Marian E. Schlotterbeck, *Beyond the Vanguard: Everyday Revolutionaries in Allende's Chile*

(Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), pp. xiv + 234, $34.95; £27.00, pb.

Felipe Acuña

Universidad de O'Higgins

Marian E. Schlotterbeck carries out a historical and socio-political analysis of the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Left Movement, MIR)'s culture rooted in the everyday experiences of grassroots militants who fought to become agents of their own destinies during the tumultuous 1960s and 70s in Chile. The book is particularly timely after Chile's social unrest of October 2019, as one of the multiple layers of this outbreak was the absence of recognisable political parties and leaders; that is, a spontaneous social movement emerged precisely *beyond the vanguards*.

The author's work is based mainly on the oral history of more than 60 grassroots activists interviewed over nearly ten years (2005–14). Their experiences as militants of a radical left political movement during the MIR's foundation in 1965 until Pinochet's coup in 1973 offer the reader access to a very particular time of Chile's history: the thousand days of Salvador Allende's presidency (1970–3); the first historical experience of building socialism by democratic means.

The oral accounts that are the core of the book 'might appear wonderfully mundane' (p. 6) but make sense precisely because they belong to people who 'were not accustomed to telling their stories and did not have neatly packaged narratives of heroic deed' (p. 5). The author is thus inscribed in a rich theoretical tradition that values social and popular history as an angle of observation and problematisation of the present. Schlotterbeck's theoretical approach implicitly nourishes a brilliantly written text, privileging accounts of daily and subjective changes through narratives that are not necessarily coherent, successful or heroic, but deeply relatable and human.

The book opens with sincere acknowledgements that give an account of the magnitude of the project. Then, the project is introduced as one that seeks to rethink Chile's radical past by decentring the focus of analysis through moving away from the vanguards into grassroots activists' daily experiences and looking beyond Santiago as the centre of state power and focusing on the provincial city of Concepción and its surroundings. This is the most conceptual section of the book and, in the future, it would be interesting to read a more extended analysis of some of the political-theoretical topics the author develops in this section. The book moves into six chapters that use *in vivo* codes to compose a narrative arc interweaving the history of the MIR with the life experiences of its militants. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are crucial contributions to understanding the subjective effects that the experience of everyday participatory democracy had on people. Land

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occupations and the construction of Campamento Lenin, the experience of Concepción people's assemblies and of resistance against the October bosses' lockout by the takeover of the El Progreso bakery in Coronel are outstanding events that provide an account of how a new subjectivity and political culture was formed during those years.

The book reviews important debates that are at the heart of left-wing culture from the point of view of a subaltern militant subjectivity; this is, people who were not in important leadership positions during the 1960s and 70s. A crucial debate is the old division between 'taking state power' or building 'people's power' (*poder popular*). In Latin America, for example, the Zapatista movement vigorously renewed the autonomist policy of construction of everyday popular power, while, on the other hand, progressive governments during the 2000s in different countries of the region have renewed the importance of the strategic dispute of the state as a form of construction of hegemony. The limits of Zapatismo and progressive governments, especially after the 2019 coup in Bolivia, show the importance of delving into these debates in an informed manner, and Schlotterbeck's book is a strong contribution in this direction.

The book also accomplishes the introduction of the aforementioned debates within the *mirista* culture. It is commonplace to hear within the Chilean Left that the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) parties, especially the Partido Comunista (Communist Party), gambled on taking state power while respecting its institutional framework, while the MIR devoted itself to building popular power; a stereotypical difference framed as party vs. movement or reform vs. revolution, among other binomials. Schlotterbeck reinscribes this debate within the MIR, arguing that its national leadership began to shape a political discourse and practice that started to move further and further away from its own bases. The political-military thesis of the MIR's leadership mobilised a discourse where a revolutionary subject capable of an increasingly organic popular power was reified. This political discourse, as Schlotterbeck's book shows quite well, moved away from the daily subjective experience of the MIR's grassroots militants who were focused on the creation of democratic and participatory spaces, enacting a more humble but real form of popular power. The analysis of these types of tensions within the MIR's political culture contributes to a move away from the reformist vs. revolutionary divide by articulating a different distinction: the experience of base militants vs. the leading vanguard.

The book allows us to have a more concrete picture of the MIR's political pedagogy. For example, Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator exiled in Chile during 1965–70, considered the political education of the MIR as different from that offered by the traditional Left. As he puts it: 'the MIR, which was constantly to the Left of the Communist party, and afterwards, of the Popular Unity government itself, always manifested a sympathy for popular education, something the parties of the traditional Left generally lacked' (*Pedagogy of Hope*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014, p. 35). In this sense, Schlotterbeck's work contributes by detailing some of the MIR's actions of political education, particularly their willingness to engage in practices of radical democracy with subaltern subjectivities of the working class. The experience of radical democracy, as Schlotterbeck argues, 'empowered people to imagine a different role for themselves in society' (p. 162). Indeed, in the midst of the biggest crisis of

neoliberalism in Chile, this book is a significant contribution to opening our political imagination by recalling our stand-out memories as political subjects.

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Scott Morgenstern, Jorge Pérez-López and Jerome Branche (eds.), *Paths for Cuba: Reforming Communism in Comparative Perspective*

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Anju Reejhsinghani

University of Wisconsin, Madison

For United States-based academics, writing about Cuba without centring US–Cuban relations is a delicate endeavour even at the best of times. The past five years, putting it mildly, have not been the best of times. Nevertheless, the authors and editors of this volume bravely attempt a comparative approach to Cuba's ongoing transition that, if not completely sidestepping Donald Trump's concerted effort to overturn normalisation at least minimises it in order to foreground Cuba's domestic political, economic and social challenges en route to modernisation.

Paths for Cuba and many of its essays emerged out of a November 2014 conference at the University of Pittsburgh 'to examine Cuba's internal reforms and their external influences within a comparative framework' (p. 2). A month later, Presidents Raúl Castro and Barack Obama shocked the world by announcing a normalisation of relations. In the United States, this executive-level sea change did not usher in significant congressional reform, leaving it vulnerable to rollback. Faced with renewed hostility from the Colossus of the North, a weakened Venezuelan ally, continued emigration pressures and a transfer of power that has left its major institutions intact, Cuba since 2017 has continued its largely top-down reforms in fits and starts. By focusing on how its pathway to development can benefit from lessons learnt in Eastern Europe, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam and Latin America, this book at its best provides insights into those seeking to modernise Cuba from within. Yet it could have grappled more forcefully with impacts of the US embargo, rising Cuban social inequality and generational schisms. It could also have demonstrated greater consistency in spotlighting the benefits of comparative analysis.

Except for an introduction and conclusion, chapters are divided into three parts: 'Economics', 'Policy and Politics' and 'Citizens and Society'. Essays in Parts 1 and 2 have some topical overlap and are largely comparative. Those in 'Citizens and Society', whilst dealing with race, gender, youth and culture, have little connection to earlier chapters or to each other. Integrating sociology and the humanities in a more robust way would have strengthened the entire volume, since these subjects are discussed only