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THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

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## ABSTRACT

### The Nicaraguan Revolution

This paper is an attempt to understand the first 15 months of revolutionary rule in Nicaragua. Beginning with a brief history of more than 53 years of Sandinist struggle against the U.S. occupation and the Somoza dynasty, it then assesses the immediate legacies of the way in which Somoza was finally overthrown. The bulk of the paper explores six key interrelated aspects of the contemporary Nicaraguan political and economic situation:

- The manner in which Nicaragua is ruled.
- The ideology of the Sandinist National Liberation Front and the ideological clash with other groups and parties who oppose, to some degree, the Sandinists.
- The economic problems and policies in post-Somoza Nicaragua.
- Class relations and class struggle.
- Exterior influences on the revolution and the relationship with the United States.
- Cultural and social transformations and problems under the revolution.

A concluding section raises the issue of socialism, recognizing that contemporary Nicaragua is not socialist but that there is a strong commitment by the leadership to a socialist transformation of the economy at some future date. Four short appendices present translations of key political statements by the Sandinists, two political parties critical of Sandinist policies, and the Catholic Church.

## THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

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Tyrants do not represent nations,  
and liberty is not won with flowers.

Augusto César Sandino

### Introduction: Understanding Nicaragua

The key political/intellectual issue for persons--particularly outsiders--who want to understand contemporary Nicaragua pivots around what Régis Debray has called the "radical moderation" of the revolution.<sup>1</sup> How should one interpret the oft-noted "pragmatism" and "flexibility" of the revolutionary leaders, their willingness to negotiate and bargain with the private sector at home and with banks, multinational corporations, and the United States government abroad? How should one understand the seemingly restrained exercise of state power in a context where the old Somocista order has been destroyed, where the new rulers fully control (in fact organized) the armed forces, and where the popularity of the Sandinist movement remains high even after a necessarily difficult first year of revolutionary rule?

Enduring answers to these and related questions would require both more space and a fuller historical analysis than can be managed here. Additionally, prudence dictates that another few years of revolutionary rule should pass before "pragmatism" and "flexibility" are taken as basic characteristics of Sandinismo in power. As the history of other revolutions reminds us, basic transformations of the sort now underway in Nicaragua have their own dynamics, both national and international, and today's revolutionary politics are not necessarily tomorrow's. Caveats aside, however, more than a year of the Sandinist Popular Revolution (a characterization having semi-official status inside Nicaragua) is sufficient to allow some analysis and reflection.

While analyzing and reflecting, I have not attempted to describe the achievements and problems of the first year in detail. Others are working on such key topics as the literacy campaign, agrarian reform, mass organizations, the Church, and U.S.-Nicaraguan relations.<sup>2</sup> Rather, I have concentrated on some of the classic questions involving

class, power, culture, economics, and imperialism in order to sketch the context in which a politics of radical moderation has emerged. What confidence I have in the "correctness" of this analysis derives in large measure from the four trips that I made to Nicaragua between June 1979 and July 1980.<sup>3</sup> The many interviews, both formal and informal, conducted during these trips have been of inestimable value in shaping my perspectives. Out of respect for the privacy of informants, however, I must make only a general acknowledgement of all the help that they have given me. What little I understand of the Nicaraguan revolution I have learned primarily in the field, from these people, surrounded by the sights, smells, and sounds of the insurrection and reconstruction.

On the other hand, when I have used published sources directly, I have followed standard footnote form. To the extent possible, I have limited these citations to what might be called regular sources--newspapers, magazines, official publications--rather than fugitive sources such as press releases, mimeographed pamphlets, etc. My own research experience argues that these regular sources (even if somewhat irregular under revolutionary conditions) are the most useful for other investigators who wish to follow up bibliographical leads and loose ends.

#### A Half Century of Struggle--and More

When Augusto César Sandino took refuge in the mountains of Segovia in northern Nicaragua in 1927 to begin his battle against the U.S. Marines, he inaugurated what Comandante Humberto Ortega later called 50 years of Sandinist struggle.<sup>4</sup> In one sense the characterization is accurate, for the anti-imperialist, nationalist, and popular spirit and thought of Sandino were never completely extinguished during the next half century--not when the guerrillero himself was assassinated in 1934; not when Anastasio Somoza García reigned supreme during much of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s; and not when the fledgling FSLN suffered setback after setback from its founding in 1961 through the early 1970s.<sup>5</sup> But if the spirit and thought of Sandino were never completely extinguished, they were certainly endangered for long periods of time. That Sandinismo is alive and in power in Nicaragua today--and that Somocismo is in ruins--is a tribute to the courage of the Nicaraguan people and the tenacity and good sense of the FSLN. But the struggle between Sandinismo and Somocismo is not--even if broadly understood--the whole of Nicaraguan history. There is a related history, one that antedates both Sandino and the Somozas, one that helps set the stage for understanding Nicaragua in the 1980s.

At a minimum this history must begin with the invasion of Nicaragua in 1855 by the North American filibusterer William Walker. Walker managed to name himself President, finally fleeing in 1857 when he was defeated by a Central American army.<sup>6</sup> The story must also incorporate the long series of late 19th and early 20th century machinations by the United States and the British to secure control over Nicaragua because of its strategic location and attractiveness as a possible site for an inter-ocean canal. In 1912, when all else

had failed, the Marines landed. They stayed until 1933, except for one brief period during the mid-1920s. It was, of course, during the final period of this occupation that both Sandinismo and Somocismo were born--the former in revolt against the Marines and the Nicaraguan Liberals whom Sandino felt had sold out to the Americans, the latter as the inheritor of the U.S.-created Nicaraguan National Guard.<sup>7</sup>

Even these later alliances and conflicts, however, had 19th century antecedents. The post-independence feud between the Conservative elite based in Granada and Liberals based in León reflected different economic interests and political styles, with the León oligarchy more dynamic, export oriented, and "modern." And as Conservatives and Liberals fought each other, both Great Britain and the United States moved to take advantage of the opportunities and weaknesses which resulted. By the end of the century, with the advent of the Liberal regime of José Santos Zelaya, the balance was irreversibly tipped. Zelaya accepted U.S. aid in ousting the British from the Atlantic Coast, but the Nicaraguan strongman then proved less than cooperative regarding canal rights for the United States. It was his turn to go, and U.S. support was thus shifted to the Conservative Party. In 1912, when the Marines landed, they came at the request of Conservative President Adolfo Díaz, who needed U.S. military help to protect his faltering regime against rebel Liberals.<sup>8</sup> Decades later, both Somoza's Liberal Party and to a lesser extent the Conservative opposition to it were still creatures of U.S. policies and preferences. For more than a century, Nicaragua had never known an autonomous domestic politics.

Thus the slogans and the reality of 50 years of Sandinist struggle are embedded in 125 years of imperialist penetration. But it was imperialism of a certain kind, more geo-political and military than economic. Nicaragua was never transformed into a classic banana republic, never deeply penetrated by multinational capital in the mid-20th century; neither Managua nor provincial cities were ever Americanized in the manner in which pre-1959 Havana and Varadero Beach, for example, were shaped by dollars and tourists. In a way, the Somoza dynasty itself came to be the economic embodiment of imperial power, scheming, corrupting, buying, selling, terrorizing, looting, and eventually coming to control a major share of the nation's productive resources.<sup>9</sup> To this already established pattern of economic control, West Point-educated "Tachito" Somoza Debayle added his own North American gloss, preferring to speak English whenever possible and eventually outdoing even his Yankee mentors in his anti-communism.

Then it ended. The long and bloody battle against the Somoza dynasty is increasingly well documented.<sup>10</sup> This is particularly so for its final phase, the period from August 1978 when the FSLN attacked the National Palace to July 1979 when Tachito's jet took off for Florida. These eleven months witnessed the semi-spontaneous popular uprising of September and its bloody suppression by the National Guard; the hopelessly flawed mediation attempt organized by the United States; the tense opening months of 1979 when the FSLN

was reorganizing for a new assault on Somoza; and then the massive and heroic insurrection which began in the last days of May and culminated on July 19 when the new Sandinist-named governmental junta was formally installed in Managua.

There are multiple implications and lessons that could (and undoubtedly will) be drawn from these dramatic events. Certainly it is impossible to understand post-Somoza Nicaragua without some grasp of the multiple legacies of the anti-Somoza struggle. At the risk of oversimplification, I would emphasize six.

1. Armed Struggle. If guns alone were not a sufficient condition to topple the Somoza dynasty, they were certainly necessary. The primordial claim of the FSLN to leadership in post-Somoza Nicaragua is that as an organization it understood from its inception that Somocismo could not be "negotiated" out of power. Because it was the spinal column of the dynasty's power, the National Guard had to be destroyed. Fire had to be fought with fire. To do less was to run the almost certain risk of getting little more than Somocismo without Somoza. Even though the "final battle" of Managua was never fought--because after Somoza fled with his generals and colonels, the Guard then disintegrated--the FSLN had militarily defeated its opponents in every major urban area outside of Managua by the middle of July. Thus, when the Sandinista columns entered the capital, they came as a victorious army, a fact with immense implications for contemporary Nicaragua.

2. Internationalization. From the original FSLN camps in Honduras and subsequent bases in Costa Rica, to the important diplomatic and economic support given to the FSLN by non-Nicaraguans, the struggle against Somoza had a substantial international dimension. As the last of the classic tyrannies of Latin America, the Somozas had multiple enemies, persons as diverse as Pepe Figueres in Costa Rica and Fidel Castro in Cuba. The family also, of course, had important friends. But after the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro in January 1978, an openly pro-Somoza position was difficult to take. In fact, while Somoza bombed and assassinated his countrymen in an attempt to maintain dynastic rule, not just a pro-Somoza but even an anti-FSLN position became less and less viable, both at home and abroad. The middle ground had disappeared. The resounding defeat of the U.S.-sponsored "peace-keeping" proposal in the Organization of American States in June 1979 can only be explained if it is clearly understood (as it was in both the Carter administration and the OAS) that "peace-keeping" in that particular context meant preventing an FSLN victory. Needless to say, the victory of the Sandinistas has not diminished the interest of various international actors in Nicaragua. To the contrary, it has heightened the concerns of some and the hopes of others.

3. National Unity. A joke circulating during the final insurrection noted that Somoza had the support of 15,003 Nicaraguans--the 15,000 members of the National Guard, plus his wife, his mistress, and his son. The figures are not too wide of the mark, for the dictator's capacity to encourage the widest possible coalition against



himself during the last years of his rule was certainly impressive. As has often been remarked, Tachito drove one of the larger nails into his eventual political coffin when he shouldered aside important sectors of the national bourgeoisie as he and his cronies rebuilt post-earthquake Managua in 1972 and 1973 according to their own dictates and interests. In fact, for this and other reasons, well before Somoza began killing Nicaraguans in large numbers, a very significant liberal, essentially middle-class, opposition--best exemplified by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro--had formed. Later, unevenly and at times very grudgingly, much of this opposition came to accept the historic necessity of armed struggle as defined and led by the FSLN. By the time of the final offensive, the coalition of anti-Somoza forces was massive indeed. Headed by a unified FSLN, leading (and at times rushing to catch up with) increasingly radicalized and mobilized urban masses, the coalition included millionaire industrialists like Alfonso Robelo, much of the rest of the private sector, the traditional opposition parties, most of the organized Church hierarchy, and tens of thousands of other Nicaraguans who simply wanted the beast--as Somoza was popularly known--to go. The coalition was far from united in its vision of post-dynasty Nicaragua, but it had no trouble chanting no más Somoza in unison.<sup>11</sup>

4. Democratic Visions. Although from its founding the FSLN was predominantly Marxist in ideology (and some might say in practice), the last year of the struggle against Somoza was not waged in the name of Marxism or even socialism. The politics of national unity and the brutality of Somoza both encouraged a language taken from the liberal tradition. Not only was this the natural language of the bourgeois opposition--and a language easily understood by a citizenry whose civil and human rights were daily violated by the regime--but it was also a language which found powerful support in Sandino's own thought and politics.<sup>12</sup> In fact, within the FSLN itself (and particularly within the Tercerista or Insurreccionista tendency), social democratic ideology came to have increasing importance in 1978 and 1979. On June 28, when the still-in-exile Junta de Gobierno issued its program, the opening paragraph read as follows:

The legislation necessary for the organization of a regime of effective democracy, justice and social progress will be promulgated, which will fully guarantee the right of all Nicaraguans to political participation and universal suffrage, as well as the organization and functioning of political parties without discrimination on ideological grounds except for those parties which might attempt a return to Somocismo.<sup>13</sup>

The section on fundamental liberties contained three sections:

All laws suppressing the free expression and diffusion of ideas and freedom of information will be abolished.

The full exercise of religious freedom will be guaranteed.

Legislation will be promulgated and actions taken to guarantee and promote the freedom of trade union, professional and popular organizations, both in the city and in the countryside.

As we shall see, this legacy--this particular kind of democratic vision--agitates post-Somoza Nicaragua in profound fashion.

5. Death, Destruction, and Debts. The insurrection was a war; not a conventional war, not a civil war, but a war nevertheless. Between 1.5 and 2 percent of the slightly more than 2 million Nicaraguans were killed, perhaps 100,000 more were wounded, 150,000 were forced to abandon their homes--with many going into exile--and approximately 40,000 children were orphaned.<sup>14</sup> Destruction in urban areas was extensive; war damage to dwellings, educational and health facilities, and urban infrastructure reached almost \$78 million dollars. Many industrial facilities were also wrecked, although the most serious economic consequences were and are being felt in agriculture where much of an entire crop cycle was lost. Commerce was almost completely disrupted, first by a shut-down and subsequently by looting. Overall, the United Nations has estimated that material damages to Nicaragua in 1978-79 reached \$480 million dollars, not including lost wages, sales foregone, and the disruption of post-Somoza economic performance. When more than \$1.5 billion dollars of foreign debt and an empty treasury are added to this grim inventory, it is little wonder that the official name given by the FSLN to the new junta was Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional.

6. Political Bankruptcy. Not only did the dynasty sack the national treasury, but more than 20 years of the Marines and 46 years of the Somozas left Nicaragua without a viable political legacy--except the legacy of Sandinismo and oppositional politics in general. Structurally and organizationally this meant that the institutionality of the Somocista state had to be dismantled.<sup>15</sup> It also meant that few if any Nicaraguans had a living experience in anything except the corruption and venality which characterized the Somoza years and then the insurrectional activity which brought the dynasty down. At the individual level, many citizens quite literally did not know how to behave outside the context of Somocismo. In November of 1979, for example, a young FSLN political organizer working with the newly formed Sandinist police told me he had a double problem: on the one hand, the young Sandinist fighters had to be taught the role of policeman and policewoman, how to "serve the people, direct traffic, handle barrio problems, etc." On the other hand, the citizenry had to learn that the police (which were formerly part of the National Guard) were not now oppressors, could be trusted, could act decently, and were not the inheritors of the Somoza legacy even though they too wore uniforms and carried guns. In short, the cultural transformation implied by the uselessness of most of Nicaragua's 20th century political experience is immense. Some optimists view this as a distinct advantage: the slate has been or can be wiped clean, there is no need to make a delicate blending of what is best or at least useful in the old politics with what is

essential to the new. Realists--some of whom are also optimists--emphasize how profound, difficult, and lengthy the transformation of values and behavior must be. As they and others are learning, the combative and heroic spirit shown during the insurrection does not automatically translate into the civic virtues needed in the new Nicaragua.

### Power and Hegemony

Who rules Nicaragua? A legalist might point out that executive power resides in the Junta de Gobierno, operating through a relatively standard array of ministries; legislative power resides in the Consejo de Estado, formally inaugurated on May 4, 1980, after a long drawn-out controversy over its composition; and judicial power is lodged in the Supreme Court and lesser magistrates--except for special tribunals established to try ex-members of the National Guard. What is striking about such a formalistic overview of the structure of government in Nicaragua is that it nowhere would include a separate box for or perhaps even a mention of the Sandinist National Liberation Front. Yet anyone even marginally familiar with Nicaragua today would certainly answer the initial question, "who rules Nicaragua," with a single phrase: the FSLN. It was, after all, the FSLN that named the Junta de Gobierno, FSLN commanders hold several of the most important ministerial positions, all other ministers and high officials were selected by the FSLN, the Frente decided on the composition of the Consejo de Estado (in which it has a clear majority), the armed forces (Ejercito Popular Sandinista), the police, and state security are all down-the-line Sandinist organizations, and no major decision--either domestic or international--would be taken without prior approval by the National Directorate of the FSLN.<sup>16</sup>

The hegemonic role exercised by the FSLN does not mean, however, that what the Frente wants the Frente gets. To the contrary, as will be explored in some detail below, an immense amount of political bargaining takes place in Nicaragua. Policy options are sharply constrained, both by domestic and international factors. Hegemony is not the same as control; if economic realities and social forces were not so complex, for example, it certainly would not have taken the Frente months of pulling and hauling to constitute the Consejo de Estado. Nor does hegemony imply that the FSLN is actually able to govern in a direct, day-to-day manner. Not only is the new state necessarily staffed by many persons who by no means fully agree with official policies, but even with the best of will the multitude of projects underway outruns the technical and fiscal capacity of the state to respond.<sup>17</sup> There is thus a sharp, double constraint on making Frente-designed policies come to life.

Additionally, the policies themselves contain substantial tensions and even contradictions. In a coffee-growing area north of Managua I witnessed sharp confrontations between peasants and land-owners in the streets of the provincial capital. Peasants were demanding back wages (not paid during much of the insurrection) and better working and living conditions. They were counselled by

organizers from the ATC (Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo), the Sandinist-led association of peasants and rural workers. The confrontations were being adjudicated by employees of the Ministry of Labor. I asked a young Sandinist cadre how the Frente felt such disputes should be settled. He answered that the most important overall goal was to maintain agricultural production, that the situation on each finca or farm was different, that the Frente did not have nearly enough cadres to investigate individual cases, that the ATC would do a good job of representing the workers' interests, and that the final word would have to rest with the Ministry of Labor--many of whose provincial employees had served under Somoza as well. Such are some of the problems of turning hegemony into coherently implemented policies at the grass roots.

If the FSLN rules Nicaragua--at least in the sense suggested above--what kind of an organization is it? In 1980, at least, this was not an easy question to answer. Originally founded as a guerrilla group, very much influenced not only by Sandino but also by the Cuban Revolution, the FSLN had only limited popular support and won no significant military victories during the first five years of its existence. During the last half of the 1960s and the first years of the 1970s, the still-small Frente turned its energies more to political work and the rural sector.<sup>18</sup> Not until 1974 did the Sandinists surface again with a headline-making action, an assault on a Christmas party during which 12 members of Somoza's inner circle were taken hostage and later exchanged for 14 political prisoners. But even after that audacious assault, the Sandinists were neither unified nor a real threat to Somoza. In 1975 the FSLN split into two tendencies, the GPP or "Prolonged Popular War" tendency which believed in extensive political work, especially in the rural areas, and the "Proletarian" tendency which emphasized linkages to the urban working class. Later the Insurreccionistas with stronger links to the more progressive sectors of the middle-class opposition emerged. Only in 1978 was a definitive reunification achieved and the nine-person National Directorate consolidated.

Throughout the period prior to the August 1978 assault on the National Palace it would be difficult to claim that the FSLN was in any sense a mass organization. Although it had many sympathizers among high school and university youth and more radicalized sectors of the middle class, by no means did it command the loyalty of most of the huge number of Nicaraguans who opposed Somoza. With the mass uprisings of September 1978, this situation changed. The uprisings were sparked by the FSLN, but they were truly insurrectional in the sense that thousands of citizens grabbed whatever weapon was at hand, built barricades, and launched themselves against the Guard. In many instances the major role of the thinly stretched regular FSLN combatants was simply to try to instill some order and coherence in what was in essence a spontaneous overflowing of hostility toward Somoza and the Guard.

Somewhat chastened by this experience, the FSLN worked diligently during the fall and winter of 1978-79 to prepare the citizenry for the next round of insurrectional activity. But once again, the response to the Frente's call was so massive, so popular,

that the thousands of milicianos with their red and black kerchiefs and assorted pistols, shotguns, rifles, Molotov cocktails, and contact bombs were never fully organized by Frente cadres or always led by known Sandinistas. In fact, in the hour of victory, anyone who had built a barricade, thrown a bomb, fired a gun, carried a message, or cared for the wounded had earned the right--at least temporarily--to call himself or herself a Sandinista. And many others, well aware of which way the wind was blowing, even if they had done none of the above, were quick to don a bit of military paraphernalia, pick up one of the thousands of weapons abandoned by the fleeing Guard, and assume the posture and title of combatiente, and thus by implication become a Sandinista.

In July 1979, the leadership of the Frente was faced with several problems deriving from this multifold expansion of the rank-and-file. Most urgent was the task of putting some semblance of order into the armed forces. Common criminals released by Somoza just before he fled had grabbed weapons and uniforms and were posing as combatants. Honest but untutored muchachos who had actually earned the right to bear arms were also behaving in quite outrageous ways, seizing houses and automobiles, getting drunk, firing weapons indiscriminately, and in general giving the FSLN a bad name.<sup>19</sup> But of more lasting importance was the task of deciding how to organize the FSLN for the purpose of governing Nicaragua rather than overthrowing the dynasty.

The organizational issue embodied a prior question: what should be the role of the FSLN in post-Somoza Nicaragua? Although others would dispute its definition, the Frente has a one-line answer: "El FSLN es la organización de vanguardia del pueblo nicaragüense."<sup>20</sup> On other occasions this idea has been spelled out in more detail:

. . . FSLN is the only and legitimate vanguard of the Popular Sandinist Revolution, and we ought to defend this principle without quarter. The FSLN has not come to power through faked elections, through demagogic promises, nor through conjectural circumstances. We have come to power because we laid our own lives on the line, and we have won the acknowledgement of our people--yesterday with the sacrifice of our blood and today with heroic and self-sacrificing work. The FSLN is the culmination of the historic effort of our people to shape their own vanguard, and if we are in power it is because we have known how to be faithful to the interests of the Nicaraguan workers through good times and bad.<sup>21</sup>

This view of the Frente as vanguard in turn implies a double imperative. First, it implies a continuing privileged place for the FSLN in Nicaraguan politics. It is thus a claim that FSLN hegemony, in the sense previously mentioned, ought to be a structural, not just a conjunctural, feature of the political economy of the nation. Second, it implies that membership in the FSLN must be strictly controlled. Not everyone can belong, no matter how heroic they might have been during the final insurrection.

Although not at present constituted as a political party, the FSLN is clearly moving in that direction. On the 46th anniversary of Sandino's death, for example, Comandante Tomás Borge, the only surviving founding member of the FSLN and currently Minister of the Interior, gave a speech in which he sketched both the characteristics of a Sandinist party and the qualities that its militants should have.<sup>22</sup> Comandante Carlos Núñez, also a member of the National Directorate of the FSLN and the person with the direct responsibility for Sandinist organizational work, has been even more explicit. A membership structure with three levels is envisaged: militant, pre-militant, and affiliated member.<sup>23</sup> Local committees (Comites de Base Sandinistas) will link the party with the masses, and existing mass organizations like the CDS (Sandinist Defense Committees) and the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores (labor confederation) will then be oriented more directly by the party as well.

### Ideology and Legitimacy

The hegemonic role played by the FSLN exists in a deep and continuing state of tension with the standard liberal understanding of democratic politics. If prior statements of the Frente and the Basic Statute of the Government of National Reconstruction had not paid such heed to the language and forms of this particular version of democracy, the tension might not be so acute. But in any instance it would still exist, for on the one hand the living legitimacy of the FSLN as the vanguard in the liberation of Nicaragua is undeniable, while on the other hand neither the concept nor the reality of a vanguard has any place in the pluralist version of how the state should be organized.

Stated somewhat differently, the objective reality of Nicaragua substantiates and reinforces the claims of the FSLN to vanguard status and thus a special place in the political life of the nation. On the other hand, the dominant ideological umbrella under which much of the struggle against Somoza was waged locates the operational definition of legitimacy in an electoral process in which all come equally to contend in the "free" political marketplace. Both visions can agree on the importance of basic human rights and certain developmental goals. Both could also agree that in a transitional period after Somoza an extraordinary role would have to be taken by the group that spearheaded the dictator's downfall--the FSLN. But their longer-term understandings of the proper nature and organization of the state are in fundamental conflict.

This conflict assumes a multitude of forms in contemporary Nicaragua, reflecting economic interests, long-standing political divisions, and international actors and forces. At least during 1979 and 1980, however, it is being played out largely at the ideological level. This in no way diminishes its seriousness. To the contrary, since what is at stake is nothing less than the future format of the Nicaraguan political economy, the battle is deadly serious. The ideological conflict is a sometimes murky cover through which the social forces bubbling just below the surface can be viewed. The pot has boiled over in the past, and it will undoubtedly do so again.<sup>24</sup>

Given the complexity of this debate, I will not attempt to summarize it here. Rather, in the appendix to this essay I have presented three documents which suggest its main contours. The first is an official statement of the FSLN's National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education. It sets out the Frente's view of its historic role, its understanding of concepts such as nationalism, anti-imperialism, freedom, private property, revolution, reformism, and class struggle.<sup>25</sup> Because it was first published in a moment of sharp disputes with the opposition (March 1980), it should be read both as a general statement and as a specific rebuttal of criticisms.

The second document is a speech given by Alfonso Robelo to the political party which he heads, the MDN or Nicaraguan Democratic Movement. On April 22, 1980, Robelo resigned from the Junta de Gobierno, precipitating what threatened to become a serious problem for the FSLN.<sup>26</sup> Three weeks later, once again assuming a leadership role in the business community, he addressed a gathering of the faithful in the provincial town of Matiguás. His speech not only details his reasons for resigning from the Junta, but also contains a stinging attack on alleged Soviet and Cuban influence in Nicaragua.

The third selection contains excerpts from a programmatic statement by the PSC or Social Christian Party. Dated January 1980, it is the earliest of the three documents and contains a long list of specific criticisms of the Frente and the Junta de Gobierno. Although the PSC is not an important political force in and of itself in Nicaragua, it does represent the thinking of more conservative sectors of the Catholic Church and the quite wide constituency to which those sectors speak. Additionally, the PSC most clearly articulates the standard pluralist critique of the FSLN.

That voices such as the MDN and the PSC could speak unhindered in Nicaragua in 1980 is, of course, an indication of the high degree of political freedom that exists. Equally impressive and perhaps more revealing of the "tone" of politics in Nicaragua in the first year and a half of the revolution is the manner in which ordinary citizens are voicing complaints and participating in the pull and haul of reconstruction. In union halls, workplaces, neighborhoods, and on streetcorners, Nicaraguans are for the first time in their history speaking out in large numbers. As one very highly placed but non-Sandinist member of the Government said to me, "there is more freedom in Nicaragua today than at any time in the last 46 years."

Some sense of the way in which this freedom is being exercised can be gotten from the popular call-in radio show known as Linea Directa. On Linea Directa important members of the FSLN and the Government take questions about whatever callers care to ask. On July 3, 1980, for example, the guest was Comandante Luís Carrión, a member of the National Directorate of the FSLN and the Vice-minister of the Interior. Carrión fielded a barrage of calls, many of them on difficult and sensitive topics. They included questions about why Nicaragua would not support an OAS investigation of the human rights situation in Cuba; what kind of democracy Nicaragua was going

to have; what kind of philosophy the FSLN believes in, and in particular what was being done to correct or avoid the many errors of Marxism-Leninism; why the government is spending 25 million cordobas to build a plaza to celebrate the first anniversary while there is so much hunger and so many economic problems; why has Robelo been denounced, since he was clearly the choice of the FSLN in the beginning and has not really changed his tune; why are the abusos of the police continuing, and what is going to be done about them. Carrión confronted all of the questions, even the most hostile, with calmness and directness. He twice made public apologies for the abuses of the police (for which he, as vice-minister, has special responsibilities), and was impressively well informed on all but a small number of very specific questions having to do with local matters.

But precisely because so much is at stake in Nicaragua today, these democratic and pluralistic features of current political practice will not quiet the debate. Put more directly, the ideological struggle reflects a continuing and very intense class struggle. The reflection is, however, by no means exact, nor is the struggle itself nearly as two-dimensional as some would have us believe.<sup>27</sup> The field of forces is not simply the FSLN and the workers on one side against the capitalists (or the sell-out bourgeoisie) and the imperialists on the other. Both economic and political realities make the real world more complex. A useful next step in understanding this complexity is a brief examination of the economic policies of the FSLN and the Government of National Reconstruction.

### Economics in Command

#### Austerity

Our country has many debts. It is broke.  
 Many citizens are unemployed.  
 We don't have many crops.  
 Somocismo is to blame for all of this.  
 In spite of these conditions, we can improve the economy.  
 With more dedication, we will increase the country's resources.  
 We are sharing what little the somocistas left.  
 Austerity is necessary.<sup>28</sup>

A politics of austerity characterizes the Sandinist economic recovery program.<sup>29</sup> This takes many forms, none of them especially pleasant for a working class that hardly enjoyed a decent standard of living under Somoza. For example, in a situation characterized by severe shortages of basic goods, high unemployment, and 60 percent inflation, the official goal was to limit salary increases to rises in the cost of living, thus keeping real wages constant. In many instances, the actual increases granted undoubtedly did not even meet this goal. There is thus real bite to the Sandinist slogan that "la revolución no es piñata." That there seems to be widespread understanding and acceptance of the necessity of such policies attests to the political capital accumulated by the FSLN. Who else but a Comandante de la Revolución could tell the workers that "pressures to raise wages (above the rate of inflation) are pressures directly



against the Plan," and then continue by saying:

Brother workers and peasants, it will be necessary for you to make adequate use of what salary you have this year, meeting your family responsibilities and not spending your money on unnecessary things. Begging your pardon, but you will have to get drunk less and dedicate more of your salary to your family.<sup>30</sup>

What is striking, of course, is that these are not the words or logic of conservative politicians or reluctant populists operating under the strictures of IMF conditionality. Rather they reflect the conscious choices of a revolutionary movement faced with a war-torn economy, massive foreign debt, and the responsibilities and possibilities precipitated by the flight of Somoza and the instantaneous creation of a significant sector of state property (Area de Propiedad del Pueblo).

Decree Number Three of the Junta of Government, promulgated less than 24 hours after it had come to power, confiscated for public use all the property of the Somoza family and other somocistas who fled the country after December 1977. In mid-1979 there were stories to the effect that these confiscated properties would amount to as much as 50 percent of all the productive facilities of the nation. Although the holdings of the dynasty were impressive--and thus the newly formed Area of Peoples' Property very significant--when an interim inventory became available, it was disclosed that the majority of productive facilities was still in private hands, particularly in certain key sectors of the economy.<sup>31</sup> Thus, in the critical agrarian sector (the main earner of foreign exchange), 80 percent of production remains in private hands. In manufacturing, the corresponding figure is 75 percent. Only in mining and construction does the balance tip in favor of the state, with 95 percent of the productive facilities of the former and 55 percent of the latter in public hands.<sup>32</sup> Overall, the Plan estimates that 59 percent of the nation's total gross domestic product will be produced by the private sector, and 41 percent by the state in 1980. That the state achieves even this level of participation in production is due to the very large and predominantly state-run service sector.<sup>33</sup>

The implications of even this superficial sketch of the pattern of ownership of productive facilities in post-Somoza Nicaragua are obvious: without the cooperation of the private sector, even the seemingly modest targets of the Plan of economic reactivation cannot be met.<sup>34</sup> Take a crucial crop such as cotton, for example. The 1980 Plan set a planting target of approximately 170,000 manzanas. Of this total, only about 21,000 manzanas or 12 percent was to be the responsibility of the INRA, the national agrarian reform agency. The rest remained in the hands of more than 5,000 private producers, most of them owning less than 50 manzanas each.<sup>35</sup> Although INRA had emergency plans for moving onto the majority of these farms to plant cotton if the owners refused to do so, the hope--which ultimately was met--was that a package of incentives would stimulate almost all of these farmers to plant. In effect, the state delivered credit, agricultural

inputs, and price guarantees sufficient to motivate the farmers to act like the capitalists, whether large or small, that they are. With appropriate modifications, similar incentive packages have been given to other sectors of private enterprise.

What has developed in Nicaragua in the immediate aftermath of the overthrow of Somoza is thus a special kind of mixed economy. The state controls certain key sectors such as the financial system, has important participation in some others, and uses its very significant (but relatively conventional) instruments of pricing and credit to structure the operation of various markets--always trying to defend to the extent felt possible the position of the popular classes. But the rules of the game are still capitalist rules--as the FSLN would be the first to acknowledge; and where hard choices have to be made between production and other goals, those choices are almost always made in favor of production. If local capitalists decide not to participate in productive activities in Nicaragua today, it is in essence a political decision. The government has not made it difficult for them to operate profitably. To the contrary, official policies are designed to keep the margin of profitability large enough so that decisions not to participate will be clearly seen to be what they are: class-based, politically motivated attempts to weaken the Sandinist state.<sup>36</sup> Of course this kind of governmental tuning, in which "excessive" profits are curtailed but "reasonable" profits are still possible, is not easy in any capitalist economy, much less one as unevenly developed, imperfectly controlled, and rapidly changing as the Nicaraguan. In fact, official policies during 1980 seemed to err in some instances on the side of allowing the private sector unnecessarily high margins.<sup>37</sup>

It is in this sense that economics is in command in Nicaragua today. More precisely stated, the superordinate goal with which the FSLN has charged the Government of National Reconstruction is economic recovery. In post-insurrectional Nicaragua this means that "making the economy work"--with all the compromises implied therein--takes precedence over certain political and social goals that are surely close to the hearts and central to the longer-run program of the men and women who fought so long in the name of Sandino and el pueblo to overthrow the dictatorship.

### The Class Question

On May 4, 1980, the Consejo de Estado was formally inaugurated. It was an historic occasion in a double sense. First, because it was the 53rd anniversary of what Sandino had called "the day of national dignity," the day on which he moved irreversibly into armed opposition against the U.S. Marines and their Nicaraguan allies.<sup>38</sup> Second, because the naming of the Consejo climaxed months of struggle over the size and composition of that body, a struggle that suggests the complexity and dynamism of the class question in revolutionary Nicaragua.<sup>39</sup>

The pre-victory program of the Junta of Government provided for a 33-person Council of State which would "share legislative functions with the Junta." The program actually named the groups and organizations which were entitled to representation by virtue of their contribution to the overthrow of Somoza. But within weeks after the victory, it was clear that the particular constellation of groups and organizations that came together in the anti-Somoza coalition and were thus named in the program did not reflect the realities of revolutionary Nicaragua. Most glaring was the omission of any mention of or representation for mass organizations--of women, youth, workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, and neighborhood committees (Committees of Sandinist Defense or CDS). But to include mass organizations, essentially created and organized by the FSLN, was to pose a double threat to those who opposed the hegemonic role of the Frente: first, it clearly tipped the balance of the Consejo in favor of the FSLN and gave additional institutional legitimation to the notion of the FSLN as vanguard; second, it added a host of new voices speaking for the clases populares in a forum that might otherwise have significantly overrepresented the bourgeois opposition to Somoza.

It is not surprising that the composition of the Consejo became an issue which embraced the key question "in whose interest should Nicaragua be ruled?" It is also not surprising that the FSLN won this particular battle, finally constituting a Consejo of 47 members, with ample representation of the mass organizations.<sup>40</sup> The opposition was less than pleased, and Robelo's Nicaraguan Democratic Movement, the Social Christian Party, and the Conservative Democratic Party all initially refused to take the seats allotted to them. COSEP, the Higher Council of Private Enterprise, allotted five seats, debated for a week and then finally decided to participate. Evidently not all members of COSEP agreed with the decision, for José Francisco Cardenal, the COSEP representative named to the governing board of the Consejo, fled to the United States shortly thereafter.<sup>41</sup>

The position taken by COSEP vis-a-vis the Consejo does not mean, however, that there is an implacable and unrelenting tension between private enterprise on the one hand and the Sandinist state representing the clases populares on the other. To the contrary, it might be more accurate to locate one key aspect of the class question in Nicaragua today in the struggle for the hearts, minds, and energies of those tens of thousands of small capitalists, both urban and rural, who are essential to the politics and economics of reactivación and unidad nacional. For example, 50 percent of Nicaragua's coffee is produced by approximately 15,000 farmers working medium-sized or small plots; and almost 40 percent of all Nicaraguans employed in the production of consumer goods work in shops with less than 10 employees. The owners of these farms and shops, in addition to the owners of retail stores and other small businesses, have neither the savings nor the opportunities to leave Nicaragua. They sink or swim with the Revolution. This is well understood by both those who oppose and those who support the programs of the FSLN and the Junta. Thus, under the sacred banner of the defense of private property some seek to band together persons as disparate as the owners of huge agrarian estates and barrio shoe repair stalls. Meanwhile, both in

its micro-economic policies and in many other ways, the Sandinist state takes cognizance of the importance of both the economic necessities and the values of small and not-so-small capitalists and the diffuse "middle class" to which some belong and with which many others identify.<sup>42</sup>

The other key aspect of the class question is located in the relationship of the popular classes to the Sandinist state. There is no doubt that the FSLN means what it says when it states that the new Nicaragua will be ruled a favor de las clases populares. But as the previous discussion of austerity and economics-in-command suggests, the relationship between long-run goals and short-run exigencies is by no means simple. The pressure to redistribute is very strong; worker revindicaciones are very real and at times poignant. In the words of one leader of the Frente-affiliated ATC (Association of Rural Workers), "We haven't had a vacation in 300 years." The temptation to take that vacation, in one form or another, is great.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, just as the capitalists are not a homogeneous grouping, neither are the clases populares. The situation in urban areas is especially differentiated. Organized workers are doing relatively well. But it is in the cities that unemployment is most severe, and the government's public-works programs have not been able to employ more than a minority of those without jobs. Nor has the so-called salario social (non-wage benefits in the form of improved services) been very successful. As one planner told me, at this stage the people want reales (cash), not services. Above all, it has proved difficult to do very much for the more marginal urban youth who fought so heroically during the insurrection. There is a certain irony in this. These urban muchachos formed the backbone of the FSLN-led militias. Thousands were killed and wounded. But they were marginal to the Nicaraguan economy before the insurrection, and they are not central to the reactivation process either. Those who have found a place in the new Sandinist Popular Army or the police are among the most fortunate. Others have found pick and shovel work, usually temporary, in the physical reconstruction of the country. But many more are still on the streets, making do as best they can. Their full incorporation into a new Nicaragua will have to await future structural transformations of the society and the economy.

#### "Luchamos Contra el Yankee"

"We struggle against the Yankees." This line from the FSLN anthem is followed by a second which says "enemigo de la humanidad"--enemy of humanity. It is a continuing reminder of the anti-imperialist roots of Sandinismo, and particularly the very strong feelings engendered by the U.S. occupation and subsequent support of the Somoza dynasty.<sup>44</sup> But the general anti-imperialist position of the FSLN does not offer much specific policy guidance when it comes to dealing with the international dimensions of the day-to-day problems that the Frente and the Government of National Reconstruction face.

This is particularly so in the whole area of international debt, financing, and balance of payments. Even before taking power, the Junta announced that it would honor those parts of the Somoza-incurred

debt that were not demonstrably stolen by the dictator and his friends or used to purchase arms. With a total indebtedness of more than \$1.5 billion dollars, almost \$600 million due in debt service alone during 1979, total exports expected to be only a fraction of the more than \$600 million earned in 1977, a desperate need for new funds for reconstruction, and reserves of only \$3 million in the Central Bank, the debt and balance-of-payments situation of the new government seemed impossible when it came to power.<sup>45</sup> But neither commercial creditors, governments, nor international organizations were motivated to push Nicaragua to the wall. To the contrary, hardly any debt was serviced at all during 1979, and by the end of the year the Plan was able to list \$370 million in additional financing that would be available from international agencies during 1980.<sup>46</sup>

Crucial to the entire process of bringing the debt situation under control are the recently completed negotiations between the Nicaraguan government and representatives of the more than 100 international banks holding Nicaraguan public-sector debt contracted under Somoza. Five meetings were held during the first year of Sandinist rule. Then, in the first week of September 1980, the terms of a renegotiated debt structure were announced. Overall, \$582 million dollars in debt were rescheduled, on terms substantially more lenient than those typically granted by the banks. Nicaragua received a five-year grace period on the repayment of past-due interest and principal.<sup>47</sup> For the moment, the threat of a serious clash between the international financial community and the new Nicaraguan government had been averted.

Although not economically as crucial as the debt renegotiations, the much-discussed \$75 million of foreign aid from the United States illustrates even more clearly the political and ideological dimensions of Nicaragua's relations with the United States. First proposed in the fall of 1979 as part (albeit the major part) of a package of Central American and Caribbean aid, the battle over this appropriation became a major sounding board for the two major "establishment" postures toward post-Somoza Nicaragua. On the one hand were supporters of the Carter administration and the bill who argued that the political-economic future was still open and U.S. aid (60 percent of which was earmarked for the private sector) would be essential for influencing events in a "pluralist" and "democratic" direction. To add a sense of urgency, the Cuban specter was called on with great frequency.<sup>48</sup> Many spokespersons for the private sector, both North American and Nicaraguan, added their voices to the chorus calling for the \$75 million.

Arrayed against this powerful pro-business, anti-Cuban, last-chance-for-democracy-in-Nicaragua lobby were the hard-line cold warriors and the still-vocal friends of Somoza. Many of the same persons and organizations who had fought so hard against the Panama Canal treaties once again raised their voices, saying in one form or another that Nicaragua was already "lost," and thus to appropriate \$75 million was, in effect, to pour money down a Communist rat-hole. For months the debate dragged on, in Congress, in the press, and

elsewhere. Only on July 2, 1980, was the money finally voted by the House and Senate, tacked on to a \$17 billion emergency appropriation including everything from food stamps to disaster relief. It had passed the House by a scant two votes.

The episode of the \$75 million raises a double question: Why did the FSLN attach such importance to receiving money from the Yankees (the Frente and the Junta worked effectively behind the scenes in support of the appropriation), and why did the very same Yankees who scant months before were reaching deep into their bag of tricks to prevent an FSLN victory suddenly become so energetic in lobbying for aid to the new government? The second half of the question was at least partially answered in the course of the debate itself: once it became clear that the FSLN victory could not be prevented, the main U.S. policy goal became to ensure that a Sandinist-led government was as "moderate" as possible, both nationally and internationally. This position was powerfully reinforced by the important domestic and international role played by the Nicaraguan private sector and the other political groups most vocal in criticizing the FSLN and the Junta.<sup>49</sup> Since these groups and interests were seen (and saw themselves) as the natural Nicaraguan allies of the United States, and since they were unanimous in supporting the appropriation and wanting a continuing U.S. presence in their country, powerful local reinforcement was given to the U.S. advocates of aid.

The position of the Frente was convergent, but from quite different premises. Assuming that the alternative to a smiling imperialist is an aggressive one, they opted for the former. Unable to escape entirely from the political-economic orbit of the United States, faced with immense domestic problems which they did not wish to complicate by sparking international antagonisms, and realizing that aid from the United States was likely to be a key signal and legitimating factor unlocking cooperation from other sources, the Nicaraguan leadership decided that the advantages of the aid significantly outweighed the disadvantages. A bit of self-discipline was needed, for the insults hurled at Nicaragua on the floor of the House and Senate, and the various amendments proposed, must have been galling in the extreme to proud Sandinistas and their fellow citizens. But as one Nicaraguan official, well versed in North American political culture, said to me, "if we could put up with 20 years of the Marines and 46 years of Somoza, we can put up with a few more months of imperialist rhetoric." The continuing question is, of course, will the rhetoric at some point again turn to action, the smile to an iron fist.<sup>50</sup>

#### A New Dawn; A New People?

The workbook used in the 1980 literacy campaign (literally, the cruzada or crusade) is titled The Dawn of the People. The reference is to Carlos Fonseca's statement that the time will come when the dawn is no longer only a dream, but rather a living reality.<sup>51</sup> A new dawn, however, implies not only a liberation from Somocista oppression, but also the transformation of the human and cultural

legacy left by the dynasty, the system that it instituted, and the interests that it represented.

The literacy campaign itself, with its triple emphases--on teaching, reading, and writing; on the political and cultural formation of the alfabetizados; and on the political and cultural formation of the young and not-so-young brigadistas or literacy workers--was the most important initial attempt to begin that transformation. In the longer run, of equal or greater importance are the mass organizations. The most important are directly linked to the FSLN: the Sandinist Workers' Confederation (CST), the Association of Rural Workers (ATC), the Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMNLAE), the Sandinist Youth (JS-19), and the Sandinist Defense Committees (CDS).<sup>52</sup> As might be expected, in the initial phases of the revolutionary process the mass organizations have functioned unevenly, although in comparative historical terms their growth during the first year has been impressive. In addition to the predictable range of organizational problems, there is at root what might be called the "deep culture" issue. An example from the CDS is illustrative.

The most important Christmas holiday in Nicaragua is not the 25th of December, but rather the Purísima, the celebration of the Virgin Mary that takes place about two weeks earlier. At the end of November 1979, I was invited to lengthy CDS discussions of the first "Purísima Sandinista." The setting was a barrio in an area once known as Open 3, a poor neighborhood that had been built in the wake of the 1972 earthquake on the outskirts of Managua to resettle residents from the center of the city. Renamed Ciudad Sandino after the victory, it was unpaved, without water or plumbing in the houses, but with electricity in most areas and the first signs of new, post-victory, community facilities. This particular meeting was held in the dusty space in front of one of the homes.

Among other items on the CDS agenda was a discussion of the necessity, both economic and moral, of celebrating the Purísima in collective fashion. Local CDS leaders explained that since resources were limited, a block party--to which each family would contribute what it could--made more sense than parties in each individual house (or shack). The leaders also explained that the well-established holiday pattern in which the men go off with their buddies for some drinking and perhaps a little womanizing--while the women stay home with the children--was not the pattern that ought to be followed in the new Nicaragua. No attempt would be made to close the bars and cantinas, it was said (to an audible sigh of relief from some), since Nicaraguans were not fools and if the bars were closed the drinkers would just stock up on liquor in advance. People would have to come to understand, the speaker said, that tighter family, community, and national bonds all go together, and are now both necessary and possible.

One of the national organizers of the CDS, the man who had taken me to this particular meeting, then added that to the extent possible the toys for the neighborhood piñata for the children should be locally made, products of Nicaraguan handicraft. He explained, as simply as he could, that the foreign exchange necessary to buy

cheap manufactured toys from abroad was in very short supply. He went on to talk briefly about the honorable tradition of Nicaraguan handicraft that had withered as merchants interested in making money had begun to import toys made in other countries and to other tastes. Finally, he explained that with thousands of fellow Nicaraguans out of work, buying local toys was a way of creating employment for some of these brothers and sisters, and that in the new Nicaragua we should be doing everything possible to help our countrymen, not just ourselves.

The forty or so persons gathered in this barrio listened attentively, asked some questions, and seemed to accept what was being said and proposed. I have no way of knowing what kind of Purísima was actually held--there or elsewhere in Nicaragua. But I do know that what was being attempted was audacious in its scope. These people were being asked to reconsider decades-old ways of celebrating a religious holiday. Men were being asked to modify behaviors that they had been practicing all their adult lives. Humble citizens of revolutionary Nicaragua were being called upon to see their own lives as linked to complex national issues like the shortage of foreign exchange. They were also being asked to understand that their way of life, however modest, has consequences for the lives of other Nicaraguans whom they do not know and will never meet.<sup>53</sup>

#### Conclusion: Toward Socialism

Nicaragua is not socialist. The 1980 plan is designed to revitalize capitalism and to set up an important sector of state ownership and state production. It also establishes the state as the main source of new investment, while at the same time attempting to create conditions which will allow and encourage the private sector to participate fully in the process of reconstruction and reactivation.

It is clear, however, that what exists in Nicaragua today is not simply the capitalism-cum-state-intervention which characterizes some other non-socialist Latin American nations. Nor, as time passes, is the Nicaraguan system likely to become more like these nations. To the contrary, the commitment of the FSLN leadership to the construction of a socialist economic system is of such long standing, and their critique of dependent capitalism so serious, that it is unimaginable that they will settle in the long run for a somewhat tamed state capitalism. But to say this is not to predict either the timetable for socialist transformation in Nicaragua or the particular form that socialism will take.

Nicaraguans are conscious of the fact that they have been given an historic opportunity to construct a socialist system that is not simply a Central American imitation of what has been attempted in Cuba, Eastern Europe, or elsewhere. What actually happens in Nicaragua will, of course, depend not only on decisions taken there, but on events and decisions in a host of other countries and institutions as well. But at a minimum there are four broad (one might



say generic) tensions that will have to be dealt with in the course of socialist construction in Nicaragua. To list them is not to speculate on possible resolutions, only to emphasize that whether explicitly or implicitly these issues will have to be faced.<sup>54</sup>

1. Centralization and Decentralization. A planned economy requires a significant degree of centralization. To combine this centralization with institutions that allow local initiative, decisional autonomy, and true participation has been, perhaps, the most difficult task facing those who believe in socialism with a human rather than with a bureaucratic face. In the Nicaraguan case, the massive, only partially coordinated, participatory experience of the insurrection strengthens the tendencies and pressures toward decentralization. The people have proved, under fire, that they are capable of taking charge of their own affairs. On the other hand, it is equally clear that insurrectional institutions, experiences, and talents are not the same as those needed for the post-insurrectional period. The latter must be invented, learned, and lived. Especially in war-damaged Nicaragua, there thus exists a powerful pull toward the centralization of decision-making. The arguments are familiar, which is not to deny that they are also compelling: a firm hand at the helm as we sail through stormy seas; a period of tutelage while the masses learn the skills and discipline needed to participate more fully in the management of their lives and labors.

2. Consensus and Dissent. Socialism never has and never can work on the basis of full consensus. We are not in the age of primordial communities where powerful and exclusive learning experiences combine with tribal bonds to forge extremely high levels of perceptual and behavioral homogeneity. In all more modern societies (some theoreticians to the contrary), conflicts of interest and differences of opinion are inevitable. Thus, even in a well-functioning socialist system, conflicts would have to be adjudicated, some voices given priority over others, and hard decisions on the allocation of scarce resources made. There will be dissent, either openly expressed if the costs to the dissenters are not too high, or expressed in other ways if mechanisms of social control (including physical repression) operate "effectively." The key question is thus not how much dissent will be "allowed," but what forms and channels of dissent are most compatible with the construction of a working consensus supportive of a new political-economic order.

It is precisely in this tangled area of consensus and dissent that liberal and religious fears and critiques gain their most sympathetic audiences inside and outside of Nicaragua. Socialist practice to date does not give comfort to those who fear that the degree of national unity that must be forged if developmental socialism is to prove viable implies the silencing of those voices, large and small, that fall outside a centrally determined view of how society should be run. In this tangle of concerns, it does not matter much that the policies and practices of the FSLN to date stand up well to comparative scrutiny considering the very real internal and external

threats to the Nicaraguan revolution. After all, Robelo still speaks and organizes, La Prensa still publishes, ordinary citizens call Linea Directa to ask tough questions, and peasants and workers stand up in union meetings to voice their disagreements and make demands. What many fear is that when even tougher times come, when bed-rock contradictions in the construction of socialism are reached, and when and if external and internal pressures of a clearly counter-revolutionary nature increase, among the first casualties will be the space for criticism that now exists.

3. Public and Private Property. One of the basics of socialist theory is that unless the state controls "the commanding heights" of the economy, the means of production cannot and will not be used for the benefit of the majority. In this sense alone it is clear that Nicaragua is not socialist, for despite the takeover of somocista properties, and the nationalization of banking, mining, and fishing, a substantial proportion of the "commanding heights" remain in private hands. But it is also the case that the incorporation of private enterprise into the process of reactivation of the economy is not an historical experience to be taken lightly. The more deeply entrenched and even legitimate a "patriotic" private enterprise becomes, the more difficult it will subsequently be to gain control of its productive facilities without serious conflict. This is particularly the case for the large enterprises whose owners have very substantial political and economic resources (both domestic and international) with which to oppose the socialization of the economy. Yet it is precisely these large enterprises which eventually must pass into collective ownership if the socialist compromiso is to be fulfilled.

None of this is news to Nicaragua. To the contrary, as one official noted, the game being played in Nicaragua is chess, not poker. Everybody can see everyone else's hand. This means that the fragility of the current alliance between the state and the private sector is evident to all. At the moment, neither the state nor the private sector is motivated to fracture the alliance--although their reasons for restraint are different. But the game is dynamic, and certainly both the tactics and even some of the players will change (despite the chess metaphor, there are many players, not just two). What can be predicted with some certainty is that the particular mix of public and private property which characterized Nicaragua at the beginning of the 1980s will not hold through much of the rest of the decade.

4. The Present and the Future. As emphasized at the outset, each of the tensions that we have mentioned must be understood historically. The past conditions the present, and the present in turn shapes--but does not determine--the future. In addition, however, there is a basic present-future tension which is not captured by this historical perspective alone. Socialism, particularly developmental socialism, elevates the dialectic of present-future to the center of its political economy. Thus, for example, economics-in-command and a policy of austerity are justified not just in conventional terms (the pie is not big enough for each of you to have a larger

piece), but in terms of collective investment in the future. Today's foregone consumption is tomorrow's investment which, in turn, represents the capital on which a better life for you and your children will be based. The construction of socialism requires that the postponement of current gratifications--and in some cases the postponement of necessities of life--be undertaken consciously and collectively. This shared understanding is at the core of the cultural transformation without which the promises of structural transformations dissolve into bureaucratic and inegalitarian forms.

But to emphasize this domain of socialist construction is not to define what constitutes "proper" decisions regarding the allocation of scarce resources between what in shorthand we can call consumption and investment. All of the other tensions intercut with this. The dialectic of present and future will be resolved differently if strong, decentralized participatory institutions have been constructed.<sup>55</sup> Patterns and channels of consensus and dissent are also obviously relevant, as is the particular mix and stratification of public and private property. What makes the prospect of socialist construction in Nicaragua so exciting at the moment is that none of these issues has been definitively decided. One hopes, in fact, that within certain broad boundaries they will be the subject of just as much discussion years from now as they are today, for only a dogmatist would believe that in a well-functioning socialist society these issues can or should be settled once and for all.

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<sup>1</sup>Regis Debray, "Nicaragua: Radical 'Moderation,'" Contemporary Marxism, No. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 10-18. This essay was first published in Le Monde Diplomatique, September 1979.

<sup>2</sup>See in particular the Nicaragua papers presented at the Latin American Studies Association Meeting, October 17-19, 1980, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>3</sup>A travel and study award from the Ford Foundation enabled me to make the third and fourth trips to Nicaragua, in November 1979 and June 1980. The first two trips, in June and July 1979, were made on my own, although I did file a series of stories on the insurrection with the San Diego Union during the first trip. The Union's letter of identification proved crucial in securing a press card from the Somoza Government. Without this card it would have been extremely difficult if not impossible to move about Managua (not to mention other areas) during the insurrection.

<sup>4</sup>Ortega's short book, 50 Años de Lucha Sandinista, was first published in 1978, outside of Nicaragua. It was republished after the Sandinist victory by the National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional). Humberto Ortega is a member of the nine-man National Directorate of the FSLN, as is his brother Daniel. Throughout this essay, the short form "Frente" is used interchangeably for FSLN.

<sup>5</sup>The standard compilation of Sandino's thought is Sergio Ramírez, El Pensamiento Vivo de Sandino, 5th edition (San Jose, Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1979).

<sup>6</sup>For a compact review of recent writings on Walker, see "William Walker and the History of Nicaragua in the Nineteenth Century," Latin American Research Review, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1980), pp. 237-40.

<sup>7</sup>See Richard Millett, Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S. Created Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua and the Somoza Family (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1977). Millett's book contains a useful bibliographical appendix.

<sup>8</sup>For more detail, see Dana G. Munro, Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean 1900-1921 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

<sup>9</sup>In addition to Millett, op. cit., see Jaime Wheelock Román, Imperialismo y Dictadura: Crisis de una Formación Social (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 3rd ed., 1979).

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, Regis Debray, op. cit.; Richard R. Fagen, "Dateline Nicaragua: The End of the Affair," Foreign Policy, No. 36 (Fall 1979), pp. 178-91; William M. LeoGrande, "The Revolution in Nicaragua: Another Cuba?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Fall 1979),

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pp. 28-50; James Petras, "Whither the Nicaraguan Revolution?" Monthly Review, Vol. 31, No. 5 (October 1979), pp. 1-22; Roger Burbach, "Nicaragua: The Course of the Revolution," Monthly Review, Vol. 31, No. 9 (February 1980), pp. 28-39; José I. Casar and Juan Enrique Vega, "Los Sandinistas: El Camino de la Imaginación," Le Monde Diplomatique en Español, July 20, 1980; "Crisis in Nicaragua," NACLA, Report on the Americas, Vol. XII, No. 6 (November-December, 1978); Epica Task Force, Nicaragua: A People's Revolution (Washington, D.C.: Epica Task Force, 1980); Adolfo Gilly, La Nueva Nicaragua: Antimperialismo y Lucha de Clases (Mexico: Nueva Imagen, 1980).

Memorias by participants are also beginning to appear. In addition to numerous accounts in Nicaraguan newspapers see, for example, Roger Mendieta Alfaro, El Ultimo Marine: La Caida de Somoza (Managua: Editorial Unión de Cardoza y Cía, 1979); Comandante Henry Ruiz, "La Montaña era como un Crisol donde se forjaban los mejores cuadros," and Comandante Humberto Ortega, "La Insurrección Nacional Victoriosa," in Nicaráuac, No. 1 (May-June 1980). Nicaráuac is the magazine of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture.

<sup>11</sup>Maintaining national unity now that there really is no más Somoza is a very difficult task, as is suggested by much of what follows.

<sup>12</sup>Sandino, although unrelentingly anti-imperialist and popular, was not in any strict sense a Marxist. Certainly he was not highly regarded by the Communist powers-that-were during his most active phase. Denounced by the Communist International in 1929 as a "petit bourgeois leader," he was later accused by them of having betrayed the anti-imperialist movement in Nicaragua. See Adolfo Gilly, La Nueva Nicaragua, op. cit., pp. 101-105.

<sup>13</sup>For an English translation of the first part of the program, see Nicaragua: Dictatorship and Revolution (London: Latin America Bureau, 1979), pp. 31-35. On August 21, 1979, the Junta promulgated a much more detailed but still essentially liberal "Statute on the Rights of Nicaraguans." An English translation is available in Pedro Camejo and Fred Murphy (eds.), The Nicaraguan Revolution (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979).

<sup>14</sup>Basic statistics can be found in Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), Nicaragua: Economic Repercussions of Recent Political Events (United Nations: Economic and Social Council, September 1979), pp. 17-45. Data in this paragraph are from the ECLA study.

<sup>15</sup>The dismantling of the state did not mean, however, that persons who served in the various bureaucracies under Somoza were prohibited from working for the Government of National Reconstruction. The FSLN recognized that even marginally skilled and experienced

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bureaucrats and technicians would be in very short supply. State employees not directly associated with corruption and repression were thus given the option of staying on, and most--having no real alternative--chose to do so. In some cases, of course, the adjustment to new rules and values has not been easy, and the public sector would certainly be strengthened if a larger group of politically committed state employees were available.

<sup>16</sup>The National Directorate of the FSLN is composed of nine comandantes, all bearing the military rank Comandante de la Revolución. Although different members of the National Directorate have different political responsibilities (and many hold formal governmental positions), all indications are that the Directorate does function as a collective leadership. The Directorate operates through a series of commissions and secretariats with operational foci such as foreign relations, propaganda and education, etc. Since the FSLN is not formally part of the government, it has a serious budgetary problem. Although it does enjoy what is in effect a state subsidy for some activities, other programs must be self-financed through a tithing system in which all militants contribute a percentage of their salaries.

<sup>17</sup>An example of "reluctant" state employees can be found in the public health service where many doctors and others simply don't want to live and work in rural areas. An example of a severe lack of resources, human and material, can be found in veterinary medicine. As one official said to me, referring to these and other problems in FSLN-state relations, the FSLN sits astride a flan (milk pudding). The flan is easy to agitate, but not very easy to control or direct. Or, alternatively, once you shake it you're not quite sure what it's going to do.

<sup>18</sup>See in particular, Henry Ruiz, "La Montaña. . . ." op cit.

<sup>19</sup>This kind of behavior, known in general as abusos, reached serious levels in the second half of 1979 and was, of course, used vigorously and with some success by both the domestic and international opposition to discredit the FSLN. In a press conference on November 29, 1979, Comandantes Luis Carrión and Humberto Ortega admitted that persons in uniform were still committing abusos, and they said that stricter measures would be taken to punish those who continued to do so. See also, "Fijan posición del FSLN frente abusos," Barricada, November 22, 1979. Barricada is the official newspaper of the FSLN.

<sup>20</sup>The definition is from El Amanecer del Pueblo (The Dawn of the People) (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1980), the workbook used in the 1980 literacy campaign. It is the opening line of reading number 4, "EL FSLN." The concept of vanguard is not, of course, fully self-defining. For further explication of the official FSLN view, see the statement included in the Appendix to this essay.

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<sup>21</sup>The quotation is from an official internal communication of the FSLN. It is titled "Circular Interna No. 6," and dated March 20, 1980. The quoted material is from the section headed "Nuestra Posición."

<sup>22</sup>"Hay que aprender de las masas para educar a las masas. . .!" Patria Libre, No. 3 (March 1980). Patria Libre is the magazine of the Ministry of the Interior.

<sup>23</sup>"La consigna es: organización, organización y más organización," Barricada, December 11, 1979.

<sup>24</sup>Interestingly, among the major open clashes of 1979 and early 1980 was a series of confrontations with the "left" opposition to the FSLN, groups which felt that the Frente was not fulfilling its class compromiso with the popular sectors--in wages, worker control, etc. Because the challenge to Frente hegemony was serious, the possible economic costs important, and mano dura easier to use against the ultra-left than against the private sector, the crackdown was swift and evidently effective. Dozens of persons were jailed and a sharp ideological campaign against the "ultras" was launched. See, for example, Latin American Weekly Report, February 8, 1980.

<sup>25</sup>Although details are hard to come by, the FSLN is by no means entirely united on these and other questions. All leading members share an anti-imperialist perspective and a popular development position. In this they are the true heirs of Sandino. But on policy questions, very different points of view are evidently held and expressed at times. The same would be true with regard to some basic questions of Marxism. Particularly vexing in this regard must be the explication of the notion of vanguard. Since it is basically Leninist thought and practice which translates the notion into a living reality, and since the Frente as a whole is by no means committed to Leninist politics, there is no easy or single interpretation of what a long-run vanguard role for the FSLN in Nicaragua will mean.

<sup>26</sup>Just a few days before Robelo resigned, Violeta de Chamorro, widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and the "representative" of the Conservative Party on the Junta, also resigned. Although her resignation was not as openly political as Robelo's, the combined effect was certainly threatening. A relatively long period of negotiations ensued, and on May 19, 1980, Arturo Cruz and Rafael Córdova Rivas were named as replacements for Robelo and Chamorro. This was widely and correctly viewed as a very successful outcome to what otherwise might have developed into the first full-fledged political crisis of the Nicaraguan revolution.

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<sup>27</sup>The quasi-autonomous nature of the ideological debate (i.e., it is a debate not directly or entirely determined by the contours of class struggle) is best illustrated by the role of the Church. It cannot be said that the Church "represents" class forces in the same sense that, for example, COSEP (the Higher Council of Private Enterprise) represents specific economic interests. Additionally, there are important divisions within the Nicaraguan Church itself. Yet the Church is deeply involved in the ideological debate in Nicaragua today, and thus is itself an arena of struggle for groups attempting to influence the political and economic future of the country. To the extent that the Church has taken an official position on the issues of democracy and socialism in Nicaragua, it is spelled out in the Bishops' Pastoral Letter of November 17, 1979. The key section of this Letter is translated in the Appendix to this essay. The general topic of the Church and revolution in Nicaragua is sufficiently important to warrant much fuller treatment than it can be given here.

<sup>28</sup>Reading 1, El Amanecer del Pueblo (literacy workbook), op. cit.

<sup>29</sup>The key document is the Plan de Reactivación Económica en Beneficio del Pueblo (Managua, Ministerio de Planificación, 1980). This is the 1980 national economic plan, hereinafter cited as Plan. For a useful series of articles on past and present problems of Nicaragua's economy, see Edmundo Jarquín Calderón, Nuevo Diario, June 11, 12, and 13, 1980. Nuevo Diario is the newspaper formed by the group that broke away from La Prensa in the spring of 1980. It is supportive of, but at times also critical of, the FSLN and the Junta.

<sup>30</sup>Comandante Henry Ruiz, Minister of Planning, speaking on January 2, on the occasion of the public presentation of the Plan. The Plan is, of course, both an economic and a political document. It was written, I was told, with four not necessarily compatible audiences in mind: International bankers and foreign opinion in general, the private sector in Nicaragua, workers organizations and the clases populares, state bureaucrats and técnicos (they too had to be sold on its propriety and viability).

<sup>31</sup>In addition to the holdings of the dynasty, certain other sectors of the economy such as mining, fishing, and the banking system were nationalized.

<sup>32</sup>See Plan, p. 31. These are estimates of the percentage of the total gross domestic product (GDP) that will be generated in 1980 by private enterprise and by the state in each sector of the economy. Overall, agriculture and manufacturing are expected to make almost equal contributions to gross domestic product (about 22 percent each). Construction and mining together add only another 2 percent, although mining promises to be increasingly important as an earner of foreign exchange. Calculated from Plan, p. 119.



<sup>33</sup>Plan, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup>The appropriateness of the word reactivation can be seen in the overall goals of the Plan. What is contemplated in 1980 is to reach 91 percent of the 1978 GDP (a somewhat war-torn year). By 1981 it is hoped that 1977 levels will be reached (a "normal" year). See Plan, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup>See Plan, pp. 37-38. A manzana is approximately one-half acre. Evidently about 80 percent of the target was met. See "Pushing ahead with the rural revolution," Latin America Weekly Report, August 22, 1980, pp. 9-10.

<sup>36</sup>Government policies recognize the important distinction between private-sector participation in reactivation and private-sector participation in investment for additional production. The former is expected, but the latter is not. Thus the Plan allots 88 percent of total investment during 1980 to the public sector. See Plan, p. 70. Capitalists who are willing to keep their enterprises operating are not necessarily willing to invest in a future in which they see their own role as uncertain.

<sup>37</sup>On a series of visits to a privately owned coffee finca in November 1979, I made some rough calculations of current costs and returns to the owners. Even while paying the official wage for coffee pickers and complying with the new rules on working hours and bonuses, the finca was paying out in total wages at harvest time only about 11 or 12 percent of the gross income received for selling beans to the state-owned processing center. Since harvesting wages are the major component of labor costs on the finca, and since coffee production in Nicaragua is not very capital-intensive, the owners were doing very well for themselves financially under the Government of National Reconstruction--as they themselves were quite willing to admit. Their worries were centered on the future and its implications for their "way of life," not on short-run profitability.

<sup>38</sup>On May 4, 1927, the Liberal José María Moncada submitted to a deal arranged by Henry Stimson in which a truce would be called between feuding Liberals and Conservatives, allowing the Conservatives to continue in power. Sandino, then a general in the Liberal army, refused to accept the deal and the truce. He later insisted that May 4 not be seen as a moment of national infamy, but rather as a day which separated the true from the false patriots, thus a day of national dignity. For relevant documentation, see Ramírez (ed.), El Pensamiento Vivo de Sandino, op. cit., pp. 70-112.

<sup>39</sup>Fittingly, Sergio Ramírez was selected to read, in the name of the Junta, a lengthy "state of the nation" document on the occasion of the Consejo's inauguration (Mensaje de la Junta de Gobierno, May 4, 1980, Managua, 63 pages). For much useful information and an interpretation of the class question in Nicaragua, see Roger Burbach and Tim Draimin, "Nicaragua's Revolution," NACLA Report on the Americas, Vol. 14, No. 3 (May-June 1980).

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<sup>40</sup>For basic information on the Consejo as constituted, see Patria Libre, No. 4 (May 1980), pp. 20-23. See also Burbach and Draimin, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>41</sup>COSEP-FSLN battles are frequently aired in the newspapers, with La Prensa speaking for COSEP and Barricada for the Frente. For an example of the latter, see "El COSEP y sus 'periodistas independientes,'" Barricada, June 5, 1980. This article includes a cartoon in which the clases populares are headed down one road marked "Democracia: Demos=Pueblo, Kratos=Poder." Hanging onto the street sign is a well-dressed, derby-hatted man yelling to the masses, "You're detouring the revolution." His sign, pointing down another road, says "Democra\$ia."

<sup>42</sup>An illuminating story was told to me by a government official. Prior to Mothers' Day, 1980, a discussion was held in the Ministry of Planning with regard to the norms that should govern the import of the traditional (middle-class) Mothers' Day gifts of candy, etc. In foreign exchange-poor Nicaragua, all such discussions imply important trade-offs: Candy for middle-class mothers or rice for peasant children? Because of the political sensitivity of the issue, it was decided to allow modest amounts of Mothers' Day luxuries to be imported. Thus does the class question percolate into multiple layers of society and bureaucracy.

<sup>43</sup>In general, rural labor was quite productive under the old system. Punteros or pointmen were used. If a worker did not sow, harvest, or weed as much as the puntero, he or she was docked or in some cases not paid. In times or areas of extreme speed-up, a fresh puntero was put on after lunch. The puntero system has, of course, been abolished. But with the punteros gone and real wages rising only slowly if at all, quite understandably prior levels of worker productivity are not easy to maintain in the countryside.

<sup>44</sup>The FSLN anthem is sung along with the Nicaraguan national anthem on almost all state and ceremonial occasions. This presents some problems for North Americans, particularly official representatives, since relations are otherwise relatively good between the two nations. At the ceremonies marking the first anniversary of the Sandinist triumph, the U.S. delegation walked out just before these lines were sung.

<sup>45</sup>See Economic Commission for Latin America, op. cit., and passim, for relevant data.

<sup>46</sup>Plan, op. cit., p. 87. One calculation that I have seen estimated that by the first anniversary of the triumph Nicaragua had received promises of almost \$1.2 billion in loans, grants, lines of credit, materials, and discounted oil. Other published reports suggest that this figure is high.

<sup>47</sup>For more detail, see the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal of September 9, 1980.

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<sup>48</sup>See, for example, the testimony of Viron P. Vaky, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, November 27, 1979. Similar testimony was given by Warren Christopher, Deputy Secretary of State, Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate, December 7, 1979.

<sup>49</sup>As the selections translated in the appendix suggest, the line between a Nicaragua that is "beyond hope" and a Nicaragua that can still be saved for "democracy" is not easy to draw for these groups. Nor is it easy for their U.S. allies either. Thus, the Washington Post, in an editorial cautiously supportive of the appropriation, said (in the course of an attack on Congressman Robert Drinan of Massachusetts), ". . . to imagine that local government units controlled entirely by the dominant Sandinistas bear anything more than a superficial resemblance to true democracy is something else. And to conclude that the government is now 'truly representative of the people' is to make precisely the leap that the Sandinistas deny by reserving all real power to themselves." January 19, 1980.

<sup>50</sup>This question suggests a line of research and speculation which for the moment we shall not pursue. At a minimum, key elements are the U.S. elections, events in El Salvador and Central America, and the overall twists and turns of a rapidly reheating cold war.

<sup>51</sup>The FSLN anthem enshrines this statement in the line, "el amanecer dejó de ser una tentación."

<sup>52</sup>For more detail on the mass organizations, see Burbach and Draimin, op. cit., pp. 18-30, and Epica Task Force, op. cit., pp. 79-96. In the Nicaraguan press, including those organs directly controlled by the FSLN, the least well reported mass organization is AMNLAE--and women's activities in general. For one of the few exceptions, see Barricada, March 8 and March 23, 1980.

<sup>53</sup>It is not only in the mass organizations that the "deep culture" issue is present. When the new behaviors are critical "right now," problems can be quite severe. In the first months of the revolution, for example, 1,500 persons were dismissed from the newly formed National Police. Some were ordinary delinquents who had joined local militias at the last moment and had no real affiliation with the FSLN. But many others were simply persons without the minimal cultural formation necessary for police work. See "La Policía Sandinista cumple con la Revolución," Patria Libre, No. 4 (May 1980), pp. 32-34. At a news conference in November 1979, an Army officer illustrated some of the problems they were having by telling the story of two Sandinist soldiers on routine patrol in Managua who took two Algerian diplomats prisoner because they heard them speaking French. Thinking that it was English and thus that the diplomats were CIA agents, the soldiers arrested them. Due apologies were later made by higher authorities and the Algerians were released.

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<sup>54</sup>A methodological clarification is called for. I do not view these tensions as dichotomies (e.g.: centralization or decentralization). Nor should they be seen as continua (essentially linear dimensions along which one can locate "real" systems). Rather, they are arenas of conflict in socialist theory and practice (and elsewhere as well). At any given historic moment certain resolutions of the resultant tensions may be made, and at a later time, other resolutions will be found. But taken together, these resolutions (which are not and cannot be independent of each other) will go a long way toward defining "what kind of socialism." Finally, these tensions are not exclusively either "political" or "economic." Surely, for example, issues raised by the ownership of property cannot be understood if we insist on using standard liberal definitions of lo político and lo económico.

<sup>55</sup>It is both theoretically and historically correct to think that if strong, decentralized, participatory institutions exist, the "masses" will always prefer the present over the future, consumption over investment. Although it is true that hungry peasants, once the landlord has fled, will often slaughter cattle, eat truly well for the first time, and in the process decapitalize "their" enterprise, such perfectly understandable episodes say nothing about the kinds of decisions that would be made in well-designed worker-managed enterprises.

THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE IN NICARAGUA\*

- A. Sandinism is not "Democratism"  
Secretariate of Propaganda and Political Education, FSLN
- B. Speech of Alfonso Robelo in Matiguás  
Nicaraguan Democratic Movement
- C. Socio-Political Statement  
Nicaraguan Social Christian Party
- D. Socialism  
Pastoral Letter of the Nicaraguan Bishops

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\*Full citations on first page of each selection. Translations  
by David Dye.

## APPENDIX

## SANDINISM IS NOT "DEMOCRATISM"\*

Forty-six years after Sandino, revolutionary Sandinism -- now in power -- reaffirms implacably the principles of the Sandinist Popular Revolution. Ideological struggle is a permanent task of revolutionary organization, and becomes all the more imperative when renewed ideological currents arise which claim to "revise" Sandino to the detriment of our historic legacy. "Democratism" is precisely that, the most recent attempt to revise Sandino in order to blend him with bourgeois liberal ideology, distorting the class and anti-imperialist character of Sandinism whose synthesis is expressed in the revolutionary struggle of the masses and their vanguard, the FSLN.

Sandinist militants and the whole nation of Sandino must permanently renew the ideological struggle without yielding a single inch in the face of the pretensions of democratism and other ideological currents. With the aim of contributing to forging weapons for the masses in this struggle, the National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN wishes to point out certain aspects of our positions. Collective discussion and militant enrichment of these positions will be indispensable for reaffirming the principles of the Sandinist Popular Revolution. With the considerations which we expound and the revolutionary practice of our militants we will put democratism in its place.

#### 1. The FSLN, Vanguard of the Revolution

The hegemony of Sandinism which today spreads throughout our country, and which represents the dominant political force in the revolutionary process, can neither be explained or circumscribed by taking Sandino as an abstract idea, nor by amputating the Sandinist movement of 1927-34 from the whole process of the Revolution.

Sandino is above all a political, military and ideological line, an example of action which has been followed, defended and developed to its ultimate consequences only by the Sandinist National Liberation Front, the sole depository of the struggles, historic heritage, and revolutionary leadership of our people. For this reason the FSLN has been and continues to be the only revolutionary alternative for the children of Sandino.

The FSLN is the vanguard because it springs from the roots of the Fatherland, from the proletarian-peasant army of Sandino, from the popular anti-imperialist war, from the class consciousness of the Sandinist movement and from its armed revolutionary strategy; in its turn it is the continuation of a historic line, of the anti-interventionist and anti-oligarchic struggles of the past century, of the struggles of Zeledón; in word, the FSLN is the historic continuation of the struggles of our people.

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\* Translated from Barricada, March 14, 1980. The same document, without the opening two paragraphs, appears in Patria Libre, No. 3, March, 1980, pp. 16-22.

It was the people and its vanguard who through bullets, heroism, death and sacrifice, disinterred Sandino from the oblivion and the silence in which the conservative and liberal oligarchies and the other dominant but partyless forces wanted to sink him.

The Sandinist Front is the Vanguard not only because it is the faithful expression of Sandino and his Army of Defense, but because it is the architect of the victory, the organic political synthesis of the flux and reflux of fifty years of Sandinist struggle and of the sufferings and revolutionary conquests of our people.

Sandino was not a legacy for only one group; he was a legacy for all. But that legacy was only raised on high, as a symbol and banner of struggle, by the workers and peasants, and only their vanguard, the FSLN, converted it into the road to victory.

The Sandinist struggle continues in the tasks of the Popular Revolution, and today as yesterday the political heritage of Sandino remains alive and valid for all those patriotic sectors which, under the leadership of our vanguard, wish to participate in the Revolution.

But Sandino is no longer just an idea, he is a reality which is made concrete day after day by workers and peasants who are guided by their Sandinist vanguard in the development of the Popular Revolution.

And in Nicaragua, other patriotic forces also have the right to aspire to making their own that Sandinism which, up to now, only the workers and peasants and their vanguard have made theirs with their heroic struggle. But they must understand that they will not be able to adapt or subordinate Sandinism to their own political project, because it is already the expression of the interests of peasants and workers whose task is to lead the patriotic sectors, and never again to be led by another social force.

## 2. The Vanguard, the Workers, and their Allies in the Struggle against the Dictatorship

Vanguard is the honorable title which a revolutionary organization gains for itself in struggle, throughout the course of a long process, by leading the forces it represents to the taking of political power first and its consolidation afterwards.

In the struggle against the dictatorship, there was only one vanguard: the FSLN. This role it earned through 20 years of uninterrupted struggle against dictatorship in the interest of the workers of the city and of the field. The irrefutable force of the facts speaks for itself.

While the traditional "oppositions" deceived the people with false demands in order to obtain a share of power at the side of the Dictator

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and to their own exclusive benefit, the FSLN, still embryonic, armed basically with the force supplied by right justice, revolutionary principles, and confidence in the workers, pointed out the road to National Liberation. Thus, with the daily example of its actions, in the most difficult conditions, with the practical demonstration of its intelligence and capacity for leadership, the FSLN took definitive root in the hearts of our heroic working people to form a single force, an indestructible unity: the fundamental pillar of our Sandinist Popular Revolution.

Afterwards came the allies, those who, since the Dictatorship no longer represented their interests and owing to the strength demonstrated by the popular movement, saw themselves forced to act against the Dictatorship, coinciding in this manner with the objectives of the FSLN and the workers. And it is thanks only to the correct policy of the FSLN, that of amalgamating all the anti-dictatorial forces under a single democratic and anti-imperialist program, that the progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie were converted into allies of the workers in overthrowing the Dictatorship.

From this it may be deduced that the allies who decided to travel the last part of the journey together with the workers played, if you will, an important role, but not the decisive one. This ultimate role is reserved historically to the fundamental forces, those who shed their blood on the barricades, in the trenches, in the mountains, to the workers of the city and the countryside whose most advanced political instrument is the FSLN, their vanguard and the military and political leadership of the Revolution.

### 3. Nationalism and Anti-imperialism

Nationalism is another of the values of Sandinism, but in the epoch of imperialism a nationalism which is not anti-imperialist cannot be in favor of the people's interests.

The sovereignty of a people cannot be debated but rather must be defended with weapons in hand, said our General of Free Men. But in the history of Nicaragua there have been citizens and organizations who debated our sovereignty at various negotiating tables.

After Sandino and before the FSLN, no organization, no political party, was able to defend our sovereignty, for none of them really dared to confront North American imperialism.

No one can deny that the nationalism of Sandino had an anti-imperialist content and practice. The first Sandinist movement in Nicaragua (1927-33) proposed to and succeeded in expelling imperialism from our native soil.

After Sandino, and before the FSLN, what existed were compromising and mediating movements.



We wish to make it very clear that ambiguous situations do not and ought not to exist; either one is an anti-imperialist nationalist and in favor of popular interests, like the Sandinists of the FSLN, or one is "nationalist" in favor of imperialism and therefore against popular interests; in the latter case one cannot even be called a Sandinist. The most typical case of this kind of nationalism was the flag-waving of Somoza.

In this country no one is prevented from wanting to be a nationalist, even though it may be at the eleventh hour, as long as it is a nationalism in favor of the interests of the workers and not a nationalism which serves to legitimate the opportunism of a movement or of a party.

#### 4. The Phantasm of Private Property

Regardless of the different political and ideological forms which the historic struggle of oppressed classes for their liberation assumes, all of the progressive and revolutionary moments of that struggle confront the dilemma of Revolution or Reform, and thus the specter of private property.

Today, once again, this phantasm is being demagogically stirred up in order to sow terror and anxiety, in an eager attempt of the middle classes and petty bourgeoisie to seek a political clientele.

To affirm the necessity of defending private property in the means of consumption, in personal goods, household articles, refrigerators and kitchenware, is nothing other than to intend ridiculously to stir up this old ghost, when this and all other revolutions not only have defended private property in these goods, but indeed made access to them possible not only for the petty bourgeoisie but for the workers and peasants as well. The Revolution not only affirms this form of private property but seeks to extend it to all social classes and sectors of Nicaraguan society.

The objectives of the Revolution are none other than to struggle until the social welfare of all workers is guaranteed. Instead of the slum shack, decent and humane housing, replacing the ground with a bed, to which the worker has a right, and endowing a life free of oppression with all the means to make the life of a worker and his family pleasant and comfortable. This is the Sandinism which contains, in potential form, the social and economic essence of the popular economic project, which today finds its most concentrated expression in the popular use of the surpluses which the Area of People's Property is beginning to produce.

#### 5. Bourgeois Freedom or Popular Freedom

When Somoza exploited and massacred the people, he always did it in the

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name of the "sacred principles of liberty." As a good liberal, he defended with blood and iron his freedom to impose, with imperialism's help, a system of domination and exploitation contrary to the interests of the people. Thus the peasants were expropriated so that they would have the "freedom" to sell their labor power to whoever would buy it; a whole people was kept in ignorance in order to preserve its "freedom" to decide whether or not it wanted education; "freedom" was given to capitalists and landowners so that they could exploit the people as they pleased; the organizations which represented the class interests of the masses were repressed, supposedly so that they could choose "freely" whether they wanted to join without being "manipulated"; and the information, ideology and culture which represented the point of view of the exploited were suppressed, apparently in order to defend the liberty of these very same people.

This was neither more nor less than the conservatives always proposed, with the difference that the latter wanted more "freedom" to exploit the people and Somoza was depriving them of this possibility.

Our people, then, has always been talked to about "freedom" as if it were something abstract and pure, and as something which has always been the same, precisely in order to mask the class connotation which the concept possesses. But with the Sandinist Popular Revolution this tale ended forever. Today the masses understand that liberty is not a word which it suffices to pronounce for it to exist, but in fact signifies two totally contrary things depending on the class viewpoint from which it is considered. Thus there does not exist for the masses a liberty which is sacred in the abstract, for the only things which are truly sacred are their own class interests and the principles of the Popular Revolution.

Bourgeois freedom has nothing to do with that popular freedom which reflects the people's own objective interests in regard to their right to organize and arm themselves (politically, militarily and ideologically) as a class in order to further the historic social project which corresponds to their nature as the majority class. And in the face of the popular liberty which is based on the interests of the immense majority of the people, it is both crude and hackneyed to want to impose on the people a notion of liberty as sacred in the abstract. This is nothing but an ideological artifice which has its roots in a past of exploitation and which it tries to preserve, albeit in updated form.

The Revolution has already defined clearly the true context in which liberty should be understood. And the hour has come to return to words their real meanings. To want to mask this fact with subterfuges is to attack the very interests of the people.

## 6. Education is Liberation, not Domestication

Up until the triumph of the Revolution, education in Nicaragua was a class privilege which kept the exploited masses of the country in ignorance, and tied to the most criminal domestication and ideological-political manipulation. And it constituted a class privilege not only because of the meagre access which the great majority had to education on account of their condition of economic exploitation, but also because of the very content of an educational system designed to reproduce the ideology of the dominant class and to secure the bases for the reproduction of the economic relations of exploitation. As in all capitalist societies, this was the role which the educational system, together with the other ideological institutions of the bourgeois state (mass media, cultural apparatus, etc.), played.

Education, then, has never been pure or neutral, and much less have heads of families ever been "consulted" about the kind of education which they wanted for their children. That is pure fakery. The class content of education cannot be covered up with a phrase snatched from the air, as it is demonstrated by the facts to be an objective necessity for the survival of the system.

With the revolutionary triumph and the exploited classes' advent to power, this situation has changed radically. The new socio-economic reality, the objective necessities of the revolutionary process, and the class interests of the majority demand a new kind of education, no longer one which covers up exploitation and makes it appear normal, but one which strips exploitation right before the eyes of the exploited in order to liberate them and to endow them with an instrument which will convert them into active subjects of their own history. If the real takeover of power by the exploited is expressed in anything, it is expressed in their political and technical capacity consciously to direct society toward new economic foundations; and the new educational system will have to play an essential role in creating those foundations.

The Literacy Crusade which is about to begin is only the first firm step in that direction, and the pedagogical-political content of the campaign is given precisely by the imperative necessity to break with the domestication to which the masses and even the youth of our country have been subjected. An ignorant, divided, and disorganized people can be tamed to accept meekly the exploitation and ideology of its exploiters, but no one can subdue a people which is organized and conscious of its historical role. Our people are not going to continue to be exploited in the name of a "freedom" which they supposedly possess to go on being ignorant and exploited.

Such is not freedom but rather a criminal declaration of war against the right of a people to liberation. With literacy not only will the great mass of illiterate peasants be liberated, but so too will thousands of young people who only yesterday had been tamed to accept like lambs the ideology employed by the dominant class to reproduce its system of exploitation.

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No matter who opposes it, we are going to implement the Literacy Campaign in order to liberate the people.

7. A Single Working Class, A Single Union Organization

The overthrow of the dictatorship, product of the revolutionary action of the masses and their vanguard, opened the historical pathway on which workers, peasants, and other sectors of an oppressed people would set forth and push forward their own political and socio-economic project; thus have the workers become the principal protagonists in the construction of the New Nicaragua.

This historic reality shakes the enemies of the people to their foundations and leads them to promote the most varied forms of ideological diversionism within the working class with the aim of dividing it and of impeding its organic political cohesion.

"Union democracy" and "ideological pluralism" disguise the interest of the enemies of our workers in keeping them fragmented in order to impede their monolithic, organic and political unity.

The Nicaraguan working class, like every other in the world, is one class. The interests of the workers of our country, whatever may be their position in production, no matter whether they work for Fabritex, El Caracol, Standard Steel, or in an Agricultural Production Unit, are the same, the ideology is the same, and their union organization as an instrument of class struggle is the same.

There is no place, therefore, for values like "union democracy" and "ideological pluralism" when, by proclaiming freedom of union organization in the face of the project of working class unity which the Revolution is promoting, what is being sought is to fragment that class, to divide it into as many particles as there are union organs which may be created in the country.

The organizational dispersion of the working class is not an expression of the exercise of proletarian democracy, but rather a product of the very structure of capitalism, which opposes capital to the worker at the individual level, as well as a policy of oppression which imperialism and its allies promote in order to shatter our workers into a multiplex array of syndical particles, thus hindering their revolutionary development as a class.

Only the revolutionary struggle of the masses, only the creative initiative of workers and peasants is capable of achieving the workers' objectives. True union democracy thus corresponds to the historical imperative to erect only one organic, political and class standard for the workers.

## 8. Distribution or Revolution

Capitalism has now had recourse to the little game of distributing a part of the entrepreneurs' profits among the workers as a mechanism for holding back the class struggle.

The capitalists imagine a world in which, by distributing five pesos of their earnings to each individual worker, they will attain the desired equilibrium between "justice and liberty." Perhaps this entrepreneurial charity would bear more fruit if it were not for the fact that the real world is radically different. In that world, because of the very contradictions of the system, their desires do not coincide with reality, and workers do not act as single individuals but as a class organized around its own ideology.

Sandinism has created working class consciousness by not selling itself for a few pesos. The political power of the working classes cannot be exchanged even for all of an enterprise's earnings. What is really important is to participate in the economic and political decisions of society as a whole.

This distribution, just like reforms, however radical they may be (like those in El Salvador), cannot supplant the revolutionary power of the popular masses. And let it be understood that when we speak of Revolution we are talking about the organized participation of the workers in the construction of a society which will put an end to inequality and exploitation.

Such distribution must not deceive anyone, especially because it constitutes a populist mechanism for trading pesos for votes, as if we were still living in the Somoza era.

The development model of the most advanced capitalism is that which gets the workers to limit democracy to the sphere of the factory or the enterprise, regulating exploitation in order to preserve it.

## 9. The Sandinist Revolution Guarantees Individual Values

We have said it on many occasions, we say it now, and we said it before when we were struggling to the death with the Dictatorship. The FSLN, the unquestionable vanguard of this Revolution, guarantees the individual practice of all values and beliefs, of all religious creeds. We are and always will be respectful of these beliefs. There is freedom in Nicaragua, although it is a freedom which does not prejudice the interests of the People, the interests of our Revolution. But what the Sandinist Popular Revolution will never accept is the organized political use of these beliefs against the Revolution. What we will never accept is that counterrevolution be made in the name of freedom of worship, of belief, and of religious values.

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Here anyone can attend his church and practice his religious beliefs without any fear, and no one is asked, as a prerequisite for joining a union, cooperative, or political party, to declare to what religious current he belongs. As far as the state is concerned, the practice of religion is a private matter. But our state will not permit workers to be kept in poverty, enterprises to be decapitalized, production to be sabotaged, and actions to be taken against the Revolution, all in the name of religion. This would indisputably affect the majority of society and the right of an entire people to forge its own liberty and to emerge from poverty and exploitation. Just as our Revolution respects individual freedom of worship and thought, it likewise guarantees the maintenance of the family and the authority which parents have over their children, a right, however, which does not exempt them from obligations and respect for the rights of the children themselves. In any case, Nicaraguan youth have demonstrated, by their example and their massive participation in the struggle, too great a maturity for them to be manipulated. They know how to defend their own rights, the rights of the Sandinist Popular Revolution.

10. A Free Country or Death

A Free Country or Death, which signifies Liberty or Death in the struggle of our workers and the FSLN to exercise their collective right to social, economic, and political emancipation, free from the strings of imperialism and its local allies, is the highest expression of the class legacy of the thought and action of General Sandino and his army of workers and peasants.

This is the Fatherland for which Sandino fought and through whose legacy the Sandinist National Liberation Front, as the military, political and ideological guardian of our Revolution, leads and directs workers and peasants in the construction of the new society.

It is not the fatherland which Somoza and his hangers-on established in order to repress the people and cover it with blood. It is not a fatherland in which opportunistic positions which revise Sandinist thought in order to seek a political clientele are protected. The heritage of Sandino is not symbolized in phrases but by the concrete practice of that small crazy army which on a ridge at Las Segovias fought for the National Liberation of a people, and it is made concrete in the children of Sandino, in the combatants and militants of the FSLN, in the revolutionary Sandinist people.

In the language of our workers and peasants, the fatherland which we are constructing today is one free of all exploitation and imperialist domination, a fatherland with a popular, democratic, and internationalist trajectory, in which our workers and peasants will regain control of our wealth and national resources to the benefit of the great dispossessed majority, where national values are respected, in which the workers, arms in hand, defend the social wealth which they produce by their own effort; in sum, a fatherland which is recovering the programmatic and political heritage of Sandino and his Army of Defense of National Sovereignty.

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Sandino never gave his watchwords to the bourgeoisie, for "only the workers and peasants will go on until the end, only their organized strength will achieve the triumph."

A FREE COUNTRY OR DEATH!

## SPEECH OF ALFONSO ROBELO\*

Matiguás, Nicaragua

May 10, 1980

Brothers of Matiguás  
Brothers of Matagalpa  
Brothers of Nicaragua  
Free Peoples of the World

Today we come here to Matiguás, in the very heart of our heroic Nicaragua, under this burning sun, to talk to our people and to the whole world, with frankness, with clarity, and without vacillation.

In our party, the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement, we believe in speaking out fearlessly, in speaking face to face with the people, without recourse to the vileness of insults and without hatred or rancor; we advocate a civic struggle conducted on a high plane, through which we will construct a New Nicaragua without destroying the values of our long-suffering country.

Our revolution has been and will always be against fear. The present moment demands that each and every one of you conquer the fear which the powerful naturally inspire. Brothers, democracy requires us to speak the truth and to defend our fundamental rights. Fear is the silent accomplice of totalitarianism, and today, here in Matiguás, we wish to say with all our strength, so that it resounds in every corner of Nicaragua and the world, that Nicaragua, as Darío said, is made up of strength and of glory, and is destined for liberty.

The MDN is a political party which raises the banner of a socialism in liberty. We struggle to eradicate forever the exploitation of man by man, but we struggle equally so that this exploitation will not be replaced by enslavement of man by the state.

We struggle to overcome the injustices of capitalism, which, exploiting the great majority, has kept it sunk in misery. Likewise we are openly against the reign of terror which Communism implants in the nations which it oppresses, subjecting them to an intolerable police state.

One cannot trample the individual rights of men, no matter what their social, economic or political condition, in order to transform the unjust structures of the past.

The MDN respects all ideologies, but at the same time it demands respect for its own way of thinking. We are not blind or insensitive to the unjust conditions in which the greater part of our worker and peasant brothers live. We are firmly committed to defending their interests because they are the oppressed majority of our people.

We believe in the harmonious integration of all social classes. We reject class hatred, which only engenders more violence on our native soil. Our goal is to construct an egalitarian society in which the immoral differences between those who have more than enough and those who have nothing will be

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\*Translated from the official MDN transcript.



done away with. But a better distribution of the wealth which God has given us can only be achieved through order and with respect for the legitimate rights of all citizens

In carrying out the basic transformations which our country demands, we must not forget that only work produces wealth and that without production we can only divide up poverty.

We respect that private property which fulfills the social function of distributing equitably the fruits of labor to all those who take part in it, and which in addition contributes taxes to the maintenance and development of government services and programs. In short, we are for a mixed economy in which efficiency and stimulation of a progressive private enterprise is made compatible with the national interest.

In the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement we are proud of our history of dignity and steadfastness in the struggle against the tyrant. We have never knuckled under and we will never allow ourselves to be subjected to any kind of dictatorship. Let it be understood, we are not in the opposition—we have already said it—we are part of the true revolution.

We are not nor will we be a refuge for Somocistas, reactionaries, or exploiters. We are working people who, with our heads held high, today and forever will struggle patriotically to defend the ideals for which the steadfast Martyr of Public Liberties, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, died.

We demand that the revolutionary process, in which we all participate, be authentically Nicaraguan and truly independent of foreign dictates. One of the greatest achievements of our Revolution is that it has given us, for the first time in our history, the power to be masters of our own destiny. The hands which proudly take up the reigns of our future must be Nicaraguan, not foreign.

In the MDN we believe in a non-aligned foreign policy. We believe in having respectful relations with all nations on earth.

We willingly receive disinterested assistance, without strings attached, from all countries. But we will not tolerate having imposed upon us models which have failed; even less will we copy those which are based on the domestication of a whole people. Nicaragua has the right to be truly free, and all we Nicaraguans have the obligation to struggle, in any way necessary, to keep our country free from foreign intervention, whether of the kind which trampled us in the past or that which today hovers dangerously close in order to subject us to its iron fist.

In the MDN we are anti-imperialists. We combat the hateful interference of the powerful in our sovereign life, wherever they may come from.

We are against the Northamerican intervention which stained our past, and we will fight continuously so that this never occurs again.

Likewise, we say today publicly and without subterfuge that, in addition

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to the danger of intervention from the North, there are already signs of Soviet interference in Nicaragua, directed by the disproportionately large diplomatic mission which the Soviets have in our country.

We condemn Northamerican intervention, but we also reject energetically the idea of being converted into a new Afghanistan.

We are against the maneuvers of the Northamerican CIA, just as we are also against the claw of the KGB which now menaces Nicaragua.

Nicaragua is mortgaged to foreign banks; it has been plundered by the thievery of 45 years of corrupt and criminal dictatorship; finally, it has suffered the destruction of a war of liberation. It would be very sad—let it be well understood—if in the wake of this cruel reality we were to fall into the hands of any of the imperialist superpowers, only to play the miserable role of pawn in the chess game of their world-wide struggle for power.

We were always against Somoza, we never knuckled under, not in the face of cajolery nor imprisonment. Many of us have suffered prison and would willingly suffer it again if by doing so we could help achieve a free, independent and democratic Nicaragua.

We are neither on the side of capitalism nor Communism. We are on the side of democratic socialism. We did not accept the criminal dictatorship of Somoza in the past, and we will not accept the totalitarian dictatorship of Marxism-Leninism.

I have said it before and I repeat it here today in the heart and soul of this noble land. In accepting membership in the Junta of Government I contracted a sacred commitment with God, with my country, and with you, my people, to work with all my strength to achieve a Democratic Nicaragua in which justice, freedom, and peace among all Nicaraguans will always reign.

It is precisely because of this inviolable commitment that I withdrew from the Junta of Government. How can there be democracy if only one political organization controls, with an iron hand, the only newspaper which now circulates as well as television and the majority of radio stations?\* How can democracy be constructed if the ministries and agencies of government monopolize political education with doctrines which are openly Communist? How can one speak of justice when there is as yet no legal recourse (amparo) protecting Nicaraguans from the multiple abuses of the governmental authorities? How can one speak of liberty and pluralism when changes are imposed arbitrarily on the Basic Statute, the fruit of national unity and an essential element in the triumph of our Revolution?

How can the unity and peace of the Nicaraguan family be spoken of if

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\*At the time of Robelo's speech, the main opposition paper, La Prensa, had been shut down by a strike. Subsequently, a majority of the La Prensa staff resigned and founded a new daily named Nuevo Diario. La Prensa then resumed publication.

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daily minds are poisoned by sowing class hatred? How can our country be reconstructed without love, without justice, without liberty, without work and without God?

To have continued on the Junta would have been to go against my conscience as a Christian and as a Nicaraguan. To have continued on the Junta would have been to play the sad role of accomplice in the totalitarian future which some Nicaraguans want for our country. To have continued on that Junta would have been to convert myself into a traitor to my own ideals, and that, I swear before you today, will never happen.

In the MDN we have always put and will continue to put the interests of the Fatherland above party or individual interests. We are therefore withdrawing from the political position which we occupied in the Government. This withdrawal of our party has produced a serious national crisis which still persists. As a positive effect of that crisis, conversations have taken place between the private sector and the Government which have led to promises that, if converted into effective reality, will alleviate the heavy climate of uncertainty in which the country is living.

Only on the basis of genuine deeds can the government recover the confidence it has lost. Only on the basis of sincerity could we return to the monolithic unity which united all sectors of our people when the long-awaited day of our liberation, that memorable 19th of July, 1979, arrived. That total unity constituted the most valuable resource in our joint struggle for the complete reconstruction of our Fatherland.

Presently the Junta of Government is incomplete and does not satisfy the essential pluralist representation designated in the primary law of our Republic, the Basic Statute. Depending on whether the form whereby the Junta is recomposed is responsible, it could contribute to creating the proper climate for a rapid and efficient economic and political recovery which would channel our Revolution onto the democratic path which we all desire.

The insults which I have received for having exercised my right to withdraw from this Junta of Government are innumerable. I have been called an opportunist, I have been called disloyal, timorous, hypocritical. Today I respond as follows: it is ridiculous to call a person opportunist who has left a comfortable position of prestige and supposed authority in the Junta of Government in order to return to the field to raise the cry of the General of Free Men, Augusto César Sandino, a cry which today resounds vigorously in these mountains around Matagalpa, the cry of "Fatherland and Freedom."

It is ridiculous to call a person disloyal who has followed the dictates of his conscience, and who was not an unconditional supporter of those who wish to make Nicaragua a police state in which freedom is trampled upon.

It is illogical to call a person timorous who, without fear, has pronounced against the deviations of those who impose their mandates on our revolution and who today boast of their power

It is incredible to call a person hypocritical who, not once but many

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times, took up and pointed out privately the errors and deviations from which our Nicaraguan revolution is suffering.

None of this frightens me. I am at peace with God, with my country, with my people, and with my conscience. We will go forward in the civic struggle, on a high plane as occurs in other democratic countries; as occurs very close to us in our neighbor Costa Rica.

We are going to pledge ourselves to a civic struggle without quarter, without retreat, so that we Nicaraguans may choose, through secret ballot, in the first free elections in our history, our national and municipal authorities.

From this moment forward we demand that the present Junta of Government fulfill the commitment contracted on July 12, 1979, before the peoples and governments of the Americas, to convoke elections, fixing an exact date in the near future. In those elections we will be able to find out what the Nicaraguan people really want, whether a democratic road in a free Nicaragua, or the sad, gloomy society typical of a totalitarian regime.

When the Junta of Government was formed as the supreme authority of a Government of pluralistic unity within the framework of the Program of National Reconstruction, it was its responsibility to prepare the economic, social and political terrain of our country and to plant the seed which, upon germinating, would produce the tree of democracy in a New Nicaragua.

But this democratic seed cannot be planted in a field plagued by hatreds and watered by abuses and arbitrariness, all of which attack freedom, justice, and equity.

We have had enough of being forced to belong to a specific political, professional or labor organization, because this is to attack the sacred right of freedom.

We have had enough of rancor being fomented in a country which wants no more war and no more fratricidal struggles, but rather peace and love among all Nicaraguans.

We have had enough of those who want to monopolize a revolution which has only one master: you, the whole people of Nicaragua.

We have had enough of flirting dangerously with Communist powers who seek only their own interests of world domination.

We have had enough of the heroic people of this land of Sandino being confused by those who want to convert them into a manipulated mass.

We have had enough of those who attack national unity, demanding that all of us submit to the dictates of a single judgment.

We have had enough of this disrespect for our allies in the struggle for

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liberation, without whose invaluable participation the triumph over genocide would not have been possible.

Today we seek the true unity of the whole people, a unity in which all Nicaraguans participate and in which differences of opinion are respected. This unity our party, the MDN, will always promote and defend.

Here today in Matiguás, in the very heart of the land of Augusto César Sandino, of Rubén Darío, of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, one of the memorable pages of our history has been written in uneffaceable letters. Here today the people—not what others call the masses—you, brother peasants, rural workers, city workers, shopkeepers, businessmen, and farmers, here today we all shout to the four winds so that all Nicaragua will hear it, so that the whole world will hear it—

Democracy ..... Present  
Justice ..... Present  
Liberty ..... Present

All people of Nicaragua, in this magnificent meeting let us repeat it so that it is heard, so that it is heard to the four winds—

Democracy ..... Present  
Justice ..... Present  
Liberty ..... Present

In this magnificent meeting we are forging our free, sovereign and independent future. Future generations will recognize that, here today, democracy was affirmed on our beloved soil.

Long Live Free Nicaragua  
Long Live the MDN  
Long Live Sandino  
Fatherland and Liberty

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SOCIO-POLITICAL STATEMENT OF  
THE NICARAGUAN SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY\*

1. Revolution and Liberty

In broaching the political aspect of any analysis, from whatever ideological perspective, one always finds that the key to every authentically revolutionary process is rooted in liberty. Its realization or negation, its indiscriminate extension to all citizens or its restriction to a particular sector in power in the last instance determines whether the overall shape of a regime will be democratic or anti-democratic (dictatorial). The Nicaraguan people certainly does not need to be taught any lessons in this matter, nor is it disposed to accept deceptive interpretations of what liberty is and what it is not, for it has not experienced the burden of forty-five years of struggle against dictatorship and for freedom in vain, or so that anyone should suppose that this people does not know how to distinguish the difference between them.

Democracy, full liberty, is a right which has been conquered by all Nicaraguans with their blood, and today it is up to us to exercise that right in all its fullness. The Social Christian Party believes that there are signs denoting a tendency away from the effective democratization of the country, and judges that the Junta of Government of National Reconstruction has the historic responsibility to orient this process toward a regime of liberty and social-ideological pluralism, within a participatory democracy. To reach this goal, tens of thousands of our brothers generously gave their lives, and no one, under any pretext, must dream of betraying their ideal. Only through the exercise of liberty can the new man spring forth, in an authentic and effective manner, in the process of constructing a new society of free men.

2. Human Rights

At both the national and international levels, this revolution raised on high the banner of the struggle to implant respect for the human rights which were trampled by the Somoza dictatorship. We can affirm that this was the dynamic factor cementing the popular and civil contribution which was a decisive aid to armed pressure in the triumph against Somoza. This banner was raised in a virtual explosion of multiple actions in Nicaragua and all over the world, dealing the genocidal regime formidable blows, of a moral and political character which created the conditions for its final defeat.

Those memorable events are enshrined in the innumerable documents of international organizations and in written and filmed reportage of various types,

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\*Translated from Por una Nicaragua de hombres libres, Partido Social-cristiano Nicaragüense, January, 1980.

among which stand out the official reports of the OAS and the UN, as well as the documentary "Free Country or Death" filmed and distributed by the FSLN, and the testimony of representatives of the opposition to Somoza before the U.S. Congress. All this, without any doubt, constitutes a well-deserved tribute to this vital front of struggle and in particular to the men and women of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights, whose non-sectarian and pluralist approach permitted the decisive incorporation of all sectors in a joint effort in defense of human life, against psychological and physical torture, in search of "disappeared persons," on behalf of prisoners, of children, in short, of the common good.

Everything just described evoked in Nicaraguans, above and beyond class, religious creed and party, the legitimate hope that respect for human rights would take first priority in the actions of the revolutionary government, as an attitude logically consistent with what it had always preached. Unfortunately, things did not turn out that way. Above and beyond what can be considered isolated excesses—executions, arrests, and disappearances of persons—always attributable to the confusion and strong feelings present in a context of post-war confrontations, the problem of respect for Human Rights persists in Nicaragua today to a degree which it is necessary to face up to and correct energetically and quickly.

We Social Christians believe that the observance of Human Rights in Nicaragua is a vital necessity for the construction of a new society; therefore their fulfillment cannot be subordinated to partisan or sectarian interests. We Nicaraguans who are committed to revolution cannot invoke such rights only when it suits our private interest. As Social Christians we reiterate that the observance of Human Rights, which we have always promoted, does not imply any absence of justice but rather its strict and correct application. We believe further that this is a task which concerns all Nicaraguans, but one which, for obvious reasons, must be a prime preoccupation and pressing responsibility of the government.

### 3. A New Governmental Conduct

Those in government have an elemental duty not only to search out and join together all those sectors which made the revolution possible and which desire in this critical transitional stage to consolidate it, but also to make an effort to ensure that their words and deeds conform to the dignity and gravity which their responsibility as leaders involves. The act of governing has a more profound pedagogical significance than some people appear to realize, to such an extent that one can affirm that the best way for a people to learn and ennoble itself is not to be found in any textbook but rather in the good example which is derived from the words and conduct of its rulers.

Words are the basis of all constructive action. It is not proper to use stinging words to attempt to shunt aside those who do not share a particular way of looking at things, or a particular view of how one contributes to building a new society of free men in which the right of all citizens to hold their own opinions and the freedom of expression necessary to manifest them are made sacred.

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The deeds and actions of statemen must contribute to strengthening the State's image. Capriciously disconnecting oneself from one's responsibilities as a man of state, as a steward of the common good, in order to convert oneself into an inciter of one citizen against another is not the way to strengthen the reputation of trustworthiness which the State must possess and which it must project to the citizenry as the institution called upon to oversee their rights and guarantees.

It is necessary for our rulers to promote the exercise of criticism, to banish the fear of speaking out (a fundamental pillar of somocismo), and to promote fraternity above all ideological creeds, because these things will contribute to the building of the new man, to the building of a new society. Nicaraguans in their popular wisdom know very well how to identify haughtiness, insolence, vulgarity, deceit, incitement and discrimination, because these were the methods which the dictatorship commonly employed. Therefore, those who hold leadership responsibility in this process must guard against these temptations and serve the people with humility and a sense of responsible citizenship.

#### 4. State Security

For forty-five years our people saw itself subjected to the constant surveillance and repression of the Office of National Security, whose atrocious crimes represent a long history of cruelty and darkness. For that reason, all methods tending toward political vigilance and denunciation among neighbors, such as occurs in those CDS which are still in the hands of somocistas, as well as directives in favor of ideological discrimination, spying at work and in teaching institutions, etc., are objects of repudiation on the part of all our people.

Nicaraguans have a right to be informed of the legal provisions regulating the functioning of the organs charged with overseeing the security of the State and of the citizens. The fact that private information which goes beyond that necessary merely for legal and judicial ends is required for simple administrative purposes compels one to ask whether the compilation of dossiers on the citizenry is not being furthered for unknown reasons. This is particularly visible in illegal attempts at manipulation which aim at shifting the community development functions of the CDS, contaminating them with bureaucratism. In addition, the people demand to know who is advising the government on national security matters, for the influx of foreign "technicians" into this domain, above all when they are from countries without democratic traditions, causes uneasiness in a citizenry which repudiates political espionage as an expression of somocismo. This charge is particularly troubling because of the existence of detailed denunciations of torture inflicted by foreign interrogators on Nicaraguans who have been imprisoned. Another reason for concern is the imprisonment of known anti-Somoza leaders and militants on charges against which they have not been given the opportunity to defend themselves publicly.



## 5. The Communications Media

It should be a priority task of the Junta of Government of National Reconstruction to establish clear distinctions in the use of official broadcast media, above all because of the confusion which exists between state policy and the party policy of the FSLN in regard to the use of such communications media. We believe that the state-owned press, radio, and television should be put at the service of all Nicaraguans and not just one political organization, for not to do so, in addition to confusing the national interest with that of a specific group, represents clear discrimination against the other cultural, political and socio-economic forces of the country as well as clear opportunism. The State may have its own TV channel and transmitter and its own means of information, but these must obey guidelines of a national character, above all in regard to the use of patriotic national symbols, i.e. the national anthem, shield, and blue and white flag. Any deviation from this norm tends to sectarianize if not displace to a secondary plane, those symbols. In this respect, the Social Christian Party believes that this deviation was incurred when a decree was handed down establishing that the same oath of loyalty be given simultaneously to the blue and white flag, which is a national patriotic symbol, and a banner whose colors are associated with a political-military organization. This is the case with decree #66 of September 13, 1979, published in Gazette #14 on the 20th of the same month, which requires a joint oath to the national flag and that of the FSLN. This tends to confuse the national with the partisan.

If what is really intended was not to confuse the national with the partisan, and not to draw our people into a deception, the decree referred to should in any case be accompanied by another prohibiting the use of this banner for partisan ends, for it is currently a fact that—under the cover of Sandino's symbols, figure and thought—Marxist-Leninist indoctrination is taking place. However, what happened was that on the same day that the said decree was handed down, another was promulgated which granted exclusive use of the term "Sandinist" and of the above-mentioned banner to the FSLN. It is obvious that, by means of such decrees, the forced alignment of all Nicaraguans into one party governed by the ideology in question is being attempted.

To try to induce the adhesion or affiliation of the citizenry to a particular group or party by decree or by other coercive methods violates Sandinist principles, as well as the Basic Statute of Rights and Guarantees of all Nicaraguans.

For the reasons just expounded, our Party considers it opportune and necessary to review the contradictions present in Decrees 66 and 67 and to effect whatever corrections are needed to eliminate them.

In regard to the communications media expropriated from Somoza and his cronies, the correct way for the State to further a truly democratic way of life would be to correct the defacto taking of those media—which belong to all the people—by specific political and para-political organizations. Arbitrary takeovers must give way to the procedures of legal action. The same spirit, in conformity with the revolutionary juridical order now in force, constitutes the necessary basis for the installation and operation of new

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media, both printed media and radio and television. Freedom of information and the right to healthy recreation are indissolubly linked to the principle of pluralism and variety of choice. Imposition and monotony are their most flagrant negation.

#### 6. The Massification of Human Beings

We perceive with alarm a clear tendency toward the depersonalization of our people through the use of methods and techniques of mass propaganda which attempt to replace the adherence which springs from liberating reflection with submissive obedience. In the State's political propaganda, the family, the basic unit of every society, has not been given the degree of importance which it deserves in the revolutionary process.

We believe that Nicaraguan men and women must not be converted into mere instruments of production or into submissive followers of political catchwords. On the contrary, it is our firm conviction that the human person is in essence a being endowed with dignity and reason, and therefore must not be subjected to any kind of alienating treatment which would tend to destroy his very thinking and deliberative capacity, his very spirit.

The most effective way to incorporate Nicaraguans into the revolutionary process is by calling upon them to participate, without sectarianism, in the tasks of reconstruction, in the conviction that this effort is destined not only for their own welfare and that of the country, but is also inscribed in the quest for the new man and the building of a new society of free men.

#### 7. A Necessary Political-Military Clarification

We find an obvious contradiction between the conception of the army consecrated in the Program of Government of National Reconstruction and what some people in practice want it to be. This can be perceived in the evident tendency to politicize the army around a party organization which dictates the rules it will follow. The army of the General of Free Men was called the "Army of Defense of National Sovereignty," and the Basic Statute establishes that "a new National Army will be organized whose basic principles will be the defense of the Democratic Process and the Sovereignty and Independence of the Nation, as well as the integrity of its territory."

The fact that the National Army is called the Popular Sandinist Army, and that there also exists a Sandinist Air Force and National Police (all these are strictly military organizations), and that at the same time there are, in addition to the FSLN, other non-military organizations which utilize the "Sandinist" label, such as the Sandinist Workers' Confederation, the 19th of July Sandinist Youth, the Sandinist Defense Committees, and the Sandinist Television System, brings with it a clear tendency toward the creation of a single structural system for the country around a single organization, above all when the establishment of a Sandinist Party has been spoken of on repeated occasions. The lessons of history clearly demonstrate that every sectarian mixture of the military with the partisan has always ended up

erecting a dictatorial and totalitarian militarism.

It is our belief that the term "Sandinist" has a national connotation, for the thought of Sandino is common to all Nicaraguans who aspire to and work disinterestedly and without selfishness for an independent and authentically sovereign country, where justice and liberty reign, where no one is marginalized or privileged, and where a spirit of solidarity is promoted with our brother peoples of Latin America and the world who are struggling for similar ideals and goals. Sandinism is the authentic expression of the Revolution which Nicaraguans desire: nationalist, anti-imperialist, democratic, just, popular, pluralist and participatory. Therefore all we Nicaraguans who participated, from different trenches, in the struggle to overthrow the dictatorship find it appropriate to come together around the memory of Sandino, who is the symbol of the Fatherland and of Nicaraguanness, the enemy of all sectarianism. Nevertheless, it is well known that a sector exists, sheltering itself in Sandinism, which is attempting to promote and implant the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Cuban-Soviet tendency, which on account of being totalitarian is the negation of Sandinist ideology. The Nicaraguan people—recently freed from North American imperialist domination—will not allow itself to fall into the hands of an equally repressive and materialistic Russian imperialism, whose armed presence in Afghanistan (its most recent victim) constitutes a trampling of the principle of non-intervention and of the right to self-determination of all peoples which, in conformity with its current policy of non-alignment, Nicaragua must energetically condemn.

By this logic, we also support all military organizations' use of the term Sandinist, that term having emanated from a popular insurrection inspired by the ideas of General Augusto César Sandino; but we believe that no political and para-party organization should use this name because it prejudices the image of the army itself, which—as the Program of Government and the Basic Statute establish it—is national and consequently belongs to all Nicaraguans. There cannot be any effective democracy when the armed forces are politicized in a particular ideological direction and when para-party organizations are created which, upon rooting themselves in the army, obviously tend to circumscribe the action of any other political, labor, or associational force in Nicaragua. All this is contrary to the new society of free men which Sandino called upon us to construct, because it tends instead toward the installation of a totalitarian model, which is its negation.

#### 8. The Use of Confiscated Property

We deem it necessary for the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic to publish a detailed list of the confiscations which have been effected since it began to exercise its functions, and the fate of the affected properties. The fact that the genocidal dictator, along with his military clique and protégés, owned the greater part of everything which was capable of generating wealth in Nicaragua implies that the State is presently in possession of a large percentage (in some cases all) of the principal economic activities of the country. All this brings in train the necessity of establishing an effective administrative structure to promote real production in the properties in question. Likewise, we deem the conjunctural historical moment propitious for promoting, starting with the confiscated units of production and from a

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non-capitalist perspective, true worker enterprises, either participatory— with co-management or self-management—or comunitarian. Only on these bases can one effectively open up real access to Social Power for the workers. This model of property would in addition contribute to increasing productivity.

We also feel that it is incumbent upon the Attorney General's Office to make known on the basis of what decree automobiles and private homes have been assigned to civilians, for it is well known that movable and fixed property which now belongs to the State has been occupied by persons or organizations which do not form part of the central government. It would be useful to know, as well, whether the occupants of those properties are paying for their water, electricity, telephone, cleaning and street maintenance services, the value of which the public must receive for the benefit of National Reconstruction and which is now being paid by all inhabitants in the country who need this money for their own various activities.

### 9. About National Unity

A distorted conception of what the State, the party-political, and the private areas should be led Somoza and the Somoza system to forge an anti-democratic and anti-popular hodge podge of interests characterized by Uniquismo ("only one-ism"), in which everything was subordinated to the arbitrary decision of he who considered himself at the same time the entrepreneur, the industrialist, the merchant, the investor, the rancher, the coffee-grower, the rice-grower, the bean grower, the fishing fleet operator, the banker and financier, the final word, the boss, the general, the spokesman, in a word, the beneficiary of everything on account of being the chief of the party and repressive apparatus through which his system of dictatorial imposition was sustained.

It was against all this that the Nicaraguan people rose up, effecting the democratic unity of all sectors for the purpose of fighting against such evils with the intention of banishing them forever, so that they would end up, just like Somoza, on the trash heap of history.

In this new stage, broadening and consolidating that National Unity is a priority task. Consequently, it is necessary for some members of our government, acting above sectarian interests, to show greater awareness of the fact that discharging the role of statesman imposes National Unity as a goal which must be met in order to fulfill, in this critical transitional stage, the vital necessity of consolidating the revolutionary process. From this derives the duty to seek out and join together, through fraternal and respectful dialogue, the conflux of all the sectors which made the Revolution possible and which desire to consolidate it.

Besides the sector of the somocistas, there exist foreign groups holding enormous economic resources which are greatly desirous of seeing this popular revolution fail.

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This is a reality which our government must consider and weigh deeply. Our people have deposited their trust in that government, their trust that a new society of free men will be built in which all Nicaraguans, without discrimination or privilege, will see their necessities as human beings fully satisfied, both their material necessities (housing, clothing, health, food, etc.) and their spiritual necessities (education, culture, full exercise of freedom, etc.). We affirm that the unity which is necessary in this stage of the process does not signify subjection to alien ideas at variance with democracy and the authentic building of popular power, which some sectors are trying to impose. This opportunistic and sectarian attitude has contributed to the creation of a destructive divisiveness contrary to the interests of the revolution, and—in the end—to those of the Nicaraguan people. We conceive National Unity, as our people conceived and support it, to revolve around the physical and spiritual Reconstruction of the Nation.

It is fitting here to emphasize the plural character of the various vanguards as well as their unity, which finally determined the triumph of the people over the genocidal dictatorship. Arm-in-arm with those who formed the vanguard of the armed struggle, there sprang forth the vital combat of those who championed the defense of Human Rights, the struggle of the Workers Confederations, who together with the anti-Somoza parties led the mobilization of the workers, the political cadres, and the popular base, the struggle of the business organizations and associations which led in the contribution of economic and technical resources, and the last to be mentioned because it is the most important, the resolute evangelical posture of our Church, the vanguard par excellence of a peace founded on justice. These same vanguards, then, just as they did in the struggle to defeat dictatorship and oppression, must remain united in order to defeat sectarianism, exploitation, and the other expressions of material and spiritual poverty which lie in wait for us in this vital stage of reconstruction.

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## PASTORAL LETTER OF THE NICARAGUAN BISHOPS\*

Socialism

We hear expressed, at times with anguish, the fear that the present Nicaraguan process is moving toward socialism. The Bishops are asked what we think about this.

If, as some think, socialism weakens people, usurping their character as the free protagonists of their history; if it tries to submit people blindly to the manipulations and dictates of those who arbitrarily seize power, such spurious or false socialism we could not accept. Neither could we accept a socialism which, overstepping its limits, tried to deny men the right to their religious beliefs or the right to express publicly their beliefs and convictions whatever their religious faith might be.

Equally unacceptable would be a socialism that denied parents the right to educate their children according to their convictions, or which denied any other human right.

If, on the other hand, socialism means—as it ought to mean—the pre-eminence of the interests of the majority of Nicaraguans and a model of a nationally planned economy, solidly and increasingly participant, we have nothing against it. A social project that guarantees the common use of the goods and resources of the country and permits—on the basis of the satisfaction of the fundamental necessities of everyone—the improvement of the human quality of life—seems just to us. If socialism implies a reduction of the injustices and the traditional inequalities between city and countryside, between pay for intellectual and manual work, if it signifies the participation of the worker in the fruits of his labor, the overcoming of economic alienation, there is nothing in Christianity that is in contradiction to this process. In fact, Pope John Paul II has recently emphasized in the United Nations his concern with the dramatic separation between work and property.

If socialism means power exercised from the point of view of the vast majority, and increasingly shared by an organized people—in the sense that there is movement toward a true transfer of power to the popular classes—again it will encounter nothing but support and approval from our faith.

If socialism brings cultural processes that awaken the dignity of our masses and give them the strength to assume responsibilities and demand their rights, then we are dealing with a process of humanization that is convergent with the human dignity proclaimed by our faith.

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\*The Pastoral Letter, dated November 17, 1979, is subtitled "Compromiso Cristiano para una Nicaragua Nueva." This translation is the final section of Part One, about one-fifth of the total Letter.

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Regarding class struggle, we think that the dynamic aspect of class struggle that leads to a just structural transformation is one thing, and class hatred directed against persons is quite another—one that radically contradicts the Christian obligation to be guided by love.

Our faith tells us that it is an urgent Christian duty to live in this world, to transform the land and all the other resources of production in order to permit man to live and to make of Nicaragua a land of justice, solidarity, peace and liberty in which the Christian vision of the kingdom of God acquires its full meaning.

Furthermore, we are confident that the revolutionary process will be original, creative, profoundly national, and in no way imitative. Because, with the majority of Nicaraguans, what we want is a process that advances firmly toward a society that is fully and authentically Nicaraguan, not capitalist, not dependent, not totalitarian.