

makes space for simultaneously seeing it as the continuation of a well-established cultural tradition characterized by adaptation and resilience. Although the “Pentecostal wail” may be drawn from feelings of angst and insecurity, the sense of the volume is somehow and at the same time optimistic.

*Grande Prairie Regional College*  
*Grande Prairie, Alberta*  
[smorton@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:smorton@gprc.ab.ca)

SHAWN MORTON

### CHACO WAR AND POPULISM

*¡Vamos a avanzar! The Chaco War and Bolivia's Political Transformation, 1899–1952.* By Robert Niebuhr. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2021. Pp. 260. \$60.00 cloth.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2022.45

Framing Bolivian history around the Chaco War (1932–35), Robert Niebuhr narrates how politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were shaped by a “growing inclusion of the Bolivian people in politics, as engineered from above and ultimately, as manifested from below” (21). The book also seeks to put Bolivia in dialogue with other global political trends of the era, most importantly, populism. By engaging with the historians and political theorists who study World War I and its aftermath, Niebuhr successfully places Bolivian politics, economics, and military conflict into larger global movements that shaped the tumultuous early decades of the twentieth century.

The title of the book, *¡Vamos a avanzar!*, is a reference not only to the military’s advance in the Chaco War, but also to the hope that the broader era held for the development and modernization of the Bolivian nation. This period saw dramatic transformations of Bolivia’s Indigenous people. Significantly, Indigenous women became active and eager participants in political activity. The war helped foment a sense of national identity that had not existed before soldiers’ experiences in the vast Chaco. Moreover, the book seeks to understand the rise of the 1952 Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) as a “logical outcome” to the events of the 1899 Federal War, which brought the Liberal Party to power in Bolivia (25). This, the author argues, was the beginning of Bolivia’s engagement with “populism or proto-populism” (10–11). Unfortunately, the author does not explain in any depth what the 1899 Federal War was about—its major actors, causes, or results; it is simply assumed that the reader knows about this conflagration in Bolivia and hence why it would be used to frame the text.

When moving on to the events of the Chaco War, the author does an excellent job of describing the most pivotal moments of the war for Bolivian troops, while not getting distracted by the bloody detail or each battlefield maneuver. Focusing simply on the engagements that shaped the larger Bolivian experience with the war, the author makes

a strong case for how the war effectively brought various ethnic and racial groups together for the first time to create a sense of nation that had not previously existed in Bolivia.

Using newspaper reports and archival material from both Bolivian and Paraguayan archives, the author seeks to hear the voices of those from below. This is where Niebuhr struggles a bit. He is too often dependent on secondary literature to fill the void in primary material. This is disappointing, in that tuning into popular culture in the form of music, theater, or art could have helped the author better “hear” the voices of the masses. Also disappointing are the distracting comparisons to wars and revolutions outside of the period in question. Examples include paragraph-long comparisons between what was happening in early twentieth-century Bolivia and the US Civil War and the Vietnam War. Although certainly demonstrating the depth and breadth of the author’s readings, in the end these cases prove to be more distracting to the narrative than beneficial.

The text, however, is a great companion to other works about the rise of the MNR. These include Laura Gotkowitz’s *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880–1952* (2017). Niebuhr’s book also serves as a welcome addition to the understanding of populism and populist movements in Latin America more generally.

*SUNY Buffalo State*  
Buffalo, New York  
[chestebm@buffalostate.edu](mailto:chestebm@buffalostate.edu)

BRIDGET MARÍA CHESTERTON

## PRINTING AND POLITICS

*Ink Under the Fingernails: Printing Politics in Nineteenth-Century Mexico.* By Corinna Zeltsman. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. Pp. 339. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index.  
doi:10.1017/tam.2022.46

Historians tend to discriminate against unprinted versos. Corinna Zeltsman, however, is unusually interested in the material side of print culture, and looks at these things: flipping over one protest flyer, she found on its reverse side ghostly mirror images of multiple predecessors, all pasted on the same bit of wall to fustigate the government of the day. As they say in the bullring, another venue for protest, “*El detalle valió el boleto.*” It typifies the imagination, originality, and meticulous attention to detail that bring an important book to life and make it unmissable for anyone interested in Mexico’s nineteenth-century public sphere and politics.

It was not just what was printed, Zeltsman argues, that shaped how people thought about, talked about, and acted in the politics of the time: it was authors’ mere ability to turn manuscript into print and get it out there in the first place. That in itself was a major