Inter-continental Hotel.

Amidst all the action, including ambushes, murders and hostage taking, there are also political debates. The author makes no pretense to being dispassionate, but neither does she simply set up straw men or straw arguments. Her Somocistas are real people, and their thoughts and arguments ring true. They considered the revolutionaries as barbarians, and certainly as enemies of the privileged world they had long known. We hardly meet the real villains — the torturers and murderers; we hear of their deeds, which is enough.

While the novel ends on the very day of the Sandinista triumph, Ms. Jakober's interest in the country is obviously a continuing thing. Her brief Afterword concludes:

Nicaragua's determination to shape its own destiny has won friendship and solidarity throughout the world....And most of the governments of Latin America, including some which have little in common with the politics of the Sandinistas, are striving to end the war, recognizing that Nicaragua's right to live is not separable from their own.

Nor is it separable from ours.

While the sheer number of characters may sometimes be a little overwhelming to the reader, this is both an entertaining novel and a valuable evocation of recent history, done from a Canadian perspective. As such, it is well worth reading.

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