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“To defend our nation’s honor": Toward a social and cultural history of the Sandino Rebellion in Nicaragua, 1927–1934. (Volumes I and II)

Schroeder, Michael Jay, Ph.D.

The University of Michigan, 1993
"TO DEFEND OUR NATION'S HONOR":
TOWARD A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE
SANDINO REBELLION IN NICARAGUA, 1927-1934

Volume I

by

Michael J. Schroeder

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1993

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Rebecca J. Scott, Chair
Professor Frederick Cooper
Assistant Professor Fernando Coronil
Associate Professor Jeffrey Gould, Indiana University
Assistant Professor Roger Rouse
Professor John Shy
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

-- William Blake
in memory of

Elizabeth Jane Delehanty Schroeder
and
Genevieve Delehanty

and for the children of Nicaragua
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My deepest thanks to all those who helped make this work possible. The members of my committee offered uncounted suggestions for improvement and helped save me from more than a few errors of fact and many more of judgement and interpretation. The entire staff of the Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo in Managua was extremely kind and generous in sharing with me the oral testimonies which help to give this work any historical bite it might possess. The staff members of the National Archives in Washington D.C., the Library of Congress, and the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library at the University of Michigan were kind and helpful. The Graduate Fellowships Committee of the Department of History and the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies of the University of Michigan provided much-needed funds for the conception, construction, and completion of this project, as did the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. The members of the Military Studies Group at the University of Michigan offered valuable advice and criticism on portions of this work. Richard Ingebritson was the very best at what he did; likewise Allen Isaacman and Lansiné Kaba. All three deserve more thanks than I can give. A special thanks also to John Peters, who spent untold hours reading and critiquing all four corners of this work, and a few more besides. Jon Marwil kept pushing me to think harder and aim higher, and offered sound counsel. Sabine MacCormack provided encouragement, criticism, advice, and friendship, all in the proper proportions. David C. Brooks helped me laugh and think and keep things in perspective. Neil Foley and Angela Hintz and their family helped me many ways many times. Abdollah Dashti was friend, adviser, compadre. David Austin was a good friend and an even better example. Rafe Blaufarb, Ada Ferrer and Gregg Van
Ryzen, Lessie Jo Frazier, Patrick Kennelley, Charo Montoya, Karen Robert, Tim Scarnecchia, Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, Knut Walter, and Christopher Wolterstorff, all helped in different but crucial ways. The Zamora and Blandón families of Estelí and Yalí opened their homes and hearts; Keyla, Yesenia, Jaime, Adelina, Marcial, Nelson, Chepe, Wiliam, Chico, Abuelo y Abuela, all helped me in more ways than I can count or recount. Doña Pastora shared her many sorrows and few joys and helped me understand better. Denise and Sarah Betsy and Timmy D. helped and help make it all worth it.
PREFACE

This dissertation tells a story about the Sandino Rebellion in Nicaragua, 1927-1934. It is a story both tragic and hopeful. It is about a struggle waged in the name of social justice and human dignity that was also a war between families, communities, parties, regions, ethnic groups, races, nations, and social classes; it is about a defensive struggle against a foreign aggressor that was also a brutal civil war. It is a story, at one level, of how a new kind of Nicaraguan national identity was born of the fires of imperialism, oppression, war and rebellion. At another level it is a story of how this patriotic struggle against US imperialism and the Nicaraguan ruling oligarchy generated, in true dialectical fashion, its own antithesis, in the form of the Nicaraguan National Guard and the anti-Sandinista ideology of Somocismo. Sandino's Rebellion has been mythologized as a heroic anti-imperialist struggle, and in many ways it was. Yet it was also, fundamentally, a brutal fratricidal conflict, a product and reproducer of the dominant themes of Nicaraguan history: foreign intervention, internal political struggle, and extreme levels of social, economic, and political inequality, injustice, and violence.

"I am one of the Defenders," reads a popular Sandinista verse from the period, "who with blood and not with flowers / I struggle to win my second independence / that traitors without conscience / have wanted to profane."¹ And the Rebellion was indeed a kind of Second War of Independence. The raison d'etre of the struggle, by Sandino's lights, was to free the "Nicaraguan nation," and indeed all of the "Indo-Hispanic race," from the clutches of "Yankee imperialism" and its native allies, the *vendepatria* or

¹ Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo (1985a: 142); one rendition of this verse, scrawled in an almost illegible longhand, was taken from the body of a dead Sandinista in mid-1930 and eventually deposited in the National Archives; NA127/202/13.
"country-sellers"; it was to create, through the process of armed struggle, a new ideology and a new national identity which would recognize and give voice to the rights and aspirations of the impoverished and oppressed majority in his homeland of Nicaragua and Central America. It was to create a new brotherhood of man on Earth. One might say that Sandino's Rebellion was the Enlightenment and French and American Revolutions come late and thickly filtered to post-Russian-and-Mexican-Revolution, still quasi-seigniorial, freshly neocolonial Nicaragua. Sandino's struggle was the product of the country's anarchical politics and extreme levels of social and economic violence combined with nearly two decades of heavy-handed US imperial domination. Moved by a kind of spiritualized, messianic patriotism, Sandino was, like many national heroes before and after him, basically a nationalist; at the same time he depicted himself, as he was depicted and remembered by others, as a Christ-like figure, holy redeemer of the nation and race. His battle, waged in the name of the poor and downtrodden, was for national sovereignty, popular sovereignty, and social justice; a kind of redeemer-patriot, he offered his blood for the freedom and independence of his homeland and the well-being of the majority of its citizens.

History and circumstances compelled Sandino to take his holy crusade for national sovereignty and social justice to the rugged and mountainous north-central part of the country popularly known, then and now, as the Segovias. The Segovias, in turn, had their own long and complex history of social and political struggles, of peasant and Indian revolts and uprisings, civil wars between factions of the oligarchy, class struggle, ethnic conflict, gang warfare, family feuds, and interpersonal violence. The Segovias were an extremely brutal and violent place long before Sandino and the Marines appeared on the scene, a world where, as Jerzy Kosinski writes of the homeland of his youth, "The only law was the traditional right of the stronger and wealthier over the weaker and poorer."² Most inhabitants of this rugged frontier region -- some ninety

percent -- were impoverished, illiterate, barefoot peasants who lived in thatched huts in
isolated mountain hamlets, laboring endlessly to pull a living out of the soil and avoid the
violence of the more powerful. The national state held only tenuous influence on
regional affairs; local power and local authority ruled. Sandino, confronted with a
national state that had effectively surrendered its sovereignty to the United States, took
his nationalist rebellion to this rugged frontier region and proclaimed, essentially, his
own, parallel sovereignty. A kind of rebel republic, or parallel army-nation-state, was
created across the north-central part of the country and on into Honduras, in the form of
Sandino's politico-military organization, the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National
Sovereignty. For nearly six years the peasant-worker-Indian soldiers of the Defending
Army waged a guerrilla campaign against the US Marines, their native allies in the
Nicaraguan National Guard, and their local civilian supporters. Ongoing struggles in this
region -- struggles for land, for political office, for patronage, for authority and power,
for vengeance -- melded at many different levels into Sandino's struggle for social justice
and national independence. And things got very messy indeed.

As an expansive comparative literature attests, nationalist doctrines in the 19th
and 20th centuries, invariably emerging from the labors of a tiny intellectual elite, have
tended to find their greatest bite among literate urban middling and upper classes.
Illiterate peasantries, on the other hand, have generally not gained notoriety for the depth
of their nationalist fervor. Indeed, nationalist ideologies and the ideologies of Latin
American peasantries have tended historically to swim in rather different streams --
except in the specific context of invasion by a foreign army. And even then, peasants,
like other social actors, have tended to filter nationalist doctrines through the prism of
their own experience, to construct "the nation" and its interests in accord with their own.
This was certainly the case in Nicaragua in the 1920s and 30s. From the beginning,
Sandino worked to propagate his nationalist doctrine among illiterate mountain peasants,
most of whom had never heard of "national sovereignty" or given much thought to "the
homeland" (la patria). All across the Segovias, however, the sudden appearance of the Marines and the Guardia Nacional and their liberally-used machine-guns and bombs helped to make Sandino's abstractions a little more concrete. Defending the sovereignty of the nation was one thing; expelling the murderous Yankee invaders became quite another. If defense of the national sovereignty or la patria was sometimes insufficient cause for joining the rebels, defense of one's family and community and hatred of los machos (literally, "the mules," i.e., the Marines) were quite often reason enough.

Yet the Marines did not invade the Segovias all by themselves. Insinuating themselves deeply into the cracks and fissures of Segovian political culture, they were only the most visible element in what quickly emerged as a broad and deeply-rooted anti-Sandinista alliance. Sandino's dream was of a free Nicaragua ruled by the popular will. For the Nicaraguan ruling classes, on the other hand, the notion of the unfettered exercise of the collective will of the lower orders was not a dream but a nightmare. Harboring few illusions about what Sandino's aspirations meant for their own interests, the ruling elite across Nicaragua, and the literate and propertied across the Segovias -- including most merchants, traders, ranchers and coffee growers -- took little time to ally with the Marines and Guardia against the "bandit hordes" of the rebel chieftain. Fear of social revolution compelled more powerful social actors to construct Sandino as a false patriot and his followers as brigands and criminals bent on the destruction of the social order. The rebels, for their part -- confronted by a ruling class that insisted on allying with their enemies and an invading army that was as aggressive as it was ruthless -- defined a goodly portion of the Nicaraguan populace as cowardly traitors who would rather live on their knees before their imperialist masters than die on their feet as men defending their dignity and freedom. The fractured and fluid political milieu of Nicaragua and the Segovias meant that not only the ruling and propertied elite but thousands of ordinary men and women and children came to see their interests more closely aligned with the Yankees and Guardia than with Sandino and his rebels.
The Sandino Rebellion was a pivotal moment in Nicaraguan history which ended up generating two diametrically opposed fields of social memories, two antithetically related shared stories of the Nicaraguan past. One, what might be called the Sandinista narrative, glorifies Sandino and villifies his foes. Its antithesis, what might be called the Somocista narrative, casts Sandino and his followers as criminals and brigands and the Marines and Guardia as righteous defenders of the social order. United States' policymakers and their pliant Nicaraguan allies in the 1910s and 20s did not intend that Nicaraguan subordination to US imperialism would generate a rabidly anti-Yankee nationalism like Sandino's -- though that is, in effect, what happened. And Sandino, for his part, did not intend that the process of struggle he initiated would generate a body of theory and practice dedicated to the annihilation of what he fought and died for -- but that too is, in effect, what happened. What is called the Sandino Rebellion was in fact many different struggles all taking place at once -- the product of continuing and relatively autonomous struggles between parties, social classes, ethnic groups, regions, communities, families, and individuals, all in the context of a weak, only partly-formed national state, a dispersed structure of power and authority, and US imperialist domination. This dissertation, using copious caches of archival documents and oral testimonies, tries to paint a picture of these processes: as they were documented, as they were remembered, and as they were.
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CHAPTER 1: "DANGEROUS MEMORIES": WRITING A HISTORY OF THE SANDINO REBELLION

But many that are first will be last, and the last first.

- Matthew 19:30

In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary.

- Karl Marx

In the early 1980s, Radio Sandino broadcast an interview with Pedro Antonio Arauz, former personal secretary and brother-in-law of the most talked about and least understood figure in Nicaraguan history. "What can you tell us of that epoch?", he was asked of the period half-a-century before. "What memories come to mind at this moment when we ask you about the heroic deeds of Sandino?" "What I remember most," replied Arauz, "was when we entered here triumphant.

Even though within a year Somoza's betrayal brought misfortune upon us once more, when we entered here, the entrance of the entire army of General Sandino to occupy the village of San Rafael del Norte, this is the most glorious thing that we ever had in those times. Our entrance here was the apotheosis! No one will ever see anything like that again!

Arauz's radio listeners knew that he was talking about February 1933, when the peasant soldiers of General Augusto César Sandino's Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty descended from the Segovian mountains in triumphant procession after more than five-and-one-half years of guerrilla war against the US Marine Corps and the

2. IES 096: 1.
Nicaraguan National Guard. They also knew what "Somoza's betrayal" meant: the assassination of General Sandino on February 21, 1934 at the hands of the National Guard, commanded by Anastacio Somoza García, after which Sandino's movement was crushed.

Pressed to capture in a few words the essence of Sandino's struggle for a new and revolutionary generation, the aging Sandinista juxtaposed the struggle's most sacred moments with its most hellish: inextricably bound up with the "apotheosis" of the Rebellion, the glorious triumph of the sacred cause, was its tragic and inglorious ending, brought about by treachery and carrying with it misfortune, repression, pain and death. Sandwiched in between these two watershed events, left unmentioned by Arazu because he was never there, was the creation and destruction of one of Nicaragua's many alternative futures, at a place called Wiwilí.

The US Marines withdrew from Nicaraguan soil on January 2, 1933. At that time Sandino demanded, as a key condition for peace, that a new department (similar to a state in the United States) called "Light and Truth" (*Luz y Verdad*) be created across a large part of the sparsely settled north. He further insisted that "all the civil and military authorities of the said department be appointed from members of our Army," proposing, in effect, the creation of a quasi-sovereign nation-state within Nicaraguan borders. The Treaty of Peace signed on February 2 by Sandino, his representatives, and the Nicaraguan government under President Juan B. Sacasa contained a modified version of the proposal. A vast tract of land along the Río Coco was designated as the exclusive domain of Sandino's Defending Army, to be defended by one hundred armed "emergency auxiliaries" under his command, in lieu of a more permanent treaty. The net effect of the Treaty was to grant Sandino's original proposal, ceding to his Defending Army, in practice if not in name, the status of sovereign statehood.³

In the months following the Treaty of Peace, Sandino and several hundred of his followers established an agricultural cooperative along the Río Coco at a place called Wiwili, a small-scale version of the utopian society he envisaged. "Nicaragua imports a great quantity of products that it does not have to import," the rebel chieftan explained to a journalist from Managua's La Nueva Prensa in July 1933, "cereals, oils, even meat, by way of the Atlantic Coast. All of this can be produced here. Soon the entire distance of the Coco will be navigable, and after that we will begin to open new lands for cultivation. In this region there is an incredible exuberance of vegetation . . ."4 A few months earlier, in an interview with the Basque journalist Ramón de Belaustegui, Sandino hinted that the Wiwili cooperative was to be only the first stage in a far-reaching process of state-directed land and social reform all across northern Nicaragua.5 These comments were amplified in a March 1933 interview with the Nicaraguan journalist José Román. "It is evident, said the General, that this work [of civilizing the Indians of the Río Coco region] is very difficult, but even if we can inculcate in them only the most elemental notions of morality and hygiene, it will be a real triumph.

There are thousands and thousands of Indians [said General Sandino], among them Sumos, Zambos, Miskitos, and Caribs who live in this Atlantic Coast region and along her rivers. . . . In my war I had an opportunity to come here and I began to understand our reality, because this too is Nicaragua, and I made the firm promise that when the war of independence ended, instead of accepting the standing invitations I have to places like Paris, Buenos Aires, and Mexico, where I would go only to be exhibited like a movie star . . . that instead I would stay here along the Río Coco -- the most savage, but most beautiful part of our homeland.

It is my hope to liberate this region from the barbaric exploitation to which it has been subjected, first feudal-colonial, and now capitalist, to do what is possible to civilize these poor Indians who are the marrow of our race. And as you can appreciate, my labors are already beginning to bear fruit. I hope, at least, to have this work well underway, so that our future generations and governments can occupy themselves with this problem, which is fundamental for the economic and moral development of Nicaragua. This virgin region comprises much more than half of the national territory, and only by civilizing it can one transform Nicaragua into a respected and dignified country.

"For me," he continued a few days later, "after the expulsion of the Marines, this cooperative is the most important thing that exists, so much so that I will not abandon this mission till death."  

More than half-a-century later, in mid-1984, seventy-seven year old Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera was asked to recount his experiences as one of Sandino's soldiers; soon the topic turned to the war's aftermath. "We were in San Rafael for a week," he recalled of the disarmament. "The day we turned in our arms, he [Sandino] called us to attention and asked who wanted to stay with him; 'Whoever wants to stay with me,' he said, 'take one step forward! I need 100 men to continue defending our sovereignty!' And from there we went to Wiwilí, to form a cooperative there.

And there we worked, always working and carrying arms; we were always in service. There we planted corn, we planted beans, we planted gardens for everyone; everyone brought their women with them, there were five or six women who used to work making tortillas, cooking beans, washing clothes, and the following week it was someone else's turn, and the others could rest ... We had one large camp at Wiwilí, and there was General Sandino, he had his little house set apart from the rest ... Did General Sandino explain to them the purposes behind the cooperative? "What he wanted, he said, was progress for all the poor people," the old-time Sandinista explained, "that he fought so there would be no slavery. He wanted improvements for all the poor, without distinction to colors [party affiliation]."

Many ex-soldiers of Sandino's Defending Army carried similar memories of the cooperative at Wiwilí. In 1983, seventy year old Cosme Castro Andino, longtime resident of El Cuá near the Río Coco, recounted how the area around Wiwilí was transformed in short order from wilderness into a thriving agricultural outpost. "We cleared the land and planted corn and beans," he explained half a century later, "and he [Sandino] went to work organizing his cooperatives, giving the people their little houses, so that each one would have their little house, 'so that all can live in tranquility' as he

7. IES 102: 3.
used to say, so that we could work freely, I don't remember what all he said, counseling the people, but it was like he already had a plan ready."8 "In Wiwilí there was nothing, nothing, nothing," recalled seventy-two year old Joaquin Fajardo Arauz, lifelong resident of Jinotega, in 1984. "But the man went to work, building houses, planting tobacco, planting corn, planting everything that was needed, panning for gold... The people were all organized into cooperatives... and they went to work."9 "I was in Quilalí during the year of peace," recalled seventy-six year old Juan Bautista Tercero García to his youthful interviewer in early 1984, "and Sandino was in Wiwilí. I was told that they set up some cooperatives there with Sandino, because he had 100 men and with these men he formed a cooperative, planting corn and beans and panning for gold..."10 Such memories are legion, even among those, like Don Juan Bautista, who were never actually there at the time.

* * * * *

Flying low over the banks of the Río Coco in late 1990, there is little to distinguish the little village of Wiwilí from the dozens of other hardscrabble farms and settlements dotting the mountainsides and valleys in this still rugged and isolated region. As the pilot descends, a few cows can be seen being herded down a dusty dirt path by a pair of young boys with long switches and short pants and expressions at once quizzical and suspicious; women and girls up to their knees in water barely take time to glance skyward as they scrub soiled clothes against the boulders lining the banks of the river. A thin film of soapsuds soon disappears into the currents and eddies of the rain-swelled Coco, a brown-black ribbon coursing its way through a sea of mountains, pastures, cornfields, and farms. Some things have changed dramatically in the fifty or so years

8. IES 049: 16.
9. IES 100-1-2: 10.
10. IES 093: 5.
since Sandino's cooperative was hacked out of the wilderness by his followers and then razed to the ground by the Guardia Nacional. The land is tamer, more cultivated; as the population has swelled the forests have shrunk, and each year a little more is swallowed up to make way for cattle and horses, for cornfields and beanfields, for homes and fences and homefires. Yet other things remain much the same. Life is still hard, the days still filled with toil and sweat and the troubles and joys of everyday life, the land still incredibly fertile and verdant and unforgiving.

Flying back into Managua, it strikes me that despite a decade of revolution not much has changed there either, at least at some levels. The ever-fractious terrain of Nicaraguan politics remains as fractious and fractured as ever; politicians of all ideological bents still vie endlessly for power, cultivating alliances with some and animosities with others, though a few have tried to attend, for once, to the real needs of the majority. A kind of muted civil war still governs the country. I wonder: has it ever not? Up north, bands of contras still roam the countryside, clashing periodically with units of the Sandinista Popular Army, or EPS. Soon a remarkable convergence will take place, when ex-contras and ex-soldiers of the EPS will join forces to form the revueltos, a Nicaraguan play-on-words that can either mean "rebels" or "scrambled eggs" depending on one's perspective and mood, one more testament to the extraordinary fluidity of ideologies, identities, and allegiances in this deeply polarized, deeply divided country.

*          *          *

Pedro Antonio Arauz was concluding his radio interview: "At the end of the war, our forces controlled everywhere around here," he explained to his listeners, "and that's why the enemy was afraid of a disaster, and they came to arrange this whole thing. They say that they fooled Sandino, but it's a lie because nobody ever fooled Sandino."
This might be considered a curious assertion, coming as it did from someone who knew as well as anyone the consequences of "Somoza's betrayal." Around the same time that he was being interviewed on Radio Sandino, Arauz submitted a handwritten manuscript to the Managua-based Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo (Institute for the Study of Sandinism, or IES) which explored the consequences of that betrayal in some detail. "The literal words of General Sandino before he left on his last trip to Managua," wrote Arauz, were the following:

'LITTLE PEDRO, MAY IT BE AN ETERNAL REMEMBRANCE FOR THE FAMILY THAT I HAVE HELD MY LITTLE DAUGHTER ON MY LAP, I WILL DIE AT ANY MOMENT. I SAY THIS BECAUSE OUR BROTHERS ARE BEING ASSASSINATED, WITHOUT REGARD FOR ANY OF THE ACCORDS. I LEAVE FOR MANAGUA. A FAVORABLE ARRANGEMENT OR I STAY FOREVER. HERE MY LITTLE DAUGHTER STAYS, YOU TAKE CARE OF HER, BECAUSE BY NOW I EXPECT NOTHING GOOD.'

Arauz continued:

HE LEFT ON FEBRUARY 20, DOING WHAT HE HAD TO DO, AND EARLY IN THE MORNING ON THE 21ST THE ASSASSINATION TOOK PLACE, DYING WITH THE VERY BEST OF MEN, WHOM FORMERLY THE ENEMY COULD NEVER DEFEAT. AND AFTER THIS CAME ALL OF THE LEGIONS TO ASSASSINATE HUNDREDS OF SANDINISTAS AND DISARMED SOLDIERS. SOME OF THESE VICTIMS FELL IN THE POWER OF GABRIEL CASTILLO, A SALVADORAN CARIVORE, I ONLY REGRET THAT TODAY I AM UNABLE TO FIND HIM TO KILL HIM WITH MY OWN HANDS . . .

HE THEN TURNED TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF SANDINO'S ASSASSINATION FOR HIMSELF, HIS FAMILY, AND OTHER SANDINISTAS OF THAT PERIOD:

WELL, MY BROTHER WAS SACRIFICED IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER: THE SAME NIGHT THAT THEY ASSASSINATED GENERAL SANDINO THEY CAPTURED HUNDREDS OF SANDINISTAS AND MURDERED THEM IN GROUPS OF FORTY AND FIFTY. AT MIDNIGHT THESE VICTIMS WERE DIGGING THEIR OWN GRAVES, THEN THEY WERE KILLED. WELL, LUCKILY I MANAGED TO ESCAPE, BECAUSE I HAD A SECRET PASSAGE OUT OF THERE. I RAN TO GO WARN MY BROTHER LUIS RUBÉN ARAUZ WHO LIVED ON A LITTLE FARM ABOUT ONE-AND-A-HALF KILOMETERS FROM SAN RAFAEL. BUT IT WAS TOO LATE, THEY HAD ALREADY CAPTURED HIM, HANDS UP. I WAS WITH MY OTHER BROTHER OCTAVIO ARAUZ. HE WAS BAREFOOT, CARRYING HIS SHOES IN HIS HANDS AND WITHOUT A WEAPON. AFTER THEY TOOK HIM PRISONER WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING BUT WATCH HIM PASS BY. I WANTED TO RESCUE HIM, BUT I HAD THE ONLY WEAPON AND THERE WERE LOTS OF GUARDSMEN, AND WHAT WOULD'VE HAPPENED WAS THAT THE FIRST TO DIE WOULD HAVE BEEN MY BROTHER, AND IF THAT WAS SO, THE WHOLE IDEA WAS FATAL.

SO THEY TOOK HIM TO THE VILLAGE, AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED THEY BEGAN TO TORTURE HIM, THEY PUT HIM ON A BIG BOX WHERE THEY WERE GOING TO HANG HIM, THEY TIED A ROPE AROUND HIS NECK AND KICKED OUT THE BOX FROM UNDERNEATH, AND HE JUST STAYED THERE, HANGING. WHEN I FIGURED HE WAS ABOUT READY TO DIE, I SNUCK UP AND THREW A BUCKET OF WATER ON HIM TO REVIVE HIM. THAT'S HOW THEY HAD HIM THERE ALL DAY.
But the worst was when this murderous Gabriel Castillo with a squad of Guardias came in from Estelí dragging with them twenty-seven Sandinista prisoners, they had already shot many of them in the road. So he slept there and in the morning asked if there were any prisoners, and they told him, yes, and that among them was Sandino's brother-in-law. That made him furious, like a tiger with his prey.

My brother was taken down and tied to the tail of the carnivore Castillo's mule; if the mule ran, my brother had to run too. They arrived at a place called Río Tuma. Here they beat and beat a prisoner named Tránsito Sequiera; they tied them around the neck and threw them into a deep pool, but since they knew how to swim, they couldn't drown them. The martyrdom continued. My brother asked them to quit sacrificing him and just kill him, but the carnivore Castillo kept them going till they arrived at Cerro Grande. . . . He was taken to some tall weeds, and there the carnivore gave the order to kill the last two prisoners, who were my brother Luis Rubén Arauz and Manuel Montalván.11

Miraculously, left for dead with a bullet lodged in his face, Luis Rubén Arauz survived.

*  *  *

In the early 1980s, when the revolutionary process in Nicaragua was in full swing, a handful of young and enthusiastic staff members of the Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo set off into the mountainous north to find and record the life stories of the campesinos (countryfolk) who had fought with General Sandino against the US Marines half-a-century before. More than one hundred of Sandino's ex-soldiers were eventually found and their stories recorded.

Tales like Pedro Antonio Arauz's abounded. Jinotega native Sixto Hernández Blandón, who first told his youthful interviewer that he was sixty-eight and later let slip that he was around eighty, was an illiterate peasant soldier under General Pedro Altamirano for most of the war. "I left the Army when peace was made," he recalled toward the end of the interview.

The day Sandino died I had already mustered out. I stayed around and went to my house, to my place near La Pavona, there I lived. Since I could see there was no way to resist, I left, I went toward Jinotega, and that same day they killed fifty

11. P.A. Arauz, IES ms. "Luz y sombra," pp. 3-5. "The Carnivore" Gabriel Castillo was, according to Marine and Guardia sombra, one of the first Nicaraguan officers commissioned in the Guardia Nacional in the San Rafael district; see, e.g., Informe de la patrulla, Subteniente G. Castillo, Yali, 13 Dec. 1931, NA127/202/14.
of our companions because they had papers that he had given them, little papers, safe-conduct passes that they were carrying with them.

It was a massacre!! Well, I never made it to Jinotega that day. Some companions said to me: 'Let's go!, but I said, 'No! I'm not going!!!' The General wasn't around any more, and what was I going to do? So I went to my henhouse, to my ranch at La Pavona, through the brush, the brush, the brush, all the time, all the time: what cruel punishment!! After being so long in the mountains with the General, and afterward, to the brush, ah! Fleeing in the brush, because we couldn't stop to see. How could we stop to see? How? They were hunting us down like dogs!

The war stopped and for us the war kept going, the few of us who were left. We were there three months, six months, they called out to us to have, like it is now, like a committee, like meetings; the commandos called us, that we should present ourselves, saying they weren't going to do anything. We went in, deathly afraid. That's how I came in. After the death of Sandino, between life and death!!! . . . No!!! I didn't have my rifle, I turned it in at San Rafael; nobody had any arms, only the twelve soldiers who stayed on with Pedrón, they went back to the mountains again, but not bothering or fighting with anyone, indefensible, better said.

Yes, the enthusiasm had ended. We thought we were going to have a life of pleasure, happy and good, thinking, well, that Sandino was going to be the one to dominate the republic. But no. Because Sandino offered to Nicaragua 'Free Homeland or Death,' but independent free. This he offered, his narrative, because I heard it. The revolution cost us dearly, like I tell the compas today, I know some of them, it cost us dearly.12

Others told remarkably similar stories. Seventy-two year old Jinotega native Secundino Hernández Blandón told his young interviewer that he had fought with Sandino for more than three years. He remembered especially, as did others, the coordinated movement of the troops into San Rafael and the signing of the peace.

When we received orders to turn in our weapons, we turned them in. Everyone who turned in their rifle was ordered to get a safe-conduct pass . . . they asked your name and both your last names, where you lived and worked, how old you were, things like that. Well, we were a bunch of kids, I was pretty young back then, we saw how they wanted us to snatch us with a yoke, turn us back into slaves. They were signed only by Sofonías Salvatierra, only by him. If you ask me, he was the man responsible for the death of General Sandino.

Sofonías Salvatierra, a widely respected Liberal intellectual, was the leader of the "Patriotic Group" formed in March 1932 to negotiate the withdrawal of the Marines and the disarmament of the Defending Army. While his actions and subsequently published book (1934) make plain that he was broadly sympathetic to Sandino and his cause, he

12. IES 036: 10-11.
also, as Secundino Hernández suggested, helped to devise and to implement a frightfully
dangerous way for rebel soldiers to return to civilian life. Since these "safe conduct
passes" were not signed by General Sandino, Secundino Hernández declined to get one.
He remembered it as a fortunate choice.

On February 2 they killed General Sandino. On February 3 the armies of Somoza
were there, martial law for everyone who had been Sandinista, or not Sandinistas,
'bandits' was the word they used; there everyone who had been a 'bandit' died,
along with their families. Near here there's a mountain named El Sarayal, and if
you scratch the ground just a little bit, one foot, maybe two, you'll find the bones
of our comrades. This hill of Pantasma was filled with buzzards, the bones of the
'bandits' that they killed at that time, families and all. . .

If I had gotten that safe-conduct pass, signed by Sofonías Salvatierra, I wouldn't
be talking to you about this, because from here, from Jinotega, there were people
who knew us, the people knew us, the capitalists used to walk at the head of the
Guardia with a list, and say 'he's so-and-so, he's so-and-so.' 'What's your name?
'So-and-so.' 'Here's a book, it's true that I signed there to get the safe-conduct
pass,' and the names appeared there, the workers of all the haciendas of all the
mountains, there was a line of workers: 'So-and-so, what's your name?, so-and-
so,' and if it was on the list, a step to the front, a step to the front no more, and if
they didn't shoot you right then and there, they'd take you into these mountains.
They'd take the families too; because I saw it there, near Caraterra, they killed
women and everything, because they were the wives of those who had been
Sandinistas. They burned their homes, the same thing they're doing now [the
contras], these sons-of-bitches who come around here killing children and
everything. This is the old system. In El Salvador it's the same . . . 13

Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera recalled that he was at Wiwilí when the news came; he
was twenty-seven at the time.

When they killed General Sandino, I was there in Wiwilí. A group of us had
separated from the main camp, we clambered out along a ridge and placed
ourselves in front of a steep hill near this big clearing we had made for the
plantings. We saw them coming along the beach. We tried to clear out all the
people, especially the women; some made it downriver in canoes, and we were
here in the rear guard, but without weapons. There was a battle there, thanks to a
Browny [Browning machine gun] we had, but it only fired one shot. Well, they
were all captured in the river, all those who tried to go downriver. There were
about 2000 of them when they came along the beach, you could only see yellow
because they were all wearing yellow clothes; they were gringos and guardias.

We had our flag hoisted, the red and black flag with the skull and crossbones, and
they had seen it; so they tried to see how to break up the villages. 'Everyone by
land!' we said. And a bullet: pa! And travelling! That's what we had to do. So,
I along with sixteen others managed to go toward Murra. From there we went
into the mountains . . .

13. IES 047: 3-5, 12.
At Wiwilí they destroyed everything, everything we had constructed and had there, the camp, everything was destroyed. They burned the houses, everything! An "artophone" that the General had! An "artophone" is this thing that talks, like the victrolas...

Well, we cried. I told them: 'I warned him! He didn't want to heed me! And now look at us! We're finished, we have to flee, because if they catch us they'll kill us!' And that's how it was, many who stayed around, in love with their woman, they killed them. They'd hunt them down in their hiding places and finish them off... Yes, it surprised us that they pursued us so, we wondered, why?, what did they want? They had finished with the chief, and why were they pursuing us too??!

Similar tales were told time and again by old-time soldiers of the Defending Army. For Ascensión Iglesias Rivera, who fought for more than three years, memories of the peace and its aftermath no less streaked with the bitterness and anger of betrayal.

"Now look," he said at one point in reference to the disarmament,

if the struggle would have continued between ourselves, if the struggle, like Sandino said, would've continued, we would've continued, because we had some good arms, we were well armed... and everything we gave away! When we entered San Rafael, we left a house filled up with good weapons!

He then shifted to the massacre at Wiwilí:

One guy told me afterward, 'Look,' he says, 'when we arrived above Wiwilí, just before entering this grassy field we found 500 men armed to finish off the people who were there, and we met this little man with a raggedy little blanket on him, on the road, and he came over by us. 'Where'd you come from?' 'From Wiwilí.' 'Where're you going?' 'I'm going to Quilalí. Man,' he says, 'I can tell you that whoever keeps going on this road is going to end up a victim.' 'Oh, why?' 'Not even 500 yards up ahead they have a giant ambush set up for Sandino's army, whoever goes up that way is done for. It's true,' he says, 'that whoever would've left that way, would've arrived and not a single one would've been left, because, look: on the downriver side there was a giant hanging, that whoever wasn't killed by gunshot they would've killed in those hangings.'

'So, the little man took us on a detour; we came around and looked back over the mountain where we were going to walk before. When we went down to where they had been, only the wounded left, but they had taken the weapons. And they arrived at Wiwilí, there was nothing there, they only came to kill the people. Uhh!! The families there were finished off, they were all finished off, finished off...

His narrative then circled back to where he was at the time, at the coffee hacienda La Colonia far to the south in Jinotega department. His postwar experiences there had been

14. IES 102: 3-6.
the subject of considerable discussion earlier in the interview. After Sandino had been killed, as he had told it, the Guardia went on a killing rampage in Jinotega:

From that day forward, there were eight days of killing people, because all the people went fleeing from the mountains, until eight days later when there was an armistice. Everybody went to present themselves at the Guardia headquarters after they stopped the killing, but those eight days were nothing but killing people. Nothing but meat for the buzzards! We who were in the army, 'no, here we stay, if they kill us they kill us together!' (p.7)

After eight days, the workers at La Colonia went to present themselves to the 100-man Guardia station at Santa Isabel. A lieutenant spoke to them:

Men, it has been done, this plan for everyone to present themselves at the Guardia posts, because this tyrant has died. They have killed Sandino, they have taken his life, because Nicaragua is very small, and Sandino's opinion was to make two governments: he would command in the Segovias, and in Managua, the government. And the nation is very small for two governments, so on this side they have removed this stone, and only they remain. (p.11)

Afterward, life at La Colonia was sheer misery.

We passed a terrible life on that hacienda because we couldn't sleep, waiting for the hour they would come to carry us away and kill us, because at that hacienda all the workers were Sandinistas. (p.12)

After Sandino was killed, the manager of La Colonia, Defending Army Colonel Daniel Hernández, switched allegiance and joined the Guardia, as did many others, according to Ascencio Iglesias Rivera.

He joined the Guardia, I think he might be in the Guardia still. What a disgrace, and a colonel with General Sandino! (p.7) . . . Many compañeros who were in the Army at that time all were made Guardias, they liked to go around with weapons, but I had an opinion I couldn't change, because look, the iniquities they committed against my family: they killed two uncles and two brothers of mine they cut up into ribbons in the yard of our house, my mama buried the pieces there, and I'm supposed to be friendly with them? No!! Never, never! Even though in truth I avoided getting killed, I never had the least desire to have any friendship with them, I'm very much their enemy.15

Massacres, betrayals, the utter collapse of all semblence of organization, the absolute dissolution of all hint of rebellion: that is how Sandino's ex-soldiers tended to remember the ending of their Rebellion. It is also, at one level, how the Rebellion really did end.

15. IES 065: 5-7, 10-12.
There is, of course, more to it than that. Wars and other social upheavals create memories -- private and collective, personal and shared. And such memories, melding into one another until the line between individual and collective begins to fade into nonexistence, such memories survive long after the last battles have ended and the last gunshots sounded. They have clearly survived in Nicaragua among Sandino's ex-soldiers. And violence and betrayal and repression and death is but one side of the story they tell.

If one listens closely to these voices, one hears another kind of story alongside the horrific tales of the Rebellion's demise sampled above. Pedro Antonio Arauz's writings, for instance, continually circle back and forth between the struggle's pain and suffering, on the one hand, and its glory and honor and heroism on the other. "What greater satisfaction for a small army of free men than to defend the grandest and noblest cause of all time?", he asks his readers in one of his untitled manuscripts; a few sentences later he returns to the theme touched on in his radio interview, the triumphal Sandinista march into San Rafael del Norte in February 1933. "When I saw our flag hoisted and the flag of the pirate invaders taken down," he wrote, "tears flowed from my eyes, tears of incomparable happiness of that most transcendental moment of my life."16

With others it was the same, in greater and lesser degrees; the same batch of testimonies excerpted above (quoted here in the same sequence) have another story to tell.

Sixto Hernández Blandón: A few moments before recounting the cruelties of the Somocista backlash in such excruciating detail, he honored his interviewer with a rustic rendition of an old Sandinista patriotic song:

16. P.A. Arauz, IES untitled ms., begins "Yucapuca, Zaraguasca, Jinotega ..."
We have potent arms
To follow the destiny
Augusto César Sandino
Taught us to defend

That we should proceed
Like valient soldiers
Better to embrace death
Than humiliate ourselves

Despite the tremendous pain and suffering of the war and its aftermath, not to mention the passage of fifty years, Don Sixto still carried for his former Supreme Chief profound love and respect: "He was a wise man," he recalled at one point, "a man who really understood his army."17

Secundino Hernández Blandón also recalled his participation in the Rebellion with a fierce moral pride and an unshakable hope for the future. After telling about Sofonías Salvatierra and the safe-conduct passes, he was asked if they knew at the time why they were fighting. "Ah, yes, exactly," he responded without hesitation. "Yes, we knew we were fighting for the poor, for the well-being of the poor, yes, for the well-being of the campesinos.

In the end it was so there would be freedom, this is what was said, that all the poor ought to have, and were going to have a place to work, to live -- and now I am seeing it! What is happening is that things are just beginning. Even though the triumph has only just come, we only have three years and a little bit, this is nothing! One can say that the light of the day is only now beginning to dawn, that is if the Yankees don't get rid of us again.18

Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera also retained a burning pride in his role in the Rebellion. "Companions, compatriots, and brothers," he sang at the conclusion of the interview,

Never falter in your valor
And if we die in defense of our homeland
Our history will live for another generation19

Ascención Iglesias Rivera remembered his role with no lesser sense of dignity and honor:

"What Sandino told us was that we should never forget why we were fighting,

17. IES 036: 3, 7-8.
18. IES 047: 12.
that we should always remember that we were fighting a just cause, our own
cause on our own land, that we cannot permit a foreigner to invade our country,
that we will not be slaves to foreigners, and that was why we had to fight for our
homeland in the manner we were fighting, because it was our cause. That was the
ideal.20

Anguish and pride, horror and hope, terror and joy, defeat and victory: In the
excerpts quoted above these oppositions have been separated, mostly for heuristic
purposes. More often the untangling is not so easy -- the glory is entwined with pain, the
heroism with suffering -- as in the opening quote from Pedro Antonio Arauz, in which he
bracketed in virtually the same breath the joy of Sandino's Army's hard-won victory with
the despair of its defeat, the sacred beauty of the man and his cause with the unspeakable
ugliness of their demise. Others did much the same thing, and in as few words. Again,
Asención Iglesias Rivera: "I tell you, the history of General Sandino, a good man, a wise
man, he was a military man and a wise man, but things had to happen as they did, the
man soon failed, and his struggle was little."21 Seventy year old Jinotega native Cosme
Castro Andino was interviewed in 1983:

Q: Yes but why were you pursuing this struggle?
A: Ah, we pursued the struggle for the tranquility of Nicaragua! So that we'd
always be tranquil, happy, working peacefully more or less, well, like this, like
now when we want to work and live without being bothered by anyone.

And then, the flip side of this idyllic dream: "Then this tragedy, I went into the
mountains, six years with him, until the peace; from here to there we were clandestine,
fleeing, fleeing . . ."22

And so it continued: from a thousand pages of testimony come hundreds of such
stories with a thousand twists of detail. Eighty year old Macario Calderón Salinas spoke
for more than half an hour about his post-war experiences; after telling a long and
harrowing tale about the massacres as Wiwilí and how he and his family narrowly
escaped death at the hands of the Guardia, he was asked what he thought now that the
Sandinista Popular Revolution had triumphed. "I didn't think we were going to see the

20. IES 065: 16
21. IES 065: 16.
22. IES 049: 2.
triumph of our Sandinista Revolution," he answered. "Seven years of struggle that we struggled through, I didn't think I'd see it, I didn't think I was going to see the triumph of the revolution, me being so old and all" -- though he was certainly glad he did.23 "What did General Sandino tell you in San Rafael?" sixty-eight year old Francisco Lara López was asked in 1983. "That we should be very careful that we didn't eat too much," he replied in a recollection surely poisoned by subsequent events, "because there was going to be a plague that would wipe out all of Sandinismo." He remembered the burning of Wiwili and the slaughter of its inhabitants in some detail, though he was not there personally at the time; asked what the Guardia did with Sandinistas when they found them, his reply was incredulous and automatic: "Eh? They killed us!" Most of all he remembered fleeing:

   We all went to the mountains, always on the run. Everybody just looked out for their own ass. We didn't make the least effort to stay together, everyone scattered, we went our separate ways. There was neither the occasion nor the place to join up again, when??? Everyone went to save themselves, always fleeing, nothing more.

Yet Sandino and The Cause remained for him sacred, exalted, beautiful, true: "This he told us, when we were at Wiwili: 'I am going to Managua, I am going to die. I am the trunk and you are the branches, and these branches will someday shed their vines and grow strong and true, and they are you.' These are the words of a prophet. And no doubt, that's how it is."24

*  *  *

To talk about Augusto César Sandino in Nicaragua in the 1980s, as these testimonies make plain, was less to talk about a dead man than it was to partake in a living national myth. "Revolutions write and act out their own mythologies," writes

Roger Lancaster, a truism that applies with as much force to the Sandino Rebellion of the 1920s and 30s as to the Sandinista Popular Revolution half a century later. The iconography of Sandino began long before Carlos Fonseca and the FLSN appeared on the scene. Even during his own lifetime, the very word "Sandino" evoked less a man than a myth, a symbol, and not only in Nicaragua but across large parts of Latin America and into Europe and Asia. From the first days of his struggle, Sandino was painted as morally pure, his Defending Army as a spiritual-religious brotherhood bathed in the light of a radically superior moral universe. Thousands of pages have been devoted to capturing and propagating that mythology, but none succeed more beautifully than Ernesto Cardenal’s 1956 poem, "Zero Hour":

And his men:  
many of them were kids
with palm-leaf hats and sandals
or barefoot, with machetes, old men
with white beards, twelve-year-olds with their rifles
whites, inscrutable Indians, and blonds, and kinky-haired blacks
with tattered pants in shreds
parading in Indian file with the flag up front --
a rag hoisted on a branch from the woods
silent beneath the rain, and weary
their sandals sloshing in the puddles of the town

_Long live Sandino!_

and they came down from the mountain and they went back up to the mountain,
marching, sloshing, with the flag up front.
A barefoot or sandaled army with almost no weapons
that had neither discipline nor disorder
where neither officers nor troops got any pay
but nobody was forced to fight
and they had different military ranks but they all were equal
everybody getting the same food
and clothing, the same ration for everybody
And the officers had no aides:
more like a community than an army
and more united by love than by military discipline ...
What’s that light way off there? Is it a star?
It’s Sandino’s light shining in the black mountain ...
But the hero is shining when he dies

25. Lancaster, p. 132.
and green grass is reborn from the ashes.\textsuperscript{26}

Drawing most powerfully on Biblical imagery of David and Goliath and Christ the Redeemer, Sandino cast himself, and was cast by others, as The Great Liberator, The General of Free Men, a tiny David struggling valiently against the mighty Goliath; his soldiers were a rag-tag army of barefoot peasants heroically sacrificing their lives for justice and freedom in an epic struggle against the footsoldiers of the evil, oppressive, murderous imperialism of the Colosus of the North, the United States of America, and their treacherous native allies.

For Sandino and like-minded Latin American intellectuals in the 1920s and 30s, United States imperialism was despised for a simple and powerful reason, because it was seen to deny others a fundamental right that it claimed for itself: the unfettered exercise of genuine national sovereignty. Sandino's Rebellion against US military, political, and economic intervention in Nicaragua was but one manifestation of a much broader set of nationalist and anti-imperialist currents surging through intellectual circles and enclaves of imperial intervention and capital accumulation in Central America, Mexico, the Caribbean and South America in the wake of the First World War and the Russian and Mexican Revolutions.\textsuperscript{27} The Nicaraguan patriot, tapping into deep wells of anti-imperialist resentments and nationalist aspirations at home and abroad, came to represent the defense of sacred rights arrogantly trampled upon by Yankee bullies and thieves and their shameless collaborators in Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, the Philippines, and beyond.

Myth-makers throughout Latin America seized on Sandino from the first days of the Rebellion; from the deaths of the first Marines at the hands of his tiny Defending Army -- dubbed "the crazy little army" by the Chilean Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral in 1928 -- Sandino was painted in epic hues, a glorious chapter in the unending struggle

\textsuperscript{26} Walsh, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{27} For a useful overview of anti-imperialist movements in Central America in the 1920s see Salisbury (1989).
between the morally righteous, humble folk of Latin America and the arrogant brutality of US imperialism, between good and evil, justice and injustice, freedom and slavery. Like the internationalism of the Spanish Civil War (and, for that matter, the Sandinista Revolution of the 1980s), Sandino fired the imaginations of revolutionaries and visionaries world-wide; rebels and romantics from across Latin America came to fight at his side: from Colombia and Venezuela they came, from Peru and Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras, and elsewhere. Scores of Latin American writers, poets, novelists, and essayists lent their pens to "The Noble Cause of Sandino." That other Chilean Nobel laureate, Pablo Neruda, sang the praises of

Sandino, Sandino, Sandino.
The roll of drums grows louder,
The voices grow inflamed,
The fists are raised:
Sandino, Sandino, Sandino!  

Myriad lesser-known figures added their voices to the chorus, like the Guatemalan Rafael Arévalo Martínez, in "To Nicaragua":

Sandino saved you. He took your dishonor
upon his titanic shoulders, bloodied,
like a Redeemer. He called to History.

And the Nations came, on behalf
of Nicaragua, the price of her sellout
paid with her blood and with her glory.  

Literary figures from across the hemisphere brought the power of their poetry and prose to The Cause. "Today the Nicaraguan patriot Sandino, invincible in his struggle against the dictators and invaders of his homeland . . . is the grandest figure in America and the world," wrote the Cuban Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring from Havana in 1928. "Augusto César Sandino has the utter security that he represents the conscience of Spanish America," proclaimed the Colombian author Max Grillo the same year, a few months

before the Bolivian poet and writer Tristán Maroff paid homage to "The name of Sandino and his epical heroic deeds."\textsuperscript{30} His backers were not only poets, novelists, and journalists but labor leaders, activists, and organizers; the French socialist Henry Barbusse was an ardent Sandino supporter, as were (for a time) Mexican Communist leader Hernán Laborde, Peruvian Aprista Esteban Pavletich, famed Salvadoran communist Faribundo Martí, and many others.

The most masterful Sandinista myth-maker, of course, was Sandino himself. As the author of Manifestos addressed to "Nicaraguans, Central Americans, the Indo-Hispanic Race" and "The Nations of the Earth," as the "Supreme Leader" who appropriated for his Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty the "Supreme Moral Authority of Central America," indeed "a continental moral authority," he could scarcely be accused of parochial thinking.\textsuperscript{31} "I swear that my sword will defend the national honor and redeem the oppressed," he announced with great drama and boldness in his first Manifesto in July 1927.

I hope to convince my compatriots, the Central Americans, and the Indo-Hispanic race that in the mountains of the Andean Cordillera there exists a groups of patriots who will know how to die like men, in open battle, in defense of their national honor...\textsuperscript{32}

Writing in the 1950s, the first historian of the Rebellion, Gregorio Selser, held that "only one thing" bound Sandino's Defending Army together: "the simple decision to throw the North Americans out of Nicaragua."\textsuperscript{33} Three decades later, Donald Hodges argued more convincingly that Sandino combined this "elementary patriotism" with the ultimate goal of "universal fraternity" and the "communication of mankind" in an earthly kingdom to be governed by "Divine Justice."\textsuperscript{34} His aim, in a nutshell, was nothing less than the

\textsuperscript{31} The first quote is from Sandino's first Manifesto, 1 July 1927; the second from one of his last, 13 March, 1933; the third from the "Guidelines" of a proposed "Autonomist Army of Central America," 18 August 1933, and the last from a Proclamation of 1 February 1933; Conrad, pp. 74, 463, 437; Ramírez (1984), vol. II, p. 351.
\textsuperscript{32} Conrad, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{33} Selser (1981), p. 90.
\textsuperscript{34} Hodges, pp. 59, 68, 70.
redemption of the world, a world cleansed of injustice and oppression; it was to create a
radically new moral universe, a new world order in which the strong and the powerful
would no longer dominate the weak and the powerless. In the words of one of his
peasant soldiers, "He wanted a new world, different from the one we were in. He
promised us good things: work, peace, liberty, enough food for all Nicaragua, and that
they would never come back, that the Americans would never come back again." This
was and remains the mythology -- rich, romantic, full of hopes and dreams and visions of
a new and better tomorrow. Just as revealing are the gaps and fissures between public
myth and private memory, and between public myth and historical reality. "But he was
sold out and we remain in slavery," this peasant soldier continued. "That time has not yet
arrived; what he wanted and promised has not yet come to pass."35

* * * *

In 1934 Sofonías Salvatierra placed the word "tragedy" in the spatial and strategic
center of his book's title -- "Sandino or the tragedy of a people" -- to capture what he saw
as the essence of the experience of the Rebellion for the national history of his homeland.
Thirty-five years of dictatorship later, Carlos Fonseca Amadór, the guiding light of the
second Sandinista Revolution, seized the same word and paired it with "glory" as he
grappled with the lessons of the past to forge a new and more successful revolutionary
movement.36 More recently North American political scientist John Booth has echoed

36. "The Sandinista resistance was almost completely peasant in composition, and therein
lies the glory and the tragedy of that revolutionary movement. It was a glory for the
Nicaraguan people that the humblest class responded to the stains against the honor of the
homeland, and at the same time it was a tragedy because it involved a peasantry without
any level of political awareness whatsoever." Carlos Fonseca, "Nicaragua hora cero"
this judgement. "Sandino," he affirms, "was a truly tragic figure, his achievements fatally flawed." 37

For the Greeks, who invented the concept, tragedy was an ambiguous phenomenon combining an outward defeat with an inner triumph, the calamitous demise of something wonderous and beautiful yet inherently and fatally flawed, a process at once heart-wrenching and inspirational, full of sorrow yet cause for joy. The concept of tragedy effectively captures the historical experience of the Rebellion for the national history of Nicaragua. The manner of the Rebellion's denouement bears witness to one of its more calamitous sides. The testimonies quoted above describing the last days of the Rebellion jar the reader not only because of the violence and suffering of which they tell, but because they reveal such discordance between private and public memories, because they tag such an inglorious end onto what is so commonly depicted as such a glorious struggle. The end they describe was swift, brutal, and very nearly total. In exacting and moving detail they describe the Rebellion's utter collapse and disintegration, a portrait confirmed by a wide range of other evidence. Ex-Sandinistas either hid, fled, migrated, changed their names, surrendered, or they were killed. Indeed, the evidence is clear that, after five and a half years of guerrilla war and a year of peace, all that survived were memories--stories, myths, legends, songs, texts.

The victory of the Rebellion, by the lights of these testimonies, was not military but moral: It was in the example that was set, in setting the stage for future struggles, and in its affirmation of human dignity, not in the immediate results that were obtained. "I am going to Managua," as Fransisco Lara López had Sandino saying. "I am going to die: I am the tree and you are the branches, the branches which will shed their vines and grow strong and true." 38 "If I die, I die," Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera remembered him saying at the same moment. "Others will soon follow." 39 Similar examples could be multiplied

37. Booth, p. 49.
38. IES 059: 4.
39. IES 102: 3.
many times over; nor is it difficult to trace them back to their source, as in Sandino's July 1927 Manifesto quoted above. Less than a year before all remnants of the Rebellion were crushed, Sandino likened the struggle to the planting of a seed in the soil of the Nicaraguan people:

I am absolutely convinced that there is no seed that will not grow if planted in good soil. No one in the world can doubt the excellence of the seed we have planted and I don't have the least doubt that the people of Nicaragua are a fertile and generous soil, and let it be known that the this seed, though it will have to be sprinkled with abundant tears and the blood of our people, one day, maybe far off in the future, will unexpectedly and irresistibly bear fruit, and the longer the period of germination, the more beautiful that fruit will be. Never lose faith. You will see it! . . .

It is futile to argue with prophecy. It is clear that in many ways Sandino intended the Rebellion as an exercise in seed-planting, a brief explosion intended to create something that was in turn meant to be destroyed, so that someday the same process would be repeated and taken to a higher and more advanced level. His intention, it seems, was to create emancipatory social memories -- dangerous memories, from the perspective of those who worked so diligently after 1934 to suppress them. And that appears to be what has happened.

Was Sandino's Rebellion, then, like a giant suicide mission, a large-scale, organized, collective, five and a half year kamikaze run on the USS Imperialism? In many ways the answer is yes. And if this is so, it brings into sharper focus the history and strategy of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN). In 1934, Sofonías Salvatierra likened Sandino and his Rebellion to a link in the chain of Nicaraguan history. The question is, what kind of link is it, in what kind of chain?

This is the question that this dissertation attempts to tackle. It tries to do so in ways both direct and circuitous. At one level I attempt to tell the story of the Rebellion as an unfolding historical process governed by certain logics and dynamics, a "link in the chain" of Nicaraguan history. At another level I try to tell the stories of those who lived

and experienced this process, preferably in their own words, to the extent possible in so few pages. In some ways these agendas work at cross-purposes; strict adherence to the former would result in a tightly focused analytical narrative, and the latter to a sprawling montage of data and voices. My goal has been to surrender neither extreme, with what degree of success it is the reader's to judge.

*     *     *

To treat national myths and national heroes as historical constructs is to place oneself in the middle of a political minefield. At the same time it would be hopelessly naive to pretend to sweep away all of the accreted meanings associated with the Sandino Rebellion (or any such highly mythologized event or process) to simply "tell the story" of what "really" happened. The relationship between "myth" and "reality" is clearly more complex than diametric opposition or mutual exclusion. Myths, after all, are also facts, with creators and histories and consequences; facts too are constructed, possessed of certain mythical qualities, interpreted in the very act of being deployed, inevitably selected or ignored to construct or adhere to one or another storyline.41

At another level, what makes the Sandino Rebellion so fascinating and so eminently worthy of study are precisely those accretions of meaning. Dozens of guerrilla wars, most forgotten by all but a few, dot the historical landscape of Latin America; only a handful still vibrate in the historical imagination of the popular classes. The Sandino Rebellion is one of those few -- precisely because of the myths and meanings which have come to be associated with it. Why then sweep away the most meaningful part? At the same time, is there anything meaningful beyond myth?

"Myth," it should perhaps be noted, is used here in its most elastic and expansive sense, as any set of shared beliefs or ideals around which actions and practices coalesce. Myths are not fallacies; they are neither "true" nor "false," as the terms are commonly understood. Following Gramsci, one might fruitfully define myths as "concrete phantasies which act on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will."\(^42\) It should perhaps be emphasized that the stress on myths and mythmaking here is not meant to suggest that Latin Americans (or other "third world" peoples) have myths, while North Americans (or other "first worlders") have history. Far from it: that myths and mythmaking remain alive and well even in the most "advanced" societies is plainly and painfully evident in every aspect of daily life -- even in the conviction that "advanced" societies really are more "advanced," or that "progress" is something other than a social construct, a "concrete phantasy," that is, a "myth."

More than half a century ago Walter Benjamin, grappling with precisely this question of the relationship between "myth," "history" and "reality," wrote in his characteristically cryptic and aphoristic fashion that

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins.\(^43\)

In this oft-quoted reaction to what he saw as the blind and uncompromising positivism and empiricism of the leading historians of his day, Benjamin was, I think, only partly right: To articulate the past historically does mean, at one level, to work to recognize it "the way it really was," in a dual sense: to work to separate, if and where possible, "fact" from "fiction," mythologies and legends from "actual" events and processes, while at the same time working to recognize the power and autonomy of those fictions, myths and legends, and not only as historical agencies in their own rights. For the historian the

\(^{42}\) Gramsci, p. 126.  
\(^{43}\) Benjamin, p. 255.
moral, political, and practical tensions between "event as myth" and "event as fact" are unrelenting, particularly in something so highly mythologized and moralized as the Sandino Rebellion. On the other hand, if perceptions of reality are often of far greater moment than "reality" itself, "reality" also has a way of creeping in and rearing its ugly head to smash the dreams and visions of alternative moral and mythical universes onto the rocks of cold, hard actuality. That the Sandinistas remember that they outgunned the Marines, for instance, that they outfoxed them in countless ambushes, killed hundreds and thousands of them, defeated and drove them from the country, does not necessarily make any of it so; that they remember rock-solid international solidarity for the Rebellion, with droves of supporters streaming in from all sides, does not mean that that was the way it "really" was. Nor does "reality" necessarily intrude to make the mythologies false. More than simply "objectively false" and "subjectively true," such historical representations both expand and limit the possibilities for collective action and social change, in the past and especially in the present. Neither "truths" nor "lies," such mythologies can be both a mirror reflecting the past, around which possibilities for positive action can coalesce, and an opaque, undulating, pock-marked window that can blind and distort, rendering clear-eyed critical judgement more difficult to achieve and, no less, to practice. If this double-edged quality of historical memories and historical "truth" renders the historian's task doubly tricky, it renders it no less pertinent. While there is doubtless a need to recognize and respect the autonomy and power of popular and national mythologies, there is at the same time no lesser need to move beyond their restrictive and self-limiting boundaries. If even the dead are not safe from the enemy if

44. Complicating the picture even further, it is not uncommonly the case that different mythologies (or different aspects of the same mythology?) contradict one another; e.g., compare the myth of rock-solid international solidarity to the myth of the lone guerrilla battling it out in the wilderness, as expressed, e.g., in Sandino's lamentations in Mexico in July 1929: "We are incomunicado with the outside world. We lack neither arms nor money nor cartridges, but moral support, the sympathy that we have always had from all the people of Latin America. We are drowning in silence, isolation, the desperation of remaining unknown . . ."; in Villanueva, ed., p. 33.
he wins, the living are not made safer by an uncritical vision of the heritage their forebears bequeathed or the process by which they struggled.

This dissertation attempts to maintain a tension between "history as myth" and "history as an accurate depiction of reality." The task is rendered even more problematic by the teleologies implicit in contemporary mythologies. Among the most seductive myths of the second Sandinista Revolution was the inevitability of the triumph of the first. Paradoxically this myth rested on another: that Sandino's defeat was in the short-term inevitable. Myths, of course, are essential to any emancipatory project; at the same time even apparently friendly myths can be debilitating, generators of delusion and myopia. In the 1980s many Sandinistas labored under the conviction that they were winning the war against imperialism, that the "tide of history" was on their side, that victory was assured -- beliefs shared by many in the US solidarity movement. Vaya ilusión! In history few things are inevitable, beyond death and taxes, and certainly not the triumph of social movements from below, no matter how potentially emancipatory. "The central principal of all history," writes Stephen Jay Gould in a conclusion that applies with as much force to anthropos as arthropods, "is contingency." To borrow generously from his favorite metaphor, wind back the tape of Nicaraguan history to Sandino's assassination in 1934; let it play again, and the chance becomes vanishingly small that anything like the Sandinista Popular Revolution would grace the replay.45

The teleological vector constructed by latter-day Sandinista ideology, running directly from Diriangén through Benjamin Zeledón and A.C. Sandino to Carlos Fonseca and the FSLN and the 1979 Triumph, suppressed the obvious, as do all nationalist narratives: these were separate struggles, linked together by latter-day iconographers but each governed by its own unique contingencies and dynamics (see Figure 1.1). Sandino may well have imagined that someday something like the FSLN would come into being; he

Figure 1.1: Sandinista iconography and teleology: The march of history according to latter-day Sandinismo (source: Barricada, 25 February 1984).
may well have designed the Rebellion to fire the imaginations of future generations of patriots. Yet, except in the mystical sense of being dedicated to an unknown and unknowable future, it is clear that the Rebellion as an historical process unfolded wholly independently of what came after it. That the FSLN eventually emerged (nearly thirty years later) and emerged victorious (nearly fifty years later) were utterly contingent and never inevitable.

In short, then, if the struggles of the FSLN can only be understood within the context of the Sandino Rebellion, the Sandino Rebellion can best be understood in isolation from the struggles of the FSLN. To understand the Sandino Rebellion as a historical process with its own integrity it is necessary to disregard, to the extent possible, the subsequent accretions of meaning associated with it, to pretend that it ended in 1934 - which in many respects, especially if one adheres to Stephen Jay Gould’s notion of historical contingency and does not dismiss the possibility of alternative futures, it did.

This presents formidable problems if one proposes to use, as I do, oral testimonies collected during the highly politicized years of the early 1980s as historical evidence for events that occurred more than half a century before. How reliable are these memories, considering the extent to which present-day concerns shape memories of the past? Perhaps the first thing to be said (and the historian’s standard disclaimer) is that no source is perfect. The reports of the US Marine Corps and Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, the other major primary source consulted in this study, have their own severe shortcomings and biases. More to the point, contemporary myths of the Rebellion do not differ radically from those propagated during Sandino’s lifetime. In general terms, the most effective strategy for dealing with the problem of transformed and politicized memories is never to forget that it exists; at least that is the strategy followed here.

* * *
Why another history of the Sandino Rebellion? The short answer is simple: despite everything that has been written, very little is known about what actually took place during the Rebellion or about the experiences of the men and women who fought in it. The historiography of the Rebellion might be characterized as myth-rich and fact-poor; but since myths and facts often help to constitute each other this is not an especially helpful formula. It might better be said that most of the literature on the Rebellion strongly tends to deploy selected facts and myths to follow one of two opposing narratives: the Sandinista and the Somocista-Marine.

The Somocista-Marine narrative interprets Sandinismo as common brigandage, gangsterism, underclass sociopathy, communism, and false patriotism (or some combination thereof) and the Marines-Guardia as protectors of civilization and order. The defining text here is Anastacio Somoza García's *El verdadero Sandino, o el calvario de Las Segovias* (1936), a key work discussed in greater detail below; others in the same vein include José María Moncada (1942, 1985) and Juan Matagalpa (1984). The other major branch of this narrative consists of Marine-centric military and diplomatic histories by North American historians, including Wearmouth (1952), Frazier (1958), and Megee (1963).

The Sandinista narrative sees Sandinista patriots locked in epic struggle against Nicaraguan traitors and yankee invaders. The works comprising this narrative include fiction, poetry, autobiographical narratives, compilations of documents, polemical works, and historical narratives. Often the genres overlap, as in Gustavo Aleman Bolaños (1934), which poses as a "biography" of Sandino but is combination hagiography, polemic, and compilation of documents; or Xavier Campos Ponce (1962), ostensibly a historical narrative which follows the same tropes as Bolaños. Few of the works in this narrative could be classed as scholarly; the major exception is Gregorio Selser's classic, *Sandino: General de hombres libres* (1959), which, like others, focuses on political-
diplomatic relations between US and Nicaragua and largely ignores the social and cultural aspects of the struggle in the Segovias.

Only a handful of monographs on the Rebellion flow outside the channel of these two main narrative currents; prominent among these are Macaulay's military history (1967), Millett's history of the Guardia Nacional (1984), and Hodges' study of the intellectual foundations of Sandinismo (1986). Since the 1979 Triumph a spate of books, chapters, and articles have appeared which draw from Macaulay, Selser, and other published works to provide brief overviews of the Rebellion, including Walker (1981), Black (1981), and Booth (1982, 1985), to mention only some of the earliest and best of these. Remarkably, nearly thirty years have passed since the last major study of the Sandino Rebellion -- Neill Macaulay's *The Sandino Affair* (1967). An informative and, on the whole, judicious narrative, written largely from the perspective of Marine Corps and military history, the work is only tangentially concerned with the social and cultural dimensions of the Rebellion and how it fits into the larger contours of Segovian and Nicaraguan history.

Sadly, then, there remains very little empirical knowledge of precisely what happened or why during before, during, and after the Rebellion in the Segovias, at least in published, narrative form. The basic facts of the story -- What happened to whom? When? Where? Why? -- are shrouded behind a veil of myth and legend. As yet there is no adequate narrative of the Sandino Rebellion as a historical process. One of the primary objectives of this dissertation is to lift this veil and provide at least the rudiments of such an account.

* * * *

To date the most effective efforts to understand the origins, trajectory, and denouement of the Rebellion follow the contours of a series of historical ironies, a series
of intended actions and unintended consequences overlapping one another like shingles on a roof. First, it has long been recognized that this, the most radical anti-imperialist national liberation movement in Central American history (up to that time), emerged precisely from the nation in which the US had intervened most extensively and had worked most diligently to limit the exercise of full national sovereignty. Sandino's was, fundamentally, a nationalist rebellion, emerging from a particular national terrain of Nicaraguan subordination to the United States (ch. 2). Second, few things generate nationalist sentiment more effectively than foreign invasion. Ironically, Marine Corps and National Guard violence against the rural populace worked powerfully to promote the cause it was intended to destroy (ch. 9-10). Third, Sandino's efforts to reimagine and retell the narrative of Nicaraguan history through a decentralized peasant-based guerrilla war worked to subvert and to violate, in the eyes of the country's tiny intelligentsia and incipient bourgeoisie, the material and cultural underpinnings of liberal-capitalist society, most importantly, private property, civilization, progress, and order. In the modern world, nationalist doctrines have tended to emerge and find their greatest purchase among urban intellectuals and "modernizing" bourgeoisies; in this sense, the way in which Sandino's struggle was conceived and practiced led logically (though not inevitably) to its eventual demise. In other words, how the Rebellion was constituted, as a peasant-based nationalist movement, worked powerfully against its eventual success (ch. 11). Fourth, rebellion generated its antithesis as much as intervention did; one result of five and a half years of guerrilla war was the accelerated centralization of the national state and consolidation of a powerful national army -- the Guardia Nacional -- which would soon crush utterly the Rebellion it was created to oppose; early Sandinismo thus unwittingly served as a midwife to Somocismo (ch. 10-11).

A further irony undergirds all of these: While Nicaragua's subordination to the US helped to produce Sandino's nationalist challenge, it also militated against the possibility that the challenge might succeed. Some have argued of late that the tragic
denouements of the two Sandinista Revolutions teach that Nicaragua is simply too small, the United States too powerful, for genuine national sovereignty to be a viable national goal. Regrettably it is beyond the parameters of this dissertation to address this ominous issue directly, though much of what follows bears directly upon it.

*   *   *

This project has spanned two historiographic eras, as reflected in the subtitle, "Toward a social and cultural history." I began these investigations schooled mainly in the theories and models of the "new social history" of the 1960s and 70s. The question, "Why do peasants rebel?" was most fruitfully addressed, I judged, from within the currents and eddies of scholarship running from the British Marxists (esp. Hobsbawn 1959, 1969, C. Hill 1972, Thompson 1963) and Moore (1966) to such scholars as Womack (1968), Wolf (1969), Scott (1976), Clark and Donnelly (1983), Tutino (1986), and Stern (1987). The roots of rebellion, by the lights of this heterogenous body of theory, ought to be sought in the first instance in changing socio-economic relations between landlords, peasants, and the state. The mainspring of agrarian transformation and agrarian unrest in the modern world, in this view, can be found in the spread of capitalist social relations, what Marx called the process of primitive accumulation: peasants dispossessed of their lands and proletarianized, i.e., transformed into wage laborers. Oppressive labor control mechanisms and exactions are seen to multiply and deepen grievances among newly proletarianized rural laborers. In the "breakdown" of pre-existing "moral economies" a social milieu is generated which is conducive to various forms of unrest, ranging from Luddism, social banditry, and other atomized forms of popular protest, to nationalist and socialist revolution. Jaime Wheelock (1985a) was among the first to apply this body of theory to Nicaragua, though more recently Jeffrey Gould (1992, 1993) has obliquely but effectively challenged many of Wheelock's
conclusions regarding the imputed proletarianization of the Nicaraguan countryside before 1930.

These "breakdown" theories came to be supplemented by a heterogenous body of scholarship commonly considered to fall under the rubric of "solidarity" or "resource mobilization" theories. Since conflict and grievance are endemic to social structure, advocates of these theories have argued, the erosion of traditional social relations in itself cannot account for the emergence of social movements. The focus here has been on the ways in which social movements mobilize human and organizational resources to achieve their aims.46

As I became familiar with the literature on the Rebellion I soon grew impatient with the dominant, state-centered explanation of its origins. Like a good social historian I wanted to know more about the agrarian history of the Segovias, where the war was fought: to take a closer look at land and labor relations from the colonial period; demographic transformations; processes of migration, coffee expansion, and the spread of wage labor relations; and traditions of resistance and adaptation to these processes.

Why did the peasants in Nicaragua rebel? Over time I have gravitated toward an explanation that is less exclusively economicist and centered more on processes of local political struggle and political violence on the one hand, and military violence of the Marines and Guardia on the other. The violence of primitive accumulation and changing socio-economic relations between landlords, peasants, and the state was, the evidence suggests, less important in generating support for the Rebellion than the episodic violence -- beatings, rapes, killings -- generated first by local political struggles and second by foreign military invasion. At the same time, it was also the case that material realities and social relations of production were critical in generating support for and shaping the kind of rebellion this Rebellion became. While grievances stemming from

46. For useful reviews of this literature see Jenkins (1983) and McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1987).
struggles over access to productive resources did not spark the Rebellion, they remained one of its principal fuels. In the half-century before Sandino the processes of primitive accumulation was experienced with especial acuteness in the micro-regions of Murra-El Jicaro and Jinotega-San Rafael, though in fact they proceeded, with great unevenness, all across the north. From the 1880s to the 1920s Segovian rural society witnessed a series of far-reaching social and economic changes which generated increased tensions between the upper crust of wealthy landowners and the majority of peasants. By the mid-1920s most Segovianos had sufficient cause to harbor a broad array of grievances against landlords, coffee growers, mineowners, and agents of the state (chapters 2-4).

At the same time it is doubtless true that without direct US military intervention in the Segovias there would have been no Sandino Rebellion. Popular opposition to US military intervention was the Rebellion's raison d'être from start to finish (chapters 6-7, 10). Causes are never unique, of course, motives never singular. If the IES testimonies leave little doubt that opposition to intervention was the principal motive force behind the Rebellion, they also make clear that much else was going on besides. Especially during the first year and a half of the Rebellion, long-simmering opposition to continuing Conservative rule (and local resentments against US-owned enterprises like the San Albino Mine) worked symbiotically with new sets of grievances generated by the Marine invasion. Political oppression and violence at the hands of local Conservative powerholders were, along with the violence of the invaders, a mainspring of Rebellion. In the decades before Sandino, struggles for political office and access to state power among and between local, regional, and national elites generated extreme levels of episodic violence in the Segovias. Peasants, workers, and Indians (inclusive and overlapping categories), who comprised close to ninety percent of the Segovian populace, were commonly drawn into this violence as both perpetrators and victims, usually through allegiance to one or another powerful patron or political party (chapters
Changes in land and labor relations, in turn, can only be understood within this larger political context.

The Sandino Rebellion emerged from a civil war that was the most recent expression of longstanding political struggles between Liberals and Conservatives. In many ways Sandino's Rebellion against US intervention represented a continuation and transmutation of these local and national political struggles. At the same time, the political culture of the Segovias helped to define the kind of rebellion the Rebellion would become, most concretely with respect to pre-existing mechanics of gang violence and practices of ritual terror. In this light it is remarkable that scholarship on the Rebellion has completely ignored local politics. It is a key contention of this dissertation that the Sandino Rebellion cannot be adequately understood outside of the context of local political struggles between factions of the elite (chapters 3-6).

These multiple and intertwining roots helped to give the Rebellion its polysemic, multidimensional character -- a collective struggle that became part rebellion against foreign intervention, part national liberation movement, part social movement, part millenarian movement, part guerrilla war, part civil war, part class war, part race war, part riot. These diverse roots also helped make the Defending Army the polymorphous organization that it was -- part army, part coalition of chiefs and gangs, part secret brotherhood, part religious sect, part parallel nation, part parallel state (chapters 4-8).

The extant corpus of texts produced by the Defending Army makes plain that its members tended to see the world in certain ways, as governed by certain logics, to be understood and narrated in certain words and stories and categories. The most powerful and prominent of these was the language of nationalism and the story of national oppression and redemption, crafted in the tripartite idiom of patriots, traitors, and invaders (chapters 2, 6, 11). Alongside this unambiguous storyline and set of categories were a host of others, more dispersed and less sharply focused, ranging from the qualities of social relations (such as property, oppression, exploitation, and violence) to qualities
attributed to the individuals and collectivities (such as honor, justice, dignity, loyalty, and courage, and their opposites). The effort here is to identify and disentangle these categories and idioms and to reconstruct the process by which people in the Segovias created and transformed meanings in and through the process of struggle.

* * *

Riding along the dusty dirt road that leads to the village of Wiwilí, I am struck by the discordance between the grandiosity of a half a century old myth and the apparent mundaneness of contemporary realities. There seems to be little to distinguish this place from anywhere else in the Segovias. Women and children with impossibly large bundles on their heads trudge along in the hot sun, their faces creased with dust and sweat and the quiet anguish of the chronically overworked. Men bent over in the fields, their backs horizontal to the ground, swing their machetes slowly back and forth in a rhythm nearly as old as the hills whose surfaces they scratch. The open-air truck seems to gain speed as it enters the village, spewing dust and dirt into the faces of those it passes, though none seem to pay much mind. As we come to a lurching halt and our dust finally catches up and envelops us, I grab my bags and hop off, secretly hoping to be suddenly seized by a revelation about the profound historical significance of the patch of earth under my feet. But the inspiration proves elusive; instead, things seem so ordinary, so unremarkable; a modest white clapboard church, a simple town square, a handful of vendors lining its shady side, a knot of children playing ball down a side street, graffiti and silhouettes of Sandino and his ubiquitous hat painted in red and black on the rough-hewn boards of houses and stores, down the hill to one side a muddy river -- a town much like any other. As I amble off in search of roasted corn, a warm bottle of Pepsi and a chat with the locals, it occurs to me that perhaps the profundity of the place lies in its very ordinariness, its utter indistinctness. Here, where within the space of a year Nicaragua's
alternative future was hacked out of the wilds only to be crushed into the dirt again, here
the dangers and opportunities of everyday life in the present serve as both backdrop and
challenge to understanding the past and shaping the future. "Sos gringo, eh?" queries an
old man in the park after an exchange of pleasantries. Yes, I tell him as I settle down
with my Pepsi and corn, I am a gringo. Gesturing toward the cigarettes he sees sticking
out of my shirt pocket, he asks what I'm doing so far from home. Without naming names
I try to explain that I am writing a book, a book about memory and hope and the
destruction and survival of alternative futures, and a brief knowing glance says he knows
well what I'm talking about.
CHAPTER 2: "TO DEFEND OUR NATION'S HONOR": NATION-STATE FORMATION, IMPERIALISM, AND SANDINO: NICARAGUA TO 1927

What we ought to do is to forget all our family grudges and recognize that our legitimate enemies by race and language are the Yankee invaders.

- A.C. Sandino

Sandino is a link in a chain, a product of the total agitation of the Nicaraguan people. The hero acted and reacted as an individual in the immediate struggle, and as a people in the historical tragedy of my country. . . . [He] can only be judged from an integrated perspective, as a function of the environment which engendered him and served as his theater. . . . [He] can only be judged with the truth, and with the truth, his enemies also.

- Sofonías Salvatierra (1934: 6)

"The man who does not ask his country for even a handful of earth for his grave deserves to be heard, and not only to be heard, but also to be believed." With these oft-quoted words Augusto César Sandino began his first "Manifesto," directed "To the Nicaraguans, to the Central Americans, to the Indo-Hispanic Race." "I am a Nicaraguan," he continued, "and I am proud because in my veins flows above all the blood of the Indian race, which by some atavism encompasses the mystery of being patriotic, loyal, and sincere.

The bond of nationality gives me the right to assume responsibility for my acts, without being concerned that pessimists and cowards may brand me with a name that, in their own condition as eunuchs, would be more appropriately applied to them. I am a mechanic, but my idealism is based upon a broad horizon of internationalism, which represents the right to be free and to establish justice, even though it may be necessary to establish it upon a foundation of blood.2

Whose blood? What cowards, pessimists, and eunuchs? What was this freedom? This justice? How to "read" this manifesto, and other pronouncements and letters like it?

This chapter advances a rather straightforward proposition: that the ideological mainspring of Sandino's Rebellion, a particular brand of Nicaraguan and "Indo-Hispanic" nationalism, emerged from the intersection of the twin historical processes that dominated postcolonial Nicaragua: internal political struggle, or what can be called the process of truncated liberal nation-state formation (or what Jeffrey Gould, with palpable restraint, calls "the peculiar terrain of Nicaraguan politics"), and US imperialist intervention, particularly from 1909 to 1927. The war of national liberation launched by Sandino, a product of his country's past, was also, necessarily and fundamentally, a civil war. The theme is an old one in Nicaraguan historiography. The 19th century historian José Dolores Gámez devoted much of his labor to untangling the twisted strands of civil conflict in his country's past, a task that continues into the present. "Even in a region proverbial for internal anarchy and foreign intromissions," observes Knut Walter in the opening paragraph of his scholarly study of state formation during the Somoza years, "Nicaragua stands out as an extreme case." E. Bradford Burns' masterful synthesis of early 19th century Nicaraguan history likewise seizes on the twin themes of nation-state formation and foreign intervention as fundamental points of departure; "[the] combination of internal conflicts and external interventions," he writes, "became a tragic leitmotif in Nicaraguan history." Understanding the dual character of the Rebellion -- as an anti-imperialist and as a civil war -- requires keeping these two dimensions of Nicaraguan history continually in the interpretive forefront.

5. Burns, p. 165.
Nation-state formation and foreign intervention in Nicaragua to 1927

Why anarchy? The question has long perplexed students of Nicaragua. Any satisfactory answer must reach back to the colonial period and before. Indeed, the violence of Spanish colonial conquest in what is now western Nicaragua prefigured much of the region's subsequent political history. The conquest of the politically fragmented, multi-ethnic, densely populated region was exceptionally violent even by 16th century standards. Numbers provide one way to approach its magnitude: by the best and most recent estimates, during the first twenty-five years of colonial rule -- from 1525 to 1550 - - slave-trade, forced labor, and disease combined to reduce the population of what is now western Nicaragua from around 800,000 inhabitants to around 200,000; by the late 1600s this figure had declined to around 60,000 -- a "demographic decline" (a favorite euphemism of historians) of more than ninety percent. 6 The population recovered only gradually, approaching 100,000 only by the early 1800s. 7 It would be difficult to overstate the impact of this legacy of violence and demographic catastrophe on the subsequent history of Nicaragua. Biderman (1983), Romero Vargas (1976), and Wheelock (1985a, 1985b), among others, explore the myriad ways in which the relative labor shortages generated by conquest shaped production, settlement, and landholding patterns well into the colonial period, and indeed, for a long time afterward. No less crucially, in a terrain more commonly (and effectively) explored by poets than historians, the collective memory of the violence of conquest came to be indelibly etched into the body politic of the region that would become Nicaragua; Clausewitz's dictum that war is politics and politics war became, throughout most of Nicaraguan and Central American history, a harsh and transparent reality. "The conquest left wounds that would not heal," writes Jo Anne Englebert; quoting a 16th century "Indian poet [who] wrote of dzules or strangers --

They taught fear.
They came to wither the flowers.
So that their flower might live
they crushed and sucked the nectar out of ours\textsuperscript{8}

-- she puts flesh on the bones of the more measured conclusions of Murdo J. Macleod:

"The petty states which ruled much of Central American Mesoamerica underwent a particularly long and bloody Spanish conquest," he writes. "The native peoples . . . underwent a drastic shock, and large numbers of them died in the epidemics, famines, battles, forced migrations, and dislocations of those early years."\textsuperscript{9}

For nearly three hundred years, the region of what is now western Nicaragua remained, in relative terms, an isolated backwater in the Spanish imperial system. As in the colonies of New Spain and Peru between which it was sandwiched, a seigniorial, patriarchal colonial administration was forcibly imposed on a politically, economically, and culturally subordinated indigenous population -- though here, on the margins of empire, with far less vigor or reason for it. One way to map colonial social order is as a vertically integrated, flat-bottomed, teardrop-shaped pyramid, with the toiling masses of Indians peopling a broad base, a much smaller strata of mestizo laborers, artisans, and traders straddling a bottlenecked middle, and a tiny elite of Church officials, landowners, and colonial administrators crowning a miniscule summit. Products of Indian labor flowed from bottom to top, Spanish political domination from top to bottom. The Spanish Crown, in common with the central states of most far-flung empires, served as an overarching political and administrative umbrella over what remained a weakly integrated and highly fractured colonial state and society.\textsuperscript{10}

The colonial economy of Nicaragua, agriculturally based and locally oriented, was powerfully shaped by indigenous production and settlement patterns, relative

\textsuperscript{8} Rosario Santos, ed., \textit{And We Sold the Rain: Contemporary Fiction from Central America} (Peterborough, Great Britain: Ryan Publishing, 1989), p. xii.
\textsuperscript{9} MacLeod, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{10} On the colonial period see Biderman (1983), MacLeod (1973), Newson (1987), Radell (1969), Romero Vargas (1976), Sherman (1979), and Wortman (1982).
commercial isolation, and the labor shortages produced by conquest. Land and labor relations, highly complex and locally variable, were based, as was true throughout most of Spanish America, on the encomienda system, and later, hacienda and latifundio, distinct but related forms of surplus extraction and political domination. With land plentiful and labor scarce, Indian labor became the colony's most valuable resource. In exchange for tribute to Crown and Church, Indian communities were able to exercise various forms of communal land ownership. Indigenous cultigens like corn, beans, and a wide array of fruits and vegetables came to be supplemented by introduced foods such as plantains, bananas, sugarcane, cattle, and pigs. Cattle, introduced in the mid-16th century onto lands depopulated by conquest, soon became one of the colony's most important commercial products, especially in the rolling hills of Chontales. While some export products, most notably cattle, cacao and indigo, went through long boom-and-bust cycles throughout the colonial period, most production remained oriented to local consumption. Exchange relations remained severely circumscribed well into the postcolonial period.

Chapter three explores in greater detail production, exchange, landholding, settlement, and demographic patterns in the Segovias from the colonial period. Suffice it to note here that land and labor relations, even in a place as small and compact as western Nicaragua, were enormously complex and varied, that regional and micro-regional differences were extreme, and that these differences, centuries later, would carry crucial implications for the development of Nicaraguan nationalism. Less varied were the fundamental characteristics of Spanish colonial rule: the spectacular violence of conquest, and the more routinized, institutionalized violence of radically asymmetrical distributions of land, wealth, and most of all, power.

From the mid-1500s, two principal geo-political regions began to take shape in western Nicaragua: Granada, facing south and east to Lake Nicaragua, encompassing the vast cattle latifundio of Chontales, and, at the southern tip of the Great Lake, the Río San Juan, trade artery to the Atlantic; and León, colonial administrative center, facing west
and north to the sea (through the port of Realejo, now Corinto), the plains of Chinandega, and the mountains of the Segovias. By Independence, Conservative Granada and Liberal León had essentially become two warring city-states, each with a distinct regional political economy and identity; Managua was only fixed as the capital after 1858 and nearly half a century of civil war.  

With Independence in 1821, the political and administrative lid of the Spanish Crown was suddenly lifted off a steaming colonial cauldron, and internecine political struggles boiled over into the bloody civil wars of the first half of the 19th century -- what Bradford Burns aptly calls the "Age of Anarchy." "Nicaragua's anarchy reached an apogee in the last half of the 1840s," writes Burns. "Granada battled León; the Conservatives struggled with the Liberals; the Indians fought the mestizos; and the folk challenged the patriarchs. Caste, class, economic, and political struggles tore society apart."  

In brief surveys of the Nicaraguan colonial and postcolonial past, it has become requisite to point to the geographic and political split between Granada and León as the crux of the explanation for the extreme political factionalism of the country. And indeed, the simplicity and symmetry of the scheme holds a certain appeal, with political divisions falling neatly in line with geographic and regional ones. The model, like most, maps out certain basic realities. Yet as Burns and others demonstrate, the lines of political and social division were at once deeper and more complicated than suggested by the formula of Liberal León versus Conservative Granada. Rather than framing the issue in terms of a single dominating bipolar geo-political cleavage, it is perhaps more useful to think in terms of fractured political spaces, with lines of division and cohesion running along several major and untold lesser axes, vertical, horizontal, diagonal. Underlying and shaping regional divisions were class and ethnic ones: between the patriarchal oligarchy  

12. Burns, pp. 4, 105, 152; see also Ayón (1882), Gámez (1889, 1975), and Radell (1969).
and the folk communities; between Indians and non-Indians; and, of course, between members and factions of the same "group": no social group -- Conservative, Liberal, patriarch, folk, Indian, mestizo -- approached homogeneity or unanimity. Intra-group feuds and wars were no less common than feuds and wars between them -- and this of course excludes the eastern half of the country, which remains ethno-linguistically and culturally distinct from "Spanish" Nicaragua to this day.

Why anarchy? Building on the work of Miles Wortman and others, Bradford Burns advances an original and important thesis about the patriarchal roots of both authority and anarchy in colonial and postcolonial Nicaragua.13 "[In] the absence of institutions capable of unifying the nation," he argues, "[in] a society of weak institutions and leaders, the patriarchal family and the folk community filled the void." (1991: 70, 2) Yet within the geo-political space of postcolonial Nicaragua, the institution of the powerful patriarchal family tended to push the social order in two directions at once, acting both as the basic unit of social cohesion and the basic source of social division. On the one hand, outside of the folk community and "in the absence of [other powerful] institutions" like Church and Crown, the patriarchal family emerged as the most elemental building block of social order. "The colonial experience had conditioned Nicaraguans to view the political order in terms of family symbols," argues Burns, echoing José Coronel Urtecho and a host of others, "identifying authority with the domination of father over family. God, king, and father constituted the hierarchy . . . Nicaraguans tended to exercise political power on a personal basis in a patriarchal style."

(1991: 70-72) On the other hand, and in the context of the regional schism between Granada and León, the social schism between patriarch and folk, and the ethnic schism between Indian and mestizo, the very strength and preeminence of a handful of powerful patriarchal families became one of the principal engines of social disorder and political

conflict. The exercise and autonomy of patriarchal authority led, after independence, to a crisis of state authority. Throughout the postcolonial period the structure of authority in Nicaragua remained fragmented, nodally dispersed, "lumpy," constructed of webs of relationships and centered on powerful families headed by powerful patriarchs or caudillos.

The violence and factionalism of postcolonial Nicaraguan political history, so meticulously chronicled by historians, can be seen as stemming from and emblematic of a crisis of the national state, a process of partial, incomplete, truncated liberal nation-state formation. No genuinely national state existed prior to the mid-1930s, as Walter, Belli, Lanuza, and others convincingly argue; indeed, until the regime of José Santos Zelaya (1893-1909), regionalism, caudillismo, and clan-based patron-client relations exercised a far more powerful pull than any "imagined community" of Nicaraguans. Why this was so is an intriguing and crucial question. Taking under view more than half a millenium of British history, Corrigan and Sayer (1985), following Durkheim, explore state formation primarily as a cultural process, as the crafting of meanings, symbols, rituals, and traditions which, over time, invested the British state with a certain moral authority and legitimacy which transcended local, regional, and familial identities, loyalties, and horizons. For a complex of reasons -- the violence of conquest, the seigniorial, patriarchal, Iberian roots of state and society, weak markets, poor communications, regional isolation, the dominance of a handful of powerful families -- the state in Nicaragua was able to generate such transcendent moral authority only partially, incompletely, in bluntly truncated, highly circumscribed fashion. *La patria* (the "fatherland" or "homeland") emerged as a transcendent ideal, at least in rhetoric, in the wake of the American and French Revolutions, but it was a term most commonly invested with narrow, parochial meanings -- family, clan, party, region. The state as an
overarching, shared ideological construct, an "organ of moral discipline" and regulation, a cultural artifact with a claim to moral legitimacy, was never fully born.14

In Nicaragua, the process of truncated nation-state formation created, on the one hand, regional caudillos and the radical decentralization and dispersion of legitimate authority, and other the other hand, a liberal impulse that sought to extend a unified field of law and create a transendent, centralized authority. The absence of strong commodity exchange relations and a relatively undeveloped market further weakened the impulse toward centralization of the state and served to buttress the power of the patriarchal oligarchy and folk communities.

This process of truncated nation-state formation came to a head (or one of many heads) after the first generation or so of continuous postcolonial civil war. Burns most elegantly captures the basic forces at work in this convoluted process of political struggle: a small group of outward looking, commercially-oriented patriarchs, with a shared vision of a modern, progressive, "civilized" Nicaragua, but too divided by region and clan to unite behind that vision -- versus a much larger group of inward-looking, subsistence-oriented folk and Indian communities, which shared little of the dream of the modernizing elite. By the mid-1840s, more than two decades of ruinous civil war had opened up political spaces within which folk caudillos, epitomized by Bernabé Somoza, could rise to power to challenge the power of the ruling oligarchy and modernizing elite. From 1845 to 1849, popular rebellions, emerging from the cracks and fissures of intra-elite struggle, seriously challenged the status and privileges of the more powerful, who proved able to submerge their differences long enough to defeat these insurgencies from

below. Victorious, the ruling classes were once again on sure enough footing to resume their civil wars.

Yet at precisely the same moment another factor came into play, the importance of which for subsequent Nicaraguan history cannot be overemphasized: the keen geo-strategic interest of the United States to construct an interoceanic canal across southern Nicaragua -- an interest sparked by the US victory in the war against Mexico (1846-1848), the onset of the California Gold Rush (1849), and fueled by visions of Manifest Destiny -- and an interest shared, since before Independence, by most of the country's modernizing elite. After suppressing the internal popular rebellions, the ruling classes were confronted with the dangers and opportunities of external intervention. A handful of North American capitalists (most notably, Cornelius Vanderbilt), in league with the US State Department, hoped the proposed canal would facilitate westward expansion to California and commercial expansion throughout the southern half of the hemisphere; the modernizing Nicaraguan elite hoped it would make manifest their own dreams of a modern, progressive Nicaragua, straddling the commercial crossroads of the world. An initial burst of pro-US euphoria in 1849 quickly faded with the signing of the Clayton-Bulwar Treaty in 1850, in which the US and Great Britain agreed, without consulting the Nicaraguans, that neither nation would assert exclusive rights over the proposed canal. After work on the Panama canal commenced in 1904, the chief US interest relative to the Nicaraguan project was to prevent its construction. Direct US military intervention in Nicaragua from 1910 and, ultimately, Sandino's Rebellion against that intervention, are at least partly traceable to this phantom project which never materialized but which has exercised transcendent influence in Nicaraguan history.

The combination of continuing civil wars in the context of heightened US interest in Nicaragua culminated in the National War, 1854-1858, and the infamous William Walker episode. Initially under contract to the Leonese Liberals, Walker betrayed his

15. Burns, pp. 160-165, traces the long history of the proposed canal.
sponsors to proclaim himself president of Nicaragua, issue decrees reestablishing slavery, and wage war against the combined armies of most of the Isthmus before being defeated in 1858; two years later he was captured and executed. The Walker episode became a key marker in the process of liberal state formation and left an indelible mark on a still nascent national consciousness: for the first time the "Colossus of the North" became a foil against which a distinct sense of "Nicaraguan-ness" could be defined. In the popular imagination, the Walker episode came to represent the first US invasion of Nicaragua. That this view distorts certain realities -- e.g., that foreign mercenaries were relatively common in Central America during the 19th century, that Walker was not acting under orders from Washington, and that his incursion was as much a consequence of civil war as external intervention -- does not detract from its power as a national mythology.

Walker's influence on Nicaraguan national identity was, and remains, profound. To this day the North American filibuster represents the quintessential anti-hero of the Nicaraguan past; it is not uncommon, for instance, to hear children disciplined with the admonition that, if they don't behave, *el gringo Walker* will come and get them.\(^{16}\)

The popular uprisings of the late 1840s and the National War of the mid-1850s reconfigured the political map of the country, accelerating the centralization of the national state and facilitating the formation of a distinctly Nicaraguan national identity. After 1858 the Liberal oligarchy, discredited by their association with Walker, became junior partners in a series of coalition governments dominated by the Conservatives, in a period that later came to be known, tellingly, as the "Thirty Years of Peace." Indeed, it seems emblematic of the strife and violence of Nicaraguan political history that periods of continuous civil war tend not to be granted recognition as distinct epochs (such as, for example, the Hundred Years War or Thirty Years War in Europe) -- rather, the

\(^{16}\) On Walker, see Burns (1991), Gámez (1889) and Walker (1860); there is also a very bad but mildly amusing film on the subject, *Walker* (Walker Film Productions, Inc., 1987). On several occasions I overheard parents admonish their children in just this fashion.
distinction adheres to periods of relative peace. During these years -- from 1858 to 1893 -- the compromise between competing factions of the oligarchy lent a degree of stability and cohesion to what remained a deeply fractured and only partly formed national state.

Throughout most of the rest of Central America the 1870s saw the liberal revolution come of age, with the radical curtailment of corporate (i.e., Church and Indian) rights; sustained and often successful efforts to privatize corporate landholdings; the exponential growth of coffee production; and the consolidation of national states under caudillos, like Barrios and Estrada in Guatemala and Zaldívar in El Salvador. On the whole, developments in Nicaragua mimicked these Isthmus-wide trends; the national state, such as it was, was dominated, for the most part, by modernizing Conservatives with a clear program for national progress, men who, despite their party affiliation, consistently advanced a liberal-nationalist agenda. From the mid-1870s, in Nicaragua as elsewhere, the state began to intervene more directly to facilitate the process of capital accumulation. By the late 1880s (slightly later than in most of the rest of Central America) coffee production began in earnest, leading to the formation of a distinct class of coffee growers in the Managua-Carazo highlands, and by the early 1890s, another, smaller and mostly foreign, in the highlands of Matagalpa and Jinotega. These changes, in turn, transformed the regional balances of power and helped precipitate another crisis in the national state, from which the Liberals emerged victorious.

The regime of the Liberal José Santos Zelaya (1893-1909) represented the high-tide of liberalism in Nicaragua and marked another key watershed in the formation of both the national state and national identity. Representing the ascendent coffee and commercial bourgeoisie, Zelaya and his regime saw Nicaragua's national interests as

17. Though in view of the magnitude of violence in Europe from the early modern period, periods of relative peace there might equally have received special designations.
intimately connected to the expanding capitalist world market, then dominated by the US and Britain. To a greater extent than elsewhere in Latin America (due primarily to the experience with Walker), liberal modernizers saw the US through a sharply bifurcated prism: on the one hand, as a beacon of civilization, modernity and progress for a backward, tradition-bound land; and on the other, as a threatening, dangerous adversary deserving as much fear as respect. Under Zelaya, the coffee economy boomed; communications, transport, and educational infrastructures were expanded and modernized; and the national state grew more powerful and centralized.

No more a tyrant than other strong leaders of his period, Zelaya earned the lasting enmity of the US by asserting a distinctly nationalist agenda in several key arenas, most critically with respect to the proposed canal. From 1904, when the Panama project got underway, until his overthrow in 1909, Zelaya, among other irritating policies, actively sought European and Japanese financing for the Nicaraguan canal. It was Zelaya's bad fortune to rule when the US, on the heels of the Cuban-Spanish-American War and its sudden acquisition of an overseas empire, was working relentlessly to assert political, economic, and military domination across the circum-Caribbean. In this era of Dollar Diplomacy, the Big Stick, and Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine (1904), woe unto the Central American strongman who refused to succumb to US imperial designs --- especially in Nicaragua. In late 1909, branding Zelaya a "tyrant" and invoking the "moral authority" of the Monroe Doctrine, the US intervened militarily in support of a Conservative-led "revolution" on the east coast; Zelaya resigned and went into exile.

The Conservatives, in league with anti-Zelayista Liberals and other elements and chomping at the bit after nearly seventeen years' exclusion from power, could not have emerged victorious from the civil wars of 1910-1912 without direct US military

22. The literature on this period is extensive; for useful synopses and bibliographies see Bermann (1984), LaFeber (1984), and Schoonover (1992), ch. 8.
intervention on their behalf. From the perspective of the US, on the other hand, these wars could have only one possible outcome: Nicaragua's national leadership would no longer be permitted to rule a fully independent, sovereign nation-state. But there was a catch. "Overthrowing Zelaya turned out to be the most easily achieved objective for the United States," as Knut Walter cogently puts it; "maintaining internal peace and order," on the other hand, the primary US interest in Nicaragua, "required successive military interventions, outright meddling in internal Nicaraguan politics, and the control of practically all of the country's financial and fiscal institutions for the better part of a quarter of a century."23

Determined to prevent a repeat of Zelaya, the US was compelled by its own agenda and the force of circumstances into a position which might seem counterintuitive: supporting a conservative political party and program against an ascendent but stymied liberal revolution. By propping up, at bayonet point, a series of unpopular Conservative regimes, while transforming Nicaragua into a political and economic appendage, the US virtually guaranteed that anti-US, anti-imperialist, nationalist sentiments would find fertile soil in which to grow.

The years between 1910 and 1925, as an extensive literature makes plain, essentially saw the "neo-colonization" of Nicaragua by the US, beginning with the so-called Dawson Pact of 1910.24 This agreement, and others to follow, had among their practical effects the de facto surrender of Nicaraguan national sovereignty to the US.25 In 1911, for instance, the Nicaraguan government relinquished control over the customs

23. Walter, p. 31.
24. Among the better-known works exploring different aspects of this process of neocolonization are Cox (1927), Nogales (1928), Quijano (1928), Soto Hall (1928), Haven and Melinda (1928), Cramer (1929), Denny (1929), Ghiraldo (1929), Hill (1933), Salvatierra (1934), Selva (1960), and Vargas (1989).
25. The Dawson Pact included among its provisions the establishment of a claims commission to settle disputes arising from contracts and concessions granted by Zelaya; the exclusion of all Zelayista elements from any future government; and the first in a series of loans from US banks to the Nicaraguan government, guaranteed by customs' receipts; see Bermann, pp. 151-154, Walter, pp. 31-32, and Vargas (1989), pp. 44-46.
house in exchange for a loan of $1,500,000; after similar arrangements in 1912 and 1913, the National Railway and National Bank were surrendered to US banks as collateral for new loans. The high water mark in this process, in the view of many observers, was the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1914, which relinquished in perpetuity all Nicaraguan rights to the proposed canal in exchange for three million dollars, which soon disappeared into the pockets of President Emiliano Chamorro and his cronies.

During these years of US-supported Conservative rule (with a 100-man Marine Corps Legation Guard acting as the symbolic and practical expression of US domination), the national state, rife with corruption, constantly on the edge of bankruptcy, and kept afloat only by loans from Wall Street arranged through the "good offices" of the State Department, virtually ceased all investment in education, communications, transport, and other public works. By the early 1920s, many who recalled Nicaragua under Zelaya expressed dismay and astonishment at the extent to which the country's roads, railroads, ports, schools, and other physical infrastructure had been allowed to deteriorate.

Nationalist discourse from 1912 to the mid-1920s followed a number of distinct threads. At the risk of oversimplifying what was a variegated and heterogeneous body of theory and practice, it seems that most Conservatives followed Carlos Cuadra Pasos and Emiliano Chamorro in defending the more "traditional" values of family, property, and Church against the onslaught of Liberal modernizers. The United States, in a peculiar twist of history, came to be seen as a bulwark against the rising tide of liberal reform; more crucially and instrumentally, the US came to be seen and used as a bulwark against the rising ambitions of their political enemies.

26. See e.g. Walter, p. 33.
27. Critics of this Treaty were and are legion, among them, A.C. Sandino; for a particularly scathing critique see Selva (1960).
28. E.g., Carter (1927), Palmer (1945); see also United States Department of Commerce (1924), Playter (1927), and Cumberland (1928).
29. For more extensive treatments see Walter, pp. 38-39, 46-49, and for an earlier period, Burns, pp. 13-35.
Liberalism, in contrast, proved a more open and elastic body of ideas, and by the mid-teens, liberal nationalist discourse was growing increasingly popular and flowing in several parallel channels. The dominant faction of the Liberal party tended toward a mild anti-interventionism, calling for genuinely free and fair elections and a general loosening of US controls over the economy and state. Most liberal nationalists of the period were not opposed to a "constructive" US role in Nicaragua, but most came to be adamantly opposed to what they saw as the complete subordination of Nicaraguan national interests to Wall Street, the State Department, and a small clique of unpopular, self-serving Conservatives. The multiple constraints on capital accumulation imposed by tightfisted US fiscal and monetary policies became an especially bitter bone of contention among the country's small but vociferous liberal-commercial elite.

At the same time, divisions within and between these two dominant parties were based less on ideology or contending visions of "the nation" than on struggles for political power and material gain waged between clan-based networks of patrons and clients. On the whole, if the rhetoric of "the nation," "the homeland," and "the people" rang loud and often during these years -- as it did, particularly during key moments like the signing of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty in 1914 -- in practice these terms were defined quite narrowly as select segments of the propertied and literate elite. No major political figure, Liberal or Conservative, explicitly offered a definition of the nation which sought explicitly or actively to include the majority of the country's inhabitants, i.e., its rural workers and peasants. An important exception, as Jeffrey Gould points out, was a more radical variant of liberalism which emerged from the struggles of the still inchoate working class, centered on the sugar workers of the San Antonio sugar complex in Chinandega and among artisans and the laboring poor in the cities of Chinandega, León and Managua. One branch of this liberalism, obrerismo, emerged in the teens and 20s as

30. Gould (1990), p. 21 ff., was the first to explore in any serious way the elasticity of liberal discourse during these years.
31. For a synoptic discussion see Walter, pp. 39-56.
stridently anti-imperialist, anti-oligarchic, and nationalist, shifting the terms of the debate in important ways and foreshadowing much of Sandinismo.32

The Conservative Party, historically wracked by division and infighting, grew increasingly so under the intensifying pressures of a diverse and popular opposition. In October 1923, President Diego Chamorro died, and upon assuming the presidency, Bartolomé Martínez (in many respects a progressive figure in Nicaraguan history) dismissed pro-US cabinet ministers and publicly repudiated continuing US intervention. In June 1924 the State Department informed Martínez that, since the Nicaraguan Constitution did not permit a president to succeed himself, the US could not accept his candidacy in the November elections. As a result, Martínez ally Carlos José Solórzano allied with the Juan B. Sacasa faction of the Liberal Party. "Barely born before it died,"34 this Liberal-Conservative coalition won the November 1924 presidential elections only to be ousted a year later by Emiliano Chamorro in the famous coup d'etat, or lomazo, of October 25, 1925. Chamorro's coup took place a scant six weeks after the 100-Marine Legation Guard was withdrawn from Nicaraguan soil, after thirteen years' continuous presence. (The withdrawal took place at this juncture due to mounting Congressional opposition to continuing US intervention combined with longstanding Latin American diplomatic protests.) In May 1926 the Liberals under Sacasa launched a "revolution," the Civil War (or Constitutionalist War) of 1926-27 began, and the Marines and gunboats returned. A year later -- on May 4, 1927 -- the Liberals under Sacasa and his Minister of War José María Moncada, victorious in the field, were pressured by the US to lay down their weapons in exchange for $10 per rifle, continuing US military and political

32. The first serious treatment of obrerismo is Gould (1990); for examples of the idioms of obrerismo see Comité ejecutivo de la federación obrera nicaragüense to Henry Stimson, 28 April 1927, USDS 817.00/4954, and to President Coolidge, 3 June 1927, 817.00/4934; see also Salvatierra (1928). Despite a wealth of primary sources, there is no scholarly study of the various strands of liberal nationalism during this period.
33. Sandino, for instance, spoke highly of him; Conrad, pp. 222, 241; Gould (1992, 1993) goes a long way toward reconstructing Martínez's politics.
intervention, and the promise of US-supervised elections in November 1928, which the Liberals were sure to win -- an agreement known as the Treaty of Tipitapa or Espino Negro Accord. Only one of the Liberal generals, Augusto C. Sandino, refused to surrender. Angered and embittered by what he saw as Moncada's betrayal of the liberal revolution, Sandino and a handful of followers headed up to the mountainous north in armed protest against continuing US intervention and violation of Nicaraguan national sovereignty.

In broadest outline, then, from Independence to the Civil War of 1926, the processes of state and nation formation in Nicaragua followed tortuous parallel paths, inseparably linked to the twin processes of external intervention and internal political struggle. The colonial period bequeathed a regionally divided, highly sectarian, seigniorial, patriarchal state and society in which corporations, clan-based networks of patrons and clients, and hereditary rights constituted the principal organizing axes of social and political order. As was the case elsewhere in Central America, the liberal revolution, based on Enlightenment notions of universal progress and government by contract, never fully got off the ground, never gaining sway over either state or society. Rather, it emerged, in fits and starts, in truncated, stunted form, in uneasy coexistence with a deeply rooted and powerfully persistent substratum of more ancient forms of social and political organization. Nicaragua in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was not exactly a seigniorial society; nor was it fully modern. It was somewhere in between, caught between two very different kinds of worlds.

United States intervention was integral to this process. Serving both as an example of Enlightenment ideals of liberalism and modernity and as an obstacle to their realization, the US helped to propel Nicaragua toward the modern fold while at the same time acting to stymie the forces behind that impulse. The US offered to Nicaragua a mirror into which she could gaze and see her own future; it then yanked away the
possibility of achieving that vision, while the reflection remained, whole and intact. Left to themselves, without heavy-handed imperialist intervention, would Nicaraguans have transcended their sectarian squabbles and internecine violence long enough to achieve political unification and a recognizably "modern" state and society? Perhaps this is an idle question; or perhaps not. Whatever the case, with the ascent of Zelaya a small, nascent, and deeply divided national bourgeoisie came of age under a strong nationalist and liberal leadership. The US, primarily for geo-strategic reasons related to the canal, intervened militarily to co-opt the most conservative faction of the oligarchy and forestall an emergent nationalism deemed contrary to stability, order, and long-term US interests. The principal result was to deepen the political polarization of the country while facilitating the rise of the nationalist sentiments intervention was intended to suppress. This, in combination with the decision to withdraw the Marines in 1925 (itself largely the consequence of political pressures internal to the US) precipitated a crisis in the national state and civil war. And from this war emerged another variant of Nicaraguan nationalism known as Sandinismo.

**Understanding Sandino**

"A tyranny blacker and more dreadful than ever before opens its enormous throat and tries to swallow Nicaragua, its coveted prisoner," the manifesto began.

The hour has sounded to be free and not fear, at whatever cost. Nicaragua seeks to be free and she will be free, in spite of her oppressors . . . Our best patriots, today as yesterday, fill the jails . . . Nicaraguans, we protest against such outrages. When will our martyrdom cease? Will our slavery ever end? We stand tall, zealous, and with our heads held high we defend our rights. To be free is better than to be great. We do not seek liberty on our knees, nor as a favor. She is our heritage, bequeathed by our grandfathers and past civilizations . . .

[The Espino Negro Accords] constitute an affront to the dignity of our homeland and violates our national sovereignty . . . We prefer to live in the most extreme poverty, as we have always lived, rather than surrender our national sovereignty . . .

Today in Nicaragua sounds the voice of protest of Hispano-America . . . foreign intervention deals a mortal wound to National Sovereignty and is destructive of the most beautiful ideals . . .
Pay attention, [Mr. Stimson], because this people has a large number of liberals who prefer to die before continuing to live as slaves.

Which of these quotations are attributable to Sandino? In fact none are, though any might easily be mistaken for his, since the rebel chieftan frequently employed many of the same keywords, images, and oppositions. (The first is from a Conservative handbill of 1910; the last three are different responses to the Espino Negro Accords.35) They are placed here in this fashion in order to illustrate a rather elemental point: that Sandino’s nationalism was neither aberrant, unique, nor even unusual (at least in outline), but rather, was a product of and embedded within a much wider historical and semantic field. Sandino was not the only Nicaraguan or Latin American whose blood boiled at the thought of Moncada caving in at Espino Negro, or who cried out in protest against continuing Yankee violation of Nicaraguan national sovereignty. He was, however, the only one to successfully organize a prolonged armed rebellion in defense of that sovereignty, and therein, I would argue, lies the principal difference between him and his fellow patriotic anti-imperialists.

The deconstruction and interpretation of Sandino’s texts has become, over the years, something of a cottage industry. In the Sandinista narrative of history, Sandino’s nationalism is most commonly interpreted as a simple and politically naïve desire to expel the "Yankee invaders," a desire ultimately stemming from a deep love of Nicaragua and its poor and oppressed majority.36 Others have gone further to argue that Sandino’s publicly expressed desire to expel the Yankees was a pretext, a cover for far deeper goals. Donald Hodges, in the best intellectual portrait of the movement and its activating ideologies yet produced, likens Sandino’s political thought to an onion whose outer layers

35. The first, signed “Tiroteo,” c. January 1910, in Moffat to Knox, 5 Feb. 1910, USDS 817.00/6369.715; the second, from the Comité Ejecutivo de la Federación Obrera Nicaragüense to President Coolidge, 3 June 1927, 817.00/4934; the third, from a motion passed by the Salvadoran National Assembly, 19 May 1927, Caffery to Knox, 23 May 1927, 817.00/4893; and the last, on the eve of Espino Negro, from an anonymous letter to Stimson, 27 April 1927, 817.00/4954.
must be peeled away in order to reveal its inner core. At the center of Sandino's vision, according to Hodges, was a millenarian and grandiose notion of a workers' and peasants' state as the first stage of an impending world proletarian revolution which would sweep away all previous social relations and usher in an era of world communism in an earthly kingdom to be governed by "Divine Justice." On the whole Hodges' portrait of Sandino's mental and moral universe is subtle and compelling. However, the argument that Sandino initially masked the more radical aspects of his ideology by cloakimg them in classic liberal and patriotic discourse represents, in my view, a misreading of these texts. Instead, I would argue, the basic elements of Sandino's social agenda and moral philosophy were plainly apparent in his first manifestos and changed little over the course of the Rebellion.

There can be little doubt that the Sandinista narrative of history is correct in maintaining that the motive force propelling the Rebellion was Sandino's desire to defend the dignity of the Nicaraguan people through defense of the sovereignty or honor of the Nicaraguan nation. I would take this several steps further. First, the Rebellion as Sandino conceived it was fundamentally a struggle over meaning; the central locus of struggle was what might be called "the meaning of the nation," the ensemble of significations ascribed to the "imagined community" of Nicaraguans -- variously called "the homeland" (la patria), "the people," "the nation," or simply, "Nicaragua." Sandino knew that nations are essentially constituted by stories, by narratives; his most

37. Hodges, esp. ch. 1-3; onion metaphor, p. 80.
38. For instance, Hodges writes of Sandino's earliest manifestos: "What few of Sandino's followers understood at the time was that this doctrine [of national sovereignty] might also be used to defend the rights of the poor against those of the rich" (p. 74). This conclusion is difficult to support, however, since the social content of Sandino's earliest manifestos are plainly apparent (e.g., in his manifesto c. July 14, 1927, Sandino wrote at length of the "hard social problems" of his country, adding: "I want nothing for myself; I am a mechanic, the sound of my hammer on its anvil echoes at a great distance and it speaks every language in matters of labor. I aspire to nothing. I desire only the redemption of the working class." (Conrad, pp. 80-81); this hardly sounds like classic liberalism and elementary patriotism, a fact Hodges acknowledges (p. 75), but fails to reconcile with his view that Sandino was "couching" his more "subversive designs" behind "inoffensive language." (p. 72).
fundamental goal was to challenge and ultimately supplant previous narratives which constituted "the nation," to reconfigure what it meant "to be Nicaraguan," to redesign social relations within the nation and to redefine the nation's relationship with the US -- all in one sweeping movement. The struggle was to transcend the dead-end of Liberal-Conservative conflict by creating a new narrative of Nicaraguan history through the process of armed struggle; to position the goals and aspirations of the hitherto excluded popular classes at the center of the national agenda; to sever the discursive and practical links which tied Nicaragua's destiny to the US; to instill a collective visceral hatred of the world-historical agent that sought to dominate the nation, i.e., US imperialism; to reconstitute the community of Nicaraguans as absolutely sovereign and ruled by a state in turn ruled by popular sovereignty, by the collective will of the majority of the people.

Sandino was fundamentally a Nicaraguan and "Indo-Hispanic" nationalist or patriot, whose struggle was for the sovereignty of the of the Nicaraguan state and a more inclusively defined "Indo-Hispanic race." At the same time, however, as is argued more fully below, the way in which that nationalism was put together, discursively and practically, was inherently and fundamentally divisive of the "nation" and "race" it constituted and in whose name it spoke. Sandino's brand of nationalism not only divided Nicaraguans from Yankees ("patriots" from "invaders"), but Nicaraguans from Nicaraguans and Indo-Hispanics from Indo-Hispanics ("patriots" from "traitors"). To ask if Sandino's Rebellion was more "fundamentally" a war of national liberation against an imperialist aggressor or a civil war pitting Nicaraguans against Nicaraguans is akin to asking if an apple is "fundamentally" more round or red: clearly it was both, with neither "aspect" more "fundamental" than the other. The Sandinista narrative of history tends to suppress the civil dimensions of the conflict, while the Somocista narrative denies altogether its genuinely nationalist content. Neither version, for very different reasons, gets to the heart of the matter: that just as the twin processes of foreign intervention and internal political struggle have constituted the dominant forces shaping Nicaraguan
history, so too the Sandino Rebellion, as a product and reflection of that history, was fundamentally both a war to expel a foreign invader and a civil war. Both aspects derived from the bedrock qualities of Nicaraguan history, transmuted into the bedrock qualities of Sandino's nationalism. And both came to be embodied in the groups of actors that that nationalism constructed and in the story it told.

As others have made amply clear, the range and diversity of Sandino's personal experiences paralleled the complexity and eclecticism of his political and social philosophy. In turn a farm laborer, student, grain merchant, traveller, mechanic, payroll clerk, soldier, general, and supreme military commander, his life experiences bridged the worlds of the non-modern and modern, peasant and proletarian, country and city, provincial and cosmopolitan. Influenced by a remarkable range of ancient and novel ideologies and philosophies -- Zoroastrianism and anarcho-syndicalism, yoga and communism, Freemasonry and rational spiritism, theosophy and Christianity, bureaucratic rationalism and the Magnetic-Spiritual School of the Universal Commune -- and the list goes on -- his worldview was as eclectic and complex as it was, in the end, internally coherent.

39. The details of Sandino's life are well known and need only be noted in abbreviated form here. Born in 1895 in Niquinohomo, Masaya, Augusto Calderón Sandino was the illegitimate son of a moderately well-to-do coffee planter and his Indian employee. As a boy he labored in the fields with his mother, suffering many privations. At ten he was accepted into his father's household; he went to school, worked hard, and by 1920 was his father's business partner and a relatively prosperous grain merchant. In that year he was forced to flee Nicaragua for wounding or killing an erstwhile friend in a personal dispute. For the next six years he travelled through eastern Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico, working as a mechanic and laborer for a variety of export-oriented industrial enterprises, including three years in the oil fields of Tampico, Mexico. In early 1926, catching wind of the political turmoil in his homeland, he returned and secured employment in the offices of the US-owned San Albino Mine, where he convinced a small group of men to form a revolutionary-military cell to fight on the side of the Liberals in the ongoing Civil War; for subsequent events see ch. 4, below. The best portraits of Sandino and his life are Román (1979) and Ramírez's "El muchacho de Niquinohomo," (1984), vol. I, pp. 31-64.
Yet despite that complexity and eclecticism, one can gain a comprehensive appreciation of Sandino’s worldview and social and political aims through a careful reading of his first three manifestos, issued in rapid-fire succession in July 1927. The following pages therefore engage in a brief exegesis of these texts. (Readers unfamiliar with Sandino’s writings are urged to refer to Appendix B, where these manifestos are reproduced in full.)

In the pre-radio, pre-television context of 1920s Nicaragua, political "manifestos" were one of the only ways to broadcast a political agenda or program to the public at large. These three manifestos, issued only two months after the Rebellion had formally begun and on the eve of the first military encounter between the Marines and Sandino’s rebel forces (the Battle of Ocotal, July 16-17), can be likened to a drum-roll before a dramatic performance; they were the most effective way to explain, justify, and legitimate to the Nicaraguan populace and the world in general the military actions his forces were about to undertake. If there was ever an appropriate place for the underlying rationales of the Rebellion to be spelled out clearly andconcisely, it would seem to be here.⁴¹

The tone of these manifestos is passionate, angry, outraged, defiant; it is also righteously indignant, idealistic, hopeful, high-minded. Certain key words and phrases continually reappear in these texts: the nation, nationality, national honor, patriotism, justice, honor, sovereignty, liberty, Indo-Hispanic race, Yankees, traitors, invaders, cowards, blood, and death, to list only some of the commonest. How were these words used? What did they mean? What story were they trying to tell?

Sandino constructed four basic groups of actors: 1) "Patriots," i.e., himself and his army; 2) "Invaders," i.e., the US government, bankers, capitalists, and soldiers; 3) "Traitors," i.e., Nicaraguan allies of the invaders; and 4) the audience, composed of

⁴¹Unless otherwise noted, the words and phrases quoted in the following pages are taken from Sandino’s first three manifestos; the translation is Conrad’s, pp. 74-85, with the exception of la patria, translated here as homeland, not fatherland.
Nicaraguans, Central Americans, and the "Indo-Hispanic race" (or his "racial brothers").

As we have seen, he began his first manifesto by establishing his own legitimacy and authority by rhetorically establishing the inherent legitimacy of each of his own multiple identities: "I am a Nicaraguan... in my veins flows above all the blood of the Indian race... I am a mechanic... I come from the lap of the oppressed." Each of these identities -- based alternatively on nationality, race, labor, and a subordinate position in a social hierarchy -- was in turn associated with a specific positive value: pride, idealism, honor, virility. He and his fellow patriots were the "legitimate sons" of Nicaragua (a common phrase of the period\textsuperscript{42}), infused with an unimpeachable morality and embodying all that was good, true, legitimate, just, and honorable.

In explicit and diametric opposition to the patriot were the invaders and traitors. The North Americans, the "dasterdly invaders," were "cowards" and "criminals," "murderers" and "hypocrites," "the enemy of our race and language"; the White House was "the cavern where [they] concoct [their] crimes"; US capitalists were "like slave traders," "swindl[ers]" "who cheat" and "abuse" the "real people" of Nicaragua; the Marines were "mercenaries" and "morphine addicts," "miserable servant[s] of Wall Street," "Coolidge's paid assassin[s]," "degenerate pirates" who inspire no fear but arouse passionate hatred: "'Death to the Yankees!' roared my soldiers with all the power of their lungs, and 'Death to the Yankees!' responded the wild mountains of Nueva Segovia like an echo."

Many of the same phrases and metaphors were launched against the Nicaraguan "traitors" or \textit{vendepatria} (country-sellers), especially Adolfo Díaz, Emiliano Chamorro, and, the quintessence of treason, José María Moncada. The venom and vitriol heaped upon these "traitors" knew no bounds; these were "sinister" men, "pessimists and cowards," "eunuchs" and "swamp geese," "shameless hired assassins who have

\textsuperscript{42} E.g., Salomón de la Selva wrote in February 1927, "soy hijito legítimo de Nicaragua, porque me he mantenido fiel a las influencias espirituales que, más que las cosas de la materia, constituyen la patria." Selva (1981), p. 11.
committed the crime of high treason"; they were "horrid individuals," "persons of bad faith," "mercenaries" and "deserters" "who live from the scraps their master throws them," men "who march like boy scouts in the invaders' vanguard," who have "gone over to the enemy," who have committed "an unpardonable crime demanding revenge!" Moncada's "betrayal" at Tipitapa, referred to uncounted times over the next five and a half years, became one of the foundational myths of the new Sandinista narrative of Nicaraguan history.43

The audience, finally, was "the people," "the real people," Nicaraguans and the whole of the "Indo-Hispanic race," Sandino's "racial brothers," "the humble" and "oppressed," "that community of people who are forced to earn their living by their physical labor, with their bare hands, in order to eat and dress themselves badly," "fellow citizens" who have been "cheated and offended" but who "know what justice is."

In the narrative of history revealed in these three manifestos, these four groups of actors were locked in an epic struggle, and it was the nation that lay at the heart of their contention. Above all else, it was the "national honor" that was at stake. In the first manifesto the phrase was used four times, and in key moments in the text, where the underlying motives of the Rebellion were laid bare:

In the Liberal ranks there are men of conscience who understand the duties that a soldier's rectitude imposes upon him, such as the nation's honor.

Before the Fatherland and before history, I swear that my sword will defend the national honor.

Fellow citizens, ... I welcome you to my ranks ... with the one condition that you come with good intentions to defend our nation's honor.

In the Andean Cordillera there exists a group of patriots who will know how to die like men, in open battle, in defense of their national honor.

43. The meaning here is ambivalent: "betray ... 1. to help the enemy (of one's country, cause, etc.) ... 2. to break faith with ... 3. to lead astray; deceive; specif., to seduce and then desert ..." (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1970). Since Moncada and other "traitors" did not "break" a pre-existing "faith" with Sandino, or "seduce and then desert" his cause, the Sandinista usage is accurate only in its first and most general sense.
In his third manifesto, Sandino depicted his soldiers just before the attack on Ocotal, the first major battle of the Rebellion: "To Ocotal, to Ocotal! We swear to die in defense of our national honor!" cried my soldier patriots." In the second manifesto, he stated simply, "I have taken defense of the national honor."

Indeed, "national honor" was one of the commonest phrases to appear in all of Sandino's writings and utterances over six and a half years of struggle, and was consistently cited as the main impetus behind the Rebellion. What did it mean? One clue is that it was synonymous with national sovereignty. As Hodges correctly observes, "the term 'sovereignty' was interpreted by Sandino as interchangeable with national honor":44

I have taken defense of the national honor and sovereignty . . .

I am . . . a patriot who does not allow outrageous assaults upon our sovereignty

'To Ocotal, To Ocotal! We swear to die in defense of our national honor!' cried my soldier patriots. 'We will not allow an outrage against our sovereignty!'

The commonest verb associated with "national honor" and "national sovereignty" was "to defend," as in the official title of Sandino's politico-military organization, the Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua (EDSNN) -- the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty -- though "Honor" was commonly substituted for "Sovereignty," as in his July 1927 "Statement to his Racial Brothers," when his Army was dubbed the "Army in Defense of the National Honor."45

If the notion of "honor" is quite slippery and culturally contingent, the notion of "national sovereignty" is slightly less so. "Sovereignty" has been a contested and problematic concept in political theory from at least the 16th century. Sandino's notion

44. Hodges, p. 74; in my view Hodges misreads the significance of the equivalence between national honor and national sovereignty when he writes, "Sandino equated the most elementary form of patriotism with nationalism or defense of the national honor." (p. 74) Instead I would contend that, for Sandino, national honor or sovereignty stemmed directly from popular sovereignty, and were thus at the heart of the most profound form of patriotism, as is argued more fully below.
45. The Defending Army was not formally founded until 2 September 1927; Conrad, pp. 95-97.
of national sovereignty ultimately derived from the Enlightenment and, more
proximately, the French Revolution, wherein the sovereignty of the nation was based on
the principle that the legitimacy of the state must ultimately derive from the consent of
the governed -- "the popular will," as he expressed it repeatedly. In the theory and
practice of international diplomacy since at least the mid-19th century, national
sovereignty has generally been understood as an attribute of the state, signifying (more or
less) absolute freedom and independence of action in both internal and external affairs.
For Sandino, national sovereignty and honor were absolute and inviolable: Thus to
"violate" the national sovereignty was to commit the supreme injustice, to profane the
sacred, an "unpardonable crime," and it became the "sacred duty" of the patriot to
"defend" that honor by force of arms.

We are on the threshold of a pivotal conceptual moment in Sandino's nationalist
discourse: "The nation," as he constructed it, was composed of only those who adhered,
in practice, to the principle of absolute national sovereignty; those who violated this
principle were constructed as outside the nation, and indeed, of relinquishing by their
actions their birthright to membership in the nation. In a revealing passage near the top
of his first manifesto Sandino declared:

Sixteen years ago Adolfo Díaz and Emiliano Chamorro ceased to be Nicaraguans. Ambition killed their right to their nationality. . . . [they are] shameless hired assassins who have committed the crime of high treason . . . as if we did not belong to the same nation.

By surrendering the national sovereignty to an external aggressor, itself guilty of
"trampling Nicaragua's sovereignty underfoot," Díaz, Chamorro, and Moncada in turn
surrendered their right to nationality, even though they "still claim to have been born in
this land."

46. In these manifestos, expressed as "defense . . . [of] the rights of the people,"
"defender of the rights of my fellow citizens," and less directly, "Moncada, the people
know what justice is, and when it is denied them they seize it!" For further e.g.'s, see
Conrad, p. 113: "The people are sovereign . . ."; p. 140: "the legality of its [the nation's]
government should emanate from the people's will . . ."; p. 188: "Moncada . . . failed to
heed the true will of the people . . ."; pp. 206, 221-224 ff.
Why was alliance with the US a "crime of high treason?" Because the US had repeatedly violated Nicaraguan national sovereignty. How? Most immediately, by direct military intervention, though the long history of US violations -- Walker, Zelaya's overthrow, the Dawson Pact, the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty, Espino Negro -- also carried deep and abiding political, economic, and social dimensions. Indeed, imperialism meant something far more sinister than the presence of foot soldiers; it meant evil incarnate.

The metaphors and oppositions used to represent the relationship between the United States and Nicaragua were dominated by images of blood, slavery, brutality, and death: his "country's Flag, the symbol that envelops all Nicaraguans," was gripped by "the claws of the enormous eagle with its curved beak bloody with the blood of Nicaraguans"; he and his Army stood in righteous defense of the rights of the people, so terribly cheated by those who have come here to our land to make excessive profits, dealing with other people not as honorable businessmen of one kind or another, but like slave traders or dealers in human flesh.

The flag of the United States "murders weak nations," "forcing us into a dependent and tributary role," and was thus "the enemy of our race and language." Charles Butters, the North American owner of the San Albino Mine,

cheats my fellow countrymen out of their salaries, forcing them to work twelve hours a day, paying them with vouchers worth from one cent to five pesos, which are acceptable only in his commissary in exchange for merchandise at twice the normal price, thinks himself authorized by his nationality to commit such abuses. . . . The gold produced in the bowels of the Nicaraguan earth belongs to Nicaragua, and it is extracted by the hands of Nicaraguan workers. . . . How will Charles Butters convert the sacred debt that he owes to his worker[s] who [are] miserable, half-naked and sick with malaria? (emphasis in the original)

In a like manner, a "sellout" like Moncada "disregards these things because his myopia does not allow him to see the hard social problems of his fellow citizens . . ." And opposite Moncada stands Sandino, his perfect moral antithesis:

I want nothing for myself; I am a mechanic, the sound of my hammer on its anvil echoes at a great distance, and it speaks every language in matters of labor. I aspire to nothing. I desire only the redemption of the working class. (emphasis in the original)
The creation of social justice, the redemption of the working class, and the redemption of the national honor, in short, were intimately related aspects of one and the same struggle.47

"Redemption" emerges as a key concept in these texts. In his first manifesto Sandino declared: "I swear that my sword will defend the national honor and redeem the oppressed." And in the one to follow he proclaimed: "I desire only the redemption of the working class." What did redemption mean in this context? "To redeem" means "to regain possession, liberate, release or rescue from captivity or bondage, recover, reclaim; deliverance from what is regarded as evil"; its closest synonym is said to be "ransom," defined as "the money, price, or consideration paid or demanded for the redemption of a captured person or persons."48 Just prior to his avowed supreme desire for "the redemption of the working class," Sandino speaks of the "sacred debt" owed to the "miserable, half-naked . . . worker." What was this "sacred debt"?

Roger Lancaster offers a compelling reading of the concept of redemption in the context of Sandinista "revolutionary praxis" of the 1980s, a reading that can be fruitfully applied to earlier forms of "revolutionary praxis" in the 1920s and 30s. For Lancaster, the Christian concept of redemption was especially apparent in Revolutionary Nicaragua in the "mythology of the guerrilla," a metaphor, in turn, for the process of "sanctification through sacrifice": the guerrilla's "going to the mountains" became etched not only with political and ideological meanings but profoundly spiritual and religious ones; his ordeal transformed the guerrilla into a Christ-like figure -- "Cristo Guerrillero" -- a figure mystically redeemed and purified, sanctified through sacrifice for a higher cause.

"Redemption," for Lancaster,

is largely the state that accrues after and as a result of the elimination of exploitation. The promised redemption is thus always an idealized state . . . our

47. This is the point at which Hodges' argument that national sovereignty was a surface goal breaks down, since these goals were ultimately inseparable.
whole being is redeemed... the nature of social life is totally, unimaginably transformed... What ultimately cements this messianic vision together and gives it credibility... is the example of the perfect, i.e., altruistic sacrifice.49

Sandino's vision was indeed, as Lancaster, Hodges, and others have recognized, a messianic, millenarian one. Even in these first manifestos one can detect a powerful current of the revolutionary, apocalyptic millenarianism that became so apparent in his later writings and pronouncements -- a current revealed through a series of extremely potent metaphors, images, and oppositions: of the sheer epic scale of the struggle between good and evil that he and his fellow patriots were undertaking; of the perfect altruism of the sacrifices of him and his fellow patriots, as opposed to the perfect moral cowardice of Moncada and his ilk; of the moral and material redemption of the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden; and of the redemptive power of sacrifice, and that most tangible product of sacrifice, blood.50 For Sandino and his Defending Army, the price of redeeming Nicaragua, held captive by imperialist invaders and cowardly traitors, was blood -- the blood of traitors, invaders, and patriots. Blood metaphors and allusions to the cleansing power of blood are scattered generously throughout Sandino's writings, no less so than in these first three manifestos:

the blood... of my patriotic soldiers... will redden the white dome of your famous White House.

it may be necessary to establish... the right to be free... upon a foundation of blood.

we will have the honor of sprinkling the soil of our country with the blood of traitors and invaders.51

49. Lancaster, pp. 132-139; for an excellent discussion of millenarian Christianity in medieval Europe see Norman Cohn, Pursuit of the Millenium (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), and in 1960s, 70s, and 80s Central America, Padre J. Guadalupe Carney, To Be A Revolutionary (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978).


51. To cite but three further examples: On Nov. 27, 1927 Sandino wrote of Moncada: "If from the day he made a secret pact with the enemy until the last day of his life, everything this man ate turned to blood at the very moment he ate it, he would never be able to eat the blood of all the heroes he betrayed." On March 6, 1929 he wrote to US President Hoover: "If all the blood spilled and all the Nicaraguan corpses produced by Wall Street dollars from that time [1909] until the present could be brought together in one place, so that on July 4 the US imperialists in Washington and New York could consume those corpses and drink the blood of my compatriots, together they could not
This last phrase, "traitors and invaders," was among the commonest in all of early Sandinista discourse. In effect, Sandino and his followers conflated, in absolute terms, Yankee imperialists and their Nicaraguan collaborators; both groups came to be constructed as logical, equal, and supreme enemies of the homeland and the homeland's defenders, the patriots. A Nicaraguan simply could not be a Nicaraguan and allied with the United States -- they were absolutely incompatible, mutually exclusive categories.

To be defined out of the nation is serious business indeed. Membership in a nation -- citizenship -- has been described as a quintessential aspect of the modern condition. Being stripped of one's nationality -- as happens all too often to political activists and political refugees -- is, for most inhabitants of the modern world, an unimaginable, Kafkaesque prospect. The net effect of Sandino's construction of the traitor -- over time and in the context, one must recall, of an ongoing armed struggle -- was to exclude a significant proportion of the Segovian populace from his definition of the nation, to strip away their citizenship and, in a dynamic dissected more fully in subsequent chapters, to subject them to the wrath of the Defending Army. Sandino's nationalist idiom of "patriots" and "traitors," as will become apparent, provided Segovian workers and peasants with a new and powerful vocabulary in their struggle against an ancient set of enemies. Membership in Sandino's version of the nation suddenly became contingent upon adherence to a strict moral code based on concrete actions; the violation of that code -- again, in the context of an often brutal guerrilla war -- could and often did lead to exclusion from the nation, which not uncommonly translated into a sentence of

eat and drink everything . . ." Four days later he dictated a curious children's story about two brothers, Rin and Roff, in which a war of liberation broke out against an unjust king (the US); "So much blood was spilled in that terrible war that it never went away, but stayed forever fresh. The inhabitants of that country wanted coming generations to know what had happened in their land, so they collected the spilled blood and with it they filled up, one by one, the castles of Roff (Moncada). And when they had finished filling up the last of them, all the castles collapsed at the same moment and the places where they had been built were turned into seas of blood. . . . A thousand years has passed, and neither Rin nor Roff now lives. The sea of blood (History) remains, always fresh as an example to all the ages." Conrad, pp. 131, 240-244.
death. "In the past days the following traitors have been killed: Genaro Vásquez, Narciso González, and Santos González," reported Pedrón to Sandino in January 1932, to cite but one of hundreds of such examples of the idiom of treason being deployed to justify the murder of fellow Nicaraguans.\footnote{Somoza, p. 302; emphasis added. As discussed in chapter eleven (below), despite often deceptive editing, there can be little doubt of the authenticity of the Sandinista documents in Somoza's book.} The logic was simple and, in theory, airtight: to ally with the imperialists was to consciously violate the nation's sovereignty, to willingly betray the nation, to knowingly place oneself outside the nation, to voluntarily relinquish the rights and responsibilities of "legitimate" citizens, to freely choose to be the antithesis of a "legitimate son" of the nation. And under conditions of armed struggle against a ruthless and militarily superior enemy, such betrayal could be, and often was, translated into a sentence of death. "Invaders and traitors," in sum, embodied all that was evil, false, cowardly, unjust, dishonorable, and hateful in the world. These sinister forces were defined in opposition to the patriot, the embodiment of all that was loyal, sincere, honest, legitimate, authentic, courageous, dutiful, honorable, just, true, and good. Sandino's moral and ideological universe thus resembled, like the moral universe of Christianity, a dualistic, Manichaean world in which absolute good was locked in mortal combat against absolute evil, where the forces of perfect light struggled incessantly against the forces of perfect darkness. Sandino's world approached a world of perfect dualism, in which, however, good would ultimately prevail.\footnote{Hodges, esp. pp. 72-93, argues that Sandino's more occult influences, such as Zoroastrianism and theosophy, remained hidden from view until later in the war. The reading proposed here suggests that these influences were manifest from the very beginning of the struggle. We are nonetheless indebted to Hodges for pointing out that "Basic to Sandino's theosophy was the struggle between the forces of light and darkness, between good and evil -- a doctrine traceable to Zoroaster" (Hodges, p. 35 ff.), though one might alternatively trace such beliefs to Christianity.}

Thus far I have engaged in a brief and selective exegesis of three of Sandino's early manifestos, comprising a mere eight pages of text. Many aspects of these have
been elided, including constructions of race, gender, class, internationalism, and others. Broadening the analysis to include these categories and the whole range of Sandino's writings and utterances would certainly sharpen and enrich the interpretations advanced above, though it would probably not undermine them. These three documents contain the core of Sandino's social and political philosophy: the fundamental social categories of patriot, invader, and traitor populating a religio-nationalist narrative of Nicaraguan history, a new story woven together from strands of anti-imperialism, love of the homeland, anti-oligarchicalism, social justice, and revolutionary millenarianism, all fused into a single and inseparable fabric of meaning. At the core of this ensemble of meanings was the nation, a particular imagining and narrative of the political and social community of Nicaraguans. In opposition to the hegemonic discourse of the Nicarguan patriarchal oligarchy, Sandino sought to sever the link that tied national progress and well-being to the United States: "I would like to sever the ties to which the sinister Chamorro movement has bound us." The meaning of the nation was broadened to include previously excluded groups -- workers, peasants, Indians, the poor and subordinate, whose collective will would henceforth reign sovereign -- and narrowed to exclude many previously included. Donald C. Hodges reaches a substantially similar conclusion:

Sandino believed that patriotism means nationalism, that nationalism contains the elements of populism, and that populism can lead people to communism. In Marxist terminology, he defended three separate social programs: an elementary nationalism for the short-sighted; a transitional or people's nationalism based on protective legislation for workers and peasants with a union of Central American republics for their collective progress and self-defense; and an advanced revolutionary nationalism buttressed by a theosophy of liberation in anticipation of the coming world proletarian revolution . . .

54. Hodges, pp. 79-80 (emphasis added). How truly "separate" these programs were is open to debate, but it is the assertion immediately following this which is not tenable. Hodges writes: "If we may liken Sandino's moral faith to an onion, we can say that he never exposed more than one layer at a time. In this way he kept pace with the people's growth in social awareness as he worked his way down to his faith's inner core" (p. 80). This interpretation elides the more fundamental unity of the new meanings Sandino sought to promote, and ignores the fundamentally social content of the Rebellion from its beginning. As is shown more fully in ch. 4-7, below, Sandino's earliest followers had little difficulty grasping the fundamentally social aims of the Rebellion.
While the hierarchical nature of this schema is problematic, it is nonetheless clear that nationalism lay at the heart of Sandino's discourse and practice: "Nicaraguan-ness" was defined as anti-imperialism, which, under conditions of war, was defined as fighting and killing Marines, which was defined as the only way to achieve social justice, which was defined as anti-oligarchicalism, which was defined as liberty, which was defined as the popular will, which was defined as defending the national honor . . . and so on: A chain of equivalent meanings was forged, equivalents which, as will become apparent, contained considerable internal space for differential emphasis but no external space for compromise. For all participants in the struggle, all roads were to lead to either a wholly redeemed nation or to death: *Patria libre o morir*. That, at least, was how Sandino saw it.
CHAPTER 3: THE SEGOVIAS: HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHY, AND POLITICAL ECONOMY IN A MOUNTAINOUS FRONTIER ZONE

Mountain people are forced to be self-sufficient for the essentials of life, to produce everything as best they can. . . . In the mountains, society, civilization, and economy all bear the mark of backwardness and poverty . . . typical are the Pyrenees with their violent history and primitive cruelty . . . To these hilltop worlds, out of touch with the towns, even Rome itself, in all its years of power, can have meant very little.

- Fernand Braudel1

"The entire area is given to cattle business. There are a few cane mills but they are all operated by bulls and the products sold locally." Lieutenant H.N. Kenyon was reporting on the region around Somotillo that he and his fellow Marines had just spent ten weeks patrolling. The 1926-1927 Civil War had just ended, and the devastation was evident. "These mills are all in the mountain section where a considerable amount of coffee is grown," he continued, "but the business of coffee is in bad condition due to abandonment of the mountain plantations by the owners due to lack of police protection.

Every name on the Ham Map shown by a black dot represents a cattle ranch, with the exception of San Francisco which is a mountain town and should have a circle around the dot. All of the ranches are very old . . . [Most] have about one thousand head of cattle and from fifty to three hundred head of horses, although many have practically no horses. Cheese is made at all ranches. Those ranches shown by the dots on the river of the Honduran border are only small farms in the mountain country.

He went on to describe conditions in the towns:

In the small towns there are stores only in Villa Nueva and Somotillo. The banditry in the mountains destroyed all stores in the others and conditions are not yet safe for the natives to attempt to stock the stores abandoned. Many of the


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people living in the small towns are engaged in carrying Honduran contraband tobacco to Leon and distilling liquor in native stills for sale to the ranch laborers. In Somotillo there are more than a dozen stores of varying character selling all kinds of cheap wares and a considerable variety of imported liquors.

The lieutenant, who evidently did not hold the local people in particularly high regard, was nonetheless a keen observer:

Racially, most are Indians. Invariably lazy. Murder and maiming with arms and machetes very common. Considerable drinking on weekends and holidays. Very few pay any attention to religion of any kind. Churches in most towns abandoned and in ruins... It is safe to say that a third of the population in [Somotillo] live by stealing from the big ranches or from one another. The country is also infested with professional game hunters who live in small huts in isolated places and sell dried deer meat and skins of all kinds... Very little native fruit is cultivated in this area. All of it grows well. Wild game is abundant.

The lieutenant was particularly struck by the nature of political identities and allegiances in the region, which he described in tones rather sardonic and amused:

POLITICS: Although none of the natives can give any cause for participation in politics, all are emphatically Liberals or Conservatives. Conservatives are usually property owners or town officials holding office until the coming [US supervised] election... Practically all profess to be members of the Liberal Party, especially when seeking clemency for stealing or murder... Politics is usually given as the motive for all crime.²

Lieutenant Kenyon's amateur ethnography provides a vivid entry into the social and cultural milieu of the Segovias, the mountainous north-central part of the country where the Rebellion was fought. Long before the lieutenant's passage through the area, the Segovias had earned a reputation as a rugged, isolated frontier zone of bandits and outlaws, smugglers and fugitives, a violent, lawless land of primitive Indians and backward, ignorant peasants.

These stereotypes, produced by the culturally dominant, can serve as signposts, pointing to the relative autonomy of law, politics, and culture in the rural spaces of the region. To say that the Segovias were "lawless" is to accept the dominant class's definition of law. Law is not ideologically impartial or neutral, in a sphere separate from property and class and politics; rather, the nexus is intricate and dense. "[L]aw is as

much concerned with authority as it is with property," writes Douglas Hay of 18th century England. "For wealth does not exist outside a social context, theft is given definition only within a set of social relations, and the connections between property, power and authority are close and crucial." In the Segovias as elsewhere, the dominant culture's law, as "an ideological system . . . defined and maintained the bounds of power and wealth."³

Yet the state's law was far from being the only locus of power and authority. Political space was fragmented and fractured; power was exercised from multiple centers; authority and law were endlessly contested by different groups of actors. The state was too weak to effectively survey, regulate, and dominate the populace; its authority was relatively easily subverted and supplanted by other authorities, other laws, other codes, other rules -- authorities that that shifted with local, national, and international winds, and rules and codes and forms of authority that remained largely unchanged.

In the Segovias, local power, local authority, local ways of practicing politics mattered. This is the context for appreciating Lieutenant Kenyon's shrewdest observations, those dealing with politics. His wording here is deliberate, and he hits the nail on the head each time: Of course "none of the natives can give any cause for participation in politics" -- to do so to a passing Marine lieutenant would doubtless be popularly viewed as a rather stupid thing to do. (The lieutenant did not say that the natives had no cause for participating in politics.) The rest of his descriptions here were apt and accurate, though he did not connect "murder and maiming with arms and machetes [and] drinking" with local politics, as he might have. His pithiest observation -- that "Politics is usually given as the motive for all crime" -- captured key aspects of Segovian realities, spotlighting the relationship between constructions of crime, property,

and law on the one hand, and local struggles for power between factions of the elite on
the other.

Lieutenant Kenyon was describing a unique subregion on the southwestern
frontier of the Segovias. The area around Somotillo (Map 1E), dominated by an
entrenched landed oligarchy, cattle ranches, a border-oriented political culture, and illicit
petty trading (smuggling and contraband), was distinct from the rest of the Segovias,
even from the border regions further north. Kenyon said he saw invariable laziness; here
he was also commenting on the unique qualities of the region's political-cultural space, a
region in which many were able to make a living by subverting the law of the dominant
culture, by smuggling, pilfering, hunting, moonshining, robbing, in the service of oneself,
one's family, a select community of allies -- friends, neighbors, local patriarchs.

Across the Segovias, the rural poor may have been poor, but they were neither
lazy nor ignorant nor primitive, as the terms are commonly understood. Their forms of
knowledge and ways of life were products of the history and culture of the land on which
they lived. Campesinos knew about what mattered most to them. They knew about
surviving in a harsh and violent world, a world in which life was precarious, in which
injustice, suffering and death were never too distant. Most Segovian campesinos, unlike
most Somotillo-area ranch hands, traders and smugglers, scraped and pulled a living out
of the mountain soil; they were unequivocally not "invariably lazy," for if they were they
would soon perish. Nor is it likely that a full third of them were thieves. Otherwise the
lieutenant's observations were fairly generalizable. Life in the Segovias was hard, the
people tough. Violence was ubiquitous. Politics probably was given as the motive for all
crime. "Murdering and maiming with arms and machetes" were, as we shall see, "very
common."

The Segovias constituted a particular kind of political-cultural space out of which
the Sandino Rebellion emerged and within which it remained embedded, a kind of geo-
social milieu with its own long and rich history of multiple and overlapping struggles,
and along with them, its own idioms and traditions of struggle, its own beliefs and practices and ways of thinking and doing that shaped events in countless ways. An understanding of that milieu begins with the land.

The Segovias: Physical and human landscape

Maps can be deceptive, but they are a good place to start. In a standard two-dimensional representation of Central America, the region of north-central Nicaragua looks like a very small corner of a rather small country. According to an approximate 1928 Marine Corps estimate, the Segovias comprised some 4000 square miles, a figure that corresponds closely to calculations made from several maps. But the region is dominated by mountains, not plains. According to one reliable estimate, some seventy percent of the land in the western Segovias slopes at thirty degrees or greater; for the region as a whole the figure probably exceeds eighty percent.\(^4\) For students of the region, bird's-eye calculations are of far lesser moment than total surface area. A conservative estimate of total land surface area indicated on Map 3.1 falls in the range of 20,000 to 30,000 square miles, roughly equal to the surface area of half to three-quarters of the state of Ohio, scrunched up and made to fit into an area the size of Connecticut.\(^5\) An enormous amount of space is packed into this small corner of this small Central American country -- and this does not include the vast wildernesses to the east.

In the 1920s and 30s, the Segovias were composed of the departments of Nueva Segovia, Estelí, western Jinotega, and northwestern Matagalpa (the northernmost parts of Chinandega and León departments, including the Somotillo area, were sometimes included).\(^6\) Varying in elevation from 1000 to 5000 feet above sea level, the region was

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4. CIERA, p. 31.
5. Estimate of land surface area based on mathematical calculations and travels around the area.
6. "Departments" in Nicaragua are akin to states in the United States. From Independence the department of Nueva Segovia was composed of what are now Nueva Segovia, Estelí, and Madriz; the department of Estelí was created in 1892, the department of Madriz in 1936 from the southern portion of Nueva Segovia; see Guillén de Herrera, p. 230.
(and is) characterized by a bewilderingly intricate and variegated physical and human geography: steep mountains and volcanos, some rising several thousand feet above the surrounding terrain; countless hills, ridges and escarpments separating myriad rivers and streams, dells and valleys, canyons and gorges; vast expanses of thick, almost impenetrable tropical forest and jungle; large rolling plains and rocky, semi-arid savannas; all interspersed with fields of corn, beans, sugarcane, vegetable gardens, groves of fruit trees, bananas, guineo, plantain, coffee farms and cattle pastures, and crisscrossed by countless footpaths and trails. "We passed through cattle pastures and valleys and villages," wrote the engineer Camilo Castellón, who reportedly supervised the construction of the Limay-Ocotal-San Albino road in 1922,

through deep canyons, passing over considerable heights colored as much by their rugged topography as their vegetation, through forest and jungle, vast stands of gigantic pines, virgin mountains, raging torrents, thickets and moors, plains and ravines, gorges and rivers and streams . . . It is, in the end and without exaggeration, a zone in which nature is present in all of its grandeur and splendor.7

Don Camilo saw only one tiny part of the region. The Segovias were and are remarkably rugged, complex, intricate, diverse, and variable, qualities that are difficult to appreciate without actually seeing the region first-hand.

The history of the Segovias remains to be written; a comprehensive survey could easily run to several volumes in length.8 This is no less true for its sub-regions, each of which is characterized by its own unique historical geography -- what are called here the western, northeastern, southeastern, and southern Segovias.

**The western Segovias, or the Ocotal region.** Site of the oldest Spanish settlements in north-central Nicaragua, the western Segovias are bordered on the north

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8. For example, in 1984 the Agrarian Reform Institute (CIERA-MIDINRA) published a 485-page study of the agrarian history of the western Segovias -- an impressive work that excluded, among other things, most of the region (including what are called here the eastern, southern and southeastern Segovias), as well as most of the political and cultural history of the corner of the Segovias on which it did focus. This is not to fault the excellent work of the authors, but to illustrate the enormous complexity of the region and its history.
and west by the Honduran departments of Paraiso and Choluteca, on the south and southwest by the Lacustrine Depression of Chinandega and León, with its low, irregular rainfall and infertile, talpetate soils, and on the east by the more sparsely settled and wetter eastern Segovias.⁹ (see Maps 3.2a to 3.2g)

A recent agrarian history of the western Segovias offers the following periodization scheme which can serve as an approximate guide for the whole of the Segovias:¹⁰

I. Pre-Colombian period
II. From Conquest to the end of the 19th century
III. From 1890 to 1940: enclosure of the lands
IV. From 1940 to 1979: intensified capitalist offensive
V. From 1979 through the 1980s: rupture of the old system

Archaeological evidence indicates that the western Segovias supported a relatively dense sedentary population prior to conquest. Gold first attracted the Spaniards into the area, though the indigenous mines near what are now Macuelizo and Santa María were costly to work and soon abandoned. By the late 16th century, firmly ensconced within León's sphere of influence, the region became an important source of pine lumber and tar resin for the shipbuilding industry of Realejo (now Corinto), the busiest port of the Central American Pacific coast. Pine forests still blanket much of the region, though since the 1940s and 50s deforestation has been severe in many areas.¹¹

From conquest until the last decades of the 19th century, the chief economic activities were slash-and-burn agriculture and animal husbandry carried out by the numerically small and materially impoverished indigenous communities (comunidades indígenas) of the area (including Mosonte, Palacagüina, Litelpaneca (Telpaneca), Yalaguina, Totagalpa, San Lucas, Tepesomo (Somoto), and others). Conquest reduced the population of the western Segovias to only a few thousands; recovery was

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⁹ See Radell, ch. 1.
¹⁰ CIERA, p. 19 ff.
¹¹ Radell, ch. 1-2; CIERA, ch. 2. According to CIERA, pp. 45-47, the towns of Somoto, Totagalpa, Mozonte, Yalaguina, Condega, and others in the western Segovias predate the Conquest.
MAP 3.2a: The Segovias: Physiographic regions
(source: Radell, 1969: 6).

MAP 3.2b: The Segovias: Topography
(source: Radell, 1969: 7).
MAP 3.2c: The western Segovias: Roads and settlements
(source: CIERA 1984).
MAP 3.2d: The western Segovias: Geology
(source: CIERA, 1984).

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MAP 3.2e: The western Segovias: Topography
(source: CIERA, 1984).
MAP 3.2f: The western and northeastern Segovias: Average annual rainfall (source: CIERA, 1984).
exceedingly gradual. Indigenous communities, granted status as corporations, were linked to the Spanish Crown and local Spanish and creole elites through a variety of surplus extraction mechanisms, or forms of tribute, paid in labor and in kind. Subsistence crops, mainly corn and beans, were produced on several types of communal lands. From around the middle of the 18th century, hacien das devoted primarily to cattle and owned by wealthy landowners (terrenatientes) began to emerge in the area, particularly in the rocky, semi-arid region between Pueblo Nuevo and Estelí, and further north around what are now Somoto and Ocotal. Around the same time, poor mestizos living at the margins of colonial society began to migrate into the region, building simple huts and planting subsistence food crops, typically in a dispersed settlement pattern and without legal title to the land. These trends continued into the postcolonial period. Cattle pastures and pine forests, interspersed with fields of corn and beans, still dominate the region's land uses.

**The northeastern Segovias, or the El Jicaro region.** Moving east and northeast one enters the El Jicaro region, in the 1920s a transitional zone between the more densely settled west and the vast, unsettled mountain wildernesses to the east, which ran uninterrupted all the way to the Caribbean coast. The climate was wetter, the soils generally richer, and the terrain even more extremely mountainous. Bordered on the north by Honduran mountain wilderness, and on the east and south by the Río Coco, and under the political jurisdiction of Ocotal, this rugged, isolated region was very thinly populated until around the last third of the 19th century. Evidence suggests that land enclosures in the west and south combined with the rise of the gold and silver mining

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12. Population increases in the largest municipalities of the western Segovias indicate extremely slow recovery from the demographic catastrophe of Conquest (source: CIERA, p. 452. Note that these are figures for municipalities, which included rural areas outside the town proper):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pueblo Nuevo</th>
<th>Limay</th>
<th>Somoto</th>
<th>Macuelizo</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>5194</td>
<td>4129</td>
<td>5907</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>12,280</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
industry led to dramatic population increases from the 1880s, and particularly after 1900. (The growth of the mining economy in the region is explored in greater detail in the following chapter.) From the 1880s, dispossessed Indians from the western Segovias and the Matagalpa-Jinotega highlands and poor mestizos from elsewhere in the republic began migrating into the area at an accelerating rate. At the same time, wealthy landowners from Ocotal, Somoto, Pueblo Nuevo, Estelí, and elsewhere began increasingly to "denounce" or claim the best lands and the most promising mining sites in the region. Coffee production boomed in the sub-regions centered on San Juan de Telpaneca (today sometimes called San Juan del Río Coco), and further north, around Jalapa. To an even greater extent than the western Segovias, the local economy was geared toward smuggling and contraband, especially tobacco, aguardiente (cane and/or corn liquor), arms to and from Honduras and the east coast along the Río Coco (usually navigable past Santa Cruz, now Vigía).

**The southeastern Segovias, or the Jinotega region.** Moving south across the Río Coco and traversing a region of mixed pine forests, cattle ranches and farmland, one enters the more densely populated southeastern Segovias, centered on the towns of Yalí, San Rafael del Norte, La Concordia, Los Robles, and Jinotega. Like its northern neighbor, the climate is wet, the soils generally fertile, and the mountains unrelentingly rugged. The region is bordered on the north and northeast by the Ríos Coco and Pantasma, on the east by wilderness (in the 1920s the mountainous zone east of the headwaters of the Tuma and Pantasma Rivers was a virtually uninhabited tropical rainforest), on the southeast and south by the highlands of Matagalpa and Chontales, on the southwest by the drier, more open land of the southern Segovias, and on the west by the Cordilleras de Yalí and Miraflor, beyond which one begins to enter the western Segovias. The Jinotega highlands, like the western Segovias, had a small indigenous population through the colonial period that was augmented by a substantial influx of poor, middling, and wealthy mestizos migrants from around the middle of the 19th
century. From the 1890s coffee production boomed in the region immediately east of a line from San Rafael to Matagalpa, with its geographic center more or less at Alex Potter’s coffee farm Los Milagros (Map 5E). Large tracts of land, some uninhabited and some long settled by indigenous communities, were purchased or claimed by foreign immigrants, particularly Germans and British.\textsuperscript{13} By the 1920s the region exhibited an intricate mixture of surviving \textit{comunidades indígenas}, large and medium-sized coffee farms, and small-to-medium-sized peasant communities, villages, hamlets, and homesteads.

\textbf{The southern Segovias.} The southern frontier of the Segovias, the towns and hinterlands of Estelí, La Trinidad, San Isidro, Sebaco, Ciudad Darío, San Juan de Limay, El Sauce, Villanueva, Somotillo, San Francisco de Guajiniquilapa, was generally drier, more open, less mountainous, and oriented more toward cattle ranching than subsistence agriculture. The southern Segovias was among the first regions to fall under the political orbit of León during the colonial period, and remained a hotbed of political intrigue and struggle well into the 20th century.

\textbf{The Honduran border and the Río Coco.} Two other geographic features of the Segovias deserve mention. The first is the Honduran border: from near Somotillo in the southwest to Jalapa and Cifuentes in the northeast, the nearly two hundred miles of border was an elemental and vitally important part of the history and political culture of the region. Indeed, except in a region adjacent to an international border, a rebellion against US intervention would probably not have been possible. The key feature of the border was its semi-porosity: civilians and Sandinistas routinely crossed back and forth without hindrance, while the Marines-Guardia were stopped cold. (Ironically, this same dynamic worked \textit{against} latter-day Sandinistas in their prosecution of the \textit{contra} war in the 1980s.) The border itself was fluid and ill-defined even in long-settled, well-populated areas. "Espino lies on the edge of the top of a high mountain facing the Coco

\textsuperscript{13} See Houwald, pp. 269-296, and Guerrero (1966).
River," wrote one Marine lieutenant of the small border pueblo of twenty houses and sixty people. "Two stone piles separated about forty yards apart are supposed to indicate the Honduran-Nicaraguan boundary lines. This line runs through the center of the town."

Most residents of the Honduran side were Nicaraguan.14

By the 1920s the Honduran border region had a long and variegated history of smuggling, outlawry, gang violence, and political intrigue. Armed gangs flourished. Some were independent brigands. Most were connected to regional bosses and revolutionary movements against the government -- of either Nicaragua or Honduras -- exploiting political refuge on the other side of the border to organize men and materiel. From 1922 to 1924, for instance, the León daily El Centroamericano regularly carried brief news items on bands of armed men crossing back and forth across the border, particularly between Somotillo and San Marcos de Colón, the capital of Honduran department of Choluteca.15 From 1928 to 1932 the population of San Marcos swelled with Conservative political refugees fleeing Sandinista violence, while Danlí and neighboring towns swelled with Liberals fleeing Sandinistas and Sandinistas fleeing the Marines and Guardia. In practice the Segovias did not stop at the border; rather, people on both sides were enmeshed in a broader political culture which revolved, in large part, around the semi-porosity of the border itself. In this sense, a comprehensive historical survey of the region would go well beyond the border to include Honduran towns and villages adjacent to the Segovias, a task made difficult by the biases of the documents.

The other major geographic feature of the region that should be mentioned was the Río Coco, which originates near San Marcos de Colón, flows past Ocotal, Telpaneca,

15. E.g., on 19 Feb. 1922 an armed band of Hondurans under Ramón Romero Rodríguez was reported near Somotillo; on 1 April, 500 "Honduran revolutionaries" were reported in San Francisco de Guajiniquilapa; on 12 May, 200 men under Honduran General Martínez were reported in Nicaraguan territory north of Ocotal; on 8 July revolutionary bands were reported near Somotillo; on 6 January 1924, 300 Honduran troops were reported just outside of Somoto; on 8 Feb. 1924, hundreds of Honduran refugees were reported in and around Ocotal; and so on. Such reports continued at least until early 1933.
and Quilalí, through the tropical rain forests of the Atlantic Coast region, and empties into the Caribbean at Cabo Gracias a Dios. The Coco served as a major artery of men, arms, and ammunition throughout the Rebellion, providing another vital link to the outside world and making it possible to partially incorporate the indigenous peoples of the Atlantic Coast region into the struggle.¹⁶

**Planting and harvest cycles.** The rainy season, as a general rule, extends from mid-May to mid-November (Nicaraguans call the rainy season "winter" and the dry season "summer," though to avoid confusion the customary designations for the northern hemisphere will be used here¹⁷). Corn (*maíz*), the staple grain, is usually planted once a year, just before the onset of the rains, and harvested just after the rains have ceased. Beans (*frijoles*), the staple legume and the principal source of protein, are usually planted two or three times a year, around September, December, and June. In most locales the coffee picking season extends from around mid-November to mid-February, though in some areas it can extend into March or even April. As these agricultural rhythms suggest, seasonal labor bottlenecks occur at least twice a year, in May and June and again from November to January, though in fact *campesinos* are always working hard -- there was always too much work and not enough time to do it in. Most peasants enjoyed access to a wide variety of fruits (oranges, guayavas, papayas, avocados, mellons, squashes, peppers, more than a dozen kinds of bananas and plantains) and vegetables (leafy and tuberous); most also worked a small plot of sugar cane, kept cows for milk and homemade cheese (*cuajada*, another staple), and kept as many chickens and pigs as circumstances permitted. The principal agricultural implement was the Collins machete.¹⁸

¹⁷. I was told by the peasants with whom I lived and worked in a very wet part of Jinotega department that there were three seasons: winter (May to October -- lots of rain), followed by fall (November to January -- rain tapering off), followed by summer (February to April -- no rain).
¹⁸. Based on fieldwork in the area; see also Porras (1962).
Trade networks. From the 1880s to the 1930s, most rural commerce was done by pack train and bull cart. Manufactured goods, mostly clothes and farm implements, were sold in most towns by a small class of traders and merchants, while agricultural goods and minerals, mostly coffee and gold, were hauled out. It was common to see a train of fifteen or twenty mules loaded with coffee or other goods wending its way through the mountains. "Much activity was noted throughout the whole area [around Matagalpa and Jinotega]," observed Captain Rowell of the Aircraft Squadron in mid-February 1928 in a typical report. "Many pack animals, bull carts, and horsemen were observed on all roads throughout the district." Independent mule train contractors, or muleros, made regular circuits throughout the region. Such "legitimate" commerce had long been supplemented by a parallel black market of smuggling and contraband, particularly in tobacco and liquor, which the state sought to tax and regulate heavily, generally without much success. The resguardo de hacienda (tax agents) were constantly on the prowl for illicit stills and contraband liquor; a sounding of newspapers in the summer of 1918, for instance, revealed in the Limay-Somotillo district more than a dozen stills found and destroyed and their owners arrested.

The Catholic Church. Most Segovian towns had at least one church. At the same time, throughout most of the region the Catholic Church was, on the whole, an institution of marginal importance. The 1920 Census lists thirteen priests in the four departments of the Segovias -- one for every 13,750 persons -- and six of those lived in the town of Matagalpa. Most campesinos never stepped inside a church or saw a priest; only a handful had their children baptized by a priest. The Church owned only a tiny

20. El Centroamericano, June 6 and 12; July 7, 11, 12, 15, and 18; August 6, 10, and 23. July 12 was typical: "In Somotillo there was captured on the property of Teodoro Palma a still for moonshine (una fabrica de cususa) with 150 liters mixed, with its apparatus and accessories . . . There was captured in the house of Ursulo López another cususa still with 35 liters mixed, one of cususa, and the corresponding apparatus and accessories." Kickbacks and bribes were probably an intimate part of this contraband culture, and thus there might have been more to these arrests than meets the eye.
amount of land. At the same time, Christianity as popular religion, as a body of popular beliefs and practices embodied in festivals and patron saints' days and tied to the agricultural calendar, was an integral part of rural life. Sandino was strongly anti-clerical; he was not, however, anti-Christian, attributes which mirrored Segovian society.\textsuperscript{21}

**Historical demography and social structure on the eve of the Rebellion, c. 1880-1925**

In 1898 the total population of all of western Nicaragua was estimated at slightly more than 400,000 inhabitants. In the 1920 census, this figure reached 600,000, a substantial increase, though neither can be taken as more than marginally reliable. The following table provides a population breakdown for the four departments comprising the Segovias for the years 1898 and 1920\textsuperscript{22}:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N. Segovia</th>
<th>Jinotega</th>
<th>Matagalpa</th>
<th>Estelí</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>32,642</td>
<td>37,653</td>
<td>29,895</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>67,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>42,685</td>
<td>27,205</td>
<td>78,226</td>
<td>30,515</td>
<td>178,631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the departments of Jinotega and Matagalpa included large areas that were (and are) not considered part of the Segovias, one might estimate the total population of the Segovias in both periods at between 70,000 and 80,000 persons -- a ballpark figure reasonably close to a 1929 Marine Corps estimate of 73,000.\textsuperscript{23}

In 1920, fifteen to twenty percent of Segovianos lived in towns, whose populations are listed below\textsuperscript{24}:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>1920 pop.</th>
<th>Town</th>
<th>1920 pop.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matagalpa</td>
<td>4,471</td>
<td>La Concordia</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{21} E.g., see Mora (1984), Girardi (1987).
\textsuperscript{22} Sources: Niederlein (1898) and Censo de 1920. Jinotega's apparent population decrease was probably caused by the creation of the department of Estelí out of the southwestern corner of Jinotega; the increase in Matagalpa's population was probably due to considerable undercounting of Indigenous Communities in the 1898 figures. "Total" refers not to the Segovias as a whole but to the aggregate population of these departments, not all parts of which were considered part of the Segovias.
\textsuperscript{23} General Data, Northern Area, Rossell, 1 Dec. 1929, NA127/205/2/16D.
\textsuperscript{24} Source: Censo de 1920.
Estelé 2,809  Totogalpa 334
Jinotega 2,422  Condega 323
Ocotal 1,418  Ciudad Antigua 252
Somoto 1,217  Yalí 249
Pueblo Nuevo 1,176  San Fernando 236
Limay 992  Murra 223
San Lucas 720  Palacaguina 218
La Trinidad 640  Macuelizo 204
Telpaneca 487  Quilalí 172
San Rafael del Norte 462  Yalagüina 149
El Jicaro 420  Mosonte 93
Dipiltó 414  Santa María 84
Jalapa 410

In a recent volume, US social historians Steven Hahn and Jonathon Prude, in an effort to distinguish between rural and urban areas, "propose a cutoff figure of approximately 5000," a figure that suits Segovian realities nicely, since by most any measure even the largest towns in the Segovias were fundamentally rural in outlook and orientation.25

According to the 1920 Census, more than ninety percent of Segovianos were employed as domestic laborers (oficios domésticos, the category for women), were without employment (sin oficios, the category for children), agriculturalists (agricultores), or wage laborers (jornaleros). A tiny fraction were listed as professionals -- Estelé department, for example, boasted one priest, four lawyers, seven doctors, and eighteen teachers, out of a total population of 30,515. A slightly larger fraction were listed as artisans -- one jewelry maker, two blacksmiths, 20 masons, 27 shoemakers, 36 mechanics, 37 tailors, 73 carpenters, and a handful of others. In Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, and Matagalpa departments the numbers were comparable.

Most people, in short -- probably between eighty and ninety percent, though it is impossible to know for sure -- lived outside the towns in the rural hamlets and caseríos that dominated the region, living on and working the land. Most were also jacks-of-all-trades; if they needed a new leather harness for their horse or mule, they made it; if their axehandle broke they fashioned another. All were tied to the market: if their machete

broke, they purchased (or borrowed or traded for) another. It is possible to devise typologies for different types of rural producers, though rural social relations were (and are) so complex and malleable that fixed categories end up bearing little resemblance to the realities they are supposed to describe.

One should, however, distinguish globally between three major strata: wealthy farmers, middling farmers, and poor peasants. The wealthy, one or two percent of the population, owned substantial properties, generally lived in towns, employed others to work for them, and were well connected politically. A broad sector of middling farmers and ranchers, a segment difficult to define but impossible to ignore, comprised perhaps ten to twenty percent of the total; more of these first two groups in a moment. This leaves the category of campesinos, comprising from eighty to ninety percent of the populace.

*Campesinos* were divided by class, ethnicity, and politics. The most important class distinctions were between permanent wage laborers, seasonal wage laborers, and those able to avoid wage labor altogether. A small fraction of the rural labor force, in the neighborhood of five percent, worked as permanent laborers, or *mozos*, on commercially-oriented farms, ranches, and haciendas. Data from the 1950s and 1960s indicates that permanent laborers on coffee farms usually comprised less than ten percent of the seasonal labor force. A Marine Corps intelligence memorandum of April 1930 concerning a reported "bandit" attack on Carlos Potter's farm in the coffee region east of Jinotega accurately described typical seasonal labor patterns on most coffee farms:

The custom is to lay in supplies during the coffee picking season for the subsistence of the employees, all of which is expended by the end of the season and no more than sufficient for the three of four employees left is maintained. . . . [these include] a mandador [administrator], a cook, and two mozos [workers], which were the only people reported to be on the place.²⁷

²⁷ Matagalpa coffee growers resolution and response, NA127/198/misc. 1930.
Most campesinos engaged in subsistence agriculture for most of the year. Census data for 1920 indicate that, depending upon the region, from one-third to two-thirds of these small-scale producers supplemented subsistence production with seasonal labor on commercial estates. The secondary literature sometimes divides these rural producers into several types, including minifundistas, or property owners with title to a small plot of land insufficient for year-round subsistence; colonos and aparceros, or tenants and sharecroppers, small-scale producers who contracted with local landowners for the right to cultivate a parcel of land, either through a rental or sharecropping arrangement, and who were sometimes obliged to engage in seasonal or periodic labor; precaristas or squatters, who subsisted without legal title to the land or an explicit land-use agreement; and others.

Yet in practice such distinctions usually meant little. Rural social relations were tremendously fluid and variable, such that a single individual could easily fit into all of these categories and more at any given time, enjoying title to a small plot of land, renting or sharecropping on another parcel, squatting on another, subletting a sub-parcel to a relative or neighbor, all the while engaging in seasonal wage labor on local estates for several months of the year. A small minority of rural producers were able to avoid wage labor altogether and subsisted with only tenuous connections to the wider market.

28. According to the 1920 Census, the number of wage laborers (jornaleros) was highest in Estelí Dept. and lowest in Nueva Segovia and Jinotega:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>agricultores</th>
<th>jornaleros</th>
<th>% jornaleros</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estelí</td>
<td>3,410</td>
<td>7,102</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinotega</td>
<td>5,768</td>
<td>2,695</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueva Segovia</td>
<td>9,094</td>
<td>4,001</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matagalpa</td>
<td>9,575</td>
<td>12,851</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30. My own experience on a farm near Yalí pressed this point home. My hosts had owned their land outright since the late 19th century, making things relatively simple, yet land use arrangements and labor exchanges within the extended family were very complex, with the use of specific parcels of land traded for pasturage for cattle and horses, in exchange for the use of a team of oxen for ploughing, in exchange for a portion of the day's production of cheese or milk, in exchange for labor at corn harvest time, in exchange for room and board while the children attended school in town, in exchange for God knows what else; they were unable to trace for me all such informal exchange paths.
economy. "In some sections the Indians own their own land and grow no more than what they require for their immediate consumption," observed one Marine officer, "plus an amount sufficient to trade in to storekeepers in the small towns what is necessary to effect purchases." Completely self-sufficient households and communities, with no links to the wider market economy, probably did not exist. At the same time, in most cases links to the market were tenuous and partial.

_Campesinos_ typically lived in dispersed, isolated mountain hamlets surrounded by forests, fields and pastures and honeycombed by trails (Graphics 3.3a and 3.3b). "The houses in Santa Rosa are scattered helter-skelter in groups of from one to four in approximately a three mile area," wrote Lieutenant Bellinger of a typical mountain hamlet southwest of Somoto. The boundaries of such settlements were usually fuzzy and ill-defined. "Points on map shown as Chamaste and Ojoche are misleading," reported a Marine captain in 1930. "Chamaste is known by the natives as an area extending in a belt about three miles wide along the north bank of the Coco River . . . Ojoche is the entire vicinity of Ojoche Mountain. There are no definite boundaries."

_Agrarian change in the Segovias from the mid-19th century_

E. Bradford Burns argues that, from Independence to the early 1840s, "In contrast to the feuding patriarchs, Indians and mestizos alike experienced a period of relative tranquility, . . . gain[ing] an opportunity to withdraw into their folk societies." In view of the customary effects of civil warfare on crops, livestock, and human lives, this tranquility was probably quite relative indeed. The Age of Anarchy, Burns suggests, did serve to forestall an emerging capitalist social order, from the perspective of the Segovian rural poor probably its most enduring benefit.

31. General Data: Northern Area, 1 Dec. 1929, NA127/205/2/16D.
32. Patrol, Bellinger, Somoto, 7 Nov. 1927, NA127/43A/20.
33. Patrol, Good, Quilalf, 3 July 1930, NA127/202/13/56.
34. Burns, p. 146; elsewhere (p. 35) he acknowledges that during this period, "all too often the peasants . . . gave their lives for causes that mystified them."
GRAPHIC 3.3a: A TYPICAL MOUNTAIN HAMLET

"BUENA VISTA"

ZONA DE "LA RICA"

Bird's eye view of Los Angeles, three miles due east of San Juan de Telpaneca, drawn by Capt. Stent, 10 April 1930 (source: NA127/43A/30/9.10).
After the end of the National War in 1858, and particularly by the mid-1870s, the pace of rural social change in the Segovias began to accelerate dramatically. As was the case throughout most of Latin America, a liberal, modernizing elite at the head of an increasingly interventionalist state, armed with its most important weapon -- the law -- worked relentlessly to create the conditions for capital accumulation in the countryside.

There are many ways to tell the story of the growth of the coffee economy in the Segovias from the late 19th century. One of the most revealing is through the prism of primitive accumulation, the process of organized theft and violence against the land, labor, and lifeways of the indigenous communities of Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, and Matagalpa on the part of coffee growers and the state. Alongside this, there is a related story about the growth of a middling sector of farmers and ranchers on vacant lands purchased or claimed from the government, lands which were not stolen from indigenous communities and on which Indians were not required to labor. Another story centers on political struggles between factions of the elite in the towns. All were aspects of the same general and uneven process of social transformation, driven by the imperatives and ideologies of liberal capitalism, pushing and grinding against more ancient and no less persistent structures of folk and indigenous community and patriarchal oligarchy.

Beginning in 1877, a series of laws were passed designed to stimulate coffee production, privatize Indian lands, and exercise greater control over the rural labor force. Jeffrey Gould's pioneering work (1992, 1993) traces the contours of this convoluted history, offering a compelling glimpse at both the liberal vision that such laws were designed to realize and the on-the-ground realities they confronted and gradually, unevenly transformed.35 Particularly after 1880, the state radically intensified its multi-tiered assault against the land and labor of rural folk in general and indigenous

35. Burns, pp. 234-235, dates the onset of liberal reforms to the 1858 Constitution and the labor law of 1862; Gould (1992) to the law of March 1877, which offered coffee growers five cents per coffee tree planted (it met little success); and CIERA, pp. 103-104, to a law of May 1877, which established the right of Indigenous Communities to privatize and sell communal lands.
communities in particular. Two laws of March 1881 called for the complete abolition of the comunidades, the privatization of all Indian lands, and the effective end to their political autonomy. At the time more than forty percent of the country’s population lived in comunidades; in the department of Matagalpa, the figure was closer to eighty percent, while in Jinotega and the western Segovias it probably did not exceed thirty percent. The 1881 laws expanded forced labor legislation, authorizing agricultural judges to capture workers who abandoned their jobs or failed to fulfill labor obligations, a logical extension of legislation dating back to 1862. By the 1880s, primitive accumulation in the Segovias had begun in earnest.36

Indigenous resistance to this multi-pronged offensive took many forms, from fence-cutting, arson, and murder to popular uprisings. The most memorable instance of the latter was the Matagalpa Indian Uprising of 1881, which, as Gould demonstrates, was primarily a reaction against forced labor on public works, and not against dispossession from the land or the growth of the coffee economy.37 From one to two thousand Indians were killed in the Uprising; many thousands more fled into the mountains. Of no lesser moment, the internal unity of the Matagalpa comunidad began rapidly to disintegrate.

From 1881, and particularly from 1889, the destruction of the economic and political autonomy of indigenous communities emerged as a key priority of the national state. The year 1889 saw the passage of two key laws designed to facilitate coffee production in the north-central highlands.38 Under Zelaya (from 1893) these liberal reforms accelerated. In a crucial development, beginning in 1895, the capitanes de cañada, or political leaders of the comunidades, were effectively transformed into agents

36. The data and interpretations in this and the following paragraphs are Gould’s (1992, 1993); see also Biderman (1983), CIERA (1984) and Wheelock (1985a, 1985b).
37. Gould (1992, 1993); by 1881 there were only 50-75 manzanas planted with coffee in Matagalpa, requiring only 30-40 workers, while the Comunidad Indígena had 30,000 members and possessed some 100,000 manzanas of land.
38. Gould (1992, 1993); the first offered five cents per planted coffee tree, minimum of 5000 trees; the second offered 500 manzanas free of charge to any foreigner who planted more than 25,000 trees; forced labor mechanisms were also strengthened.
of the state, provoking fierce conflicts within comunidades and intensifying their economic and political disintegration. During the same year, 1895, a nativistic millenarian revolt erupted in the Matagalpa highlands. Swiftly crushed by the authorities, the movement was emblematic of the wrenching social and cultural changes being experienced by Indians and their communities, and the rural poor generally. Dispossession from the land and forced labor continued, unevenly, from the 1880s to the 1920s.\(^{39}\) In 1904, in opposition to the expanding coffee bourgeoisie, the National Congress formally abolished forced labor, though the measure evidently had minimal impact. In 1909 many Indians joined the Conservatives in the anti-Liberal revolution, though after 1910 the Conservative governments continued the Liberal project of Zelaya, even reestablishing forced labor legislation, off the books since 1904. From 1915 to 1919, the attack against highland indigenous communities entered a new and even more violent phase; a new police force of "rural inspectors" (inspectores rurales) was established; the number of "civil guards" (guardias civiles) was increased dramatically in the coffee zones. In February 1919, succumbing to increasing pressure from coffee growers, the National Assembly reactivated moribund forced labor legislation of 1913; in April 1923, the 1913 law was formally abolished, though forced labor evidently continued unabated. In 1928, during the early stages of the Sandino Rebellion, a new repressive law was introduced which authorized the National Guard to capture delinquent laborers and return them to their employers. In the same year the laws dealing with boletas de ocupación were strengthened, requiring rural laborers to register with specific enterprises and submit proof of employment.\(^{40}\)

\(^{39}\) Gould (personal communication) estimates that from 1895 to 1911, the Comunidades of Matagalpa and Jinotega lost more than 30,000 manzanas of land, slightly more than one-third of their total.

\(^{40}\) Again, the data and interpretations in this paragraph are Gould's (1992, 1993). Boletas de ocupación had existed for some time before 1928, being mentioned occasionally in the newspapers, e.g., El Centroamericano, 9 July 1922.
This brief sketch of an extremely complex process is intended to highlight several points. First, following Gould, the history of highland indigenous communities illustrates to a much greater extent than is conventionally recognized a high degree of relative state autonomy. The predominant interpretation of Nicaraguan agrarian history, which tends to model the state as the pawn of economic factions and partisan political interests, tends not to be supported by the evidence. Second, and related to this, regions and sub-regions were extremely variable politically, though not particularly mutable. Groups with a Chamorroista bent -- like the Mosonte or Matagalpa comunidades, for instance -- tended to stay that way. The political strategies followed by individuals or classes or class fractions need to be ferreted out of the evidence, not assumed a priori; if there is one rule for students of Segovian politics, it is that political relations were more complicated than they might at first appear to have been. Third, while the details of the process are often obscure, the half-century before the Sandino Rebellion witnessed profound social, economic, and political upheavals across the Segovias, most all of which were experienced by the majority of the rural poor as detrimental to their already precarious way of life. Despite the need for specificity and avoidance of blanket assertions, it is plainly the case that large numbers of Segovian Indians, Indian communities, and campesinos had many reasons for harboring deepfelt animus against the state and its local agents, landowners, and the dominant classes in general. Most agrarian grievances evidently stemmed less from dispossession from the land per se than related processes of forced labor and labor control. At the same time, while the process of primitive accumulation in the Segovias did accelerate dramatically in the half-century before 1930, and while CIERA (1984) is doubtless correct in labelling this period the "age of enclosures," the slippage in their own use of the term reveals the discontinuous and uneven quality of the process.41 As Frederick Cooper and others observe with respect to

41. E.g., in their initial synopsis of their periodization scheme the authors assert that on the one hand the enclosures of communal lands and the growth of an agro-export economy generated tremendous peasant support for the Sandino Rebellion, while two
African agrarian history, the process of divorcing direct producers from the means of production is rarely linear, continuous, or even. The evidence is strong that, except in specific subregions, particularly in the El Jícaro mining region and the zone of coffee expansion east of Jinotega, the majority of rural folk did enjoy substantial access to land. At the same time, across the Segovias the land and labor of the rural poor were increasingly at the center of fierce struggles, particularly in these zones, where improved and cultivated lands were commonly among the first to be expropriated.

In the half-century before Sandino, in short, more traditional forms of social organization that had endured throughout the long colonial period were undergoing a series wrenching and radical transformations. This is of course a dicey issue; no figures are available for all of the indices traditionally used to measure poverty: income levels, nutritional intake levels, infant mortality rates, etc. We do know that not one in fifty peasants could read or write, that most went barefoot, lived in simple thatched huts, and toiled from dawn to dusk in the fields most every day of the year. We also know that none of this represented anything new. While more traditional economic and political structures were neither just nor tranquil, they were probably preferred, by most rural folk, to the radical transformations they were experiencing. Were it possible to travel back in time to the year 1925 and survey the opinions of the rural populace (assuming they would speak honestly to a roving pollster, a fantastic notion), it seems likely that a large majority of adult Segovianos would say that their quality of life had deteriorated markedly during their lifetimes, and certainly since their fathers' and grandfathers' days.

By the mid-1920s, most campesinos were worse off than within living memory.

Paragraphs later they acknowledge that up until the 1940s, "the region had few relations with the external world, and its transformations were in large part endogenous." CIERA, pp.17-18.


44. According to the 1920 Census, illiteracy in Estelí, Matagalpa, Jinotega, and Nueva Segovia departments was 85%, a figure that was probably low.
Other processes paralleled the violence of primitive accumulation. From around the 1860s, and particularly from the 1880 and 90s, the growth of the coffee economy led to the emergence across the region of a broad strata of middling, modernizing farmers. Most did not steal their land from previous owners, since even as late as the 1910s and 20s, large parts of the Segovias remained tierras baldias or uncultivated, devoid of settlement and sold by the state for the equivalent of pennies per acre. Documents in the Marine-Guardia archives attest to the existence of a broad sector of small-scale but relatively prosperous farmers, or finqueros, by the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1919 in the environs of San Rafael del Norte, for instance, probate proceedings for the estate of one of San Rafael's most affluent citizens, Natividad Rivera, revealed that he had been the owner of ten relatively modest properties: one called El Carrizal, consisting of sixteen acres of pasture enclosed with barbed wire, worth $160; another called El Ingenio consisting of sixty manzanas of fenced land, nine manzanas of sugar cane, 1500 coffee trees "in poor condition," pasture grounds, "a machinery house for the sugar cane with its respective installation," worth $1600; a house in town; and others. Altogether they were worth about $4200. Beyond the northern boundary of El Ingenio were the properties of Juan Piñeda and Ezequiel Arauz; to the south, of Jacinto Lumbi; and to the east, of Luis Ubeda. Each of these individuals, in turn, owned other properties in the immediate vicinity, as did Dr. López García, Pedro Carmen Piñeda, José Ramón Piñeda, Santos Rivera, Sixtos Rivera, Doña Pastora Rivera, Basilio Castro, Julian Castro, Anastacio Castro, Santos Arauz, Juan María Monzón, Eusebio Zelaya, Rosa Herrera, and others all residents of the little frontier town of San Rafael del Norte. In the early 1980s, Pedro Antonio Arauz described these and others like them as the "better class of Sanrafaelíña society." These were not wealthy terratenientes; nor were they impoverished peasants.

45. Pedro Antonio Arauz, IES ms. "Francisco Estrada."
Nor, by the 1920s, was their social type a rarity; more than two thousand such parcels of land had been registered in the municipality of San Rafael by 1917.46

Such recently established, modernizing, middling *nouveau* farmers dotted the countryside, clustered in specific sub-regions, representatives of an expanding segment of rural producers who owned from around fifty to several hundred acres and geared most production to the market. Their farms were concentrated in a band of territory extending roughly from north and south from the Matagalpa-Jinotega highlands, through the San Rafael and Colon Valley region, and north to beyond San Juan de Telpaneca and Telpaneca, as indicated on the accompanying map (Map 3.4) -- a frontier zone of sorts, much of it lacking an indigenous population and on the edge of settlement (east and northeast of this zone was mostly uninhabited). Moving north from San Rafael del Norte, for instance, there was the family of Manuel, Cusegene, Domingo, and G. Escobar, whose father owned a small coffee farm called Zancudal near La Pavona, north of Yalí47; a few miles east of Zancudal was the coffee farm Las Nubes, owned by Gilberto Centeno48; a few miles to the south, in the El Tigre Valley, was the coffee farm

46. Testimony #138, English trans., probate proceedings for Natividad Rivera, San Rafael del Norte, 27 September 1919, NA127/192/1. I do not know how this document got into the archives, but it is the only one of its kind found there. On the history of San Rafael, see Guerrero (1966), pp. 130-134; see also Chuno Blandón (1988).
47. Manuel Escobar was killed by Sandinistas under Carmen Arauz, who in turn was under Sandinista General Ismael Peralta, in November 1929; according to one report, "the reason they killed Escobar is a personal grudge for having killed Arauz's uncle about two years ago in the finca of Escobar's father at Zancudal, and as revenge they killed Escobar." (Patrol Report, 30 Nov. 1929, E. Marcos, Jinotega, NA127/202/13/55).
48. Somoza, p. 144, also reports Escobar's murder and mutilation. Cusegene, Domingo, and G. Escobar were later reported as civilian guides in the La Pavona region for Marine-GN patrols out of Yalí (e.g., Patrol Report, Alexander, San Rafael, 28 July 1931, NA127/202/14).
48. Gilberto Centeno reportedly had three permanent laborers (*mozos*) and five women working on his finca. According to several reports, the Sandinistas wanted to kill him (Patrol Report, O'Leary, Ocotal 4 July 1930, NA127/202/13/56; Denig, *Diary*, p. 126). In B-2 Report, 30 April 1930, he was reportedly providing information on "bandit" groups to Marine-GN forces (NA127/43A/4). He was later suspected of being protected by Sandinistas and "trying to work both ends against the middle." Patrol Report, Fagan, Yalí, 28 August 1930, NA127/202/13/56.
by Sandinistas and "trying to work both ends against the middle." Patrol Report, Fagan, Yali, 28 August 1930, NA127/202/13/56.
LIST 3.5: SELECT LIST OF LARGEST COFFEE GROWERS IN JINOTEGA-MATAGALPA HIGHLANDS, c. 1930\textsuperscript{49}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>NATIONALITY</th>
<th>PROPERTIES</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L. Bloomquist</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>La Corona</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yasicsa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Frauenberger</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Monte Grande</td>
<td>95,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Frauenberger</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Algovia</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.J. Hawkins</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>La Pita</td>
<td>90,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Garita</td>
<td>48,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil Hawkins</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>La Isla</td>
<td>150,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Esconcia</td>
<td>50,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer Richardson</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Santa Emilia</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ester E. Rourk</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>La Cuesta</td>
<td>60,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy E. Rourk</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>El Paraiso</td>
<td>120,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gladys M. Smith</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>La Piñeda</td>
<td>85,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alejo Sullivan</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Buena Vista</td>
<td>120,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El Canton</td>
<td>30,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Davies</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>La Paciencia</td>
<td>100,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El Guapotal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yasicsa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federico Fley</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>El Tapaselito</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Haslam</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Guasaca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos Potter</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>La Fundadora</td>
<td>160,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>San Antonio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex C. Potter</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>Aran Juez</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Los Milagros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique Trewin</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>La Constancia</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael Quan</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>La Oriental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Colonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Boedeker</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>La Mascota</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>El Arenal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Bösche</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>La Harmonia</td>
<td>125,000 trees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{49} Sources: properties with number of coffee trees specified taken from "Data re: Coffee Plantations in Matagalpa District," D.A. Stafford, Matagalpa, 18 December 1930, MCHC-PPC/J.C. Smith/7; the same box contains a list of "principal haciendas de café de la comprensión municipal de Jinotega," undated, c. 1930. Other sources include "List of foreign owned property in the Matagalpa Jinotega district," untitled, c. 1930 and Matagalpa Coffee Growers' Resolution and response, April 1930, in NA127/198/1, and intelligence, patrol, and combat reports in NA127 too numerous to list. On Germans in the region see Houwald, pp. 269-296.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juan Bolt</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Molino Norte</td>
<td>50,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Grecia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Las Cañas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Frenzel</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Santa Ana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrique Gilke</td>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guillermo Húper</td>
<td>German</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Mierish</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>La Sajonia</td>
<td>40,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Las Lajas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Stadthagen</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Palo Blanco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Corinto Finca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberto Vogl</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>La Bavaria</td>
<td>30,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Vita</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>La Laguna</td>
<td>100,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Rosa</td>
<td>100,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.D. Amort</td>
<td>Swiss</td>
<td>La Viola</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>40,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Cumplida</td>
<td>60,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Garita</td>
<td>40,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvador Amador</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>San Rafael</td>
<td>64,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andres Arauz</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>La Vencedora</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benicio Castro</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>El Mojón</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvador Cisne</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>Santa Rita</td>
<td>100,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvador Cuadra</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>El Gorrión</td>
<td>100,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herman Delgado</td>
<td>Nicarguna</td>
<td>Santa Josefina</td>
<td>140,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen Herrera</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>El Yanqui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francisco Navarro</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>Las Placeres</td>
<td>140,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigoberto Navarro</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>Babilonia</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustavo Noguera</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adan Piñeda</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>El Sisle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolas Piñeda</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>Volcan Grande</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domingo Portillo</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>Las Mercedes</td>
<td>50,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luis Reyes</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>La Salvadora</td>
<td>80,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago Rivas</td>
<td>Nicaraguan</td>
<td>La Verona</td>
<td>30,000 trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>La Viola</td>
<td>30,000 trees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of Idelfonso Rizo\textsuperscript{49}; a few miles northwest was the ranch Las Delicias, property of Hipolito Olivas\textsuperscript{50}; about a mile west was the ranch and coffee farm Darailí, owned by Moises González\textsuperscript{51}; and so on. Compared to the biggest growers, none of these properties were large, averaging between 1000 to 5000 coffee trees (as opposed to 80,000 to 100,00 or more for the largest). A complete list of such middling coffee growers and cattle ranchers in the Yalí-Jinotega region alone would fill many pages; indeed, most of the place-names on Map 4D, which details this region, describe coffee farms that had been established in the half-century before 1927 (see Appendix A). And many more were evidently too small to appear on the map.

Such middling farmers were not limited to this region, of course. Yet they were less common in the western and southern Segovias, where social relations were dominated more by ancient, entrenched landed families on the one hand, and ancient, entrenched indigenous and village interests on the other. By the mid-19th century there were few tierras baldías left in the Ocotal-Somoto-Limay region; pre-existing production and settlement patterns meant that by the late 19th century the social middle ground was smaller and more precarious, with higher barriers to entry and less room to maneuver.

The region highlighted on Map 3.4 was more of an agricultural frontier, a region in which poor campesinos still predominated but merged into a class of modernizing farmers who had established homesteads during the preceding fifty or so years by dint of free land and hard work. This was less the case in the south and along the Honduran border, though the difference was mainly one of degree.

This group of modernizing, middle-level farmers gradually merged into another strata, more easily identified: the truly wealthy modernizing coffee farmers, composed of

\textsuperscript{49} In 1929, Rizo reportedly employed one permanent worker; Patrol Report, Kaneches, Yalí, 6 May 1929, NA127/212/1; R-2 Report, Ocotal, 12 May 1929, NA127/209/1.
\textsuperscript{50} Patrol Reports, McShane, Darailí, 12 July and 16 July 1929, NA127/212/1; a group of Sandinistas reportedly held two of his sons hostage, and he was ordered to pay $600 for their release.
\textsuperscript{51} See ch. 6, below.
both foreign immigrants and native Nicaraguans -- powerful and ambitious men like the
Italian immigrant José Vita, who successfully expropriated more than 1000 manzanas
from the indigenous community at Yucul, as detailed by Gould (1992). Most such
wealthy landowners were clustered in the Matagalpa-Jinotega highlands. List 3.5 offers a
select accounting of some of the largest foreign and domestic owned coffee plantations in
this region. By the 1920s these growers formed a small, tight-knit, self-conscious class
of elites, evidenced by their incorporation into such organizations as the Jinotega
Chamber of Commerce, the Coffee Planters Association of Matagalpa, the Jinotega
Basketball Club organized by their wives and daughters, and others.52 Just beneath them
in the social hierarchy, with farms interspersed among their own, were hundreds of
smaller, middling farmers aspiring to enter their ranks.

Political struggle in the Segovias before Sandino

In the decades before the Civil War of 1926-1927, violence in the Segovias had
many origins and took many forms. Violence of incalculable magnitude was wrought by
the processes of primitive accumulation and the growth of the coffee economy:
dispossession from the land, anti-Indian racism, forced labor and mechanisms of labor
control, and, reciprocally, by Indian and popular resistance to the attacks on their lands
and lifeways. Gender relations in the countryside were, and remain, fundamentally
inegalitarian and violent.53 More episodic forms of direct physical violence -- assaults,
killings, and murders -- were everyday occurrences across the republic, nearly as
common, in proportion to population, as in the United States in the latter half of the
twentieth century. Much of the violence between men stemmed from disputes over
property, women, or personal or family honor; much of it stemmed from longstanding
family feuds; and much of it was intimately connected to the fabrication and use of

53. If the present, that is, is any guide to the past; based on first-hand observations in the
Segovias.
alcohol. In the absence of firearms, most physical violence in the countryside was committed with knives and machetes. All across the Segovias, machete murders and mutilations of cadavers were relatively commonplace; hundreds of police reports like the following could be cited:

The police agent of El Jicaral . . . reports the capture of the criminal Albino Arbizú, who barbarically murdered Roque Padilla, afterward cutting the body of his victim into many small pieces . . . 54

Or, consider the following remarkable report: in November 1927, US Marine Lieutenant George H. Bellinger was leading an armed patrol of five Marines through the region just south of Somoto when they "were suddenly surprised by a native charging down on us waving a machete in a menacing way.

He had apparently been but recently in a fight, for he was bloody about the neck and front of his shirt and showed fresh scars on his neck and face. We finally managed to stop him and get his war-type machete away from him without anyone being cut up. He had apparently been drinking guarra [cane liquor] and engaged in some kind of brawl along the road. His neck had been cut in the back and was bleeding . . . Before we could hardly say a word the native wheeled about on his horse and commenced whipping it vigorously . . . I called to him to halt but he whipped his horse all the harder.

The lieutenant chased the bleeding drunken native for about 100 yards and was gaining on him "when he suddenly swerved his animal to the left into the bushes.

I again yelled to him to halt two or three times and when he did not I fired upon him aiming low and struck his animal. The native fell off and rushed back the other way, running very fastly. Private Rue went into the bushes and opened fire on him, bringing him down. When we found him his left arm had been badly mangled at the elbow from the shots. At first he bled profusely. We tried to do something for him but he fought us off. He was hostile the entire return trip trying to run away from us and acting pugnacious. The corpsman dressed his wounds and he was taken away by some other natives.

José, the patrol's native guide, said "he thinks the fellow will live," though Lieutenant Richal, in his addendum to the report, disagreed: "I don't see how he can." But José knew more about the Segovias and its inhabitants than Richal; "the fellow" probably did survive.55

54. El Centroamericano, 15 January 1924.
This curious episode stemmed, in part, from the violence surrounding the
cancelled November 1927 municipal elections in the Somoto district.\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, as
Lieutenant Kenyon rightly noted in his report quoted at the outset of this chapter, the
source of the most visible episodes of physical violence, and the principal font of
organized violence in the countryside, was political, a term used here to denote organized
and sustained competitions among and between elites for access to state power, access
achieved through control of local political offices. Across the Segovias, political
patronage, electoral competition, gang warfare, and ritual terror formed different aspects
of a single and many-sided process of local and regional political struggle, a process that
at times could get very nasty indeed, particularly around election times. Drunken
machete riots, like the one in San Isidro in Managua department on 4 October 1928, were
relatively common.\textsuperscript{57} So too was the practice of recruiting private gangs “from among a
lower element known as ‘cirujanos’ [surgeons] because of their skill with machetes and
knives . . . said to be a custom of the authorities preceding every election.”\textsuperscript{58}

The political culture of the Segovias -- by which is meant the bundle of meanings,
signs, rituals, and traditions through which struggles for political power were practiced --
was dominated by a complex system of local and regional bossism, or caudillismo. From
the 19th century, a handful of powerful families, headed by caudillos or political strong-
men, had exercised effective political and military power throughout large parts of the
Segovias, particularly in the west and south. For example, there was Gustavo Paguaga
and the rest of the Paguaga clan in Ocotal, the capital of Nueva Segovia, along with the
Lobo, Gutiérrez, Alvir, and other Conservative families; there was the Liberal Alejandro
Cerda of Pueblo Nuevo, who organized his own army in the Civil War of ’26, served
nominally under Moncada, and had keen ambitions to be president; there was the
notorious Conservative Felipe Machado of Jinotega, and the Liberal Gustavo Noguera,

\textsuperscript{56} Discussed in greater detail in ch. 5, below.
\textsuperscript{58} R-2 Report, Larsen, Managua, 6 May 1928, p. 3, NA127/209/2.
also in Jinotega; there was the Conservative Polidecto Correa of Matagalpa; and so on.\textsuperscript{59} Each senador, each diputado, each jefe político and ministro, of which there were hundreds throughout the 1920s, was a powerful political figure (not all hailed from the Segovias, of course). Combining military power, access to productive resources, and personal charisma, caudillos dominated rural politics through family-based patron-client networks and private irregular armies or gangs. By the 1910s and 20s a complex relationship had evolved between the national state and these regional and sub-regional power-brokers. The precise structure of political authority in the Segovias emerged from a complex process of negotiation between the executive branch of the national state and these powerful regional families. While much of the process remains obscure, its outlines are fairly clear.

In classic liberal tradition, the Constitution of 1912 (following on the heels of the constitutions of 1858 and 1893) divided the powers of the national state into three branches -- executive, legislative, and judicial -- and into three levels -- federal, departmental, and local/municipal. In practice, most political and military power devolved to the federal executive branch, i.e., the president, who in turn appointed trusted allies to the cabinet posts: the Ministerio de Gobernación (Interior Ministry), Ministerio de Hacienda (Treasury Ministry), Ejército Nacional (National Army), Ministerio de Agricultura y Trabajo (Ministry of Agriculture and Labor), and lesser ministries. The head of the Ministerio de Gobernación, in many ways the most powerful cabinet member, in turn appointed departmental comandantes de policía (police chiefs) and jueces de policía (police judges), while the president appointed the jefes políticos (departmental governors), who were usually also comandantes de armas (departmental police chiefs). The national legislative branch was largely excluded from departmental

\textsuperscript{59} On the Ocotal Conservative elite, see ch. 5, below; on Cerda, a Liberal general in the Civil War of ’26, see the Marine-GN investigations into his activities, NA127/209/2. On Felipe Machado, see P.A. Arauz, IES ms., "Falta lo peor"; B-2 Report, 13 May 1929, p. 4, and 13 October 1929, p. 6, NA127/209/1; etc.
and local political affairs; there were no department-level assemblies. The national judicial branch exercised only nominal independence from the executive; the president appointed members of the Corte Suprema (Supreme Court) and jueces distrito (departmental judges). Local and municipal political authority was, in theory, exercised by locally-elected alcaldes (mayors), who in turn appointed local jueces de mesta and jueces de canton (rural judges), but commonly, alcaldes and jueces were either appointed by jefes políticos, or local elections were rigged to assure the election of the hand-picked candidates of the president and the jefes políticos. The precise nature of the relationship between the departmental branch of the Ministerio de Gobernación, the jefes políticos, the alcaldes, and different kinds of jueces was very complex and variable. In practice, however, the reins of political power were ultimately negotiated between two main groups of actors: at the federal level, the president and his circle, and at the local level, powerful families and caudillos (see Map 3.6).

From 1912 to 1924, Conservative control of the national state was mirrored in Conservative control over local political offices -- bitterly contested control that grew increasingly tenuous, particularly after the 1920 elections. Local Conservative caudillos and their allies, in alliance with the Conservative presidents and their circles, were compelled to work with increasing vigor to maintain an effective monopoly of power in the towns and rural areas. Sometimes, local realities, like an especially strong local Liberal leader, compelled compromise and power-sharing. The evidence is strong that the Segovian populace was overwhelmingly Liberal in sentiment (as demonstrated, for example, in electoral returns in 1924, 1928, 1930, and 1932). Yet the Liberals lost the 1920 elections with only 25% of the vote in what has been called one of the most violent and fraudulent elections in Nicaraguan history. Excluded, by and large, from departmental and municipal political posts, Liberal leaders grew increasingly resentful and eager to regain the reins of power. The elections of 1924, won by a Conservative-
Liberal coalition, threw another wrench into this already shaky arrangement.

Conservative President Solórzano was compelled, as a part of a series of agreements reached with his Liberal coalition partner Sacasa, to divide the political posts in the towns and rural areas between the two parties. One consequence was an enormous amount of friction between the leading families of the Segovias, particularly in the major towns.

Even during the years of Conservative rule, however, disputes between local political bosses (and would-be bosses) rent the social and political fabric. In light of the importance of these conflicts, not only to the texture of daily life but to the broader contours of Nicaraguan history, it is remarkable that to date there exist no scholarly studies of political struggles at the town or community level in late 19th or early 20th centuries -- though the sheer intricacies of these struggles and the paucity of sources do make the task a daunting one.61 In lieu of such a body of scholarship, here I offer a brief sketch of events in and around Estelí in the late 1910s and early 1920s, in an attempt to convey something of the flavor of local political struggles in the Segovias during this period.

Political turmoil in Estelí

"Here we are, citizens of Estelí, almost in anarchy, almost destroyed, owing to a man that here represents the central power," wrote "Panchito Flores del Río" (pseudonym) in the pages of the León daily El Centroamericano on July 7, 1922. The article, one of a series headlined as a "reading for [President] Don Diego [Chamorro]," went on to heap vitriol and venom on the new Jefe Político Miguel Álvarez and his local supporters and allies, particularly Abraham Castillo and his "right-hand man" Arnoldo Guillén. The short-term roots of the conflict lay in local Liberal and Conservative opposition to the results of the fraudulent elections of 1920, in which Diego Chamorro, ...

uncle of "el último caudillo" Emiliano Chamorro, captured the presidency only through extreme degrees of violence and intimidation. Unfortunately, the available evidence does not permit a detailed look at the 1920 elections; the run of newspapers and other sources used here only begin in January 1922. Still, one can puzzle together pieces of the story.

Picking up the thread, then, in early 1922, the contest pitted two main factions of the local Conservative Party against each other. One, backed by El Centroamericano, was headed by Senator Juan de Dios Pastora and included Federico Briones, Alcalde of Estelí from 1916 to 1922; his brother Juan Alberto Briones, Director of Police in 1923; the Castellón brothers; the Molina family; and at least twenty other individuals and families. The other faction, bitterly opposed by the Juan de Dios Pastora faction and El Centroamericano, was headed by one Abraham Castillo, and included President Diego Chamorro's first appointed Jefe Político Eugenio Cuadra, his Administrador de Rentas Tomás Salaveri, and other local Chamorro appointees. "1921 passes with bitter memories of the abominable actions of ex-Jefe Político Don Eugenio Cuadra," began El Centroamericano's polemic of 17 January 1922.

Undying will be the unwelcome memory of that uncivil servant, who came at a bad hour to give free rein to his impetuous and violent vandalism, without precedent here. By the will of God may he never return here again to disturb with his low instincts the peace of the citizens of Estelí.

Two months later, the alcalde of Estelí Federico Briones was interviewed by El Centroamericano's "Reporter X"; in typical fashion, the alcalde's every word and innuendo were reported as "news." "Don Abraham Castillo is the biggest profiteer of all time," Briones was reported as saying,

an opportunist as we might call him. Look here: In the year 1906, to give himself the honor of receiving General J. Santos Zelaya [President of Nicaragua] on his hacienda El Aguacate, he bought on credit all the tableware in the store of don Pedro Illescas, and afterward he refused to pay his bill.63

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63. El Centroamericano, 21 March 1922.
After relating similar episodes intended to demonstrate the base moral character of his political foe, all of which were reported in the columns of El Centroamericano verbatim and without commentary, Don Federico Briones was bid a fond adieu. Briones was probably correct in labelling Cuadra a liar and opportunist, though the evidence is strong that these traits were widely shared and knew no party bounds. Other "news" stories carried accusations of violence against Jefe Político Alvarez, "sowing terror," throwing opponents in jail, assaulting them with tear gas, and similar charges.

The Briones were one of the wealthiest and most prominent Conservative families in Estelí. In 1869, Ramón Briones (probably the father of Federico and Juan Alberto) was granted by the government an extensive tract of land in the jurisdiction of Estelí. From 1916 to 1922, Federico Briones, merchant and landowner, was alcalde of Estelí, in that capacity praised by El Centroamericano as "extremely talented, a great friend of progress." In 1928 he was still one of the leading local Conservative politicians; in addition to his activities as one of the wealthiest merchants in the district, he was a leading Conservative Member of the Departmental Electoral Board.

According to a Marine investigation of 1928, during the mayoral elections of November 1923, Juan Alberto Briones -- who was then Director of Police -- publicly assassinated his political enemy Elías Hidalgo in the corner of the town square. The reasons behind the murder are unclear. There are hints in El Centroamericano that the Hidalgo family was split between Aristeo Hidalgo, allied with the Juan de Dios Pastora faction of the Conservative Party, and Perfecto Hidalgo, a prominent attorney in league with the Abraham Castillo faction. The timing of the murder, less than a month after the death of Diego Chamorro and the assumption of Bartolomé Martínez to the presidency (October 12, 1923), suggests Chamorrista complicity. Whatever the case, a friendly jury

64. E.g., El Centroamericano, June 6, 10, 27, 28; July 6, 7, 8, 9, 30.
66. February 8, 1922.
67. See fn. to follow.
acquitted Briones on all charges, despite the incriminating testimony of numerous eyewitnesses. Two years later, on January 26, 1927, Juan Alberto Briones murdered the new Director of Police, Colonel Francisco Ríos Torres, in broad daylight and in plain sight of numerous witnesses. The case was never brought to trial, however. The court, packed with friendly Conservative judges, reportedly lost all the papers pertaining to the case. To the Marine intelligence officer who investigated the affair, "the whole deal smells of the rankest sort of political favoritism." Briones was also charged with killing numerous political opponents during the Civil War of 1926-1927, including Diomedes Uriarte, who according to one eyewitness, died "slowly and atrociously." It was further reported that from September to November 1928 (immediately prior to presidential elections that the Conservatives were about to lose in a landslide), Juan Alberto Briones personally commanded an armed gang of eighteen Conservatives which terrorized their political foes in and around Estelí, harassing, assaulting, and murdering Liberals. One prospective voter reported Briones' warning to the authorities: "We wil slice your belly open if you go to register with the Liberals." 

These shards of Estelí's tortuous political past suggest something of how local political struggles were waged in the Segovias during these years. Newspapers were more propaganda mouthpieces than disseminators of information; courts were routinely packed with friendly juries; evidence was routinely "disappeared"; criminal charges were routinely dismissed by higher authorities; lying, opportunism, assault, and murder were basic tools of the trade. Jurisdictional disputes between branches and levels of government were legion; local and district judges, police chiefs, governors, cabinet

68. Information from a file on Juan Alberto Briones in NA127/192/1/Briones; quote of the Marine intelligence officer in Pears to Jefe Director GN, 11 Oct. 1928; quote on death of Diomedes Uriarte in letter from René Tellez H. to Porfirio Pérez N., Estelí, 18 Oct. 1928; final quote in Pears to Jefe Director, 12 Oct. 1928.
69. Readers of La Prensa, El Nuevo Diario, and Barricada in the 1980s and 90s know that this, at least, has not changed.
ministers, presidents, all were constantly maneuvering to contravene and circumvent the authority of their foes and to expand and assert their own, by whatever means available.

Indeed, creating the conditions for the exercise of authority, the carving out of jurisdictional spaces, by hook or by crook, within and outside the formal structures of law, was basically what these local struggles for power were all about. The judicial system was not run by the rule of law, as the phrase is commonly understood, as a body of proscriptions and codes applied to all citizens equally and impartially by an independent judiciary -- and everyone knew it. "It must be confessed," ran an all-too-typical lament by a liberal, modernizing intellectual, "amongst ourselves [in Latin America and Nicaragua], those who govern do not rule through the law, with rare exceptions . . . progress, justice, the law, is a myth."70 Fernando Jarquín, Jefe Político of Estelí in 1924, struck a similar chord in his annual report to the Ministerio de Gobernación. "It is well known," he observed in passing, "that in our Central American countries, these [judicial] functions paralyze most business, so that everyone can dedicate their energies and activities to politics."71 Calls for judicial reform rang loud and often in the press and National Assembly, particularly after the Civil War of '26, though the structures and practices of law remained largely unchanged into the 1930s and beyond. Indeed, there is much to indicate that local political and jurisdictional struggles in the 1980s and 90s continued to closely resemble their antecedents in the 1910s and 20s, an intriguing possibility that can only be suggested here.

Whatever the case, observations like those of Jefe Político Jarquín were voiced with increasing frequency in the 1910s and 20s. "[T]he Nicaraguan takes his politics, not only into the voting booth but on the battlefields, with a bitter, feud-like vengeance passing belief," wrote one US journalist who could boast a fair degree of familiarity with the country. Writing in 1927 and commenting on the destruction wrought by the just-

70. Eliseo Lacayo Fernández in El Centroamericano, 8 March 1922.
71. "Memoria de la Gobernación," 1924, p. 211; USDS 817.00/4998.
ended Civil War, he tried to make some sense out of Nicaragua's endless political turmoil. "It is this nation-wide interruption of normal work and business which helps to speed up a certain vicious circle which causes much of Nicaragua's warfare," he reasoned.

Naturally enough, such uncertainty tends to convince most of the educated upper class citizens that ordinary business is much too unstable and unreliable to be worth attention. This tends to force the majority of intelligent persons into politics as the chief remaining means of livelihood, making competition among them keen.  

Like many such off-the-cuff historical analyses, this one mixed keen insights with flawed reasoning: "vicious circles" generally do not explain very much, though the things said to be chasing each other in circles are often key aspects of the realities under discussion. As we have seen, business was uncertain and political competition was keen, though the "uncertainty" and "unreliability" of "normal work and business" did not in themselves generate such intense political struggles. Rather, the intensity of such struggles was a consequence of the whole of the political-economic history of the country, as outlined in this and the previous chapter: extreme class, ethnic, and regional divisions combined with strong patriarchal families, resilient seigniorial patron-client relations, a weak state, a tiny internal market, stunted local industry, a subordinate position within a larger global capitalist system, an abundance of machetes, and historically violent ways of practicing politics. In pointing to politics as "the chief . . . means of livelihood" for the elite, however, the journalist hit the nail on the head: the process of truncated liberal state formation was translated at the local level into endless wrangling over who had authority over whom, who controlled what posts, who reaped the benefits of access to the state, the main source of power in town and countryside — though, especially after Emiliano Chamorro's coup of October 25, 1925, certainly not the only one.

CHAPTER 4: "THE WAR OF COLORS": SANDINO'S LIBERAL ARMY AND THE DYNAMICS OF CIVIL WARFARE IN THE SEGOVIAS, 1926-1927

I joined [Sandino's] forces in a place called Santa Cruz and we began the war, but it was in colors at that time, liberals and conservatives.

- Francisco Centeno Fonseca¹

The goal was to defeat the Conservatives; and after, when the battle was won, was when Moncada sold out, and then General Sandino separated with his army.

- Macario Calderón Salinas²

War and politics, to paraphrase Clausewitz, are but two moments in the same struggle for power. The Civil War of 1926-1927 was a particularly bloody phase in a long and inherently violent process of political struggle among and between factions of the elite. The Sandino Rebellion emerged as one extension and transmutation those struggles. One might think of the Rebellion as a mutant strain of civil conflict, a fundamentally new struggle which retained many features of the conflicts from which it had arisen. Whatever metaphor one favors -- the Rebellion was "born" of the Civil War, "emerged" from it, a "product" of it -- it is clear that the events of the Civil War and the ways in which warfare in the Segovias was thought about and practiced shaped in innumerable ways the Rebellion which followed.

Civil war, by definition, produces a fragmentation of political space, radically multiplying the sites from which legitimate authority is exercised. For more than a

¹ IES 066: 1. Centeno Fonseca was one of the "original twenty-nine" who departed San Rafael del Norte with Sandino in May 1927 after Moncada's "betrayal" at Tipitapa; see Conrad, p. 67, and List 7.2, ch. 7, below.
² IES 043-2-2: 1.
century, the subaltern classes in Nicaragua had experienced periods of civil war as volatile mixtures of dangers and opportunities. At one level, the laboring poor had been used essentially as cannon fodder in a continuous process of war between factions of the dominant classes. At the same time, the common folk had (and have) a long history of seizing moments of elite discord and weakness and exploiting the fluid political spaces opened up by intra-elite struggle. The National War of the mid-1850s and its popular prelude in the 1840s, the civil wars of 1910-1912, the Civil War of 1926-1927, all created certain kinds of political spaces within which "popular" caudillos -- i.e., leaders "of the people," emerging outside the field of traditional elite leaders -- could and did rise to power. Sandino was one such popular leader to emerge from this latest round of open infighting, but there were others, like General Francisco Sequiera or "Cabulla," an illiterate farm laborer from Chinandega who by the end of the Civil War had become one of the most powerful Liberal generals in western Nicaragua.³ Others fitting a similar mold included Generals Augusto Caldera, Santiago Callejas, Carlos Castro Wassmer, Francisco Parajón, Carlos Salgado, and Benito López.⁴ The differences between these leaders and the more traditional Liberal caudillos who traced their position to family and landed wealth -- such as Generals López Irfas, Cerda, Mena, and Moncada -- can be viewed along several axes, including social origins, degree of popular support, class politics, and underlying motivations. All combinations existed, from popularly acclaimed wealthy social conservatives (best epitomized by Conservative Emiliano Chamorro⁵) to popularly acclaimed commoners with radical nationalist and social agendas, like Sandino and, perhaps, Cabulla. Yet of the many popular caudillos who rose to power during the Civil War, few saw fit to use their power to assert a broader

³. On Cabulla, killed by the US Marines under suspicious circumstances in May 1927, see Jarquin Vallejos (1974).
⁴. The first four were "men entirely of the people," according to Jarquin Vallejos, p. 5.
⁵. As despised as he was in some quarters, Emiliano Chamorro was extremely popular in many rural areas, including most of Boaco and Chontales and in the indigenous communities of Matagalpa and Jinotega; see Gould (1992, 1993).
social agenda in the interests of the laboring classes. For nearly all such leaders, popular or traditional -- and Sandino is the only unequivocal exception here -- the long-term interests of the laboring poor or "the nation" were clearly subordinate to their own thirst for personal power. 

The Civil War in the Segovías emerged from the context of rural political bossism and caudillismo discussed in the previous chapter. The "Liberal Army" was something in between a loose agglomeration of independent Liberal caudillos and their private armies and a modern, centralized, bureaucratized military machine, though on the whole it hovered more toward the former end of the continuum. In the six months of war before May 1927 there were at least thirty and perhaps more than fifty Liberal generals fighting under the Liberal banner. "General," it seems, was a title appropriated by any man who could raise, arm, and command an "army" of fifty or more men. A more accurate designation for most such groups might be "gang" or "band," though they were commonly called "armies" (ejércitos) by those who belonged to them.

Such armies were organized in ways reminiscent of the armies of the 1840s and 1850s. Adherence to "modern" bureaucratic-rational norms was highly uneven and selective. In lieu of rigid hierarchical power structures and vertical chains of command, armies were organized according to fluid and open-ended personal relationships based on alliance, friendship and trust, and animosity, suspicion and fear. Such gang-armies were remembred by old-time Sandinistas not as machines composed of interchangable parts -- the ideal toward which "modern" organizations tend -- but as dense webs of personal relationships within individuals and groups were specifically embedded, positioned, and

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6. This is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that none but Sandino saw fit to challenge by force of arms the existing structure of authority, or the authority of the US Marines, after May 1927, as well as the total absence, to my knowledge, of any documents indicating otherwise.
7. "Liberal Army" as used here refers to an ideal that never existed in practice: an organization exercising effective authority over all Liberal soldiers; "Liberal army" or "armies" refer to actually existing organizations.
encoded. Personal charisma and bonds of personal loyalty were of paramount importance in creating and maintaining such an organization; personal feuds and competitions were no less crucial in reconfiguring them. The Liberal Army, and Liberal armies, were more dispersed and fragmented processes than coherent or congealed institutions.

Within such a process, centripetal and centrifugal forces worked in constant tension: As the hated Conservative dictatorship and the need for concerted action against it pulled Liberals and their armies together, competitions for resources and struggles for power flung them apart again. Larger armies were created by aggregating smaller ones, not by integrating them; smaller armies tended to remain largely autonomous from the aggregates to which they adhered. The Liberal Army was a "lumpy" army, a loose coagulation of discrete units, each of which retained much of its own identity and integrity even as it became immersed within a larger collectivity. If cooperation and alliance between armies was frequent and substantial, tensions, antagonisms, and mutual suspicions were never far from the surface. Liberal generals, ostensibly fighting for larger collective interests, also waged amongst themselves fierce battles over scarce resources, particularly bullets, guns, and men. The scant evidence indicates that many of the same dynamics governed the Conservative National Army.

Sandino's Liberal army, and later, his Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, were in many ways the products of this politico-military environment, created within it and enabled and constrained by its logics. It is tempting to view the Constitutionalist War was a training ground, a period of gestation, for the Rebellion to come -- in it was -- though those fighting it probably did not experience it that way at the time. For more than thirty of Sandino's early Liberal followers who continued as officers in the Defending Army, the Civil War became, in hindsight, a baptism by fire into the logics and doctrines of Nicaraguan and Segovian warfare. Before the war, neither Sandino nor any of his original followers had received any but the most rudimentary
military training. Nine months of rigorous campaigning had transformed at least one-third of the original group from the San Albino Mine into capable military commanders. Nearly all of Sandino's later lieutenants received their military training in either the Constitutionalist War or wars outside Nicaragua. The Defending Army which eventually emerged from the Civil War bore many marks of its antecedents. So too did the milieu into which it was born.

**The Constitutionalist War: A synopsis**

The Civil War of 1926-1927 emerged from a context of intensifying Liberal and popular opposition to continuing Conservative rule combined with the power vacuum created by the US troop withdrawal of August 1925. In the months following Emiliano Chamorro's coup of October 25, 1925, not only were the unconstitutional regimes of Chamorro and (after November 14, 1926) Adolfo Díaz broadly unpopular; lacking the support of the Marine Corps Legation Guard, they were also quite vulnerable.

After President Solórzano's ouster in October 1925, Vice-President Juan B. Sacasa, Solórzano's constitutional successor, was forced into exile. From Mexico he helped to organize the first military action against the Chamorro regime, in Bluefields on the east coast in May 1926. The Marines promptly landed, declared the area a "neutral zone," and the uprising fizzled. By early August, small bands of poorly-armed Liberals began appearing in the departments of León, Chinandega, Estelí, and Nueva Segovia. Most were swiftly defeated or dispersed by government forces, and those who did not melt back into civilian life fled overland into Honduras; a few fled by boat to Mexico. By late August, groups of armed Liberal exiles began landing on various points along the

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9. See List 4.3 below.
east coast. The principal obstacle facing the Liberals was unbending strong-arm US support for the Chamorro and Díaz regimes.

On December 1, Sacasa landed in Puerto Cabezas and proclaimed himself constitutional president of Nicaragua, and on December 23 the Marines landed, declared a neutral zone, and gave Sacasa twenty-four hours to vacate his weapons and troops. He did, and two days later the Conservatives were routed at Laguna de Perlas in one of the key battles of the war. After Laguna de Perlas the Conservatives abandoned most of the eastern half of the country and the main Liberal force moved rapidly west under José María Moncada, Sacasa's Minister of War. Meanwhile, small bands of poorly-armed Liberals were intensifying their efforts in northern León and Chinandega departments and the Segovias. Liberal forces under Generals Carlos Castro Wassmer, Francisco Parajón, Camilo López Irías, Cabulla, Augusto Sandino, Benito López, and others waged a string of battles against National Army in the west. In early February forces under General Parajón captured the town of Chinandega, and a few days later the Conservatives launched a counterattack. After several days of pitched street battles and bombings by North American pilots hired by the Conservatives, most of the town lay in smoldering ruins and was once again in Conservative hands. Committed to retaking Chinandega, the National Army weakened its hold on the Segovias, and Liberal Generals López Irías, Wassmer, Sandino, and others exploited the power vacuum to wrest most of the north, including the departmental capitals of Ocotal, Estelí, Jinotega, and Matagalpa from Conservative control.

By late March the main body of Liberals under Moncada, marching westward, had engaged and defeated the National Army in a string of pitched battles. The union of the eastern and western armies took place during Holy Week (in early April) near the hacienda Las Mercedes, south of the town of Matagalpa. Here the combined Liberal forces routed the National Army, setting the stage for the final assault on the remaining Conservative strongholds. In late April, as the combined Liberal armies approached the
outskirts of Managua, President Coolidge dispatched Special Envoy Henry Stimson to broker the peace. On 4 May 1927 at Tipitapa on the eastern shore of Lake Managua, under the shade of an espino negro tree, Moncada submitted to Stimson's demands, and the war was formally ended.

Sandino at San Albino: Political economy and popular grievances in the El Jícaro mining district

By the summer and fall of 1926, Liberal armies were springing up all across western Nicaragua. Cabulla, Benito López, Carlos Salgado, and other guerrilla chieftans harassed government troops throughout the western Segovias and all along the Honduran border, from Palo Grande and Somotillo to Santa Maria and Dipilto. Bands would suddenly appear, attack a patrol or garrison, and either melt back into the populace or flee across the border into Honduras.11 In the south, along the Costa Rican border, Cristiano Zapata and other Liberals were busily gathering men and supplies for anticipated assaults on the Conservative garrisons at Rivas and Nandaime on the road to Granada.12 In the north, at the San Albino Mine near the town of El Jícaro, another band of Liberals was being organized by a mechanic and assistant clerk named Augusto Calderón Sandino, who had just returned from several years exile in Mexico.

Sandino, a committed revolutionary with a definite social and political program, shrewdly chose employment among disgruntled mineworkers in a depressed and isolated company town in a region dominated politically by an increasingly anxious Conservative elite. In 1926 the El Jícaro-Murra-San Albino region was peppered with scores of small-scale, undercapitalized gold and silver mining operations, most owned by Nicaraguans and worked by a handful of full time and part-time laborers. Alongside these were a handful of larger, more highly capitalized, foreign-owned mining firms which had

penetrated the region during the previous thirty or so years (see Map 4.1). After Chamorro's *lomazo* of October 1925, mineworkers and their families across the region were not only exploited economically, but increasingly subject to the politically-inspired violence of local Conservative powerholders.

This region, like more than a dozen others in central and northern Nicaragua and southern Honduras, had been the site of gold and silver mining since the early colonial period. But here as elsewhere in Central America, the proportion of precious metals to ore was low, rich veins were few, technologies rudimentary, investment low, and labor scarce. Until the late 19th century, the mining industry remained marginal even to the regional economy of north-central Nicaragua.  

This began to change from the late 1880s, and particularly during Zelaya's regime, when many gold-producing sites and much of the best land in the El Jícaro region were claimed (*denunciado*) by Nicaraguan and US investors. For instance, in the months of January and February 1890, more than seven mines were claimed by Nicaraguans in the vicinity of Murra and El Jícaro. While the evidence is fragmentary, it is clear that jostling for land in the El Jícaro region intensified dramatically in the late 19th century. As lands in the region were gobbled up by investors and capital improvements made, overall gold production levels increased exponentially. Total

13. References to gold and silver production in Nueva Segovia during the colonial period are common, e.g., Guillén de Herrera, pp. 227-243, Playter, pp. 54-55, Incer (1973). In the early twentieth century there were mining sites in León, Chinandega, Estelí, Nueva Segovia, Chontales, and Zelaya departments; for a summary see Fernández, pp. 310-322.  
14. According to *La Gaceta*: Francisco Velásquez, miner and resident of Murra, claimed the mines 'Esquipulas' and 'San Vicente' on behalf of Pascual, Benito, and Angel Cerna; Modesto and Rafael Ucles claimed 'Los Milagros' near Murra (8 Jan. 1890); Rafael Alvarado of El Jícaro asked concession of the mine 'Providencia' near Jícaro (16 Jan. 1890); Alejandro and F. Francisco Safely, US citizens and residents of Murra, asked borders verified on the mines 'America,' owned by Srs. Gamero and Velásquez, and 'Los Mercedes,' owned by Srs. Gradis (16 and 22 Jan. 1890); Concepción Moncada of El Jícaro requested title to the mine 'Camilita'; Salvador Soza of Telpaneca claimed the mine 'La Virgen' near Murra, bordering on the mine 'Concordia' of Isidro Flores (5 Feb. 1890); Manuel Montoya claimed the mine 'San Rafael' near El Jícaro (7 Feb. 1890).
export revenues generated by gold exports from the country as a whole from 1899 to 1926 are illustrated in Graph 4.2.

In 1904, the Ministry of Internal Development (Ministerio de Fomento) reported thirty-two mines operating in the department of Nueva Segovia, most clustered to the south, east, and northeast of the town of El Jícaro. This figure doubtless excluded scores of smaller, family owned and operated mines. The largest mine in the area was El Golfo, which reportedly employed 215 workers in the month of August 1904. Other large mines in the El Jícaro region in the early part of the century included San Albino, Los Encinos, San Antonio, El Rosario, and La Eureka.16

At the same time as capital investment and production levels soared, mineowners and local elites attempted by a variety of means to exercise greater control over the land

15. Sources: For the years 1899-1904, Fernández, p. 318, and for the years 1911-1926, Playter, p. 55.
and labor of local residents. One consequence was a rapid deterioration in social
conditions in the region, particularly around the largest mines. Eudiviges Herrera Siles
began working in the San Albino mine around 1920 when he was around fifteen years
old. Seventy years later he recalled conditions of near-slavery, both in the mine itself and
in the region as a whole:

We used to earn thirty cents a day, thirty lousy cents, it was nothing, you couldn't
buy anything with so little, the food was bad, everything was bad, working day
after day without rest, without land, without anything; we were all slaves to the
rich, the rich had everything around here, everything; the poor, we had nothing,
nothing.  

Immediately to the east, vast tracts of land remained uncultivated and unoccupied. But
migration to the interior was a formidable and high-risk undertaking; hacking out of wet
jungle wilds of the northeastern Segovias an entirely new home -- clearing the forest,
planting new fields (with carried seed, of course), keeping the animals alive, ensuring
food enough to last till the first harvest -- the myriad everyday problems faced by
campesinos magnified a thousand-fold. Most mineworkers evidently preferred the living
and working conditions of the mines and villages of the El Jícaro region, deplorable
though they generally were, to the risks of migration to the east.

The post-war depression of the late 1910s and early 1920s forced many of the
smaller mines to close, and most of the larger firms to cut costs and production. By the
mid-20s the mining industry in the region was in sharp decline, according to US
Commerce Department assessments. In mid-1924 the León press reported that, "It is
well known that in the town of Murra there is a mining company, and that it has been
some months since the workers have been paid." By the time Sandino arrived in mid-
1926, many residents who had lost some or all of their lands in the mining expansion of
the previous decades were now unemployed or underemployed. In 1926 the largest
mining concerns in the El Jícaro region were the U.S.-owned El Golfo, San Albino, and

17. Interview with the author, Estefí, Nicaragua, October 1990.
Murra mines, which together probably employed from 300 to 400 full-time and part-time workers. In the region as a whole the mining industry (including small-scale family-owned enterprises) employed perhaps as many as one thousand workers of different types. In 1926 the San Albino Mine probably employed from 200 to 250 men and perhaps two dozen women.20

In the larger mining enterprises of the El Jicaro region, the majority of the workers were overworked and underpaid, technologies were rudimentary, working conditions dangerous, and accidents common. Eudiviges Herrera Siles painted a vivid portrait of work inside the San Albino and El Golfo mines in the 1920s:

It was all done by sheer muscle power (a puro pulmón), using sledgehammers that weighed twelve pounds, drilling by hand into the rock. You'd make a hole in the rock, put in some dynamite and blasting caps, and attach a long wire, all from inside the mine. There were at least 200 to 300 workers, it was an extensive mine (un mineral extenso). Some worked installing timbers and struts (aremando) so the sides wouldn't cave in; some were pulling the timbers with oxen, others laying rails inside the mine, others carting out the debris for the machinery, and others grinding the rocks that came into a big grinding machine through a big pipe. There were shovellers (paleros) who filled the carts on the rails, others shovelling rock and gravel between and below the ties and rails (balastriando). There were carpenters, mechanics, there was a mechanics' workshop, different workshops, it was a huge mine, and there was no electricity like today, it was all done purely by hand, purely by hand (era a pura mano, a pura mano).21

Don Eudiviges stressed particularly the danger of the work inside the mines:

It was extremely dangerous (era peligrosísimo), hoooh! Numerous times men were buried inside the mine; there were many wounded, many deaths. Sometimes

20. Most estimates fall within this range; USMC Captain Stafford estimated that before the Civil War 250 men were employed in San Albino and 300 in the smaller mines ("Coffee Plantations in the Matagalpa District," 18 December 1930, MCHC-PPC/Julian Smith/7); Eudiviges Herrera Siles recalled 200 men worked in San Albino before the Civil War; Charles Butters described Sandino's thirty-man uprising of August 1926 as of "a small group of men" ("Statement of Charles Butters," 21 June 1927, NA127/198/GN-2 1928). The 1920 Census reported sixty-seven miners (mineros) in the municipalities of El Jicaro and Murra, probably collapsing the categories of jornalero (day laborer, 587 in Murra and El Jicaro) and minero and undercounting both (Censo de 1920, pp. 270-271). Most efforts to count miners probably undercounted those in smaller operations and ignored jobs connected to the mining economy. At the same time, by world standards these were small-scale operations; the largest mines in Nicaragua were not among the largest five hundred in the world; see Engineering and Mining Journal, 1919-1925.

21. Interview with the author, October 1990; for a review of the technologies associated with cyanide extraction in gold production at the time, a technology used at San Albino, see H.A. Megraw, Details of Cyanide Practice (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1914).
Photo 4.3
Eudíviges Herrera Siles
Estelí, Nicaragua, October 1990
(photograph by the author)
the timbers inside the mine gave way and men were buried alive; some died, and some were rescued, we workers ourselves shovelling them out by hand.

Workers were organized into crews or gangs. Some worked in and around the mine; others worked on the surrounding mountainsides, felling and hauling trees and fashioning timbers. Angel Martínez Soza recalled working as an aserrador or timber-cutter at San Albino in 1926, "part of a group of some twenty men who worked twenty saws in the hills of El Coyolito and San Jerónimo."22

A more privileged stratum of workers was employed in four principal workshops: iron-working, mechanical, carpentry, and brickmaking shops. According to one former worker, each shop had a North American supervisor and a Nicaraguan assistant supervisor, though the North Americans were only present on occasion and the day-to-day operation of the mine fell to the assistant supervisors.23 The owner of the mine and the supervisors apparently enjoyed close relations with the Conservative elite of the region. For instance, Pedro Lobo, a prominent landowner, public accountant, and member of one of the leading Conservative families of Ocotal, was paymaster and in charge of the overall accounts of the mine.24

Workers in different strata tended to remember the work at the mines in quite different terms. Some manual laborers, such as Eudigives Herrera Siles, recalled the owners, supervisors, and labor process as a whole with a great deal of anger and bitterness. Former timber-cutter Angel Martínez Soza suggested that a rather broad social distance separated the manual laborers and from the upper strata of workers when he explained that since he was part of a timber-cutting crew, he did not know Sandino personally before the uprising: "He was a bookkeeper for the yankees, and we were a squad of timber cutters... Few people knew General Sandino at that time."25

22. IES 060: 9.
23. IES 032: 2.
24. Lizandro Ardon Molina, IES 032: 2; Jose Paul Barahona, IES untitled ms., p. 2.
25. IES 060: 9.
The memories of those in the more privileged stratum, in contrast, were sometimes laced with recollections of paternalistic relations between themselves and the owners and supervisors. Lizandro Ardon Molina represented himself as the former clerk in charge of keeping accounts at the four principal workshops. He recalled that Pedro Lobo of Ocotal, who was "a type of chief over all of us here... used to help us celebrate our birthdays." He remembered in particular that, when he took ill in 1925, Pedro Lobo counseled him to see a doctor (the 1920 Census lists six doctors in all of Nueva Segovia, one for every 7000 persons).26

They called me to his office and Pedro served as my interpreter, and through Pedro the doctors informed me that they didn't have any special medicines for me there, and that if I hoped to recuperate I had better leave San Albino for a while.27 He followed the doctor's advice, recovered, and resumed his duties. Later he was offered a job as caretaker of a small farm owned by the eminent Dr. Emilio Gutierrez of Ocotal, an opportunity he readily seized.28

The disparities between Ardon Molina’s story and the stories told by former manual laborers illuminate some of the ways in which social and class divisions were experienced in the mining economy of the El Jícaro region. One historian writes that in San Albino, "Sandino discovered that he had real rabble-rousing ability."29 It would perhaps be closer to the mark to say that among the impoverished, economically exploited, and politically oppressed mineworkers of San Albino, Sandino first began to use his extraordinary personal charisma and oratorical skills to practical effect. "I began to work the spirits of those workers," Sandino later recalled,

explaining to them the systems of cooperatives in other countries, that the sad truth was that we were exploited, that we ought to have a government that would be truly concerned with the people, so that they were not so terribly exploited by capitalists and giant foreign enterprises, after all the people are the nation, and we ought to demand, as in every other civilized country in the world, that all of the

27. IES 032: 2.
29. Macaulay, p. 54.
enterprises operating in Nicaragua should offer medical attention, schools, laws, organizations, unions, and that we didn't have any of this.\textsuperscript{30}

The recorded memories of some of Sandino's first followers from the area around San Albino suggest that this language of "slavery" and "exploitation of the nation" found some extremely receptive ears. "Sandino said that we had to liberate the homeland," recalled Eudivíges Herrera Siles.

He said that we had to put an end to this slavery, that we didn't want foreigners here because they were leaving us in utter ruin. Sandino was against these things, he said, 'this is slavery and we're going to put an end to it, we're going to see how we can put an end to it.'\textsuperscript{31}

José Flores Gradys, another resident of the El Jicaro region in 1926 and early follower of Sandino, was asked in 1983, "And what did the yankees want to do here in Nicaragua?"

"The yankees were in Nicaragua because they wanted to exploit our homeland, to take all the gold and silver and timber and everything we had in our homeland," he responded.

"They were here to exploit our homeland, the thieves. This was their ambition in Nicaragua, they wanted to continue exploiting our homeland, the thieves."\textsuperscript{32} Macario Calderón Salinas, another of Sandino's earliest followers, echoed these sentiments.

"What he [Sandino] wanted was that there would be no yankee intervention," he explained, "because the yankees were the owners of everything, they exploited, they had been exploiters, not only in Nicaragua but throughout Central America."\textsuperscript{33} Angelina Rugama of Telpaneca was thirteen years old in 1927 when she first went to El Chipote (near San Albino and populated by many former mineworkers at that time). She recalled that Sandino taught them to struggle for,

...well, liberation, so that the yankees couldn't keep on exploiting the people by taking everything that was Nicaragua's; because they were exploiting the treasures of Nicaragua, because if you dug gold out of the ground, they paid you what they wanted to pay you, and I can fully imagine that everyone knew it, that we all knew full well what was going on -- that's why they fought.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{30} Román, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{31} Interview with the author, October 1990.
\textsuperscript{32} IES 058: 11.
\textsuperscript{33} IES 044-2-2: 8.
\textsuperscript{34} IES 046.
In 1983, ex-timber-cutter Angel Martínez Soza was asked, "And Sandino explained to you why you should struggle, why he was struggling?"

He explained to us, first of all, the struggle against conservative rule, to defeat conservatism. And when the yankees came, he said that his struggle was against the yankees, because he didn't want his Nicaraguan people to be slaves of the yankees, because the yankees, what they wanted was to take over Nicaragua until you're all their slaves, and this is my struggle... he'd gather us all together and give us his explanations, and explain it all so clearly... 35

"He'd explain it all so clearly..." In truth, it is impossible to know precisely what Sandino was explaining so clearly to the men and women of San Albino in the summer and fall of 1926. The process of remembering is also a process of forgetting, of creating erasures and silences, of telescoping, magnifying, reshaping, distorting. To remember the 1920s through the prism of the 1980s, some might argue, is to tell more about the 1980s than the 1920s; and they may well be right.

What then to do? Marc Bloch suggests working from the known to the unknown: First, it is doubtless true that from the outset Sandino labored relentlessly to instill an awareness of the national and international dimensions of a set of problems that hitherto had been seen and experienced in mostly local terms. The degree to which he succeeded is another question. On the one hand, one might reasonably grow suspicious at the regularity with which certain keywords populated these recorded memories -- "homeland," "Nicaragua," "yankees," "slavery," "exploitation" -- and the consistency with which they were strung together to tell a story indistinguishable from Sandino's nationalist story. All of these testimonies mirrored the basic worldview expressed in Sandino's earliest manifestos: the evils of "yankee thieves" (US capitalists) and "yankee invaders" (US Marines) comprised different strands in the same seamless web of oppression and exploitation. 36 It is worth recalling that Sandino's basic rationale for rebelling (after May 1927) was to expel US troops from Nicaraguan soil; but in 1926 the

35. IES 060: 9.
36. In most testimonies no real distinction was made between "Yankee thieves" and "Yankee invaders," a fact not reflected in the above-quoted, carefully selected excerpts.
Marines were hundreds of miles from San Albino, and as its owner Charles Butters saw it, he had nothing whatever to do with them -- he was simply a US businessman whose interests were mining gold and accumulating capital. In this he had something in common with the workers and peasants of the El Jicaro region in the summer and fall of 1926: for neither party were the Marines the issue. Yet a year later the distinction between "thieves" and "invaders" grew so fine as to vanish, and the struggle for social justice and improved living conditions merged seamlessly into the larger struggle to expel US troops.

In short, the evidence suggests that the raw materials necessary for the propagation of a language of nationalism among the laboring poor of the El Jicaro region existed long before the Marines began to move into the area, and that the invasion itself, a process rendered intelligible by Sandino's teachings, only served to make painfully and doubly evident what had been popularly felt and believed all along. In this sense, Sandino could not have been more forward-looking in his decision to seek employment at San Albino; there was probably nowhere in all Nicaragua with greater popular anti-yankee sentiment. While it is doubtless true that not everyone fully understood his rhetoric (and no less true that some did), it is also quite likely that long before Sandino's appearance, in the experience of most mineworkers and their families, US capitalists were thieves, and rather shameless and unforgiving ones. Sandino told an eminently convincing story, a story that found deep resonance in the everyday experiences of the folk, though some of the words he used doubtless sounded unfamiliar, exotic.

Exploitation? Oh, you mean theft, working so hard and getting paid so little. Homeland? Oh, you mean our land, here, around us. The riches of Nicaragua? Oh, you mean the tons of rock we dig daily out of that hill over there. The nation? Oh, you mean us, here, the people -- "the people are the nation," as Sandino recalled himself saying. Sandino was well-travelled, strong-willed, articulate, charismatic; the people of the San Albino

37. Quoted above; Román, p. 57.
Mine and its environs were poor, overworked, illiterate, provincial, of limited intellectual horizons. "No, no, I didn't know what la patria meant at the time," confessed Eudíviges Herrera Siles, after considerable prodding in response to his repeated claims that "defense of la patria" was the main reason he joined.\textsuperscript{38} "I remember many words at that time I barely understood, as I was a young man then, with little culture," recalled Sabas Rodríguez Cantarero. "These words for me were special, great, and from that time onward I've kept them close to me: patriotism, heroism, dignity, sovereignty . . . ."\textsuperscript{39} Sandino was a stranger, but an oddly familiar stranger with the right answers to the right questions; he offered a new way of talking about an old set of miseries, a new vocabulary with which to understand and express longstanding grievances -- and, perhaps more important, a way to do something about it.

In short, in the years before the Marine invasion (which did not begin until June 1927), mineworkers and their families did not lack for sound reasons to harbor animus toward yankees. Sandino tapped into that deep well of popular grievance, and for the next seven years the El Jícaro region was to remain a key bastion of Sandinista support.

But even as early as 1926, economic violence at the hands of US and native capitalists was not the only locus of popular discontent in the El Jícaro region. During that year a far more immediate danger, in the form of Conservative political violence, began to assert itself.

**Conservative violence, the San Albino uprising, and the origins of Sandino's Liberal army**

Sandino and the "original twenty-nine" began their uprising on October 28, 1926.\textsuperscript{40} According to the written testimony of José Paul Barahona, a resident of Murra

\textsuperscript{38} Interview with the author.
\textsuperscript{39} Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo (1986), p. 286.
\textsuperscript{40} Sandino in Conrad, p. 131. According to Santos López (see List 4.3, below) there were forty original followers of Sandino from San Albino; other testimonies indicate more than a dozen more from the immediate environs of the mine. It should be noted

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who worked at San Albino, the precise moment of the uprising was sparked by
Conservative violence against the Liberal-inclined population of Murra and surrounding
areas. As he recalled it, after Sacasa and Moncada had established a foothold on the east
coast,

we were abused because we were partisans of the ousted constitutional
authorities, for which we were subjected to all kinds of outrages. In those days
the Comandante at Murra was named Gregorio Bendaña, who used to leave in the
middle of the night to kill dogs and during the day would call the men of the
village to his headquarters, and if they didn't answer his questions satisfactorily,
he would whip and beat them. Many of us -- the people of this village -- on being
subjected to such outrages, were disposed to leave for the mine San Albino . . .

One day, news arrived at San Albino that the troops of Adolfo Díaz had arrived in
Murra, and had assassinated Inés Ochoa and Lilo Leal, that they had had raped
two girls, María Salomé and Concepción Cárdenas, that they had burned the
house of the old woman Luisa Mendoza, that they had broken the leg of Lisandro
Colindres, that Rigoberto Colindres was wounded, and that they had captured
Filiberto Barahona, who escaped and went to give warning to San Albino.

It was then that we began our rebellion. The uprising began in the following
manner: Upon receiving the fateful news, in the middle of the week, we gathered
in the little plaza there to deliberate our next course of action . . . We were
directed to Sandino . . . we found him sitting at his table, working . . . When we
explained what had happened, he rose from his seat with great boldness and told
us: 'It is the hour for us to liberate our homeland!'

Barahona's recollection that Conservative violence against the civilian population around
Murra sparked the uprising is echoed repeatedly in other testimonies from the period.
Camilo Guillén was fifteen years old in 1926 and the son of the mayor of El Jícaro. In
1979 he described the origins and scope of Conservative violence during this period in
terms uncannily similar to those used by Barahona. After Chamorro's coup, he recalled,
"all the Liberals were persecuted, there was an abnormal situation in Nicaragua." In
those days, as he remembered, "there were no Liberals because they had destroyed the
Liberal Party with massacres. My uncle was eliminated by the Conservatives; his name

that in the literature the phrase "original twenty-nine" refers to two separate groups:
those who followed Sandino from San Albino in October 1926, and those who followed
him from San Rafael del Norte after Espino Negro in May 1927; for whatever reasons the
number twenty-nine came to be associated with both groups; in one of his more ethereal
41. José Paul Barahona, IES untitled ms., p. 1.
was Benjamín Guillén." When Liberal Generals Sandoval and Mena robbed the bank in Bluefields in a daring raid in early 1926, he recalled, his father was thrown into jail; soon after he was released and fled to Honduras.42 His family owned property adjacent to San Albino; the mine itself "was a kind of neutral zone; those who were persecuted arrived there at the mine and they could not be touched, they were safe." In his account, Juan Gregorio Colindres led the persecuted Liberals from Murra into San Albino; up to this point, young Camilo had only seen Sandino from a distance; "nobody knew anything about Sandino. Sandino is an employee at the mine."43

José Flores Gradys, also from Murra and an early follower of Sandino, began his testimony slowly, carefully, with exactlying chosen words:

When I joined the struggle of General Sandino, in Murra there was a colonel by the name of Cirilio Morán; he was the one who went to invite Sandino from San Albino in light of the injustices that were being committed by the Conservatives against everybody around here. They arrived at a house, and did whatever they liked with all the women, and afterward they killed the men and stole everything that was there.44

Calixto Tercero González ("La Muerte") was a young boy living near San Albino in 1926. In 1984, he was asked to relate all of his experiences with General Sandino from the very beginning. "Well, we were in San Albino," he began.

When the revolution began, General Sandino was there, and we didn't recognize him as a chief or anything, he was just another worker. Then when the patrols of the damn conservatives (los cachurecos) would pass by, killing and robbing and abusing the poor women, they'd throw them down and fall on top of the poor things, five on top of each woman. After, those who could get up got up, and those who couldn't, a bullet for them! So Sandino said that he'd put an end to this slavery for us, for all the people in the San Albino Mine . . . and that's when we began the uprising . . .45

In 1984, IES staffer Susana Morales began her interview with seventy-seven year old Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera by asking him to recount his experiences "fighting against the gringo invader." "I was motivated because they burned my little house, the

42. Such a raid did take place; Eberhardt to Kellogg, 13 May 1926, USDS 817.00/3782. 43. Alegria and Flakoll, pp. 51-54 ff. 44. IES 058: 1. 45. IES 095-1-2: 1.
Conservatives," he responded. "From there I had to flee . . . I don't know why . . . but
they were looking to cut my head off." Former timber-cutter Angel Martínez Soza
recalled simply that "the days of Conservative control were wretched. If a man was a
Liberal, they'd hang him; if he had a woman, they'd rape her. And so everybody was
inflamed against the Conservative rule." The confluence of memories here is overwhelming. Despite their differences in
detail, these testimonies make abundantly clear that after Emiliano Chamorro's coup
d'état of October 1925, Conservative powerholders in the El Jícaro region, frightened at
the prospect of losing their political grip, unleashed a series of brutal attacks, rapes, and
killings in a bid to cow or eliminate their enemies amongst the populace -- a prelude to an
even severer upsurge of violence a year later.

Memories of the period point unambiguously to Conservative violence as being
of far greater moment in generating support for Sandino's revolutionary Liberal army
than the grinding economic violence of the mines. It is true that the two kinds of
violence cannot be easily separated; it is also true that they were experienced in quite
different ways. On the whole the violence of the Conservatives was seen as far more
savage, the dangers it posed far more immediate, than the violence of laboring in the
mines. A year later, Sandinistas and Liberals worked to avenge these Conservative
crimes.

Charles Butters, the owner of San Albino, offered his view of the uprising: "one
fine morning" his file clerk A.C. Sandino "disappeared with a small group of my men and
took to the woods, where he was rapidly joined by others of the Liberal party." Not
surprisingly, the larger context of economic exploitation and even severer political
oppression was entirely absent from Butters' account.

46. IES 102: 1.
47. IES 060: 1.
Santos López was a young boy at the time of the uprising, and joined Sandino’s Liberal army a short while later. By the end of the war, in 1933, he had risen to the rank of colonel and was a close confidant of Sandino. Remarkably, he escaped Somoza’s repression and became one of a handful of Sandino’s original followers who helped found the FSLN in the early 1960s. His testimony, referred to repeatedly in the following pages, is among the most detailed and valuable of all of Sandino’s early followers.

Santos López recalled the names of forty of Sandino’s original followers, all identified as workers at the San Albino mines prior to the uprising. Their names and subsequent roles appear on the following page (List 4.4). A handful of names do not belong on this list (as noted); others probably do. Still, it appears to be generally accurate. It is noteworthy that roughly half of these original rebels played major roles in the subsequent Rebellion, most as generals and colonels.49

The revolutionary iconography of Sandino’s army commenced from the first day of the uprising, according to Camilo Guillén. "Passing by the hacienda El Conejo, property of Jacinto Sosa, the group that left San Albino entered the house," he recalled more than fifty years later. "The workers ransacked it and discovered two strips of cloth, one red and the other black, with which they put together the first [Sandinista] flag . . ."50 Soon afterward a skull-and-crossbones was added to the banner, which soon became the well-known standard of Sandino’s Liberals. (see Photo 4.5)

A shortage of arms hampered the rebels from the beginning. According to José Paul Barahona, on the day of the uprising a commission was sent to the nearby finca of Jorge Williams, an Englishman with Liberal sympathies, who provided the group with a revolver and several homemade rifles; another was sent to the house of Ramon (Moncho)

49. Only five Nicaraguan generals in the EDSNN were not part of this original group -- Francisco Estrada, Pedro Altamirano, Carlos Salgado, Miguel Angel Ortez, and Pedro Blandón -- and all of these joined Sandino by the spring of 1927.
50. Quote from 1979 interview with Camilo Guillén in Alegria and Flakoll, pp. 54-55; on Guillén see Conrad, p. 315, and Somoza, p. 77; Jacinto Sosa’s hacienda was reportedly ransacked again by Sandininstas in mid-1929; see "Plata patrol of July 22-24," 25 July 1929, R. Winans, Jalapa, NA127/212/1.
## LIST 4.4

**THE "ORIGINAL 40" FROM SAN ALBINO AND THEIR LATER ROLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>LATER ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amador, León</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blandón, Lorenzo</td>
<td>active till at least Feb. 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabrera, Pedro</td>
<td>innermost circle till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colindres, Juan</td>
<td>wealthy background; later a traitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colindres, Juan G.</td>
<td>inner circle; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Díaz, José León</td>
<td>inner circle; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietrich, Santiago</td>
<td>soldier till at least 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernández, Fermin</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flores, Coronado</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galeano, Antonio</td>
<td>Major till late 1927; shot for rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>González, Sinforoso</td>
<td>General, on General Staff in 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iriás, Pedro Antonio</td>
<td>inner circle; secretary; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarquín Tranquillo</td>
<td>innermost circle; Sandino's guitarist, cook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagos, José</td>
<td>Lt. Colonel in Feb. 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>López, Reyes</td>
<td>inner circle; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>López, Zacarias</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maradiaga, Coronado</td>
<td>inner circle; major leader till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maradiaga, Doroteo</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maradiaga, Fernando</td>
<td>inner circle; Major in Jan. 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maradiaga, Sixto</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marín, Rufo</td>
<td>inner circle; early martyr, Ocotal 1927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morales, Juan Santos</td>
<td>inner circle; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peralta, Ismael</td>
<td>inner circle; General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pérez, Alejandro</td>
<td>young boy, soldier; unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pérez, Elias</td>
<td>young boy, soldier; unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polanco, Jeronimo</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintero, Ferdinando</td>
<td>Colonel till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raudales, Ramón</td>
<td>inner circle; wealthy; Honduras agent; FSLN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reyes, Heriberto</td>
<td>inner circle; Colonel till the end; FSLN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugama, Marcelino</td>
<td>Lieutenant, April 1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salas, Marcial</td>
<td>Costa Rican; till 1928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanchez, Porfirio</td>
<td>Colonel till 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandino, Augusto</td>
<td>Supreme Commander till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sevilla, Rodolfo</td>
<td>from León; unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uriarte, Ramón</td>
<td>agent in Honduras till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vargas, Roque</td>
<td>General till the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villatoro, Alicia</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villatoro, Amalia</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villatoro, Teresa</td>
<td>Sandino's mistress till the end</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: The names are taken from Santos López, pp. 1-2; the subsequent histories are drawn from published and manuscript sources too numerous to list here; see ch. 8 for a fuller accounting. Ranks and dates given refer to the last reference I was able to find in the documents. According to a pamphlet authorized for publication by Sandino in 1929, twenty-nine workers took part in the actual uprising at the mine (Maraboto, p. 10), though except as a mythology this number is meaningless; mineworkers at San Albino were enmeshed in larger family and community networks, making Sandino's base of support much broader than that suggested by the myth of the "original 29."
Photo 4.5
A captured Sandinista flag
"The flag has a bright red field and the skull, machete and bayonet are on a black background." From The Leatherneck (August 1928), p. 29.
Raudales in the nearly valley of Iyas, who "directed us to his cellar where he brought us three homemade rifles and six revolvers." Such stories are legion; most testimonies of ex-soldiers from this early period laid special stress on the critical importance of weapons shortages. None did so more eloquently or extensively than Lizandro Ardon Molina.

**General Benito López, General Sandino, and the Springfield rifles of Lizandro Ardon Molina**

Lizandro Ardon Molina claimed to have been the head clerk of the four principal workshops at San Albino and an intimate friend of Sandino's. Though he may have exaggerated the extent of that intimacy the rest of his testimony holds together quite well, and this is one of the stories he told:

> It was around the summer of 1926. "Well, I was here [in Ocotal]" he began, "it was a day like any other,

and I went to my aunt's house nearby, where she had a small eatery and lodging business, and I saw a friend of mine from Honduras, ... and I saw that he was armed with a rifle and a sackful of bullets, his name was Angel Moncada. So I say, 'Angel!' and he signals me to be quiet, putting his finger to his lips like this; then later he comes up to me and says, 'where do you live?,' and I tell him, 'right across the street.' 'Wait for me, I'm going to eat,' he says.

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51. Jose Paul Barahona, IES ms.: 3. Four days later Williams' fourteen year-old son Alfredo died in the fight against the Conservative garrison at El Jícaro. Here the memory of Francisco Lara Lopez (IES 059: 3) is confirmed in *La Noticia*, 4 November 1926, probably the first newspaper report on Sandino, identified as a colonel from Chontales. A year later Williams was at San Albino during the Sandinista occupation; there is good evidence that he assisted the rebels, according to Major Floyd's reports; see ch. 7, below.
53. All quotes from Lizandro Ardon Molina, IES 032: 1-7.
54. Inconsistencies in his story indicate that he worked at San Albino in the capacities he described, but not while Sandino was there, i.e.: he claimed to have worked with Sandino at San Albino for some two years, from around 1922 to 1924, but Sandino was only there for some five months (June to October 1926); moreover, the timing simply does not fit: he said he had been in Ocotal for some time when Angel Molina began secreting the rifles to him, a process which took about a month; after this, he journeyed to Quilalí to take a job, was captured by Sandinistas, and delivered the rifles to Sandino, all before November 1 (the day before the first battle of El Jícaro); this would leave no time for him to have worked with Sandino at the mine.
After Angel Moncada finished eating, the two friends went over to Lizandro's house, where Lizandro began to upbraid his friend for serving in the Conservative National Army:

I say to him: 'Man, it's incredible, that you can be so shameless, a liberal of your stature serving those damn bandits!' [the Conservatives]. 'It's necessary, man,' he says to me, 'but don't believe that just because you see me with this rifle I'm just a soldier, I'm also a commander (soy mandamás) and I'm going to help you. I'm going to leave this rifle and sackful of bullets here with you, and every afternoon I'm going to bring a rifle and sack of ammunition to your aunt's place.

So, the story goes, every afternoon Angel Moncada came to Ardon Molina's aunt's and left behind a Springfield rifle and a sack of 250 bullets. After Ardon Molina had accumulated twenty-nine rifles, his friend Angel said he was in danger and had to return to Honduras, "so he left and there I was with 29 rifles." Soon afterward, Ardon Molina secreted twelve of these guns to Liberal General Benito López, who was operating west of Ocotal in the Macuelizo district, while the remainder were safely cached in his house.

Soon afterward, around early October, Dr. Emilio Gutiérrez of Ocotal summoned Ardon Molina and offered him the position of caretaker for a farm he owned near Quilalí. Ardon Molina jumped at the opportunity, and the next day he and Dr. Gutiérrez's brother departed for the farm. As they were passing through Telpaneca, Ardon Molina was seized by some Conservative soldiers who had seen him spreading Liberal propaganda there only a short time before. He was promptly thrown into jail, though soon afterward he was released. "I had a uncle there who's dead now, but his sons are still there, Conservatives all," he explained years later. "And so at dawn, when the old man found out I was in jail he did what he could and got me out."

The two men continued toward Quilalí, became lost in the mountains, and were soon captured by forces under Sandino. The prisoners were taken to Murra, where Sandino's troops were stationed. Sandino ordered his "old friend" released, and after an exchange of pleasantries, Ardon Molina told Sandino about the rifles he had given to Liberal General Benito López. Sandino insisted that the remaining guns be provided to
his forces, but Ardon Molina was reluctant to retrieve them; Conservative troops were patrolling the entire area. After some discussion they agreed that Ardon Molina would take the guns as far as El Zapote, about half-way to Murra, where a Sandinista commission would meet him.

Ardon Molina returned to Ocotal, tied the guns to a mule, and with a companion set out for El Zapote.

We put the fifteen rifles and sacks of ammunition on a mule, and we each carried a rifle and a sack, so we'd be ready for anything. But we weren't able to pass directly on the road that passed through Mosonte, instead we had to make a big circle around there because... there was an immense garrison there, 30 or 40 soldiers at least, and I'll tell you what -- God himself wouldn't have passed through there!...

So we cut through some pastures and barbed-wire fences, followed the Mosonte River, and made it back to the main road, and my friend says, 'here's where our troubles begin. They might kill us, I'm sure they're going to kill us, if a patrol finds us, they're crawling all over the place, but at least we'll be able to take four of them along with us!'...

As we were passing through Ciudad Antigua, it was just beginning to dawn, and a few people were already up and about. When they opened their doors they were terror-stricken: they saw us and slammed their doors shut, because there we were, two men armed to the teeth, without any sort of insignia, and with a mule loaded down with rifles, completely uncovered and tied on with rope!

The two men soon arrived at El Zapote and turned the rifles and ammunition over to a Sandinista patrol sent to meet them. On November 2, 1926, Sandino and his small Liberal column attacked the 200-strong Conservative garrison at El Jicaro, the first major military action undertaken by Sandino's Liberal army. According to Ardon Molina, the attack took place the day after he delivered the seventeen rifles and sacks of ammunition. Lacking sufficient arms, the rebels were repulsed with little difficulty. Apparently the rifles were not enough.55

Lizandro Ardon Molina's story not only evokes a sense of everyday life in the Segovias during the Civil War. It also illustrates an elemental fact of warfare in

55. It is unlikely that these events took place as Ardon Molina described them, since only five days separated the San Albino uprising from the attack on El Jicaro. While it is impossible to know exactly where his story deviated from the "actual" sequence of events, it is also unnecessary; something like this undoubtedly did happen.
Nicaragua in the 1920s which, for the Defending Army, continued into the 1930s: the extreme scarcity and importance of arms and ammunition. Of course, willing soldiers were also scarce and valuable resources, as evidenced especially by the frequency with which the laboring poor were forcibly conscripted by some Liberal armies as well as by the Conservative National Army. Smaller Liberal armies in the Segovias clearly operated under a different logic. Ardon Molina's story indicates that the primary obstacle facing the popular Liberal caudillos in the Segovias was not a lack of willing soldiers but a lack of serviceable guns and bullets -- a theme which recurs repeatedly in the testimonies of former Liberal Sandinistas. This elemental constraint, in turn, was closely related to an elemental tension in the Liberal ranks: the often fierce competition for scarce resources, most crucially, guns and bullets.

Don Lizandro, like others who experienced the war in the Segovias, depicted Liberal "armies" as separate, relatively isolated and autonomous groups led by individual strongmen, each in competition with the others. (Upon being told of the rifles, Sandino reportedly asked: "And who is Benito López?") The tale also illustrates the fluidity and complexity of political allegiances and identities, their shifting, overlapping, multiple, and tension-ridden character; Angel Moncada, for instance, was a Conservative soldier secretly helping the Liberals; Ardon Molina had Liberal sympathies but Conservative patrons; to his Conservative uncle in Telpaneca, family allegiances overrode political ones; and so on.

Another revealing story, beginning at the precise moment in time at which Ardon Molina's left off, was told by Pastor Ramírez Mejía.

56. The forced conscription campaigns of the Conservative National Army were common knowledge; see e.g. Denny (1929), Carter (1927), New York Times, various dates, e.g. 21 August 1927, United States House of Representatives, Hearings (1927).
The Civil War: experiences of Captain Pastor Ramírez Mejía

The remembrances of Captain Pastor Ramírez Mejía, an active member of the Defending Army from the beginning to the end of the Rebellion, shed additional light on the tensions riddling the Liberal ranks during the Civil War period. "Don Pastor," the interview began, "I want you to tell us the experiences you lived through when you fought together with General Sandino, from when you joined in 1926."

"Well, when I joined up with him, we had already fought near Chinandega and Los Robles," he began.

I began serving under the command of Benito López, joining up with him near Santa María. We fought the same day that General Sandino fought for the first time at El Jícaro... The General was defeated at El Jícaro and we were too, the same day. From there two other generals approached our position: Ciríaco Aguilera and Carlos Salgado, in a place called Icalupo, near Somoto. There they spoke to me, and I departed with five other men and joined up with them. From there I passed my command to Ciríaco Aguilera and Carlos Salgado, who were generals.

From the outskirts of Somoto, the armies of Salgado and Aguilera headed south, eventually meeting up with and joining the forces of Francisco Parajón at El Sauce, where his troops were concentrated for an anticipated attack on Chinandega. It was late January 1927. "When we departed for Chinandega, I was named chief of the war train," he recalled.

I was in charge of 40 loads of war materiel, and so there I was in the middle of that huge army. After we left, we couldn't find even a scrap of food, because the advance guard was far ahead of us, and all my men were going hungry. So I asked the advance guard to save some food for us, I didn't like it because we were all suffering from hunger. From there we arrived at dawn to attack Chinandega. We began firing around four o'clock in the morning, and we fought and we fought. We were there for three days and three nights, fighting.

After three days of battle, the combined Liberal forces were repulsed with heavy casualties; two of Captain Ramírez's men were killed and several were wounded in the

58. All quotes from IES 094-1: 1-5. Captain Ramírez was known to Marine-GN intelligence, e.g., he and his brother Rufino are mentioned in B-2 Report, Managua, 25 February 1929, p. 2, NA127/209/1.
59. Corroborating evidence for part of this story appears in La Noticia, 26 October 1926, where 180 Liberal rebels under Ciríaco Aguilera, Carlos Salgado, and Efraín Cordón were reported active south of Somoto.
bombing and shooting. After the third day, Ramírez began to harbor misgivings about General Parajón; later he learned that "he had already gone, that we were all alone, those of us who were fighting, and that he had set the train of war on fire because he was afraid it would be captured by the enemy." Under cover of night, Captain Ramírez and his men escaped and headed northeast, back toward the western Segovias. His first concern was his wounded. Presented several times the opportunity for combat, he avoided the enemy, linked up with Colonel José León Díaz, and eventually arrived in Somoto.

We entered Somoto. This López Irías had been named as General in Chief of Somoto, but he had fled to Honduras, there was a firefight in El Sauce and he got scared and left for Honduras. The people of Somoto were saying, 'if General López Irías comes, we're going to organize ourselves and rise up!' And letters were sent calling on him, and they caused him to return. So when he returned he wanted to take power from the others. So, he took over (le conquista) the columns of Ciriaco Aguilera and Carlos Salgado, he won them over (se las conquistó), got them behind him. But I didn't stay around for him to take over my troops... I continued always with our chiefs, Ciriaco Aguilera and Carlos Salgado, because these were our chiefs; I didn't want to be taken over by López Irías. Well, he was pretty ticked off, because I didn't return.

Before General López Irías returned to Somoto, Captain Ramírez departed with nine of his men, heading south toward El Sauce. Well-stocked with rifles and ammunition,

Captain Ramírez told his men that they should head over the Honduran border, away from López Irías. His men, on the other hand, wanted to return to Somoto. "No,"

Captain Ramírez pleaded with them, "López Irías has a grudge against us. We're going to enter and they're going to disarm us!" "Ah, no," his men replied, "we'll be alright because we came to fight!" Reluctantly, Captain Ramírez acceded to their wishes; "But don't blame me," he warned them, "when they take our rifles away as soon as we get there."

And that's just what happened. As we neared Somoto I went ahead and asked permission to enter the town. They gave us permission, and we headed toward town, into Somoto. A procession was sent to meet us, everyone was so happy, shouting 'vivas!' They carried us along, shouting 'vivas!' for me and the other Liberal chiefs who were there. They carried us like you'd carry a saint in a procession, happy as could be. When they met up with us along came this Pastor Prado, who was a chief of Díaz that day. 'Hombre, give me some of your weapons,' he said to me. 'No,' I told him, 'why weren't you in Chinandega? There's plenty of weapons there, there's plenty of enemy there.' Ah, I said to
myself, they're going to fuck with us, they're going to disarm us and take our weapons away.

The triumphant column presented itself to López Irías, and just as Captain Ramírez had predicted,

They disarmed us. In that moment I felt like taking a pistol and shooting myself. But no. At this point, there was nothing more to be done.

Captain Ramírez was furious. A few days later, General López Irías summoned Ramírez to his headquarters.

'Captain Ramírez,' he says to me, 'I want you to come with me to Estelf. It's true that I've ordered your men disarmed, but I trust you, I've always trusted you and I like and respect you.' Ha! That made me want to cry. So I say to him: 'No, General, this is neither to like me nor trust me. You've treated me disgracefully, as if I were against you. So it's better that I just disperse my men and we all just go home. I don't want to follow you. From now on, there's bad blood between us' (con esa planta ya quedamos mal). At that point I had already thought of going and joining up with General Sandino.

Soon after, Captain Ramírez and Colonel José León Díaz departed with their men to join up with Sandino. After much searching they eventually found him, encamped at San Rafael del Norte, around early March 1927, just before the battle of Jinotega.

Though Captain Ramírez never made fully explicit the reasons why he did not want to join up with -- or, in the idiom he employed, "be conquered by" -- General López Irías, his story makes plain that the independence of a military "unit" was something that was negotiated, contested, and, at times, fiercely defended. As he remembered his past, Captain Ramírez and his men (presumably the same men) allied with -- or, were "conquered by" -- four separate "armies" in the course of five months (November to March): they began with Benito López; they left him, for unexplained reasons, to join with Salgado and Aguilera; they linked up with Parajón for the assault on Chinandega; and they ended up with Sandino. (This of course excludes López Irías' unsuccessful efforts to "conquer" them.)

Regrettably, Captain Ramírez was silent on precisely why some alliances were formed or adhered to, and others broken or declined, though he hinted that personal characteristics -- especially, a reputation for valor and fair play -- were, at least for him,
the most important criteria. Throughout his narrative he represented himself less as an individual than the leading member of a collectivity -- "we" usually took the place of "I" -- a leader concerned most of all with the well-being of his men (in but one example, after the battle of Chinandega he avoided contact with the enemy for the sake of the wounded). Bravery and a sense of justice and fair play within the group were, for him, clearly among the most important qualities of good leadership.

This idiom of one group "conquering" another through a combination of persuasion and superior strength suggests something of how larger Liberal armies were put together, and taken apart again. Captain Ramírez's stories evoke a string of images relating to the organizational dynamics of Liberal armies in the Segovias: multiple levels of collectivities of armed men, each created through a series of congealings and dissolutions; bands as small as four or five adhering, loosely and for the moment, to other such groups, or groups of groups, each retaining a relatively high degree of autonomy, clustering around a single strongman, deciding through a rough consensus whom to ally with and under what conditions. Alliances between groups were sometimes ephemeral, sometimes long-lived; betrayal was not uncommon. As group size increased, cohesion diminished. Competition for scarce resources existed at many levels; even within a single "army," such as the one Parajón led into Chinandega, the rear guard competed with the advance guard for something as basic as food. The most precious resources of all for waging war -- soldiers, bullets, and guns -- were also the source of the most bitter divisions and conflicts. These themes were repeated time and again in the testimonies of ex-Liberal soldiers.

Sandino's Liberal Army from El Jícaro to Las Mercedes: November 1926 to April 1927

After the first battle of El Jícaro on November 2, 1926, Coronado Maradiaga, a key figure throughout the whole of the Rebellion, led most of Sandino's small army to the
isolated mountain peak later dubbed El Chipote. In a better known episode, Sandino and a handful of lieutenants descended the Río Coco toward the east coast to seek arms from President Sacasa and General Moncada. Moncada took an immediate dislike to Sandino and refused him arms. The Sandinistas were able to salvage some forty rifles and a large quantity of ammunition, and with these they returned to El Chipote in early February to continue the Liberal Revolution in the Segovias.

"He arrived at Guazapo, where we were all waiting for him," recalled Santos López of Sandino’s return. "The reunion was a joyful one . . . By then we were 100 strong and with this many men we attacked the Conservative leader General Durón, defeated him, and acquired sufficient arms to arm fifty more men." The Sandinista victory in this second battle of El Jícaro quickened the spirit, enhanced the reputation, and augmented the strength of the small Liberal column. From here, in a series of pitched battles, Sandino’s troops defeated the Conservative garrisons at Quilalí, San Juan de Telpaneca, and Susucayán, gathering arms and recruits as they went.

Just as Sandino was returning from the east coast, the Conservatives were besieging Chinandega, captured days before by General Parajón. The assault on Chinandega had the effect of drawing Conservative troops out of the northern regions, weakening their hold on the Segovias. After "Parajón’s army” was defeated (the term

60. According to Moncada (quoted in Somoza, p. 83), "Sandino gave me a written statement concerning his ideas, the concluding sentence of which proclaimed that, ‘PROPERTY IS THEFT.'" Hodges, pp. 9-10 ff., bases much of his thesis on this accusation ("Sandino learned a lesson from this humiliating experience. From then on he was careful to keep his deepest political convictions to himself and to stress the patriotic motives of his struggle.") But in view of the fact that Sandino did not adhere, then or subsequently, to the Marxist belief that private property should be abolished (see ch. 11), an alternative explanation is that Moncada fabricated the story about the written statement, and Sandino was denied arms because Moncada perceived a threat in the independent spirit and general comportment of Sandino and his men, an independence expressed in both their flag and demeanor.
62. Santos López, p. 3.
takes on a new meaning in the light of Captain Ramírez's story), Sandino and other
Liberal generals moved quickly to fill the vacuum, taking the departmental capitals of
Estelí, Ocotal, Jinotega, and Matagalpa, though the latter two were soon retaken by the
Conservatives. Within a month of his return from the east, General Sandino had become
the head of a powerful army of several hundred troops, mounted and well-armed, which
controlled most of western Jinotega and northeast Nueva Segovia. In late February or
early March he met with General Camilo López Irías in Ocotal, head of the only other
significant Liberal force in the north. They agreed that López Irías would control the
department of Estelí, Sandino the department of Jinotega. Sandino’s strategy was to
move southeast, take Jinotega and Matagalpa, link up with the main body under
Moncada, and turn west for Managua (see Map 4.6). He moved back to El Jícaro and
then south to the village of San Rafael del Norte, where he met and became engaged to a
local telegraph operator, Blanca Arauz.64 This was around the time that Captain Pastor
Ramírez Mejía and Colonel José León Díaz appeared with their men.

At the height of the campaign, from February to April 1927, soldiers flocked to
Sandino’s Liberal army for a range of personal and political reasons, most rooted in deep-
seated opposition to continuing Conservative rule. Luis Boedeker González joined
around the time of the battle of Jinotega, in mid-March. In 1983 he was asked why he
joined with Sandino. “Because I was a Liberal, because at that time the Liberal party was
fighting the revolution;

the Conservatives were in power, the Conservative dictatorship. In 1925, I was in
the constabulary, and I deserted when Emiliano Chamorro seized the presidential
house from Juan Bautista Sacasa, I didn’t want to be under the command of the
Conservatives, so I deserted the constabulary and went to Jinotega where I joined
up with the forces of General Sandino.65

Unlike most of his fellow soldiers, Boedeker González continued with Sandino long after
Espino Negro. Francisco Centeno Fonseca remembered joining “because everyone was

65. IES 055-1-2: 10.
MAP 4.6

THE CIVIL WAR IN THE SEGOVias, MARCH - APRIL 1927
joining, and since it was a fight between Liberals and Conservatives, it was a joy, because Sandino was winning, so everyone followed him." Domingo Pérez, later a soldier under Pedrón, recalled that he and his family were in the town of Yalí when Sandino began to head south from the El Jícaro region toward Jinotega.

We were in Yalí, fleeing from the conservatives because they had us then like the guardia had us till recently, we didn't have time to stop running and nobody knew what to do, everybody was totally disgusted, and many joined because of hatred, it was not because they had some kind of patriotic sentiments, no... For some, anti-Conservatism based on personal and family grievances combined with a keen desire to participate in the war in any capacity. Balbino Blandon Díaz was a young boy when the troops of General Sandino passed by his family's house in Piedra Colorada, Matagalpa, at the tail end of the 1927 coffee harvest. The Blandon Díaz family was ordered to prepare tortillas for the troops. More than fifty years later, Don Balbino recalled:

So, I left the house with the basket of tortillas for the troops and asked about Sandino, and they told me, 'That man there who's coming, that's General Sandino.' So he came up next to me and I said, 'here's the tortillas you ordered.' And so they emptied the basket, they had some cloth and they took the tortillas and put them in the cloth. And the General says to me: 'Do you live here?', and I answered him, 'yes, I live here.' And I remember this especially because I could see that he spoke to me with affection, that he liked me.

He then explained that

I was kind of angry at the Conservative forces, because they had forcibly recruited my father, and he was sick at the time. So I went to try to get him out so he could come back home, but they wouldn't release him to me. So there I was with this stupidity, so I say to my mother, 'I'm going to present myself to them,' but since I was a little boy, my mother wouldn't let me. But when the General [Sandino] passed by, I told him, 'General, I want to go with you.' And he says to me, 'Sorry, but I don't have any extra arms for whoever wants to follow me.' So I say to him, 'wait a minute! I have one, I have a gun, I don't have many bullets, but I do have a gun.' So he says, 'of course.' So I went to the house, left the empty basket behind, and got the gun. And my mama asked me, 'where are you going?', and I told her, 'I'm going to hide it from these people.' And the next day I was with them.

66. IES 066: 3.
67. Domingo Pérez, IES; one Domingo Pérez was captured by the Marines-GN in early 1929 and later released, acc. to B-2 Report, Managua, 25 February 1929, p.5, NA127/209/1.
68. IES 085: 1-2.
As Don Balbino recalled this episode from his boyhood, allegiance to his father took precedence over political affiliation: when Sandino's troops appeared at his doorstep he harbored a grudge against the Conservatives because they had forcibly conscripted his father; yet he had also wanted to join their ranks to secure his father's release (though his mother refused). Elderly Don Balbino remembered young Balbino as itching for action of any sort; to him it did not much matter which side he fought on: after his mother refused to let him join the Conservatives because of his tender age, he circumvented her wishes at the next opportunity and joined the Liberals -- by chance, it appears, Liberals under Sandino.

For most soldiers, the ideals of Liberalism and love of the homeland were less important than giving local Conservatives and their hated regime a swift kick. "We were sick and tired of the system (nosostros de aburridos) so we went to join the revolution," recalled Tomás Jarquín Velásquez of himself and his father and godfather, "because Chamorro's troops snatched us from the brush and made us fight with them, tied us up, but we never wanted to fight with him, so we deserted. And so, being fed up with the situation (ya de aburridos pues), went to join in Matiguás." For others, fighting for the Liberals meant fighting for the personalism and self-advancement of traditional Nicaraguan politics. Santos López Mejía fought with Sandino for some three months in early 1927; more than fifty years later he was asked why he joined. "Because we wanted him to be president. He told us that when he became president, he was going to give us all good posts and we'd all live in comfort." Later he summarized Sandino's ideals:

His ideal was to enter Managua; he wanted to overthrow the government, to advance the revolution. In those days we were called revolutionaries, and he wanted to advance the revolution and overthrow the president in power. Those were his ideals.⁷⁰

It seems clear that López Mejía was not well acquainted, in 1927 or subsequently, with Sandino's larger social or nationalist aims. In this he was probably typical of the

⁶⁹. IES 007: 1.
⁷⁰. IES 026: 4-5.
hundreds who fought with Sandino during the Civil War but did not continue against the Marines-Guardia.

While a common focus on a popularly despised dictatorship drew Liberal armies together, the dynamics of warfare in the Segovias tore them apart again. Santos López recalled an episode from this period which illuminates something of the relationship between Generals López Irías and Sandino, and by implication, between Liberal armies more generally. In the days just before Sandino's attack on the Conservative garrison at Jinotega, the story goes, Sandino received an urgent message from General López Irías reporting that his army was surrounded by enemy troops at a place called Los Espejos, between San Isidro and La Trinidad. He requested immediate reinforcements. "Sandino called a meeting of his officers and explained the situation. It was agreed to come to his aid." Seventy-five men were designated for the mission. "I was a part of this commission," Santos López recalled. Riding at "horse-killing speed" (a matabalballo), they arrived a day and a half later, when "suddenly we found ourselves in the middle of an enemy ambush." They lost five men and most of the animals. The Sandinistas were unaware that the previous day a group of Conservatives had defeated the troops of Camilo López Irías. Badly bruised, the small group walked to the village of La Trinidad.

At the entrance to the village were the troops of Camilo López Irías. Upon demanding the password, they used the password of the Conservatives: 'la patria.' There was a shootout and eight of López Irías' men were killed. The password of Sandino was, 'Who lives?,' and the answer was: 'people who don't sell-out their country!' (gente que no vende-patria!)

Sandino was reportedly furious about the mix-up. Several features of this narrative deserve to be highlighted. For one, in keeping with the mythologies of the later Rebellion, the decision to aid López Irías was represented as democratic and participatory, a matter to be decided by collective will of Sandino's subordinate officers. There is little reason to doubt the veracity of this representation; in an army like

71. Santos López, p. 4. According to Sandino, the leader of this commission was José León Díaz; Conrad, p. 46.
Sandino's, structured as an aggregate of semi-autonomous sub-units, a relatively high degree of decentralized decision-making was built into the very fabric of the system. If a general did not permit his subordinates a certain degree of autonomous decision-making, he would soon be without an army. In this sense the myth was based upon a concrete reality, but not one unique to Sandino.

In this story, as in the stories of Lizandro Ardon Molina and Captain Ramírez, Liberal armies were represented as separate and autonomous entities; inter-army cooperation was unusual and difficult, communications poor and undeveloped. Each army bore a unique stamp, here represented as unique passwords. Santos López stressed especially the keyword of Sandino's army -- "no vendepatria" -- affirming even at this early date a conscious effort to instill into the troops an animating spirit different in kind from other armies.

While all Liberal armies were governed by similar kinds of social and cultural logics, from its beginnings Sandino's army stood out as unique. These differences were most tangibly represented in the red-and-black flag framing the skull-and-crossbones, a symbol which enshrined Sandino's most sacred ideals as learned in the Masonic lodges and other spiritualist organizations in Mexico: "the red represents resurrection, over the black which is death."72 For Liberals outside the ranks of his army the effect was shocking. "I looked over at my soldiers and knit my brow when I saw our standard-bearer carrying the red flag that Sandino had given us in Jinotega, with a black square on which stood out a white skull-and-crossbones," wrote former Liberal Colonel Rigoberto Canales Baldonear of the aftermath of the battle of Las Mercedes.73 For the second time (the first was on the east coast), Moncada ordered Sandino to get rid of the symbol, insisting that "we're Liberals, not pirates."74 If the sources are mute on precisely what this symbol meant for Sandino's soldiers, one can reasonably surmise that the meanings

72. Román, p. 70.  
73. Cincuenta años, p. 175.  
74. Cincuenta años, p. 175; Moncada (1942), p. 52.
Sandino ascribed to it were not wholly lost on his followers, that at least for some, the words of Pedro Antonio Arauz (here referring to an episode during the Battle of Jinotega) rang true: "They unfurled the red-and-black flag, and what joy for the army to see those national colors flapping in the breeze!" 75

Sandino and his Liberal army stood out as unique in other ways. Many recalled the distinctive language Sandino used to motivate his troops, a language infused with patriotic phrases and Mexican epithets such as cabrones (cuckolds), chingados (fuckers, mother-fuckers), and, of course, vendepatria. Rigoberto Canales Baldeomar was not alone in observing the special way Sandino animated his troops, lacing his appeals to patriotism with "vulgarities," denouncing the "cuckolds and traitors" (esos cabrones vendepatrias). 76 Luisa Cano Arauz, among many others, recalled that Sandino "talked like a Mexican," commonly spouting Mexican profanities like "chingado;" "chingado was his favorite word," echoed Secundino Hernández Blandón. 77 "Cabrón, that was the word he used during those times," Luis Boedeker González recalled. 78 Doctor Doroteo Castillo, who Sandino named jefe político of Jinotega in March 1927 but who did not continue against the Marines, recalled that Sandino was one of the few Liberal generals who "knew how to animate his troops," and that he was one of the few leaders, Liberal or Conservative, "who worried that they [his troops] would get enough to eat." 79

For these and other reasons, Sandino's army grew rapidly in the month after his return from the east coast. In early March his forces defeated the Conservatives in a series of pitched battles near Yucapuca and San Gabriel, north of Jinotega, before taking the town of Jinotega in mid-March. Santos López, among many others, recalled this last victory as a pivotal one: "It was a hard fight, but we achieved a smashing success. There

75. Pedro Antonio Arauz, IES ms. "Francisco Estrada," p. 4. The actual national colors of blue and white were under Conservative dominion at the time; the traditional Liberal color was red.
77. IES 037: 1; IES 047: 10.
78. IES 055-1-2: 14.
79. Cincuenta años, p. 172.
in Jinotega we came into possession of a huge quantity of arms; there were finally enough arms for everybody."\textsuperscript{80} Pedro Antonio Arauz, stressing the importance of the battle, also underscored the critical importance of arms and ammunition for the revolutionaries. "He attacked from four sides, with strict orders to economize on bullets... so that if one man fell, another could take his place without interruption," he recalled.

Most of the troops were poorly armed, carrying only pistols, but with this strategy the enemy was able to capture few of our arms... The Liberal Revolution in those days fought almost without arms; many people died for lack of a rifle, a gun of some sort...\textsuperscript{81}

Then-Sandinista Liberal Benigno Ortíz recalled that a special name was given to this particular ammunition-economizing tactic: "stoning to death":

In the first combat of Jinotega, with the fire being stoked with Conservatives, Sandino climbed out and ran across the fields, shouting: 'Don't shoot, men! We'll finish them with stones! (a pedrada los vamos a acabar!!). It's that we had so little ammunition, we had to be sure we had enough. For every bullet a rabbit!\textsuperscript{82}

After his victory at Jinotega, Sandino emerged as one of the most powerful Liberal generals in the country, with perhaps as many as 500 well-armed, mounted, and spirited troops. Discipline in such a large aggregate was sometimes difficult to maintain, however. Santos López recalled one incident, immediately after the victory at Jinotega, in which two of Sandino's colonels, Andrade and Fernando Maradiaga, "each with 200 men," came to mortal blows. "They had a disagreement, shots were fired and Andrade was killed. Maradiaga was punished and after completing his sentence he was permitted to enter the army again, but without a command."\textsuperscript{83} Pedro Antonio Arauz wrote of a similar power struggle between General Parajón and one of his colonels, Colonel Medina, who "rose up against Parajón, with the intention of eliminating him and taking over as the leader of Parajón's army."\textsuperscript{84} Medina was reportedly shot for the offense.

\textsuperscript{80} Santos López, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{81} P.A. Arauz, IES ms. "Francisco Estrada," pp. 3, 5.
\textsuperscript{82} IES 086: 4.
\textsuperscript{83} Santos López, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{84} Pedro Antonio Arauz, IES ms. "Francisco Estrada," p. 2.
Sandino's insistence that his officers adhere to a strict moral and disciplinary code was another source of dissention in his ranks. Santos López recalled one incident in which one of Sandino's principal subordinate officers, "Colonel Bosque, after the battle of Jinotega, began to drink cane liquor, this being prohibited by Sandino. This angered Bosque, who left us to join the forces of Camilo López Irías." The decision to maintain such strict discipline within a wider field of less-disciplined Liberal armies, all competing for men and materiel, probably cost Sandino dearly at times. In the case of Colonel Bosque, he lost the allegiance of "the pride of the Sandinista army," in the words of Pedro Antonio Arauz.

After the victory at Jinotega, Sandino's army moved south into the departments of Matagalpa and Chontales, with the armies of Wassmer, Parajón, and López Irías close behind (or on his flanks). Sandino's intention was to link up with Moncada's forces, which were heading rapidly west from the east coast. The eastern and western armies converged near the hacienda Las Mercedes, between Matiguás and Matagalpa, where they routed the Conservatives in what Sandino represented as one of the key battles of the war.

"Sandino saved Moncada, then Moncada betrayed Sandino": From Las Mercedes to Tipitapa

Contradictory versions of events at this critical juncture make it difficult to sort out what actually took place, though perhaps more significant and revealing are the ways in which these divergent accounts reflect the underlying tensions between the various actors involved.

85. Santos López, p. 6.
86. Pedro Antonio Arauz, IES ms. "Francisco Estrada," p. 4; according to Santos López, p. 9, Colonel Bosque later redeemed himself under the command of López Irías, dying heroically in battle in an effort to absolve himself from his earlier betrayal.
According to Sandino, he and his forces departed Jinotega with the intention of "liberating Moncada from the forces of Díaz, who had him surrounded." At a place called El Bejuco, Sandino's forces met the main Conservative body and attacked. He was soon joined by Generals Parajón, Wassmer, and López Irías, and the combined armies routed the enemy. Sandino then went to inspect the battlefield, where he found a detachment of his soldiers "crazy with enthusiasm because they had just captured the general headquarters of the enemy that had been giving Moncada so much trouble." The next day he went to inform Moncada of his victory, but to his surprise he arrived to find General Wassmer seated on a hammock with Moncada, claiming the victory for himself.87

In Santos López's version, in general accord with Sandino's, Moncada was surrounded when Sandino's army attacked and defeated the Conservatives without assistance from other Liberal generals. After the battle, "the quantity of arms taken from the enemy was so enormous that there were now enough arms for the armies of Generals Parajón, Castro Wassmer, and all of Moncada's people who still didn't have any weapons." As Sandino was preparing his report for General Moncada, General Wassmer approached Moncada and claimed credit for the victory; Moncada believed him, and ordered Sandino's command reduced from 1500 to only 300 troops.88

In Moncada's version, in the week prior to Sandino's arrival his forces had dealt the Conservatives a string of defeats. Sandino arrived just as his own forces were finishing the Conservatives, and Moncada was gracious enough to provide arms and ammunition to Sandino and Parajón.89

Other evidence indicates that Sandino exaggerated the importance of the battle and his own role in it, while Moncada did the opposite. Rigoberto Canales Baldelomar, a colonel under Sandino during the march from Jinotega to Las Mercedes and an

87. Quotes from Román, pp. 70-72.
88. Santos López, pp. 7-8.
89. Moncada (1942), pp. 50-52.
eyewitness with no particular axe to grind, maintained that Moncada's forces were stalled at Las Mercedes when the combined armies of Sandino, Wassmer, Parajón, López Irías arrived more or less simultaneously and routed them after a long and bloody battle.90 This account is consistent with those of other well-placed Liberals, including Generals Escamilla, Sandoval, Calera, Plata, and Duarte, who separately maintained that all the Liberal armies arrived at Las Mercedes around the same time.91 The battle itself was recalled as important but not critical; the most decisive battles, in the eyes of these generals, were fought far to the east, at Laguna de Perlas and Muy Muy. Captured National Army correspondence supports this view. "Their artillery is quite good and ours is inferior," wrote one Conservative general just prior to the battle of Muy Muy (fought weeks before Las Mercedes); he added that the anticipated battle at Muy Muy "is going to decide the war."92

At the same time, Humberto Torres Molina, a Liberal colonel and businessman from the town of Estelí who later denounced Sandino's struggle against the Marines-GN, was probably on target when he declared that "without Sandino, the Liberal Revolution of 1926 would not have succeeded. Sandino saved Moncada..."93 He was referring here not to any particular battle, but to the larger strategic value afforded by Sandino's pivotal role in clearing out the Segovias and giving Moncada a straight shot to Managua. Had the Segovias remained in Conservative hands, the war might have dragged on for months longer than it actually did.

Backstabbing, lies, deception, betrayal; contradictory versions of events at this critical juncture reveal some of the cracks and fissures in the Liberal ranks before and

91. First-person accounts from these Liberal Generals in *La Noticia*, 9, 11, 15-19, and 21 June 1927.
93. *Cincuenta años*, p. 180; see also Conrad, p. 60. An exhaustive Marine-GN investigation into Torres' activities, conducted in mid-1930, failed to reveal any links to the Sandinistas; NA127/209/11/Humberto Torres.
after the Battle of Las Mercedes. Sandinista representations, in keeping with the
mythologies of the subsequent Rebellion, painted Moncada, Wassmer, and the other
Liberal generals as incompetent and treacherous opportunists concerned only with self-
advancement. That there was likely more than a grain of truth in this portrayal does not
detract from its power as a symbol, or from what it reveals about the antagonisms
running through the Liberal armies. In Sandinista popular memory, Sandino's version is
taken to its logical extreme: "When Moncada was surrounded by 6000 Conservatives,"
recalled Gregorio Duarte Gutiérrez, "Sandino went to rescue him, but later Moncada
betrayed Sandino."94 Among ex-Sandinistas of the region this probably remains the
predominant memory of these crucial events.

For Sandino, the effects of the Liberal victory at Las Mercedes were ambiguous,
enhancing his already considerable stature and power while deepening the ruptures
between himself and other leading Liberal generals. After the victory, Moncada ordered
Sandino to occupy the town of Boaco. As Sandino later recalled, he grew suspicious on
approaching the town; the plaza was brightly lit and soldiers could be seen milling about.
He soon learned that the town was held by Conservatives, and suspected Moncada of
laying a trap.95 He was probably right. According to Santos López, Moncada ordered
one of his officers to ambush Sandino on the road to Boaco, but Sandino was warned in
time.96 Moncada's account suggests considerable disingenuousness and lends credence to
the versions of Sandino and Santos López: "Sandino returned [from Boaco] because
when he passed in front of Boaco he had seen lights. He didn't like lights, nor clear fields
or plains. He preferred to ambush" -- an absurd claim which casts doubt on the rest of
Moncada's portrayals of his erstwhile subordinate.97 By this time not only was Sandino

94. IES Documentos EDSNN B-4: I: 2.
95. Conrad, pp. 51-52.
96. Santos López, pp. 8-9.
experienced and proficient in large-scale pitched battles, but he had not yet developed the tactics of ambush used later against the Marines-Guardia.

In late April and early May, the combined Liberal armies began their final push toward Managua. Sandino was ordered to occupy the town of Teustepe, where he waited anxiously. A few days later the Espino Negro Accords formally ended the war. Years later, in a theme Sandino returned to repeatedly during the course of the Rebellion, upon which the foundational myth of the Rebellion was built, he decried what he saw as the tremendous waste and destruction of a useless war which ended in betrayal:

Matiguás, Palo Alto, El Bejuco, Las Mercedes and others, these are a series of great battles which taken together ended the revolution of ‘26, that cost thousands and thousands of lives, between Liberals and Conservatives there were no fewer than 20,000 well-equipped soldiers who fought. And all the property destroyed!!... And for what? So that the Marines could once more trample Nicaragua underfoot.”

Sandino's experiences as a Liberal general only solidified his already well-formed conviction that "the Liberal-Conservative oligarchy" was morally rotten to the core. That none of the major Liberal generals supported his later struggle was a source of disenchantment and bitterness, not only for Sandino but for many of his followers.99 Disgusted with Moncada for selling out his country, victorious in the field but temporarily defeated by what he saw as pusillanimity and moral cowardice, he and his few remaining followers headed north to continue the struggle.

*       *       *

The Civil War of 1926-1927 further fractured the already highly fractured political space of Nicaragua, providing a strategic opening which popular caudillos and

98. Román, p. 73.
99. Several minor Liberal generals and colonels did follow Sandino after Espino Negro, including Carlos Salgado (Santos López, p. 13); Salgado was with Parajón at Chinandega, according to one report in Cincuenta años, p. 158, José León Díaz (see List 7.2), and Pedro Altamirano (see ch. 11, below).
popular movements could seize and exploit for their own ends. At the same time, the
discursive opening of liberalism created a political space within which popular leaders
and organizations could assert agendas more in tune with the interests and aspirations of
the laboring poor. United States intervention was intended to seal those fractures, to plug
those openings, and to impose the rule of US-defined, US-dominated liberal-capitalist
law across the political space of the country. Not even the most prescient could have
foreseen that the peculiar Liberal general with the skull-and-crossbones on his flag was
about to launch a major peasant rebellion in defiance of those "honorable and
benevolent" intentions.\footnote{Stimson (1927), p. 35.} It is tempting to see the Civil War as little more than a
prelude, a warm-up act for the central drama of the period -- the war against the yankees.
It is perhaps more illuminating to see it as a fluid process open to any number of possible
outcomes.

It is true, in retrospect, that future members of the Defending Army learned,
through a difficult and costly process of trial-and-error, most of what there was to know
about the strategic strengths and weaknesses of north-central Nicaragua. In nine months,
it is true, Sandino and his subordinates became intimately familiar with not only the
physical and human landscape of the Segovias, but with its political landscape and the
mechanics and logics of its civil warfare. Perhaps as many as one hundred future
members of the Defending Army learned lessons which would serve them for years to
come, including the advantages and disadvantages of using the Río Coco as an artery of
arms, ammunition, men, and supplies; incorporating the human and physical resources of
the Atlantic Coast region into the struggle; exploiting the proximity of the Honduran
border; and tapping into the extensive Honduran arms market. Sandino's Liberals, in
carving out a base of popular support in the El Jicaro region, not only created a home
base for future operations. More broadly, the process of creating that base of support
taught them how to stitch together a popular revolutionary army from diverse strands of
popular discontent, how to forge a new kind of collectivity from and integrate it into pre-existing family and community networks -- a strategy that would soon be applied across the north, especially in the El Jícaro-Chipote, Ocotal-Somoto and San Rafael-Jinotega regions. Most fundamentally, Sandino and his lieutenants learned how to mobilize an army, how to convince illiterate countryfolk to fight and die for a cause even when all hope seemed lost -- an attribute which would be desperately needed in the months and years ahead.

If all of this is true, it is also true that no one could have possibly seen it that way at the time. After the formal cessation of hostilities the Segovias were in a state of extreme turmoil and confusion, even by Segovian standards; in the words of one contemporary, as early as mid-January the whole region was "in misery and desolation, houses on all sides filled with grief, haciendas ruined, businesses broken, crops destroyed, men mutilated by the most horrible of tortures . . ." 101 "The warfare had become most brutal in character," echoed Special Envoy Stimson of the period before and after the signing of the peace. "No prisoners were taken. The wounded were killed when captured . . .

Non-combatants including women and children were frequently killed by some of the contestants . . . captives were tortured and mutilated . . . the country was rapidly becoming filled with disorganized but armed men and groups of men who constituted actual or potential bandits. . . . Such a situation indicated a rapid approach toward anarchy. 102

He was not exaggerating. The war between and among Liberals and Conservatives had a dynamic and momentum of its own which the peace accords transformed and deflected but by no means stopped. The Civil War ended but the civil wars continued apace. In fact, in many ways the peace accords only added fuel to the fire. By calling, essentially, for the creation of a lame-duck Conservative presidency which would rule for the next eighteen months, after which elections would be held which the Liberals, as most

101. Ignacio Vargas to Eberhardt, 18 January 1927, USDS 817.00/4592.
everyone agreed, were likely to win, the accords created a sure-fire recipe for continuing political violence in the Segovias, at least in the short term. Much of the violence between May 1927 and November 1928 which historians and others have attributed to the Sandinistas was actually the work of local Liberal and Conservative gangs and their respective allies. At the same time, the Marines were just beginning their invasion of the north, in order "to protect American lives and property" and the freshly signed peace accords from the renegade "bandit" Sandino. As the 1927 corn planting season approached, no one knew quite where any of this was going. For most Segovianos, these were confusing and dangerous times indeed.
CHAPTER 5: "TO INDUCE A SENSE OF TERROR": THE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICE OF POLITICS IN THE SEGOVIAS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

I, Cupertina Amaya, widow, 38 years of age, living in Mozonte, declare that I know Anastacio Hernández and state that on 24 May 1927 at four o'clock in the morning, in the company of Narciso Hernández, son of Anastacio, José María López, Marcelino Sierra, Geronimo Pastrana, Julian Sevilla, and his son by the name of Rodríguez, Sebastian Aguilar, Miguel Aguilar, Miguel López Jr., Felipe Marín, Rogelio Amaya, son-in-law of Anastacio, Manuel Florian, Lilial Florian, Timoteo Blanco, and others more whom I did not recognize, came in carrying rifles and pistols. They came into my house in Mozonte in the Valle de los Arados, breaking down the doors, taking away my goods, killing my son Catalino Amaya, who was sleeping in a hammock, which still shows the marks of the bullets, because my son was shot the following way. One bullet went through his head, another hit his chest, and a third one hit his right arm. They cut my son's head off with a machete after they killed him. Then they took my husband, Vital López, dragging him along the road. Of course they had his hands tied. He was led by Terencio, Narciso, and Rogelio Amaya together with Anastacio. After they had left with my husband (about 30 minutes) I could hear the shooting, so I ran to find my husband. I found him with three bullets in his body and his head cut off, also many signs of machete cuts on his body . . .

This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write.

X her mark

After the end of the Constitutionalist War, there were small groups of thieves and armed men with national arms in different parts of the Segovias, acting of their own accord, and these were Conservatives, those who didn't want to turn in their arms . . . One such band was doing these things, murdering, robbing, raping, without the least concern for the anguish they caused among the peasants. The chief of the band was named Anastacio Hernández Pérez. This man, with an overflowing barbarity, used to cut off the heads of those humble peasants who refused to serve him and stuff them in his saddlebags. His group had three guitars and an accordian, and he found the greatest pleasure in arriving in the valleys and meeting with the pretty women to dance all night long. He would remove the heads he had cut that day from this saddlebags and put them on a table, in plain view of the owners of the house, in order to induce a sense of terror. And he would threaten the women who refused to go to the dance, and tell them, pointing to the table full of heads, 'That's where you're going to end up.' It was such an extreme terror, that he was pursued without mercy . . . and the terror finally stopped.

- Pedro Antonio Arauz

1. P.A. Arauz, IES ms., "Después de la terminación de la guerra constitutionalista."
My name is Anastacio Hernández. I am 49 years old. I was born in Mosonte in 1884 or 85. I am married. I left Mosonte two years ago. I used to be sub-director of police in Ocotal. I went to Honduras a year ago. The Hondurans captured me because they thought I was a Sandinista, but I told them that I was just a soldier of Chamorro, and I really am.

- Anastacio Hernández

"Violence," write Fernando Coronil and Julie Skurski in their study of political struggles between popular movements and the state in contemporary Venezuela, "pushes the limits of the permissible, opening up spaces where customary and unexpected meanings and practices are brought together in unprecedented ways, illuminating hidden historical landscapes in a flash, and leaving behind the opaque memory of ungraspable territories." The metaphors deployed by Coronil and Skurski help to bring into some kind of focus the practices of Anastacio Hernández and his gang in the hills and valleys around Ocotal between May and November 1927. For a brief, jarring moment, a string of "ungraspable" acts sheds a blinding light an otherwise "hidden landscape," a thick and undulating terrain of cultural and political relations with a no less complex and twisting past. Engraved on the bodies and deaths of Cupertina Amaya's husband and son were many of the major contours of modern Nicaraguan history, from the processes of stunted liberal nation-state formation to daily living patterns and social conditions. The

2. The testimony of Cupertina Amaya and the declaration of Anastacio Hernández are from NA127/192/5/Hernández, Anastacio (hereafter cited as Hernández File, most of which is reproduced in Appendix C); unless otherwise noted, all information on Anastacio Hernández and his activities is taken from this source, which includes twenty-one eyewitness accounts of fourteen episodes of violence, and the declarations of Anastacio Hernández and his sometime accomplice José Eulalio Torres, dictated from prison; most of the depositions by victims were recorded in Ocotal in February and March 1928 by Marine-GN investigators working under the direction of First Lieutenant C.G. Paul; see Appendix C.

phenomenon of Anastacio Hernández thrusts rudely to center stage one of the most basic questions of social theory: how do ruling classes rule?

Political violence, as jarring and repulsive and inarticulable as it is, is historically a key element of political struggle and a fundamental determinant of social transformation. Yet as widespread as it is, as universal and transhistorical as it appears to be, violence is, more fundamentally, a product of history, conceived and practiced through specific idioms and mechanisms in specific times and places. In the Segovias after the Civil War, political violence was neither random, amorphous, nor indiscriminate. It was deployed by thoughtful and diligent individuals, members of self-conscious communities acting by the lights of a clearly defined political and moral calculus, and their "product" was "produced" in some very specific, structured, and organized ways.

Power struggles in the Segovias in the 1910s and 20s were waged on many terrains: through electoral competition, through competition for political appointments and patronage, and through organized gang violence. The latter set of practices, of which the Civil War of 1926-1927 was only the most recent expression, had the most penetrating impact on the emerging Rebellion. The ways in which death, terror, and fear were "produced" by the likes of Anastacio Hernández after the formal end of the Civil War prefigured much of what would emerge during the Sandinista struggle. The violence of the Chamorrosta Conservatives, like the violence of the Sandinistas and, in a different way, of the Marines-Guardia, was highly structured and ritualized, with elaborate sets of codes and meanings expressed in the actions of its perpetrators and on the bodies of its victims. Certain idioms and practices employed by Sandino's nationalist rebels -- most prominently, the "guarantee system" (discussed below), selective property appropriation and destruction, and ritual terror -- were acquired directly from the political culture out of which their struggle emerged, and continued to bear a close resemblance to their Liberal-Conservative antecedents throughout the course of the Rebellion.
Provincial Conservative elites exploited the fluid political spaces of the post-Civil War period to defend their privileges and power against an array of increasingly powerful enemies. Backed into a corner, confronted by the threat of "free and fair" elections and, lurking right behind them, a more modern liberal-capitalist state, greater uniformity of law, and loss of their own power, local Conservatives reached for an ancient and familiar set of weapons. To grasp something of what they reached for in their hour of desperation is to acquire a deeper understanding of the political culture out of which the Rebellion emerged, and thus, of the political-cultural struggle which was the Rebellion.

**Political struggle and control of political offices in the Ocotal region, 1912-1927**

From 1912 to 1927, provincial Conservatives elites under the titular leadership of Emiliano Chamorro dominated the political landscape of the department of Nueva Segovia. During this period, the leading Conservative families of Ocotal, the departmental capital -- Lobo, Gutiérrez, Alvir, Ortez, Jarquín, Calero, Paguaga, Aguirre, and others -- directly and indirectly controlled virtually all political posts in the department, including the governorship, the seats in the National Assembly, the sundry local branches of the executive (*gobernanza, hacienda*, etc.), the judgeships, the municipal police, and the mayorships.4 For political posts not filled by executive appointment (i.e., all posts except the seats in the National Assembly, and in some cases mayorships and the municipal police), electoral fraud, violence, and intimidation were commonly employed to retain Conservative control. This is not to suggest that the Conservative Ocotal elite was homogeneous or monolithic; as with most such ruling

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4. Interviews by the author with Luis Arturo Ponce, Ramón Salgado Lobo, and other prominent elderly members of the Liberal and Conservative Ocotal elite who wish to remain anonymous, Ocotal, October 1990. A paucity of evidence does not permit it to be conclusively demonstrated here that all of these posts were Conservative-controlled from 1912 to 1927; however, that the Conservatives controlled the executive branch (and *jefaturas políticos*) from 1912-1923 and 1925-1927, combined with evidence presented below, makes this a reasonable supposition.
blocs, intra-group factionalism and conflict were never absent, and indeed, were often rife. At the same time, and especially during times of crisis, this small group of ruling elites could and did coalesce into a self-conscious collectivity with a well-defined set of political-economic interests to be vigorously defended.

From 1912 to 1924 the Conservative-dominated national state and local Conservative elites controlled most local and regional political posts across the country. In 1924 the Liberal Nationalist Party (a Liberal-Conservative coalition) won in Nueva Segovia with 82% of the vote, again permitting Emiliano Chamorro and his Conservative allies, via President Solórzano, to appoint their political allies to the political posts in the region. In September 1926, Emiliano Chamorro named Conservative Luis Paguaga Interim President of the Departmental Electoral Council for Nueva Segovia, and in the November 1926 elections for Deputy seats which he supervised, the Conservative candidates Domingo Calero and Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo won with 99% of the votes (808 to 6) over the Liberal candidates Camilo López Irías and Adan Maradiaga -- an outcome clearly indicating massive electoral fraud. The 1927 municipal elections were cancelled due to the violence and disorder produced by the Conservatives expressly for that purpose. In the elections of 1928, very probably the first elections in Nicaraguan history in which outright fraud played an inconsequential role, the Liberal party won handily in the district of Somoto -- 58% to 42% -- but lost by a small margin in the district of Ocotal -- 48% to 52%. The latter results were evidently due in large part to

5. Composed of Conservative presidential candidate Carlos Solórzano and Liberal vice-presidential candidate Juan Bautista Sacasa.
6. Consejo Nacional de Elecciones, pp. 17, 37. The evidence suggests that Conservatives held onto power during the turbulent 1923-1925 Martínez-Solórzano period; e.g., Gustavo Paguaga was Ministro de Gobernación, 1923-24; Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo was Comandante de Policía in Ocotal in 1924; and José María Paguaga was Senator in the National Assembly in 1925. Martínez's style of politics, including his "Liga de las Segovias," discussed below, would also make continuity in local Conservative control during this period more likely; sources detailed below.
7. La Noticia, 30 September and 16 December 1926; the figures are taken from the latter source.
8. Sources detailed below.
the atmosphere of violence and intimidation which the Conservatives created in their struggle to retain political control, since by most accounts political sentiments throughout most of Nueva Segovia were overwhelmingly Liberal. ¹⁰

In sum, from 1912 to 1927 the Conservative party and their local and regional allies held a stranglehold over the political offices of the northern departments, including Nueva Segovia and the Ocotal region. Espino Negro threatened to upset this delicate arrangement, and for the first time in a generation Conservative political control over the region was in serious jeopardy.

"To create a state of disorder": National politics and Conservative gang violence in the Segovias after Espino Negro

The half-year between Espino Negro and the November 1927 municipal elections was an especially explosive moment in Nicaraguan and Segovian history. Local armies, most operating at the behest of provincial elites, filled the power vacuum created by the dissolution of the national state. Hundreds of Conservative soldiers were demobilized from the National Army, many retaining their weapons, while most Liberals, victorious in the field of battle, were compelled to disarm. By late May the Marines-GN had only begun to enter the Segovias, in response to the activities of Sandino's small group of rebels, very busily engaged in the El Jicaro-El Chipote region, far to the north and east of the main zones of Conservative gang activity. ¹¹

¹⁰ This opinion was widely voiced at the time, and subsequent voting patterns tend to bear it out; in the 1930 elections for Deputy seats, the Liberals increased their margin of victory by eight percent in Nueva Segovia (62% to 38%); in the 1932 presidential elections, the Liberal candidate Sacasa won with more than two-thirds of the vote (68% to 32%); "Report on the Congressional Elections of 1930," and "Report on the Elections of 1932," USDS/M633/1/265; it is noteworthy that in 1924 the Liberal Nationalist Party received 82% of the vote in both the Ocotal and Somoto electoral districts; while it is difficult to know the extent to which fraud influenced this outcome, the differences between the 1924 and 1928 results in these two districts are curious.
¹¹ On the Sandinistas during this period see ch. 6-8, below.
The most bitterly fought bone of contention between Liberals and Conservatives during the summer of 1927 stemmed from an ambiguous stipulation in the Espino Negro Accords which called for Liberals to assume immediate control over six of the country's twelve governorships: León, Chinandega, Estelí, Nueva Segovia, Jinotega, and Bluefields. What the Accords did not stipulate was who would fill the posts under the new jefes políticos, particularly the judgesthips, chiefs of police, and local tax collectorships. Mondada and his appointees demanded that these offices devolve to Liberal control; Díaz and the Conservatives balked, while the State Department walked a tightrope between the two still-warring parties.\textsuperscript{12}

Six months earlier, Emiliano Chamorro had provided an ominous foretaste of the seriousness with which provincial Conservatives would come to view this Liberal threat when, in a dockside interview on the eve of an extended journey to the US and Europe, the Conservative caudillo called for unity within his party at all costs. "Our adversaries, logically interested in creating difficulties within the Conservative Party... will not disdain any opportunity for sowing dissension among us," he warned. "Let every Conservative citizen keep this in mind: above all things, union of the Conservative Party around President Díaz."

The General stopped to reflect a moment and then continued. Say this also: There are in the capital and in the departments prominent conservatives who shape the opinion of considerable groups. I recommend especially to these leaders union and solidarity with President Díaz. \textit{Any difficulty whatever which might arise they must try to obviate}.\textsuperscript{13}

A good deal more along these lines was likely said behind closed doors.

Moncadista Liberals were generally euphoric at the prospect of genuinely "free and fair" elections in November 1928. Chamorrista Conservatives, on the other hand, fully expected to lose and did most everything in their power to disrupt the electoral

\textsuperscript{12} Eberhardt to Kellogg, 31 May 1927, USDS 817.00/4879; Eberhardt to Kellogg, 30 June 1927, 817.00/4922; Kellogg to Eberhardt, 13 July 1927, 817.00/4930a; Stimson to Moncada, 14 July 1927, and Stimson to Eberhardt, same date, 817.00/4938.5

\textsuperscript{13} From \textit{La Prensa}, 22 December 1926, English translation only, Eberhardt to Kellogg, 26 December 1926, USDS 817.00/4512; emphasis added.
process, beginning almost immediately after the Espino Negro Accords were signed in early May 1927. The first recorded wave of political violence in the Ocotal region took place on the night of first full moon after Espino Negro, when Anastacio Hernández and his gang killed and mutilated more than fourteen adult men in the vicinity of Ocotal.  

Another wave hit in Jinotega department at precisely the same time.

More than a score of Conservative gangs, made up of partly demobilized National Army soldiers, were active across the entire region. Conservative gang activity reached its apogee in September, October, and November. After the November 1927 municipal elections were cancelled in Nueva Segovia, the violence diminished markedly, and by the spring and summer of 1928 a new dynamic and a sharp realignment of political forces had come into play: the Marines-GN had established garrisons in most major towns and actively patrolled the most populated regions; the Defending Army had expanded its size and zone of operations and was active throughout most of the Segovias; the Liberals were gaining strength and support; and the Conservatives were materially and morally weakend. The next, and last, large-scale wave of Conservative violence reached its peak immediately prior to the November 1928 elections. On the one hand, the whole of the eighteen months between Espino Negro and November 1928 saw numerous waves of Conservative violence pulsating throughout the towns and villages of every department in the country except Chontales, Boaco, Rivas, and Granada. At the same time, the six

14. Cupertino Amaya, above, described one episode in this wave; the moon was full on May 25 (Farmer's Almanac, 1927).

15. In the only incident for which evidence has been uncovered, at dawn on 26 May 1927 a gang led by Secundino Pérez arrived at the ranch of Guillermo Gómez near Jinotega; as four women of the household watched, the gang tied up Señor Gómez and his son Andres and killed them both with gunshot and machetes. Secundino Pérez was arrested but soon released by the Conservative Jefe Político of Matagalpa, Polidecto Correa. A year later, in mid-1928, a Sandinista band headed by Ramón Sequiera and Ricardo Möller tried to kill Pérez; they failed and both were wounded; eighteen months later the brothers of the wounded men, Transito Sequiera and Gustavo Möller, succeeded in killing Pérez. Spencer Richardson to Mjr. Shearer, Matagalpa, 2 and 16 June 1927, NA127/43A/20, and Report of Operations, E. Marcos, Jinotega, 5 November 1929, NA127/202/13/55. It is likely that many such incidents occurred but were never documented.

16. Detailed below.
months from May to November 1927 was an especially explosive period in the Pacific region and especially in the Segovias.

As early as July 1927, soon after the Battle of Ocotal had demonstrated Sandino's commitment to resist the North American occupation by force of arms, Liberal newspapers in Managua and León began accusing the Conservatives of secretly aiding the Rebellion. "I have observed," wrote the publisher and editor of the Managua daily La Noticia Juan Ramón Aviles, "that the Conservatives are content with [the Sandino] rebellion. Three days ago a young conservative told me that 'Sandino is a patriot.'" For Aviles, the motivations driving the Conservatives were obvious: "They are hoping that the state of disorder they are creating will force the Americans to cancel the elections."17 Such accusations continued to be voiced by Liberal newspapers and politicians right up to election day, and indeed, for a long time afterward.

Even the politically-unsavvy Marine Corps intelligence apparatus began to pick up on the rudiments of the Chamorrista strategy. By early 1928, Marine intelligence assessments began to report that Emiliano Chamorro "had requested his followers to aid Sandino and to encourage the state of anarchy in the [northern] area."18 A week before the 1928 elections, Marine Corps Lieutenant A.C. Larsen summed up the political situation:

The Conservative party knows very well that if they go to the polls they are going to be defeated by the Liberals. As the Elections are going to be supervised by the Americans who will not allow any kinds of fraud, it would be a stupid thing to vote. Under these circumstances, they have decided to start trouble all over the country with the intention of stopping the elections and to keep in power Adolfo Díaz.19

If Larsen's reasoning was on the mark, his analysis actually applied to the whole of the period after May 1927.

17. La Noticia, 20 July 1927; a similar conclusion was reached by Dodd (1966).
18. Quote from B-2 Report, Managua, 27 December 1927; see also H. Schmidt, Estimate of the Political, Economical, and Civil Situation, 12 February 1928, NA127/43A/3.
In early June, as the Marines escorted the new Liberal Jefe Político Arnoldo M. Ramírez into the town of Ocotal, they were walking more or less blindfolded into a minefield of pre-existing political conflicts. If they were, on the whole, quick to learn, it took them some time to sort out and identify the major players and even begin to comprehend a very confused situation. "Found town to be occupied by detachment of Liberal soldiers under charge of [current] Jefe Político," wrote Major Pierce of his entry into Ocotal on June 9. "Old [current] Jefe Político reported a band of Conservatives outside this town by whom they were in fear of attack. No exact information could be obtained of how many or when they had last been observed." The Major was especially struck by the conditions of "lawlessness" in the area:

I find no police here, no system of civil law whatsoever in effect, the Government offices are in a state of disorder and I believe no attention has been paid to the rights of the people. The soldiers have been subsisting simply by taking any property desired.

A day earlier, Major Pierce had arrived in the town of Totogalpa, south of Ocotal, where he encountered "a small band of Liberal soldiers occupying the town, who were apparently living by plundering the cattle in that vicinity." From this band the Major had confiscated three rifles, two pistols, and several machetes. "This, in my opinion," he averred, "indicates a state of lawlessness which I believe exists throughout this area."20 A week later he made an inspection of the town of Telpaneca, southeast of Ocotal. His observations mirrored those he had made a week earlier: "A very small town, very poor in appearance, and poor class of people . . . Bands pass in this vicinity now and then, usually reported on being about fifty (50) in each party (unreliable) no information as to the total number . . ."21 Major Pierce was only catching glimpses, as we are, of a war-torn but still well organized system of rural political bossism and gang warfare. One can detect a tone of confusion and uncertainty vibrating through Major Pierce's observations,

particularly in his perception that there was "no system of civil law whatsoever in effect." Of course he was right: civil law was subsumed under gang law.

Conservative violence continued through the rainy summer months, as the fall municipal elections neared and Liberal pressures to assume control over local political posts intensified. In early July the Municipal Secretary of the town of Condega notified the Ministerio de Gobernación that on June 29, "a group of bandits attacked the civic guard that we have here; they killed the old man Francisco Reyes; they carried away our telegraphic apparatus, and persecuted the telegraph operator." Soon afterward the same gang reportedly seized and hanged three individuals in Palacaguina. It was suspected that this gang gathered and received arms in Pueblo Nuevo. "Also around El Consuelo there are various bandits," the report continued. "Families in Condega are fleeing for fear of being murdered. When the Americans pass by the bandits hide and afterward they reappear and continue their evil deeds." In mid-July it was reported by the Estelí correspondent of La Noticia that "a horrible crime" was committed there. "A patrol of three individuals armed with rifles and machetes arrived at the house of don Napoleón Casco with the object of murdering him," the correspondent reported. "Four of his sons left in his defense and his brother-in-law Luis Moncada. The criminals fell on the five and killed them with machete blows." In early August the Liberal Police Chief of Ocotal General J. Ramón Tellez reported that "society in Ocotal is in a constant state of anxiety (en constante zozobra) and every day the crisis of banditry is getting worse." Later that month, in the pre-dawn hours of the day Tellez was scheduled to leave for Managua, his house in Ocotal was attacked by Conservatives led by Camilo Bermúdez. Unharmed, he journeyed to Managua, told his story about Anastacio Hernández and Gustavo Paguaga to the press, and was promptly arrested and confined in the National

22. La Noticia, 6 July 1927.
23. La Noticia, 21 July 1927.
24. La Noticia, 10 August 1927.
Penitentiary by the Díaz government; soon after, he was deported. The violence was not confined to the northern regions. On August 26 the Rural Cavalry (caballerí rura1) of León clashed with a large armed Conservative gang on the plains near Posoltega. Similar clashes continued through early November.

Anastacio Hernández and his gang(s) began their second major wave of killings in the rural areas around Ocotal and Telpaneca on the ninth of September 1927. At least twenty-five adult males were killed and mutilated. The killings and mutilations continued through September, October and November. In all forty-seven persons were reported killed by the Anastacio Hernández gang during this period, though doubtless he killed many more. In mid-November Hernández’s gang was defeated by a rival Liberal gang led by José León Díaz (later a general in the Defending Army) and Simón Jirón (or "Pichingo," later a private "scout" [i.e., gang leader] employed by the Marines-Guardia).

The Liberal gang of Díaz and Pichingo was reportedly put together and hired by Liberal leaders of the region for the express purpose of defending themselves against Conservative violence. As one Liberal participant tactfully described it,

What happened is the following. Since neither the Americans nor the police had bothered to pursue Anastacio Hernández, or had not been able to do so because their activities were so focused against Sandino, and since the situation was so intolerable, with so many murders, the Liberals in the region banded together in order to attack and disperse his gang.

Anastacio Hernández told a similar story from prison. After their defeat, Hernández and his surviving followers fled into Honduras; a few months later, he was arrested by

25. La Noticla, 31 August, 8 September, 13 September 1927.
26. La Noticla, 27 August 1927.
27. La Noticla, August 25, September 13, October 6, 15, 19, 26, 30, November 8, 1927.
28. La Noticla, 16 November 1927; Díaz and Pichingo were hired by the Liberals, according to this anonymous and detailed account, which corresponds closely to a detailed biography of José León Díaz written by USMC Captain G.F. Stockes, who wrote that "When Anastacio Hernandez took the field in August 1927, declaring he was going to kill every Liberal in the Somoto district, it seems that [José León] Díaz was selected by the Liberals to oppose Hernandez" (B-2 Report, 18 July 1929, Managua, pp. 10-12, NA127/43A/4); Stockes' account conforms in many specifics to the testimony of Pastor Ramírez Mejía, IES 094-1-3.
29. See Appendix C.
the Honduran authorities and extradited to Nicaragua, where he was accused of more than forty-seven murders and sentenced to life in prison by the Marines. He died a short time later in the National Penitentiary in Managua.30

The violence did not begin or end with Anastacio Hernández, however, who was only the most notorious of the Conservative gang leaders in the Ocotal region during this period. From May to November more than a dozen armed gangs, and perhaps as many as three dozen, were mobilized by the Conservatives in the western Segovias, including those led by José Eulalio Torres, Julian Sevilla, the Cárdenas brothers, Timoteo Blanco, Medardo Vallejos, Augustín Flores, Leoncio Díaz, Antonio Huete, Abelino Rodríguez, Concepción Pérez, Toribio Solórzano, Carlos Lobo, Marcelino Hernández, Simón Mendoza, Clemente Gaitán, Fidencio Carazo, Tiburcio Polanco, Francisco and José Castillo, Filemón Molina, Juan Alberto Briones, and others, all of whom gained less notoriety than Anastacio Hernández but were engaged in essentially the same project.31

The identities and affiliations of the gangs often went unrecorded. For a handful of examples: on August 17 it was reported that "around Pueblo Nuevo and Guasuyucú there is a small band of bandits operating"; a few weeks later it was reported that "Conservatives armed with national rifles are killing Liberals have been arriving from Condega almost daily"; on October 30, that "groups of bandits under Conservative orders to foment unrest are operating in Los Ranchos in León"; a week later it was reported that

30. Hernández was admitted to the National Penitentiary on 30 April 1928; he and Torres were conscripted into the Casual Company of the Guardia Nacional on 10 October 1928. This was common with Liberal and Conservative "bandits," since, as the Marine officer in charge of the case wrote, "there existed no court by which these former bandits could be tried." It appears that top Marines were especially abhorred by the facts of the case and pursued its prosecution vigorously; a handwritten note by General Beadle emphatically ordered that Hernández and Torres not be released without his express written authorization. Hernández File.

31. All of the above-named men were reported as gang leaders or sub-leaders; see Hernández File; La Noticia, 10 and 21 August; 28 September; 5 October; 3, 10 and 11 November 1927; on Tiburcio Polanco see also entry for 15 November 1927 in "consolidated contacts," NA127/205/1/3.15; Polanco was still active in July 1929; see Report of Patrol, J.C. Rimes, 17 July 1929, NA127/212/1; on Briones see NA127/192/1/Briones.
"in Portillo Grande, between Somoto and Pueblo Nuevo, there is a large group of armed bandits . . . The bodies of two men hacked by machetes were found on a road near Somoto;" on 18 November, that "around the Valle de El Angel [northwest of Limay] . . . there is a group of around fifty rebels and murderers . . . committing every kind of atrocity."32 Further examples could fill many pages.

By mid-September streams of refugees were pouring into Estelf, Ocotal, Somoto, and Telpaneca, the only towns in the north garrisoned by the Marines until after the November electoral period (the latter two were not garrisoned until early September).33 "All the valleys in the jurisdiction of Somoto," began one report of late September,

and the villages of Yalaguina, Palacaguina, Mozonte, etc., have been completely emptied of their inhabitants, who have abandoned their properties to save their lives and are heading for Somoto, which today is the refuge of the desolated Segovianos.34

It might be argued, as many Conservatives did at the time and Somoza's book did subsequently, that this violence was the work of Sandinista gangs. And some probably was; Hernández admitted in his declaration from prison that Sandinista power in the western Segovias had outstripped his own and he had been compelled to flee. At the same time there is much to indicate that most of these murders and atrocities were committed Conservative gangs.35 From June to December 1927, the main Sandinista force was busily engaged far to the north and east, organizing and defending the mountainous region around Murra and El Chipote; after the Battle of Ocotal on July 16-17, the main Sandinista body was pursued eastward and compelled to assume a defensive posture against a sustained Marine-Guardia assault; after late January 1928 the Marines-

32. La Noticia, 17 August, 30 September, 30 October, 8 and 18 November 1927.
33. La Noticia, 28 September, 14 October, 8 November 1927.
34. La Noticia, 28 September 1927.
35. Somoza, pp. 61-76, recorded twenty-three murders and mutilations from August to November 1927 in the western Segovias and blamed all on the Sandinistas; it is very likely that all were the work of Conservative gangs. Two instances in which it can be demonstrated that Somoza laid the blame at the wrong doorstep were the deaths of Marcos López and Claudio Gómez (Somoza, p. 67), which eyewitness María Apolonia Muñoz (Hernández File) testified were killed by the Anastacio Hernández gang.
GN took El Chipote, and the main Sandinista force was dispersed to the south and east into Jinotega and Matagalpa. The only known Sandinista gang operating east of El Jícaro during the summer and fall of 1927 was led by Carlos Salgado, active in the region between Telpaneca and Somoto from July 1927 onward, and Salgado undoubtedly drew his strength from pre-existing Liberal affiliations; the same was true for José León Díaz, whose Sandinista affiliations at this juncture were evidently tenuous. Further, as nearly as can be determined, none of the above-named Conservative gang leaders were then or later became Sandinistas. More tellingly, the most notorious of these gang leaders openly admitted their Conservative affiliations.

Sometimes the violence reached such extremes that individuals with lifelong Conservative affiliations, claiming to have grown horrified at the bloodshed, made public their decision to renounce their party allegiance. In October 1927 Arcadio Acuña of San Juan de Limay publicly renounced his lifelong ties with the Conservative Party because of "the robberies, the sackings, and the murders that Generals Nicolas Baquedano and Manuel S. Ubau have committed" in the vicinity of Limay. Such public renunciations were not uncommon. Indeed, one impetus behind the violence, as suggested by Emiliano Chamorro months before, was to convince fellow Conservatives that opportunistic party-switching would not be tolerated. Others stuck with their party but condemned its excessive violence. "I have been and always will be a Conservative," proclaimed a handbill circulated by José Antonio Rugama in Granada in November 1927. Announcing that he had become "disillusioned and saddened" by the "tremendous carnage" being propagated by members of his party, Rugama pleaded with his correligionarios "to accept gracefully the fact that we are defeated."

36. Fidencio Carazo might be the only exception; see Appendix C and ch. 8, below.
38. La Noticia, 26 Oct. 1927.
39. La Noticia, 15 November 1927.
The Conservatives were partly successful in this all-out drive to disrupt the electoral process. Municipal elections in Nueva Segovia, scheduled for early November 1927, were cancelled "because," in the words of the northern correspondent for La Noticia, "the local electoral boards are disintegrating, lacking all voter registration lists and all of the materials necessary for a proper election." Throughout the rest of the country, except in the Conservative strongholds of Granada, Chontales, Boaco, Rivas, and parts of Matagalpa, the Liberals won the November 1927 municipal elections by a landslide.

"I will prove by all of the Paguagas that I am a good man!": The principal patrons of gang violence in the Ocotal region

Soon after his incarceration, Anastacio Hernández dictated an extraordinary declaration which revealed, in part and from his own perspective, the reasons behind the murders. "My soldiers were all Conservatives," he explained.

We received instructions . . . not to mix with the Liberals but to attack them wherever there was a chance to do so . . . the instructions I gave to Torres were to protect the Conservatives . . . we had instructions from Don Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo that we should not let the Liberals alone, that we should always attack them . . .

"I will prove," he concluded emphatically, "By Gutiérrez Lobo and Pedro Lobo and all of the Paguagas that I am a good man."

Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo was a prominent attorney, sometime judge, owner of considerable properties in and around Ocotal, and holder of a variety of political offices from at least 1910. His family's house still stands on the south side of the central square of Ocotal, adjacent to the Church, a position of prominence in the hierarchical space of

40. La Noticia, 6 November 1927; the Marines reported much the same thing, e.g., Intelligence report, R.W. Peard, Ocotal, 7 November 1927, NA127/43A/3.
41. La Noticia, 8 November 1927.
42. In 1918 Gutiérrez Lobo was accused of being a Zelayista and administrador de rentas during the brief regime of Madriz in 1910; Jeffrey Gould, personal communication.
the Spanish colonial town. The Gutiérrez family, like the Paguañas and Lobos, formed part of the "Spanish" elite of the region -- propertied, educated, white-skinned, of European physiognomy, as opposed to the darker-skinned mestizo and, in the eyes of the "Spanish" elite, "primitive" indios. Evidently something of a political opportunist, he, like other members of the Conservative elite, was not above aligning with the opposing party if it meant retaining the reins of local power. By all appearances an arch-Conservative, he was allied with the brief Liberal Madriz regime in 1910, a staunch Conservative from 1912 to 1928, and administrador de rentas for Ocotal in 1929 under the Liberal Moncada regime.

The Lobo clan also formed part of this provincial elite. Pastor Lobo was a wealthy cattle rancher, owner of the hacienda San Luis a few miles west of Ocotal. Pedro Lobo was a public accountant, employed by the US-owned San Albino Mine, a prominent merchant, owner of substantial landholdings around Ocotal and El Jicaro, and holder of numerous local political offices through the 1920s. In late 1927 he briefly held the position of Chief of Police for Ocotal, and acted as the Marines' translator after the town was occupied in June 1927. Ramón Lobo had been politically active since at least the time of Zelaya; by the early 1920s was one of the most prominent merchants in the Ocotal area. His aunt was probably the mother of Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo.

The Paguaña family was also a prominent fixture of the Ocotal Conservative elite. Gustavo Paguaña, the most powerful member of the Paguaña clan, had been active in politics since the time of Zelaya; in 1906, he, José Paguaña, Ramón Lobo, and other

43. A relative of Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo who wishes to remain anonymous was interviewed in his family's home in Ocotal by the author in October 1990. This individual disclaimed any knowledge of the events surrounding Anastacio Hernández or the latter's connections with Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo.
44. On the latter post, La Tribuna, Managua, 13 March 1929.
45. Intelligence information obtained from Abrosia Lopez Alfaro, Somoto, 17 May 1932, NA127/202/1/1.3
46. Hernández File; IES 032: 2; José Paul Barahona, IES ms., p. 2.
47. La Noticia, 17 August, 20 August, 31 August 1927; Nueva Segovia Expedition, V.F. Bleasdale, 21 August 1927, NA127/43A/29.
members of the Ocotal elite invited President Zelaya to a dance and party in Ocotal (the irony here was not lost on the editors of *La Noticia*).\textsuperscript{49} Gustavo Paguaga continued his political career through the fifteen years of Conservative rule, as a Senator in the National Assembly in the late 1910s; *jefe político* for the Department of Nueva Segovia in the early 1920s; Minister of the Interior (*Ministro de Gobernación*) under Presidents Diego Chamorro and Bartolomé Martínez in 1923 and 1924; and Deputy in the National Assembly representing Nueva Segovia from 1925 to 1928, and again from 1928 to 1932.\textsuperscript{50} Salvador Paguaga was named President of the Board of Elections for Nueva Segovia for the 1924 elections, and *Comandante de Armas* for the department in 1926; Luis Paguaga was President of the Board of Elections for the 1926 elections; José María Paguaga was appointed Senator in the National Assembly by Emiliano Chamorro in January 1925.\textsuperscript{51} Vicente, Celso, Jesús, Emilio, and Gonzálo Paguaga (the relations between all of these Paguagas is unclear), while evidently not as politically active as other members of their clan, did own large coffee and cattle estates, some near Dipilto to the northwest of Ocotal.\textsuperscript{52}

It is difficult to know precisely how these provincial Conservative elites were linked to the major Conservative families of Granada, though bits and pieces of evidence suggest that they were neither the pawns of more powerful political players nor wholly autonomous actors, that they were linked to Granada in a variety of ways but possessed of a strong streak of independence. In 1922, for instance, during the presidency of Diego Chamorro, the "Paguaga brothers" were identified as members of the newly-formed

\textsuperscript{49} On 25 August 1927, *La Noticia* published this historic document of March 1906, noting that, "and now the Paguagas are the most terrible persecutors of Liberalism in Ocotal."

\textsuperscript{50} *El Centroamericano*, 8 March 1922, 30 November 1923, 10 January 1924, 1 June 1924; USDS/M632/30/411; Consejo Nacional de Elecciones, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{51} *El Centroamericano*, 21 and 22 December, 1923; *La Noticia*, 30 September and 4 November 1926; Eberhardt to Kellog, Despatch No. 312, USDS 817.00/4355; also, *La Gaceta*, 27 October 1924, in 817.00/5030.

\textsuperscript{52} Declarations of Anastacio Hernández, Miguel Hernández, and José Eulalio Torres, *Hernández File*.
"Conservative League of the Segovias" under the (apparent) leadership of Vice-President Bartolomé Martínez. The League, painted in the León press as a major "schism in the breast of Conservatism," was reportedly "formed by members of the same political color in order to counteract the policies of President Chamorro, which have brought the departments of the north to ruin," and included prominent Conservatives from Estelí, Matagalpa, and Jinotega as well as Nueva Segovia.\textsuperscript{53} On the other hand, provincial Conservative leaders often travelled to Granada and elsewhere to confer with their \textit{correligionarios}; some sent their children to boarding schools in the Granada area.\textsuperscript{54} In short, the ties between provincial and national Conservative leaders were evidently infused with a great deal of tension and conflict and no less cooperation and interdependence.

The Lobo, Paguaga, and Gutiérrez families, by 1927 linked to the Chamorrista faction of the Conservative Party, were among the most powerful and active members of the Conservative elite in Nueva Segovia after the Civil War, and the Paguegas the principal organizers of gang violence in the Ocotal region. After mid-1927, accusations against "the Paguaga brothers," and Gustavo Paguaga in particular, peppered the Liberal newspapers of León and Managua. "The Paguagas should know that they have spilled the blood of many innocent people," wrote the northern correspondent for \textit{La Noticia} in mid-August 1927, "and that the public conscience is rising up against them, fingerling them as the only and true ones responsible for the massacres committed in Mosonte, Dipilto, El Jícaro, and Telpaneca."\textsuperscript{55} Another of their enemies took it as self-evident that "the circle of Chamorristas here [in Ocotal] has been arming and sustaining Anastacio Hernández, . . . and the national government believes that he is performing a valuable

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{El Centroamericano}, 8 March 1922.
\textsuperscript{54} Ramón Lobo of Ocotal brought some of his children and a niece to Granada in May 1922 and enrolled them in the schools there; \textit{El Centroamericano}, 7 May 1922.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{La Noticia}, 13 August 1927. In late August, J. Ramón Tellez, former Chief of Police in Ocotal, repeated the charge, adding that, "The Paguagas, who for all time have been the scourges of Nueva Segovia, are the ones who really run the Department." \textit{La Noticia}, 31 August 1927.
service."\textsuperscript{56} On this score at least there were few secrets; as the mass murderer Anastacio Hernández himself declared, "I state that all of the Paguagas are good friends of mine . . . I was just a soldier of Chamorro, and this was the truth."

The Declarations of Anastacio Hernández and José Eulalio Torres: Some aspects of the idioms and mechanics of gang violence

Prisoners in the National Penitentiary from April 1928, Anastacio Hernández and his sometime associate José Eulalio Torres were compelled by their captors to dictate "declarations" explaining what they knew about the murders, the reasons behind them, the actors involved, and so on. These documents must be classed among the most remarkable and revealing in all of Nicaraguan history. Without them there would be only a handful of unsubstantiated allegations connecting these horrific episodes of violence to the Ocotal Chamorrista elite. With them we are permitted an unprecedented, insider's look at how Segovian politics and gang warfare actually worked at the end of the Civil War and, presumably, for a long time before. (These declarations are reproduced in full in Spanish and English in Appendix C).

The structure of the "declarations" indicates that they were constructed from a protracted and reluctant dialogue between Guardia investigators and their prisoners. Interrogators confronted Torres and Hernández with a barrage of questions about specific events and individuals, and the answers were probably written as statements, e.g.:

Question: What is your name? Answer: Anastacio Hernández. Declaration reads: "My name is Anastacio Hernández." Ostensibly a juridical vehicle for either self-defense or, preferably, confession, both men used the occasion to exonerate themselves and blame others. Not surprisingly, both accounts are laden with inconsistencies, individually and as a set. Yet there is also a strong current of truthfulness coursing through both

\textsuperscript{56}. \textit{La Noticia}, 16 November 1927; also see \textit{La Tribuna}, Managua, 23 March 1929, in which Anastacio Hernández's father implicated Gustavo Paguaga and Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo in sponsoring his son's violent activities.
declarations. At one level, both men knew they were guilty of the charges against them and that neither had much to lose. Hernández's declaration in particular suggests a mercurial personality capable of as much contempt and rage as playfulness and pathos.

Consider the following rather confusing excerpts:

... what I did with my soldiers was defend myself from Sandino, I never attacked anyone, I have not signed a single guarantee, the Conservatives needed guarantees so that my troops would not bother them, I gave guarantees in this district, all the Conservatives were my soldiers... I wanted to return to Ocotal but I did not because I was afraid, the Sandinistas were in the mountains so I was fleeing...

This passage makes more sense if we imagine the interrogation running something as follows:

Q: What were you doing with your soldiers?
A: Defending myself from Sandino.
Q: What about all those you attacked?
A: I never attacked anyone!
Q: What about all the guarantees you signed?
A: I never signed a single guarantee!
Q: Come on, we know you signed guarantees! Look, here are some you signed for Conservatives. Why did you sign them?
A: So my troops would not bother them.
Q: So then you did issue guarantees around Ocotal?
A: Yes, I signed them, so what?
Q: Who were your soldiers?
A: All the Conservatives!...
Q: What did you do after Pichingo and Díaz defeated you?
A: I wanted to return to Ocotal.
Q: Why didn't you?
A: Because I was afraid, the Sandinistas were in the mountains so I was fleeing...

Torres's declaration, in contrast, seems to carry a more consistently earnest tone; letters he and his wife later sent to the Jefe Director of the Guardia indicate that he anticipated a rather quick release. Inconsistencies in the declarations, which are legion, probably resulted from attempts to lie, as in the example above. On the other hand, most assertions in both declarations are eminently plausible. For example, Hernández claimed that in 1924 he was jailed in Ocotal, and that Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo secured his release -- a claim substantiated by at least two newspaper stories and his father's
Photo 5.1
Photograph of Anastacio Hernández, taken in October 1928 in the National Penitentiary in Managua. Source: United States Naval Institute, Proceedings (January 1933) 59, 1, p. 29. (I am grateful to David C. Brooks for this reference.)
testimony.57 The battle he described against José León Díaz around November 1927, in which he was defeated and forced to flee to Honduras, is likewise corroborated by other evidence.58 There is little reason to doubt that Hernández was once, as he claimed, sub-director of police in Ocotal, or that he was Abraham Gutiérrez's secretary in 1920; nor is there reason to doubt that Torres was once tax collector in Ocotal and local judge in El Jicaro: We have seen that regional caudillos commonly doled out lucrative political posts to clients and allies, and that the men who held such posts were capable of extreme brutality in the discharge of their offices. If it is possible to imagine a political universe or social milieu in which Anastacio Hernández is the sub-director of police and José Torres the tax collector and local judge, it is possible to begin to imagine the Segovias in the 1910s and 20s.

Hernández was eager to finger his principal patrons, doubtless on the presumption that identifying such powerful men as his "good friends" would lead to his quick release. "I state that all the Paguagas are good friends of mine, so is Gutiérrez Lobo and Pedro Lobo," he declared emphatically. "The Hondurans said I was a Sandinista, and I said I was a soldier of Chamorro, and I really am . . . We received instructions from Gutiérrez Lobo not to let the Liberals alone, but to always attack them." In a revealing set of passages, Torres mapped out the principal lines of conflict and alliance:

We [he and Hernández] were with a Honduran chief, pursuing the Sandinistas, his name is Medardo Vallejos, I threatened Anastacio [Zamora] because he was backed up by the forces of Vallejos . . . Vallejos was chief of the Chamorristas, and Anastacio Hernández was a Chamorrista chief, and we belonged to the Chamorrista party, we were receiving orders from Cornelio Sandoval who lives in San Marcos de Colon [Honduras] and owns a farm in Dipilto, he used to get arms and send them to us, Vallejos was first chief, and Hernández second . . . I do not

57. El Centroamericano, 8 June 1924, reported that the jefe político of Nueva Segovia informed the Ministerio de Gobernación that Anastacio Hernández had been captured near Moizonte; the charge was attempted patricide. The editor noted that, "Frankly, in these cases we accept the application of the lynch law." Hernández's father, Miguel Hernández, told a similar story in his 1928 deposition (Hernández File) and to the press a year later, La Tribuna, 23 March 1929.
58. La Noticia, 16 November 1927; Stockes in B-2 Report, 18 July 1929, pp. 10-12, NA127/43A/4; Pastor Ramírez Mejía, IES 094.
know of any orders Gutiérrez Lobo sent to [Anastacio] Hernández, Lobo asked me often to quit Vallejos . . .\textsuperscript{59}

If Hernández's list of patrons and allies only partly overlapped with Torres's, both agreed that both were soldiers of the Chamorristas of the region, and as such, acted by the lights of some implicitly understood rules and principles.

It is clear from these two declarations that powerful regional caudillos essentially contracted with private gang leaders -- like Torres, Vallejos, and Hernández -- provided them with arms, and told them who to threaten, who to attack, who to kill or terrorize, who to protect or "guarantee." According to one evidently credible account, Gustavo Paguaga gave Hernández the names of 200 persons to kill, and Hernández was captured with this list and another on which were written the names of thirty of his victims.\textsuperscript{60} Torres' last comment in the above quote -- "Lobo asked me often to quit Vallejos" -- along with others, indicates that gang leaders were not mere tools of wealthy patrons, but relatively autonomous agents who could and did choose for whom and under what conditions they would "work." The same was true for their subordinates and superiors, in varying degrees.

These Conservative gangs were governed by a set of organizational dynamics very similar to those structuring the creation and recreation of Liberal armies in the Segovias during the Civil War. Despite many obvious differences, the stories told by Hernández and Torres evoke many of the same images as the stories of Captain Pastor Ramírez Mejía, Lizandro Ardon Molina, Santos López, and others, particularly with respect to how armies or gangs were organized, their "lumpiness," their endless congealings and dissolutions. Conservative gangs, like Liberal armies, were more fluid processes than solidified institutions, constructed more of networks of personal relationships than one-way channels of authority. The declarations suggest that alliances

\textsuperscript{59} In late 1927 Medardo Vallejos was described by a Marine lieutenant: "bandit leader . . . Mardardo Ballejo . . . constantly making raids and depredations on Nicaraguans living near the border. . . . The people voiced anxiety and alarm about the bandit Ballejo." Patrol, Bellinger, Somoto, 7 Nov. 1927, NA127/43A/20.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{La Noticia}, 16 November 1927.
between patrons, gang leaders, and gang members were based on longstanding
friendships and mutual trust, but that old alliances and relationships could be and often
were reconfigured under new circumstances. They also indicate that lines of allegiance
and conflict were multiple, shifting, and riddled with contradictions: Torres, for instance,
spoke of considerable friction between himself and Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, his
intimate partner's longstanding and trusted patron, and between Gutiérrez Lobo and
Medardo Vallejos, who in turn was described as "chief of the Chamorristas." Precisely
what was going on here is unclear; what is clear is that it was complicated.

To what extent was there an ethnic dimension to the violence? This is a difficult
question for which there is little evidence either way. Mosonte, where Hernández and
many of his victims were born and raised, was an indigenous community dating back to
the colonial period. What role this played in the violence is unclear, except that the
comunidad itself was still functioning in the 1920s, by which time it was a Chamorrista
stronghold with a reputation for savagery: Recall Lizandro Ardon Molina's story from
chapter four (above), carting a mule load of rifles and ammunition to Sandino, and the
extreme vigilance he exercised skirting the Conservative garrison at Mosonte: "God
himself wouldn't have passed through there!" We now know why. The role of ethnicity,
about which virtually all of the sources are curiously and frustratingly silent, remains one
of the most puzzling aspects of these events, and unfortunately must await further
investigation.

The "guarantee" system

"Guarantees" (garantías) were mentioned one dozen times in the two
declarations, four times by Hernández and eight by Torres. Hernández dictated:

All I did with my soldiers was defend myself against Sandino, I never bothered
anyone, I never signed a single guarantee, when the Conservatives used to need
guarantees so my troops would not bother them, I gave them in this district . . .
In Dipilto none of the coffee-growers participated in any pact, Anastacio Zamora had guarantees from the Liberals signed by José León Díaz, I never gave any guarantee to Zamora . . .

Torres, for his part, declared:

I remember I sent a letter to Anastacio Zamora, telling him he had no guarantee . . .

I threatened Anastacio [Zamora] because he was backed up by the forces of Vallejos, Vallejos signed to give guarantees and I signed them for those in the agreement, so our troops would not bother them, we gave them guarantees so that our forces would not bother them, the individuals who had no guarantee, I would take a bit of something or some of his property . . .

I signed only one guarantee, I signed for Anastacio Zamora, and as he was with us, I gave it to him . . . 61

In Dipilto there is no one with guarantees signed by me, Antonio Prado, Augustín Ferrafino, and Eulogio Pastan, coffee growers in a pact together, had guarantees to pick their coffee. [The Paguaga family] was guaranteed to pick their coffee . . .

Much in these texts is cryptic, phrased in a sort of shorthand that assumed a great deal about relationships and practices of which outsiders are only permitted to glimpse the outlines. It is nonetheless clear that "guarantees" were central to the practical operation of gang warfare and the rural political economy more generally during this period. Guarantees were issued or denied to individuals and families. To guarantee (garantizar), as Torres explicitly defined it, was to issue a formal promise not to injure, kill, or destroy property. Guarantees for life and property were exchanged (or distributed, or sold, or issued) for money, goods, services, or political acquiescence. Conversely, to lack or be denied a guarantee was to leave oneself open to attack. A guarantee could thus be a lifesaver, as it was for Julio Maradiaga, seized by Torres in November 1927 but set free because, in his own words, "I had guarantees given by Abelino Herrera of El Jicaro." 62 A guarantee in this context was thus very different from the "protection" forcibly peddled by Chicago gangsters during this same period, or the "guarantees for lives and property"

61. On Anastacio Zamora, on whom both Torres and Hernández seem obsessed in these declarations, see Appendix C.
62. Hernández File; Abelino Herrera was later commended for his "meritorious services" to the Marines, and was reportedly on Sandino's "death list" for treason; Recommendation for meritorious services rendered by native, G.H. Potter, Ocotal, 24 April 1928, NA127/220/2.
issued by the US State Department or the British Foreign Office. In the Segovias, a
guarantee implied neither active defense against the violence of other gangs nor a
promise that retribution would be served on outside violators. Rather, a Segovian
guarantee was a precious commodity, a promise that the group demanding money or
resources or acquiescence would not injure those who surrendered it.63

The idiom of guarantees was important for several reasons. First, the Sandinistas
employed the same idiom from the beginning to the end of the Rebellion: the scores of
generals, colonels, judges, police chiefs, tax collectors, and other officeholders in the
Defending Army's parallel state were constantly issuing and distributing and denying and
revoking guarantees. Indeed, once one's ear becomes sensitized to the term, guarantees
begin to appear everywhere in the documents from this period. More fundamentally, the
system itself could only arise from and produce conditions of extreme political
confusion, uncertainty, and instability. In a classic game theory dilemma, the system
could only be foolproof if there were only one line of authority -- if two or more powerful
gangs were actively competing, unless the guaranteed person or property were actively
protected (which by definition they were not), the system would tend to break down. On
the other hand, if there were only one line of authority there would be no need for the
system in the first place. In theory there were only two foolproof solutions to the
dilemma: a threatened individual could either secure guarantees from all gangs or opt out
of the system altogether. The first solution would tend to be impracticable, since gangs
were waging war against each other, though it was a strategy pursued by many and often
did work in practice. The latter solution -- to opt out of the system -- was very
commonly pursued in the form of temporary and permanent migration; but for many

migration was an impractical or unacceptable alternative. In other words, the system was

63. For one example of the State Department's idiom of "guarantees," in March 1927 the
US Minister in Managua reported that the Otis and Mengel Mahogany Co. on the east
cost was "making urgent requests for more ample guarantee and better protection."
Eberhardt to Kellogg, 18 March 1927, 817.00/4667; e.g. for the Foreign Office,
817.00/4666.
inherently risky, insecure, and unstable. On the other hand, people's lives and human relationships are quite unlike game theory, and in practice the system worked more often than not. Clearly it worked well enough to blanket the political landscape of the Segovias for a good while before Hernández and Torres appeared on the scene and long after they were gone. Evidently there was enough play in the system to allow it to work pretty well most of the time. Inherently dangerous and unpredictable, the guarantee system became one of the key organizing principles of gang violence and political struggle in the countryside before and during the Sandinista struggle, the central dilemmas of the system played out countless times in the hills and valleys of the Segovias through five-and-a-half years of guerrilla war. Guarantees were an intimate part of peoples lives and experiences during the Rebellion, with roots deep in the political culture of the land on which they lived.

"The cultural elaboration of fear": The structure, mechanics, and meanings of ritual terror

I, Marcelino Gómez, married, 72 years old, resident of Mosonte in the valley of Los Arados, declare that I know Anastacio Hernández, and that on 24 May 1927, around 5:00 a.m., a group of armed men entered my house shooting their guns around my house. They seized my son-in-law Domingo Gómez, two sons and another son-in-law of mine were shot at but managed to escape through the kitchen. They tied up their prisoner, and broke down the doors, and sacked all they could take, beating my wife, and they shot my son-in-law in the abdomen, afterward taking him out and about fifty yards from the house the group stopped, then Anastacio ordered that they cut off my son-in-law Domingo's head, Santiago Gómez and his brother Terencio executed the order, after which Anastacio macheted the cadaver while the others played an accordian and shouted vivas for him. Those whom I recognized were Timoteo Blanco of Dipilto, Julian Sevilla, Miguel López, Antonio Sebastián and Miguel Aguilar, Erasmo Gómez, Felipe Gómez, Narciso Hernández, Rogelio Amaya, and others more whom I did not recognize, there were about thirty and when they left they were still shouting. That is all I know and I sign, Marcelino Gómez.

Nineteen such depositions were taken by the Marines-GN in the course of their investigations into the Hernández and Torres gangs. In spite of their spare, sterile language, this single set of documents (reproduced in full in Appendix C), along with the

64. These documents are reproduced in full in Appendix C.
Hernández and Torres declarations and evidence about their patrons, tells more about how politics in the Segovian countryside actually worked than all of the political histories of Nicaragua put together.

One of the most striking things about the violence described in these documents is its preeminently public, ritual quality. Note the similarities between the scene described by Marcelino Gómez -- gangmembers playing accordion music and shouting "vivas" while the gangleader mutilated the cadaver -- and a remarkably similar ritual killing that took place four years later, committed by troops under Sandinista General Pedrón at the Javáí Mines in Chontales; as a captive German engineer described it:

> The headsman . . . took [a prisoner] to an outpost behind a church accompanied by a man playing an accordian. The headsman executed a war dance around the victim to the tunes of weird music, letting his machete come down grazing the man's face, cutting and scratching him every so often. As the music became wilder he suddenly struck the man behind the ear, felling him. He then, with one blow, severed the head from the body.65

It was as if both sets of tortures and murders -- Conservative and Sandinista -- were being choreographed, staged, as if they were variations on a larger theme, as if the leader of each group had in his mind a model, a paradigm, for the perfect arrangement of violence, torture, and death. Michel Foucault has written piercingly of the phenomenon of torture as a public spectacle. "Torture is a technique; it is not an extreme expression of lawless rage... Torture forms part of a ritual. It is an element in the liturgy of punishment."66 Foucault's insights into the "technologies of power" infusing such moments of "spectacular" violence are powerful and compelling. At the same time, his work does not address questions of meaning. Concerned with discovering and exploring the "capillary" qualities of power, its "micro-physics," Foucault's insights exclude, among other things, the meanings that participants invest in such moments of extreme violence.

65. Statement of Mr. W. Pfaeffle, formerly Manager of the Javáí Mine, Managua, 2 August 1931, NA127/202/2/9; also described in Somoza, pp. 251-252.
66. Foucault (1979), pp. 33-34.
Michael Taussig takes Foucault a step further when he grapples with what he calls the "transformative power" of the "space of death" in cultures where violence is woven into the fabric of the everyday: "We may think of the space of death as a threshold . . . [within which] lie intricately construed long-standing cultural logics of meaning -- structures of feeling -- whose basis lies in a symbolic world and not in one of rationalism."67 If Taussig's constructs here -- "space of death," "culture of terror," "threshold" -- are transhistorical, essentializing notions which work more by allusion and shock value than by exploring how violence and terror are constructed culturally in any given place or time, his basic insight is nevertheless a powerful one: in order to make sense of this violence, one needs to inquire not only into its functional or instrumental qualities -- the interests and ends it served -- but into the "cultural elaboration of fear" that it reflected and embodied.

The violence produced by the Anastacio Hernández gang was, above all else, public spectacle, a grotesque form of theater, carefully orchestrated and scripted with recurring themes and motifs. These spectacles were highly patterned, highly ritualized, and highly gendered -- certain victims were killed and terrorized in certain ways and in certain spaces, all of which presumably carried particular meanings for perpetrators and victims.

All of the dead were family men in the prime of their lives. Many were young, just coming into manhood. The women, young children, and elderly, also victims, were victimized differently: left behind, brutalized, participants in and witnesses to the terror. They played the role of audience, public witnesses to an incommunicable spasm of death. By living to tell the tale, the parts they could tell, they helped to give the ritual its preeminently public qualities. The mutilation of corpses in public places also served as a preeminently public signal. Most commonly, the remains were purposely left in the open, in or along a road, to be seen by all who passed by.

Violence was directed at the body, and less directly at the home and the family. The ritual commonly began with gunshots -- a surprise announcement, a sudden public warning heard for some distance around. As Foucault suggests, the intensity and duration of the pain inflicted closely corresponded to the rank of the victim. Some men were beaten, bound, and dragged outside to be killed; others were beaten and killed inside; some were killed immediately; others were beaten, threatened with death, but left alive. Many of the male victims were shot in the abdomen inside the home, then dragged outside to be finished off some distance away. Since belly wounds are usually fatal, these murders essentially took place within the space of the home. Perhaps, following Taussig, the space of the home was thus transformed into a "space of death" -- that at least seems to have been an intention of the gang leaders. Usually, the primary victims were taken some distance from the home before the final rituals of death began. It is not unlikely that music and "vivas" frequently accompanied the mutilation of the cadaver, the final act of degradation, the climax to the ritual of death.

The structure of the gang was intimately bound up with the structure of the violence it produced. Hernández's gangs seem to have had relatively rigid internal hierarchies, with well-defined roles played by different groups of actors. The majority, in the lowest rung, made the group virtually unchallengable and escape virtually impossible. They were probably also charged with inflicting "minor" tortures on the victims as they were being readied for the final rituals: taunting, spitting, kicking, beating, bludgeoning with the blunt edge of the machete. Men in the second tier played several roles as well. They acted as the trusted companions of the headman, performing acts slightly lower in importance than those reserved for the leader. They were usually the first to violate the space of the home. They were usually charged with doing the killing. The climax, the final mutilation of the remains, was usually reserved for the leader. When he was finished, the bodies were left where they lay, to be eaten by vultures and dogs, violating the afterlife as well. Other evidence indicates a conscious effort on the part of the gang
to desecrate the religiously sacred. One woman recalled that upon her return to her home after an attack by the Hernández gang, all of the religious "images" had been burned and destroyed.

Within the gang, certain family names tended to predominate. Most gang members seem to have been related to each other by either marriage or blood. For instance, on May 24 Cayetano Gómez was one member of the gang, as were his sons Aquileo, Felipe, Ismael, and Elisión; gang members Antonio and David Cárdenas were brothers, as were Terencio and Santiago Gómez, who were also Hernández's cousins; Hernández's brother Narciso, and his son-in-law Rogelio Amaya, were also in the gang. The same pattern continued, with a different set of men, in early September.

Victims also tended to be families. This suggests that the crimes were less directed at individuals -- though they certainly were that -- than they were at extended families. Of no lesser significance, surviving witnesses were usually able to recall the names and faces of many of their attackers. This indicates that, rather than being strangers, the perpetrators and victims were in most cases well acquainted. In an intriguing pattern, several family names overlapped between victims and perpetrators -- including Gómez, López, Zamora, Melgara, Amaya, and Pastrana. While nothing substantive can be demonstrated here, this suggests that the families of victims and gang members might have been related, at least in some cases. All of this points to the extent to which the violence and the fear it was intended to produce were woven directly into the fabric of daily life and daily social relations.

Theater is often intended to touch the deepest of human emotions. The script of terror acted out by Anastacio Hernández and his gang was designed, above all else, for the production of fear -- fear to be produced through the absolute dehumanization of the

68. For instance, of the forty-one men who comprised the Hernández gang on September 9, thirteen had the last name López; there were also four Zamora's, two Cardenás's, five Ruiz's, three Torres's, two Vásquez's, and two Landero's; on September 10 there were three Medina's, two Muñoz's, four Pastrana's, and three Ruiz's. Hernández File.
victims, the instant disappearance of all dignity, respect, and honor, the profound
inversion of the "normal," "natural" order of things.

The violation of the space of the home was the first step in this process. In the
unwritten code of the Segovian countryside, a man's home was (and is) looked upon as a
sacrosanct, inviolable space, carved out of the wilds by toil and willpower. It was a
refuge, a sanctuary, a place safe and secure, a place -- for men at least -- of rest, renewal,
replenishment; life was conceived there, produced there, and reproduced there. The
home was the space that distinguished human beings from all of the lesser creatures of
the world, the space that humans, through the purposeful labor of which only they are
capable, had created. In Segovian folk culture, the forests and the fields embodied the
forces of nature against which humans, as humans, were compelled to struggle every day
of their lives.

In the eyes of Anastacio Hernández and his gang, the violation of that space was
evidently intended to violate the humanity of its creator, to transform the space of the
home into a "space of death," of danger and fear, to invert the "natural, normal" order of
things by creating a world in which safety and security resided only in the forests and
fields. The homes of humans were to be transformed into the homes of beasts, the homes
of beasts into the homes of humans -- who in turn would become beasts. It was intended
that the home and the village, the pastures and the fields, which had their own day-to-day
topography of work and rest, of labor and leisure and play, would acquire a new
topography of terror and fear, permanently superimposed and visibly inscribed upon the
old.

For women, particular sets of rituals were used to produce particular kinds of fear.
Since most women in the countryside spent most of their time around the home --
preparing food, cleaning, caring for children -- the violation of the space of the home was
probably intended to etch fear and uncertainty onto the very fabric of women's everyday
lives, indeed, into their very souls. Was Lorenza Gómez ever able to look upon her
earthen hearth again without provoking at least some memory of the horrors which transpired as she was preparing tortillas there on the morning of 24 May 1927? Pedro Antonio Arauz's narrative at the beginning of this chapter suggests something of how the terror was experienced by women; how many could forget the rows of heads lined up on tabletops, or face the consequences of refusing to dance, or of resisting rape? Since women in the Segovian countryside have traditionally strived to exercise a certain degree of influence over the political and other activities of their menfolk, the violence was likely intended, in part, to persuade women to persuade their men not to get involved in risky political activities or alliances, or to avoid politics altogether.

For men, a different set of rituals was used to produce a similar degree of fear and dehumanization. The binding of the hands, for example, a practice common to most of the murders, was probably meant not only to incapacitate the victim but to render him utterly defenseless, to ritually transform him into something less than a man. In the Segovian countryside a man lived (and lives) by the power of his hands. A campesino's hands are large, heavy, hard, leathery; they constitute the single most important link between the designs of the mind and the outside world. More than any other part of his body, a campesino's hands permit the natural environment to be altered, the human will to be realized. Through his hands a man creates his world, and without them, he is no longer fully a man.69

That the machete was the instrument of death and dismemberment was also rich in the symbolism of rural life. In the Segovias a machete was, and is, a tool of life. With it the fields are cleared, crops harvested, weeds held in check, fences erected, firewood

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69. In the contemporary folk culture of the Segovias, a man without the full use of his hands is subtly but powerfully stigmatized as less than a whole man, as I had occasion to observe when I spent some time with a young man suffering from palsy, whose hands were small and weak, who was, in a variety of ways hard to pin down but even harder to ignore, de-masculinized, or feminized, by members of the community in which he lived. For instance, while the men were out working, riding horses, or bantering amongst themselves in the street, this young man stayed behind in the home with the women and children; when the men were home, his remarks and person tended to be ignored.
split -- life sustained. To this day, most Segovian campesinos work with a machete from sunup to sundown most every day of the year. No tool of the countryside more symbolizes the everyday. In the hands of Anastacio Hernández, this ubiquitous, life-giving tool was transformed into an instrument of terror and death. How to more thoroughly or powerfully weave fear into the fabric of everyday life?

Terror, by definition, has a certain capricious, random quality. If the rituals of death acted out by the Anastacio Hernández gang were carefully scripted, there remained a wide space for improvisation. The three laborers whom Tomás González hired to help with the bean planting in early September 1927, for example, apparently just happened to be there. If they had declined the job, or hired themselves elsewhere, or taken one of a thousand other minor, everyday decisions, they might never have been killed. One intention of the gang and its patrons, it seems, was to contribute to the creation of a capricious, random world, a world lacking causality and chains of reason -- to immobilize, to paralyze, to foster a fatalism and resignation, a refusal to believe that actions matter, a belief that "fortuna," luck, the whims of the gods, and not hard work or stubborn commitment to a goal, was the driving force of fate.

In the Segovian countryside in the 1920s, as today, death held many meanings. The death of loved ones was common, as much a part of life as the cycles of the seasons. Babies routinely died of a host of maladies; children and the elderly routinely took ill and perished. Deaths such as these were probably seen much as they are today, as grievous and painful but normal, natural, inevitable and preordained, willed by an all-knowing and unknowable God. The death of loved ones in war was also common -- horrible and saddening, but relatively distant, surrounded by an aura of inevitability and divine will. The death of loved ones from terror was probably experienced as a very different kind of death. Where was the hand of God here, in the machete of Anastacio Hernández?

The violence, in short, was intended to produce fear, and it probably succeeded remarkably well in its basic aim. In one instance, the mutilated remains of a victim were
left untouched for three or four days on the main road just outside an inhabited village, giving a glimpse into the depth of that fear. Yet at the same time, the violence doubtless provoked much more than fear, ranging from intense sadness and passive resignation to burning hatred, anger, and a desire for vengeance. Despite the worst intentions of men like Anastacio Hernández and Gustavo Paguaga, people have a remarkable capacity to adapt, to selectively remember and forget, to get beyond moments of terror and get on with their lives. No horror, no terror, is ever absolute. Even victims of something as unspeakable as the Holocaust were able to play music and compose songs for children, its survivors to laugh again. Still, the basic intentions of the gang leaders and their sponsors -- to instill a deep fear of political involvement, to foster a fatalistic outlook and a belief in the fundamental capriciousness of human life -- probably frequently succeeded.

The case of the Anastacio Hernández gang is an extreme one; it points to the outer limits of the possible, and in so doing, helps to define and reveal the ordinary and quotidian. It existed at one end of a spectrum of violence, a violence actively and purposely diffused throughout the daily lives of the vast majority of the ordinary men and women and children of the Segovias during this period. The blinding flash produced by the Anastacio Hernández gang helps to reveal, I should think, both the power of violence and the violence of power: as a discrete, narratable set of events, Hernández's actions lay bare the most elemental strands which, woven together, constituted the basic fabric of political relations during more "normal" times. Ultimately ungraspable, the rituals of death acted out by his gangs reveal, if only for a moment, something of the power and depth of the hidden landscapes from whence they had arisen.

This is not to argue that rural life was always violent, or that negotiation, compromise, and other ways of engaging in political struggle were absent or

70. Outside of San Fabian near Dipilto, north of Ocotal; Intelligence Report, 16 October 1927, Ocotal, NA127/198/1.
unimportant. Rather, it is to suggest that in the Segovias in the 1920s, politics was fundamentally violence, and that any political struggle would necessarily be a fundamentally violent one.

*     *     *

In effect, the Espino Negro Accords sounded the death knell of the political status quo and panicked the Segovian Chamorrista elite, who unleashed an intense and sustained wave of violence in a bid, partially successful, to retain their power. (Remarkably, Gustavo Paguaga was elected by a slim margin to the Chamber of Deputies in 1928.) This violence was neither random nor indiscriminate but highly ordered and structured, carefully conceived and deployed by self-conscious groups of actors in order to achieve specific ends. The ways in which these elites reacted to this threat in this time and place speaks volumes about how rural political culture was ordered and organized during less turbulent times.

The Sandino Rebellion emerged from the center of this political maelstrom -- and a little off to one side on the map. How violence was crafted conceptually and used pragmatically by Segovian Chamorristas in 1927 was replicated, in large measure, in the Sandinista struggle, grafted onto a radically different vocabulary and project of national honor, patriotism, and social justice. The Sandinista struggle, emerging in the midst of and parallel to a deeply rooted and war-torn fabric of political and cultural relations, remained integrated with continuing Liberal-Conservative struggles at many levels.

The Civil War of '26 and its aftermath were but the most recent episodes in a long, convoluted, and truncated process of liberal state formation in Nicaragua -- a war that no more led to the centralization of state power or the consolidation of legitimate authority than any of its predecessors. Peace had been brokered but political power remained radically dispersed and hotly contested, excercised from multiple sites along
sharply fractured lines among and between classes and parties and clans. In the spring of 1927, legitimate authority in Nicaragua was literally up for grabs. Sandino, infuriated by the turn of events, his patriot's blood near the boiling point, exploited the weakness of the national state, the dispersion and fluidity of existing structures of authority, in order to assert a radically alternative authority, and indeed, a radically alternative state.
CHAPTER 6: "HE WANTED A NEW WORLD": THE SANDINISTA REBEL REPUBLIC IN THE SEGOVIAS

Look -- for me, always, my whole life, I lived remembering General Sandino, I never, never forgot him. I had this feeling, always, even though we were under the Somocista regime, for me, no, I always felt it, always, even though we had to live with our mouths shut for so long, because there was no other way, we had to live that way, but that feeling, it was never erased...

- Macario Calderón Salinas

Followers . . . do not follow simply because of some abstracted 'mystical' quality: a leader is able to magnetize them because he evokes or plays upon some strand of intellectual or emotional predisposition, and because -- more than this -- he purports to offer the realization of certain values in action . . . [If we] focus our eyes exclusively or even primarily upon the leader element in the leader-follower relationship, our attention is distracted from what is sociologically more important, to wit, the relationship between the two elements.

- Peter Worsley

On August 10, 1927 a curious news item appeared in the Managua daily La Noticia. "We had the opportunity yesterday to have in our hands a gold coin of ten pesos," the story began.

The coin in question was a source of curiosity at the train station, where its owner showed it to us. It is made of gold and silver alloy, and its construction is like coins of old, very rustic. On one side we saw a strange looking seal, consisting of a man with a machete standing over another man wearing large boots, grabbing his hair and poised to cut off his head. By his looks he appears to be a foreigner. The other side carries the inscriptions: 'Indios de A.C. Sándino' and 'R. de N. 10 pesos oro.'

Five weeks earlier, Sandino dictated a letter to his commanding officer at the San Albino Mine, General Manuel Echevarría, informing him that one Antonio López would arrive

1. IES 044-2-2: 4-5.
3. Antonio López, arrested by the Marines and transported to Managua, was described by his captor, USMC Major Oliver Floyd, as "a heretofore respected thrifty cuss" who

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the next day "to arrange moulds to make coins out of the gold that we might extract . . .

My opinion," Sandino instructed, "is that from every pound of gold we make several coins . . . The inscription on the coin should be its value and the word campesino." In the photocopy of this letter reproduced on the following page, one can see (in the lower right-hand corner) the word campesino superimposed over the word montañesa ("mountain dweller" or "of the mountains"). The word campesino was added by Sandino's hand, as was the note on the margin: "The coins should say: 1, 2, or 12 campesinos, according to the value." After instructing Echevarría that the coins should be called campesinos, Sandino dictated: "If the workers are not in agreement for the re . . ."

The rest of the letter was lost. Apparently, Sandino's first inclination was to call the coins montañesas; then he changed his mind and decided to call them campesinos; finally, the decision was made to call them pesos and replace campesinos and montañesas with Indios de A.C. Sandino.

Sandino and his followers seized the San Albino Mine in early June 1927. For the next six weeks, some seventy-five men worked the mine, extracting some $5000 worth of gold. Some of this gold was mixed with silver and made into coins.4

repaired firearms, made bombs, and "turned to looting" at San Albino. (Field Message No. 12, Jicaro, 9 August 1927, NA127/43A/6; in Field Message No. 9, San Albino, 2 August 1927, Floyd reported, incorrectly, that "a German renegade [and] mechanic . . . was to mint money for Sandino -- the minting project never materialized.") In 1979 Camilo Guillén recalled that in San Albino, "There was a man there who was very capable, named Antonio López. He was put in charge of the mine and he devised a way to mint gold coins. This López was very capable. He made coins of five and ten pesos, but the first he made of pure gold and they broke, so he made a mixture and the last ones came out well." Alegría and Flakoll, p. 73.

4. According to eyewitnesses interviewed by Major Floyd, Field Message No. 9. There is evidence that coin-production continued long into the war. Dodd, p. 98, wrote that he found "numerous coins . . . on 27 March 1965 . . . in the Museum of the Cathedral of Antigua, Nicaragua. The coins read 'Republica de Nicaragua del Norte, 1925, 1926, 1927.'" The Sandinistas controlled many smaller mines, off and on, for the whole of the Rebellion (e.g., Captain E. Carlson, Report of Patrol, 5 Nov. 1930, NA127/202/13, reported new shafts recently sunk into the San Pedro mine near Murra, adding, "It is believed that the mine is being worked by bandits."). Dodd's coins might have been later versions, backdated, reflecting the greater degree of parallel state autonomy achieved later in the war. Or they might have been forgeries: no coins were minted before June 1927, and "Republic of the North" does not sound like Sandinista revolutionary

Graphic 6.1

[Image of a letter with handwritten text]
Graphic 6.2

The official seal of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, crafted during the first month of Rebellion: A Sandinista patriot readies to vanquish a Marine Corps invader.
In the theory and practice of state sovereignty in the modern world, few things are more fundamental than the minting and circulation of money -- historically a practice nearly as common for nationalist rebels as for the nation-states they rebel against. One of the first acts of the Confederacy after seceding from the Union was to print and circulate their own greenbacks; more recently, Ukraine began to issue "coupons" as soon as its nationalist leadership saw that independence from Moscow was within arm's reach.

The San Albino coin-minting scheme was intended as a symbolic and practical expression of the raison d'etre of the Rebellion. Inscribed on these coins, in addition to the characters on their surface, was the formation of a new and redeemed nation-state and social order in the heart of the Segovias, loudly and defiantly announcing itself to itself and the world. These hefty ten-peso pieces, fragments of a much wider field of evidence, leave little doubt that what Sandino struggled to create in the Segovias from the first moments of Rebellion was a fundamentally new, independent, and sovereign political, juridical, moral, and cultural order, a kind of rebel republic or parallel nation-state, running alongside and directly challenging the existing nation-state and social order.

As we have seen, Sandino was, fundamentally, a nationalist; "nation" and "state" were, for him, fundamental categories. In this light it only makes sense that what he tried to create in the Segovias approximated, to a remarkable degree, a full-blown nation-state. His aim, at least in the short-term, was to create a kind of rebel republic across the Segovias, to carve out an alternative jurisdictional space within which authority of Sandinismo would be sovereign, and in large measure he succeeded.

To appreciate the impetus behind the formation of that quasi-republic, consider Sandino's mindset after Espino Negro: Moncada, the despicable moral coward, has betrayed the Liberal revolution; the hated Díaz and his cronies still cling to state power; and the monstrous Yankees continue trampling Nicaraguan sovereignty underfoot. All of the "legitimate authorities" of the country are demanding his immediate disarmament. To the north, where his Liberal army originated, where less than a year before he spun
together a dense web of local supporters, in a frontier region lacking any legitimately constitute authority, is the Yankee-owned San Albino Mine. What more powerful way for a rebel-patriot to protest the continuing violation of Nicaraguan national sovereignty than by proclaiming a parallel sovereignty? What more creative way to seize the moment, to constructively vent his intense rage and bitterness, or give shape to his hopes and dreams of a free homeland, than by seizing the Yankee mine, mining gold, minting money, and constituting himself as the sole legitimate authority of the region? -- and by flying a new flag, creating and filling new military and political posts, proclaiming new names for towns? What better way to forge a new collective identity, to engage in productive labor, to attract supporters, to dramatize the predicament of Nicaragua, or to create new stocks of material and symbolic resources for the cause of genuine national independence?

The rapid-fire sequence of names given to these coins is as revealing as the fact of their creation. Initially toying with the notion of calling them montañesas, presumably to symbolize the rural, folk character of his protest, Sandino impulsively decided on a name with more explicit class connotations, a word commonly paired with workers (obreros): campesinos. How to identify these coins? The answer hinged on what, and who, were they identifying. This rush of names bears eloquent witness to a new collective identity in the process of formation. Evidently, after much discussion and debate, the mineworkers and Sandino reached consensus on several points: first, that if the coins were to be considered legitimate by those who used them they should carry the more conventional name peso; and second, that Indios de A.C. Sandino best described who they were and how they saw themselves -- more than montañesas or campesinos they were Indios, collectively investing their newly-minted identity in a single leader, who in turn defined and symbolized their supreme collective goal, standing in sharp relief on the symbol of their nationhood: to redeem the honor and sovereignty of the "R. de N." (Republic of Nicaragua) by vanquishing the Yankee imperialist invaders. Inscribed on
this collectively crafted icon, and the documents calling for its creation, was a new ethno-
national identity forged of diverse ideological and cultural strands, represented here by
intersecting codes of class and race, nation and state, morality and law and justice,
combined in ways completely unprecedented yet hauntingly familiar. These ten-peso
gold pieces, and a spate of related actions, announced the birth of a new social and moral
and juridical order in the Segovias, a new state which would serve a new nation, the
mostly poor, humble, Indian rural folk who dominated the social landscape of the region.

At the same time, even in something as novel as these rustic coins one can detect
deep continuities with the political culture within which they were minted. The seal
depicting the patriot vanquishing a Marine, for instance, reinscribed the tool and
technique of death employed by Anastacio Hernández and his gang in the service of the
Ocotal Conservative elite; the phrase Indios de A.C. Sandino did not signify a departure
from the age-old tradition of caudillismo in Nicaraguan politics; the self-identification
Indios reflected and inverted ladino elite and popular discourse, in which Indios was a
derogatory term denoting racial inferiority and cultural backwardness.\(^5\) The
revolutionary iconography seized on the long and painful history of foreign intervention
and class and racial oppression in Nicaragua and took it to its logical extreme; it told,
bluntly, graphically, unequivocally, of the sudden empowerment of the powerless, of
long-humiliated slaves finally rising up to slay their masters, of long-overdue justice
finally being served. The continuities with the past here are no less striking than the
departures from it.

\[\ast\]  \[\ast\]  \[\ast\]

How to tell the story of the formation of the Segovian Sandinista nation-state?
The question is a stickler: a chronological narrative tends to push into the background

the thematic unity of events, while a thematic approach tends to suppress chronology and process. Here I have settled, rather arbitrarily, on a combination of the two, beginning, in this chapter, with a broad-ranging exploration of the Sandinista nation and state -- in that order -- and moving, in the chapters which follow, to the events and processes which marked the formation of that cult-like nation and army-like state.

* * *

What did it mean, to be Sandinista? In his semi-autobiographical novel, Sandino, relato de la revolución en Nicaragua (1937), the Colombian Alfonso Alexander paints a marvelously textured portrait of the reign of Sandinismo in the Segovian countryside. From the destruction and horror of war has arisen, phoenix-like from the ashes, Christ-like from the cross, a radically transformed moral universe; the struggle against the Yankees has assumed the proportions of an epical spiritual quest, a religious crusade; a revolutionary moral sensibility infuses everything and everyone; men are not men but brothers; ranks and titles and names exist but are subsumed under a grand collective egalitarianism, a world inspired by a man and his vision of a promised land, a new Jerusalem, a world free of injustice and pain, governed by freedom and justice and light and truth: "Hardly anyone in our forces can read a sentence," explains veteran Sandinista Colonel Quintero to the green internacionalista, newly arrived from Colombia. "Nor do they know what la Patria is, nor what is God, nor the object of life, nor even what is just or unjust.

But we all know there is a man who can be trusted, a man who ought to be obeyed without reply and with pleasure. That there is a man who cannot be fooled, nor take advantage of the campesino, because he is one of them. Who thinks, talks, feels, orders, and works in their name and for them. These Indians of ours cannot explain to you where the frontiers of Nicaragua are, and perhaps they would not even know the colors on the flag of the republic. But they would be able to explain to you very well, and prove it with deeds, who is Sandino and why in his name they till new fields and give a fierce and tremendous blow with their machetes against the machos . . . We all must struggle until the end, to get these
cursed patones off of our land, which is America, first we do it here, and then in
the rest of the villages, and for this: We have a man, a true man, a great man, at
whose orders it would be a pleasure to die, defending a beautiful ideal. (pp. 90-
91)

In this world, Sandino is a living demigod; his name spoken in whispers, shouted in
ecstasy, held in reverence and awe; the very name echoes endlessly through the
mountains; it is everywhere, magically, mystically, "with all, between all, and above all
things goes HIS spirit, piercing and illuminating the densest of thickets . . . The mystical
Symbol . . . strong and marvelous . . . the immortal hero . . . the liberator . . . !Sandino,
Sandino, VIVA SANDINO!"  

Not limited to literary representations, shards of this same revolutionary moral
universe continually poke their way out of Marine-Guardia documents, a different kind
of demonstration that Sandino's new community was not only imagined and felt but
implemented and practiced. In January 1931, reads one report, an armed Marine-GN
patrol was descending a hill south of San Juan de Telpaneca when the Marine lieutenant
in charge "noticed a house in a creek bottom that showed signs of occupation." A small
detachment "surrounded the house [and] captured [two men] and a seventeen year old
girl, dressed in red and black, who announced herself as 'pura Sandinista'." She was
taken prisoner to San Juan. The language here is terse but the imagery unforgettable:
"!/soy pura sandinista!" -- "I am pure Sandinista" -- "announced" a young woman in the
flower of youth, draped in the symbols of her cause, to soldiers of a reputedly brutal and
rapacious invading army. Is there any doubt that she expected to die, to be raped,
tortured and killed? Or that to her, "Sandinista" meant something of profound
importance? If it is possible to imagine the moral power embodied in this anonymous
young woman's "announcement," it is possible to begin to imagine the grip of
Sandinismo on the hearts and minds of the campesinado.

Such shards are legion; here is another, eminently typical report: "[F]our Guardia
dressed as bandits were sent into [Los Potreros] and claimed to be Guardia deserters.

They were well received . . ." After the Guardia spies departed, the Marines followed and questioned the villagers. "[All] were emphatic that no one had passed through for several days," reported the Marine lieutenant in charge. "This section is entirely friendly to the bandits."7

And another: "Men advanced to left bank of river [after the firefight] and found one bandit killed, bandit having scarf around neck, with handwork in one corner, 'Viva Sandino' and Sandino's flag, upon searching him found another scarf or hankercchief with more hand work of same color."8

And another: "On the 24th received persistent reports that a bandit judge Hipolito Rivera residing south of Paso Real was trying to induce several indians to take up duties as spies.

A small patrol was sent to capture him and returned with their mission successful. Upon questioning Rivera he stated that he was proud of being a member of the 'Ejercito' and that he was commissioned a Judge by Emilio Blandon on the 10th of December, that his mission was to steal food, appoint spies, and to advise Blandon of all guardia movements . . . Rivera . . . would not disclose the names of his group . . . [he] tried to escape . . . [and] was shot and killed.9

"These people stated we could kill them but they would not talk," reads another.10

A girl, a scarf, people willing to die for a cause: a new identity forming in the crucible of the pain and horror of war. But what kind of identity? What did "pura Sandinista" mean to that young woman? What did "viva Sandino" mean to its embroiderer? What was it "these people" were willing to die for? The answers are as elusive as Sandino's spirit in the mountains.

Yet some things are clear. During the period in which Sandinismo ruled the Segovian countryside -- half a decade in many locales -- most campesinos operated within an alternative moral and juridical universe in which the dominant culture's

9. Patrol, N.M. Griece, Corinto Finca, 26 Sept. 1932, NA127/202/14; Map 5E.
constructions of crime and punishment, of law and justice and morality, were radically subverted, reshaped, reappropriated, transformed *in practice*. In what was evidently an extremely decentralized and participatory and ultimately democratic process, Sandinista legislation and jurisprudence, if we can call them that, came to embody *campesino* notions of what was moral and immoral, just and unjust, lawful and lawless. The Rebellion was a profoundly spiritual process, and at its center lay a revolutionary moral and juridical code: "the nation" was also a religious community, a brotherhood, a union of like spirits; the line between the spiritual, the religious, and the nationalistic was, in this Rebellion, impossible to draw. The Sandinista parallel state might be likened to the outer shell, the organizational framework built up around and within the process of spiritual-religious nation-creation. At the level of both nation and state, old and new vocabularies and practices were suddenly wedded together in a larger field of social action, in the *practice* of social revolution, national liberation, and guerrilla war. The result might be called early Segovian Sandinismo ("early" to distinguish it from post-1960 varieties).

Sandino undertook two fundamental actions in the Segovias: he introduced a spiritualized language of nationalism (or a nationalized language of spirituality), and he initiated an armed rebellion. Both, obviously enough, worked hand in hand, each drawing from and reinforcing the other: Sandino's religio-nationalist story began to circulate throughout the Segovian countryside at the same moment as the Marines-GN did; words like the nation, *la patria*, liberty, national sovereignty, national honor, the popular will, patriots, traitors, imperialism, slavery, exploitation, and others, strung together into a new narrative of Nicaraguan history, made their debut onto the Segovian stage just as the Marines-GN began to bomb and kill and "hunt bandits."11 People heard different messages depending on an infinite array of factors, all boiling down, in the end,

11. The phrase was relatively common; e.g., Patrol, Kelly, El Jícaro, 6 Jan. 1931, NA127/202/13.
to what their life histories predisposed them to hear. How did Sandinismo resonate in "the popular imagination"? Clearly there are more answers than there were people.

Still, patterns emerge. But perhaps the first and most important thing to be stressed is that it did resonate, and deeply: Sandino succeeded not only in imagining a new community, but, in large measure, in implementing it, and therein lies its power and mystery. Benedict Anderson writes with eloquence and brilliance of the imagining of community. The community successfully created by Sandino was as much felt and believed as imagined; and just as importantly, it was practiced, coming into existence only by virtue of the active moral faith invested in it by its members, a community willed into existence by the moral courage and physical sacrifice of its creators and participants:

"Everything was pure will," as ex-soldier José María Cerro Castellón recalled it; "nothing more than will," in the words of ex-soldier Miguel Angel Sequeira García.12

What was Sandinismo in the countryside? The beauty of the beast lay precisely in its many-sidedness, in the way it eludes fixed categories; it was a kind of parallel state and a kind of parallel nation, an army and a brotherhood, a secret society, a religious sect, a millenarian movement, a social movement, an ethnic affirmation, a counterhegemonic moral-juridical universe, a community bound together by boundless love and boundless hate: love for the nation and patriotism and Sandino and The Cause, and hate for the wretched invaders and traitors.

Across the Segovian countryside, love and hate emerged as the underlying mainsprings of Rebellion, in tandem and in equally immeasurable proportions: for this the evidence is dense and thick and incontrovertible. Coming into existence at the same moment as profound love for Sandino and The Cause was equally profound hatred of its enemies. Again, Alfonso Alexander, this time from an interview in the early 1980s:

"Hate, I say, was the great ally of Sandino. The way the Marines and the Guardia proceeded with respect to campesinos in the Segovias was the following:

They arrive at a house, surrounding it and forcing everyone to put their hands above their heads. They take them out into the yard, or into the fields, outside, they search for everyone. After, they set fire to everything from the humble clothes to the house; the peasants, men and women, protest, and they are immediately shot.

That is to say: They created a savage hatred, and with total reason and with total justice, this hatred had to explode all over the place. . . . Hate, then, was the first and most important ally of Sandino.13

Hatred was one of two fundamental engines of Rebellion; Sandino himself could be quoted *ad infinitum* on its magnitude and centrality to the whole process:

I saw palpably reflected in the unsettled faces of the leaders, officers, and soldiers an impressive grimace of hatred for the traitors and cowardly invaders.

. . . we were all united by a mortal hatred of the Marines who had made shit out of the countryside with their damned airplanes . . .

Because of the tremendous crimes of these human brutes [the Marines], hatred exists for them, much hatred, the simple hatred of the patriots of Nicaragua.

. . . nobody can erase the hatred that today exists against the Yankees among the inhabitants of the Segovias.

. . . the actions that kept Coolidge and Kellogg in my country have produced an enormous wave of hatred and distrust for [the Yankees] that is almost worldwide in scope.

Would it be possible for those Nicaraguans at the service of the Yankee intervention, rifle in hand, to accept that slavery that we reject with holy rage?14

After mid-1930 Sandino's use of the terms "hate" and "hatred" ceased; by this time it was axiomatic. Doubtless the above-quoted texts expressed not only what Sandino himself felt, but what he hoped and struggled to instill in his followers. One can detect in virtually all of Sandino's writings, and in memories of him, a concerted and sustained effort to generate hatred of invaders and traitors. Sandino preached a gospel that combined profound love with equally profound hate — love of *la patria*, of light and justice and truth, and hatred of the enemies of *la patria* and light and justice and truth.

The keenly perceptive Carleton Beals, the only US journalist to interview Sandino (in February 1928), sensed and recorded the extent of this hatred: "[In] all the soldiers and all of the officers I talked to he [Sandino] has stimulated a fierce affection and a blind loyalty and has instilled his own burning hatred of the invader." In the very next paragraph he noted the flip side of this hatred in Sandino and among Sandinistas:

There is a religious note to his thinking. He frequently mentions God -- 'God the ultimate arbiter of our battles'; or 'God willing, we go on to victory'; or 'God and our mountains fight for us.' His sayings run from tongue to tongue through his little army.¹⁵

Five years later the Basque journalist Ramón de Belausteguiquitoia detected much the same thing; in a brief chapter exploring "The Soul of Sandinismo," he wrote of how "the strange and profound soul of General Sandino had created in his army a religious sect imbued with a new revelation . . .

We are speaking of an absolute, definitive discipline . . . and even more than discipline was the command and respect for the chief. Between superiors and soldiers there is subordination, and at the same time, a profound camaraderie. The form of salute is an embrace outside of the military formations, and the treatment of each other as brothers. Even in soldiers less awakened I have seen a profound conviction in the justice of the cause they defend and a kind of supernatural power that helps them. 'It's that we have justice on our side against the machos,' 'It's that God helps us,' are phrases I have heard frequently among chiefs and soldiers . . . This army . . . is enveloped by a spiritual power so grand that it represents the most potent ideal army that America has had since the times of the Liberator . . .¹⁶

Belausteguiquitoia went on to record something of "the marvelous" (lo maravilloso) in Sandino and his followers: "And in all of his army there is a kind of vague mysticism that is not artificial, but based entirely on his way of being (fundido a su ser);" while Sandino professed belief in clairvoyance and the survival and incarnation of spirits, many of his soldiers, "a good third of whom [were] barefoot," insisted that they had seen, on more than one occasion, a double rainbow perched over Sandino's head following a rainstorm, something the Basque journalist was disinclined to believe, but which was

¹⁶. Belausteguiquitoia, p. 130.
emblematic, he averred, of "a kind of blind fanatacism in his soldiers." 17

Belausteguiigoitia, who observed the Defending Army after the 1933 withdrawal and disarmament, did not touch explicitly on hatred of the Yankees, though his invocation of the Black Legend clearly implied its widespread existence. 18 Andrés García Salgado, an idealistic young Mexican intellectual who fought briefly with Sandino, likewise stressed in his memoirs these identical themes of boundless love and boundless hate: "...this spirit, this force...[in] each one of its columns...what united these men was an infinite thirst for justice, a profound animosity against the 'dirty-faces'...and a profound hatred against the 'machos'." 19 In 1959, Gregorio Selser, in the first full-length study of Sandino and the Rebellion, gingerly avoided using the term "hatred" while invoking it as the fundamental engine driving Sandino's followers. "[The] will to resist was not bolstered by any defined political or social convictions," judged Selser. "Nor was there even a close identity of views among those who came to join...Only one thing held them together: the simple decision to expel the North Americans from Nicaragua." 20 He was basically right: the glue of Rebellion was hatred of the enemy.

The IES interviews in particular make abundantly and painfully clear that opposition to the Marine invasion was far and away the single most important motive force propelling the Rebellion from beginning to end. The collective voice of these testimonies insists that Marine-Guardia violence, interpreted partly through the prism of Sandino's teachings, caused large numbers of rural folk to see the Yankees as murdererous and barbaric invaders, and that far and away the principal impetus behind the overwhelming support enjoyed by Sandino in the countryside was simple and unadorned: hatred of the Yankees. Some, by the 1980s, went even further, recalling that

17. Ibid, pp. 144, 146.
18. "The Americans initiated a furor of annihilation...with these persecutions and massacres, a moment arrived in which the entire mountain is fighting with Sandino..." Belausteguiigoitia, p. 108. On the Black Legend, see ch. 10, below.
defense of the homeland from foreign invasion was the underlying motor of Rebellion, though invocations of "the homeland" and "the nation" are reasonably suspect as later impositions.

Yet even assuming that "defense of the homeland" carried meaning for at least some members of the Defending Army in the 1920s and 30s, even this apparently simple phrase swims in a sea of complexity: "To defend the homeland" could and did mean many different things: more narrowly, "to defend" means "to guard from attack; to keep from harm or danger; protect." But under conditions of war, definitions necessarily multiplied; there is much to indicate that in the Segovias in the 1920s and 30s, "to defend" also meant "to avenge" and "to attack in defense of." When a garrisoned town was attacked by the Defending Army, for instance, or an hacienda raided, or a "traitor" beheaded, was that "defense" or "offense" -- or both? "Homeland" -- la patria -- was no less polysemic. To some the term signaled an abstraction called Nicaragua, a territorially-bounded nation-state with an internationally-recognized right to national sovereignty. For most, as Alfonso Alexander suggested, it meant something far more more tangible and immediate: one's family, one's hamlet, the patch of earth under one's feet. "Defense of the homeland" often meant self-defense; "the nation" was commonly conflated with one's personal and familial possessions. "I went to join General Sandino and told him that I felt for the nation," recalled Pastor Joya Dávila. "I felt for the nation, because these bandit machos and conservatives had taken what I had -- my beasts, my cows, everything."21 "We plainly saw that it was a just cause, that the struggle was our own," echoed Asención Iglesias Rivera, "to fight for the homeland, to fight for our land, because one has to fight! Who does not fight for what is theirs? . . . We did not know what it was politically, much less read, but we could see that it was a just cause."22 "We fought not to be slaves," insisted Eudiviges Herrera Siles, "to free ourselves from the

21. IES 027: 1.
22. IES 065: 4.
rich, who owned everything around here, everything. We fought to free ourselves, to get
rid of the Yankees and free the homeland." But what did "homeland" mean to him at the
time? "Well, in those days, well of course I really didn't know what it meant at the
time."23

If "expelling the Yankees and defending the homeland" were neither simple nor
unproblematic, they were the central strands around which diverse grievances coalesced.
In many ways the Rebellion was a process of learning to think and feel in terms of a
larger community of Nicaraguans, of infusing an abstraction called *la patria* with
attributes traditionally reserved for individuals: freedom, dignity, honor, value. At the
same time, this supreme goal merged seamlessly into many others; newly forged chains
of meanings endlessly cluttered the apparent simplicity and uniformity of the "defense of
the homeland."

There was, in short, no single body of thought called Sandinismo. Nor were some
goals more "elemental" and others more "advanced." Rather, a montage of goals and
aspirations flowed into and out of one another in a fluid field of motive forces. Consider
the testimony of Felipe Romero Rocha, who wove together in a single sentence many of
the diverse strands motivating the Rebellion:

The whole purpose of the movement was so that Nicaraguans could live in peace,
and not be dominated by another nation, so that we could all be free to work, so
that the land could be organized into cooperatives where everyone could live and
work in peace, dominated by no one.24

Here Romero invoked at least half-a-dozen distinct aims: peace, or the absence of war;
an end to foreign domination; greater freedom, equality, and democracy in land and labor
relations; and a fundamental reorganization of rural social relations of production and
domination. Such diversity of goals was exceedingly common; within any military unit
there were as many reasons for joining the Rebellion as recruits, as many causes as
fighters for The Cause. At the same time, as polymorphous as causes and motives were,

23. Interview with the author, Estelé, October 1990.
they all can be traced, in the end, to two basic impulses: love -- for Sandino, for one's family and community, for one's life -- and hate -- of the Conservatives, the Marines-Guardia, and the death and destruction they caused. Consider Alfonso Alexander's testimony; at certain points he invoked the hatred generated by Yankee-Guardia violence: "If the gringo policy had been a little more rational, a little more sane, the struggle of Sandino would have failed." At one level, the supreme goal of the patriots was to expel the invaders: "The only objective was to kick the gringos out of the country, to struggle for the homeland." At the same time, this goal was infused with a profound yearning for political democracy and equality -- "We wanted a true democracy, a government of the people, in the people, and for the people" -- and social justice -- "because the only kind of liberty that means anything is economic liberty. The rest is bullshit." 25

How and why did campesinos become rebels? The memories of José María Cerro Castellón, to pick one case almost at random, are emblematic of a pattern which utterly dominates the IES testimonies. "How was it that you joined the Army of General Sandino?," the interviewer began. Don José explained that at the time he was working as a cane cutter on a small sugar cane farm near Ojoche, southeast of San Juan de Telpaneca near the Río Coco. One day a man with a red-and-black scarf around his neck passed by the yard of the house, and at the same time, the Marines and Guardia showed up and began firing at him; the man with the scarf got away.

Well, they were so indignant, they pulled the women outside and set on fire five little houses that were there, with corn, beans, wheat, sugar, and we were at the mill, set back in a little hollow, when a boy came to warn us, so we ran away. At the mill was an uncle of mine named Tiburcio Cerro, and I told him, 'uncle, let's run! If they find us here they'll kill us!' So he says, 'I'm not going anywhere, you run!,' and the old man stayed put.

So when they came down there the first thing they did was kill the old man: they machine-gunned him and cut his head off with a machete. Later, when they had gone toward Achaupa, we returned and I saw my uncle as they had left him, and from that moment I decided to look for General Juan Pablo Umanzor, who was

25. IES 008: 1-4; IES 011-015: 19.
the one I knew the most about . . . And that's how I came to join the forces of General Sandino.26

Don José's memories of his experiences -- a brutal, unprovoked attack against innocent family members sparking deep moral outrage and a desire for revenge against the invaders -- were repeated time after time after time, with endless variation. In this light it is not difficult to understand the principal impetus behind the Rebellion, from Don José's perspective: "We had this hatred, this fear of the Yankee . . . Our ideal was that the Yankees would disappear from Nicaragua."27

"We'd like you to tell us your experiences from when you entered the Army of General Sandino," Susana Morales began her 1983 interview with seventy year old Ascención Iglesias Rivera, resident of El Jícaro and originally from Palacagüina. "I entered when I was fourteen years old, into the army," he explained,

joining up with General Miguel Angel Ortez, he was from Ocotal and camped there, pretty close to us. I used to like to watch the movements of the army and many times also the gringos threatened us with death, because we'd see them pass by, bombing the houses for no reason, maybe only because the town itself told them to bomb us because we were all bandits, maintaining the bandits, and so that's why they bombed the houses.28

Already predisposed toward the rebels, young Ascención soon had ample reason to commit wholeheartedly to the cause. "In my house," as he recounted it,

my brother was shot and they took him prisoner. After they took him prisoner, I tell him, 'brother, let's go, they're going to kill you!', then, they killed two more brothers in a room of the house, they slit their throats and cut them to ribbons outside; my mother buried the pieces there. So in order to fight better and be sure they didn't kill us first, we left the house. Three years they looked for us, day and night, and we were still fighting in Las Puertas [a large battle late in the war], because we saw, well, that this was the truth, the reality, that it was our struggle, to fight for our homeland, to fight for our land, because it was a duty to fight -- who doesn't fight for what's his? So, my friend, this was our struggle. I entered at fourteen and left at eighteen, till we went to turn in our arms at San Rafael.29

Framing the Rebellion as a righteous act of self-defense, Don Ascención conflated the collective defense of la patria with his personal defense of the earth beneath his feet, his

27. IES 088: 19, 8.
28. IES 065: 1.
29. IES 065: 4, 12.
family, and his very life. Speaking here of the disarmament, he plainly acknowledged
that the larger political issues escaped his comprehension at the time:

He had a struggle so large! - and everyone, we had no idea what it meant
politically, we couldn't even read!, but we had come to see that it was a just cause.
... Such is war, always such a waste of souls and your own health, but it's worth
it to fight for the homeland, it's worth it to fight for one's own cause, a just cause,
it's not good that another comes, a foreigner comes to take from you, because
even though it's only a little patch of earth, even though it's only whatever you've
got, it costs you, and you have to take care of it, and so this was our struggle.30

Don Ascencio stressed repeatedly how Sandino's teachings meshed with his own
experiences, how the two combined made him see things in a new and morally pure light.
Here he is recounting when he and his comrades went to see Sandino at his camp at La
Chispa, deep in the interior. "There we went to salute him," he recalled more than half-a-
century later,

he was very tranquil, very happy, he hugged the fellows, because he liked to see
the fellows in the army, and he'd hug them and almost kiss them, he was so
happy. He'd say, 'Men, you are very valiant in the struggle. Continue forward, do
not despair, because we will triumph, we will expel this gringo invader, he who
tries to take ownership of our lands; and remember that these lands that we tread
upon are ours, an inheritance that our fathers have bequeathed to us. In our
struggle to expel the foreigner we cannot slacken!"31

Here, as elsewhere, the Yankees were remembered equally as foreign invaders,
exploiters, killers and thieves, the nation as both a physical territory and a collective
patrimony; at the same time, the civil dimensions of the conflict, the struggle against
other Nicaraguans, is pushed deep into the background.

These patterns of remembering and forgetting are exemplary of Sandinista
historical memory more generally, particularly as represented in the IES testimonies. "I
entered at fifteen years of age with the General," began Cosme Castro Andino of El Cuá,
Matagalpa. "That was when we entered the mountains, we were already persecuted by
the Yankees. They had burned our house, my mother's, her brother's too, everything they
burned; they shot my sister. By the grace of God I'm the only one of our family left." A

30. IES 065: 4, 5.
long litany of battles followed; later in the interview Don Cosme revisited the theme of Yankee brutality -- "whoever they grabbed they killed, the Yankees did" -- though he did not say explicitly that Sandino's reason for fighting was to expel the Yankees or defend the homeland. "Did they explain to you why you were fighting in the army?" he was asked. "Well, they told us that if we won, we'd live in tranquility. We die or we win, and if we don't win, others will. And those were the explanations." Yes, but what were you pursuing? "Ah, well, we were pursuing the struggle, the tranquility of Nicaragua. So that we'd always be tranquil, happy, working peacefully more or less, like now how we want to work and not be bothered by anyone." Throughout the interview Don Cosme did not employ the language of patriotism and treason; his points of reference were family, friends, enemies, "the people," good things (peace, tranquility, work) and bad (disquiet, unemployment, war).

Francisco Lara López, asked why the Sandinistas fought, moved fitfully from Yankee thievery -- "they came to rob, to take everything we had and leave nothing" -- to Yankee violence -- "they came to make trouble, to burn stores of corn and beans and steal chickens, to burn everything, to them it didn't matter" -- to the basic indignity of being invaded and dishonored by arrogant, immoral, thieving foreigners --

It's just not right, they have their country, they have their nation, let them eat their food and we'll eat ours! This is why we fought, because they came to use us, to leave us in hunger, to disgrace us. And this just wasn't right.

Many ex-soldiers recalled being suddenly swept up in a whirlwind of unprovoked Marine-GN violence. Secundino Hernández Blandón remembered working as a day laborer near Jinotega, having recently arrived from El Salvador, when he was accosted by some passing Guardsmen, accused of banditry, and nearly killed. "They grabbed me, threatened with their bayonets and pistols, beat me up, and were going to kill me. I wasn't even in the army yet!" The experience was enough to impel him to join. "They

32. IES 049: 1, 6, 15.
33. IES 059: 13.
let me go, with the punishment that if they found me in the countryside, in the mountains, and working, they'd kill me. I left and that was when I joined the army."  

Such stories are legion. Macario Calderón Salinas initially recalled the purpose of the struggle this way: "The General told us that he was struggling to liberate our homeland because we had been sold out to the Yankees; that he wanted a free homeland, a free Nicaragua, that there would be no Yankee intervention." Later he expounded briefly on what a "free homeland" meant, shifting from a language of patriotism and treason to a language of exploitation and injustice: "He [Sandino] told us that he didn't want the Yankee intervention because the Yankees were owners of everything, they exploited, they had been exploiters, not only in Nicaragua, but in all of Central America."  

Luisa Cano Arauz, who at numerous points in her testimony subtly distanced herself from the Rebellion, remembered Sandino's goal as something of an obsession which she, for one, never quite grasped -- "I don't remember the one who sang so well, can't remember his name, all those who were chiefs, and all he [Sandino] ever thought about, right?, was to get rid of the Yankees" -- her memory flowing from the unknown to the known, from the names she could not remember to the motives she could neither share nor forget.  

For some ex-soldiers, "defense of the homeland" remained a mysterious and ill-digested phrase long after the war was over. In 1980, Martín Blandón Rodríguez recalled that he fought for seven full years under the command of his uncle, General Pedro Blandón, though, blaming a recent bump on the head, he sidestepped most of the questions put to him. Asked several times if he was given political preparation or told why he was fighting, his most elaborate response was, "He told us how things were, that we had to look alive and keep a sharp eye out for the enemy, that we had to be well
prepared and ready, like a cat hunting a mouse." Asked, "why did you join in the struggle with your uncle?," he responded: "Because there were so many who were in the family and were already in the army, so we were invited to join up. How could we have not joined the army, with so much of the family in there, eh? So one entered the army!"

He professed ignorance of General Moncada and Espino Negro; nor did he seem to understand what "defense of the homeland" meant, though he did invoke the phrase several times.\footnote{37}

For others, the profundity of the struggle was burned into the depths of their soul. Joaquín Fajardo Arauz was asked, "after passing so many days so hungry and naked and cold, why did you keep on fighting?"

We kept on fighting because we were committed to finishing them off. To defend the national colors or lose or relinquish one's life, because we could not surrender to those invaders who wanted to usurp our rights and make our families their slaves, we didn't want that, as General Sandino said:

\begin{verbatim}
Brother people, sovereign
Awaken and give us your hand
Son of our redemption
\end{verbatim}

And this was what we cared about; because these voices came to our ears and this man, with one word that he spoke to us, even though we were hungry, we didn't feel the hunger, nor did we feel the rain or the storms; because we were content with the way he treated us. And that is why it never occurred to us to abandon him.

Did the General ever explain to them what would happen after the machos were expelled?

After we kicked out the machos, at least, what he promised was to work with us, to help us, like giving some place to work to those who have no place to work, because the soil of a Nicaraguan was of the same country and we all had equal rights, like each family fifty and some hectares. So, I never worried much about that, I was more worried about seeing them leave.\footnote{38}

In the 1980s, when these testimonies were recorded, a substantial minority of interviewees recalled a powerful agrarian impulse to the Rebellion. At one level these memories doubtless reflected decades of land concentration under Somocismo and an

\footnote{37. IES 033: 4, 6-7.}
\footnote{38. IES 100-1-2: 8-9.}
effort to shape memories of the past to legitimate a present-day social agenda. On the other hand, we have seen that as early as the 1920s, the process of primitive accumulation was well underway in particular subregions of the Segovias. Did Sandino explain what he was going to do once he had won the war?, eighty year-old Balbino Blandón Díaz was asked in 1980 (recall young Balbino bringing tortillas to Sandino during the Civil War). "To give land to the peasants," he responded without hesitation, because in that time it was obvious that the rich always chose the best lands for themselves, and the poor were left with land that wasn't any good for anything. So he said that no, that when he triumphed he was going to share, so that each village, where you lived, there you'd have your land to cultivate, to work and live on.39

It is impossible to know the extent to which these memories accurately reflected what was "obvious . . . in that time," though the frequency with which such memories surfaced suggests that, while they often might have been exaggerated and shaped to suit contemporary concerns, they were not wholly fabricated. In the early 1980s, Tiburcio Zelaya Herrera, originally from around El Jícaro, submitted a handwritten manuscript to the IES which told what he knew of Sandino's reasons for the struggle. "When Sandinismo rules," Don Tiburcio remembered Sandino saying, "there will not be rich over poor, the lands will be for the peasants, there will be no bourgeoisie."40 A short while later, in a mid-1983 interview, he was asked if he recalled Sandino's plans once the war was over. "Of course," he responded, "everyone knew:

To always distribute the land to the poor, but conscientiously, surely it was a misconception on his part, those who made like they were going to do it, and they got rid of him, it's for that reason that it organized itself, the bourgeoisie that is. They did not distribute the land to the poor, we always continue being slaves. Until now, yes, until now one can see that they are giving small tracts of land to the poor. Well it is being fulfilled, this is what he wanted. Neither was he going to dispossess all the rich, only the bourgeoisie; because that rich one who has participated with Sandinismo, there's no reason to take it away from them . . . This was his fight, so that the lands were for the peasants, not for the rich.41

39. IES 007: 18.
40. IES ms., p. 2.
41. IES 072-1-2: 10.
Don Tiburcio's effort to mould memories of Sandino to address his contemporary problems is readily transparent here, a process shaping all of these testimonies, in greater and lesser degrees. At the same time, it is clear that the discursive universe created by Sandino proved elastic and open-ended enough encompass a very diverse field of social memories. Many meanings were brought under a single umbrella -- getting rid of the Yankees = freedom = justice = dignity = access to land = Sandino -- and so on. If, in the 1920s and 30s, Sandino's multiple ideals were not weighted equally by everyone everywhere, they did come, for the first time, to be clustered under the same roof. In the process, a body of emancipatory social memories, grouped under the heading "Sandinista," was given at least the possibility of coming into existence. In this sense, at one level it matters little whether or not Sandino "actually" promised "to dispossess the bourgeoisie," since his legacy was pliable enough to be wrapped around such an aspiration decades after the fact.

Sixto Hernández Blandón of Jinotega was among those who recalled Sandino making a promise of land during "the apotheosis" of the Rebellion, the disarmament at San Rafael: "I'm going to give each of you fifty manzanas of land with title," he announced. For Secundino Hernández Blandón, an agricultural day laborer working around Jinotega before he joined the Army, "The dream we had was to struggle for the poor, for the well-being of the poor, for the well-being of the peasantry, in the end, so there'd be a free state, that's what was said, that all of the poor should have a place to work, a place to live . . ." Speaking here of the Wiwilí cooperative, Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera recalled a similar vision: "What he wanted was progress for all the poor, that he fought so there'd be no more slavery; he wanted to make it better for all the poor, without distinction of colors [political parties]." Pastor Joya Dávila, originally from the La

42. IES 036: 4; the term "apotheosis" used by Pedro Antonio Arauz to describe the disarmament; see ch. 1, above.
43. IES 047.
44. IES 102: 3.
Trinidad area, was asked how General Sandino made his troops feel their patriotism. "He told us that we always had to walk united," he responded, "a spirit, to die or triumph, because later when he triumphed, we were going to be owners of the land, free to work with title and everything. This he promised us."45

These are among the most explicit invocations of "class" -- of the categories of rich and poor and access to land -- in the IES testimonies. More commonly, the class consciousness of early Sandinistas emerges only as substratum, social categories so obvious they required no elaboration; a consciousness of class that pokes out of the surface of the narratives obliquely, offhandedly, "just there," in need of neither emphasis nor explanation. Carlos Blandón Umanzor, reminiscing about General Miguel Angel Ortez, recalled that Ortez had "wanted to set fire to Ocotal, but they said no, don't set Ocotal on fire, the rich, the rich were those who were opposed to this."46 Blandón Umanzor, representative of a more general reticence, employed the category of "the rich" only this once in an hour-long interview. On the whole there is a deep silence in the IES testimonies with respect to issues of land, labor, and relations between rich and poor -- and with respect to ethnicity -- issues that fade in comparison to Conservative and Yankee violence. For most, these were not remembered as the burning issues of the day.

Why not? Several things were probably happening. At one level there has been the more general tendency in the Sandinista narrative of history to blame the Yankees and ignore homegrown sources of conflict and violence. The demonization of the Yankees has allowed struggles among and between Nicaraguans to be elided and suppressed -- a recurring pattern in Nicaraguan historiography, professional and popular. This kind of distortion can serve multiple ends: it can unify by focusing attention away from internal conflicts; it has the potential to heal wounds by suppressing difference; and it can serve to boost its own authority vis-a-vis its enemies' by letting the air out of

45. IES 027: 2.
46. IES 035.
accusations that Sandino was some kind of fanatical communist hell-bent on civil war and destruction of the social order.

Indeed, many memories of Sandino were carefully shaped along the contours of an implicit, unspoken counter-narrative that associated early Sandinismo with communism and criminality. Lizandro Ardon Molina, whose participation in the Rebellion was limited to delivering a muleload of rifles during the Civil War, denied that Sandino was a communist, taking pride in a struggle he never waged while appropriating the hero’s image; as he described it, Sandino fought "so that no foreign country would come and trample on our homeland; if the Russians had come, he would have fought against them just like he did the Yankees." 47 Francisco Centeno Fonseca likewise shaped his testimony around an implied counter-narrative, vigorously denying any link between Sandino and communism:

He said that he wanted a free homeland, a free Nicaragua, that there would be no intervention of any kind, that there would be a government put in by the people. This was the struggle . . . Speeches about communism, he never said anything, nothing, nothing, never did he speak of that. The Russians offered him help, and he refused it! He didn’t receive anyone’s help, he fought all alone! 48

The Defending Army derived its moral purity and power from the portrait it constructed of itself and its enemy: poor, humble, righteous, David-like, Christ-like, versus the rich, arrogant, evil, Goliath-like Yankees. "It was a very poor army, in truth," recalled José María Cerro Castellón, "barefoot, civilian clothes and a little knapsack, your rifle, your Springfield gun, barefoot, that’s how it was, we were no more than that." 49 The honor and dignity of the struggle were expressed in countless ways; in the treatment of the dead, always retrieved and buried: "Did you leave your dead behind?" "No, no, no, we buried them! Neither the dead nor the wounded, so they wouldn’t find them!" 50 It was expressed in the Christian mercy given to prisoners: Feliciano Garcia Castro

47. IES 032: 13.
48. IES 066: 5-6.
49. IES 088: 8.
50. Joaquín Fajardo Arauz, IES 100-2-2: 12.
recalled how, after the battle of La Pelona (in 1932 in León department), two captured Guardia were mercifully released by General Juan Santos Morales; "he didn't kill them," he stressed several times, "he let them go to Managua with a parcel, to let them know what the vultures already knew!"51 It was expressed in the language used to address one another: "We didn't call each other 'compa,'" explained Joaquín Fajardo Arauz, "we called each other 'brothers,' this was the legitimate word."52 Secundino Hernández Blandón was discussing the Defending Army's entry into San Rafael in February 1933. "There was this woman who denounced one of our compañeros," he said before correcting himself: "or, we didn't say compañeros, we said brothers; at that time we called each other brothers."53 Many stressed the atmosphere of equality: Sandino would say, "of my men, every one of you is a chief, because everyone is equal."54 Others highlighted the moral purity of early Sandinismo by juxtaposing past with present. "He gave us nothing more than orders," Tiburcio Zelaya Herrera recalled of General Sandino.

Rigid orders, because he was an honest man; if we made an error in the army, we'd be shot, and that's not done today. Nowadays, look, there are times when some compañero gets drunk and shoots off his gun, and this we just don't like, those of us who know this law of Sandinismo; because we love each other like brothers nowadays, but only because of liquor, this ought to be prohibited, the liquor, prohibited to sell it to soldiers because that's where errors come from. What he ordered was done, and what he did not order was not done; because whoever raped a woman was immediately shot before a firing squad. Respect above all for the female. I like this, this is being fulfilled, there is a respect for the female. These were the ideals of Sandino, with this I say that he as an honest and serious man at the same time.55

Carlos Blandón Umanzor mixed a glowing admiration for Sandino with a deep bitterness that what the General promised had not yet been fulfilled:

He wanted a new world, different from the one we were in, but this time did not arrive, what he wanted, what he promised us; he promised us good things: work -- he said -- peace, and that they would never come back, the Americans would

51. IES 048: 11-12.
52. IES 100-1-2: 10; compa, short for compañero (comrade, companion) was more popular in the FSLN; in both the Defending Army and the FSLN the rebels were popularly called los muchachos.
53. IES 047: 11.
55. IES 072-1-2: 5.
never come back again. But he was sold out and we remain in slavery... The General always promised us liberty, but he never fulfilled what he promised because they sold him out, if he would have remained -- the General -- things would have been different. He promised us work, that all of Nicaragua was going to be fed; it was what he ordered, because he was going to rule over all the Segovias, the General was valiant, he never lost a battle.\textsuperscript{56}

Sandino frequently portrayed himself and the struggle as an example for history and posterity, he and his soldiers as heroes and martyrs standing tall before the sacred shrine of national honor -- planting a seed in the soil of the poor and oppressed -- a representation that became seared into the memories of many of his followers. The faith that subsequent generations would carry the struggle forward reverberates loudly through the IES testimonies. "If I die, I die," Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera had Sandino saying before his last fateful trip to Managua; "others will soon follow."\textsuperscript{57} "I am going to Managua," said Sandino at the same moment, according to Francisco Lara López. "I am going to die: I am the tree and you are the branches, the branches which will shed their vines and grow strong and true." Added Don Francisco: "These are the words of a prophet. This is surely how it is."\textsuperscript{58} "Like the saying went," recounted Tomás Jarquín Velásquez, "he was the guide and we were the inheritance."\textsuperscript{59}

Sometimes Sandino was explicitly compared to Christ, though the implicit parallels were many and obvious: "We have the hope that this revolutionary process will be a beacon of light in the horizon that lights the path shown to us by the General of Free Men and his followers," wrote José Paul Barahona in a manuscript submitted to the IES in the early 1980s. "It is there that is written with this redemptive blood our true ideology, which runs parallel with the teachings of Jesus."\textsuperscript{60} While liberation theology and related intellectual and popular currents of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s doubtless influenced Barahona's interpretation of his experiences and Sandinismo half-a-century before, it is also very likely that some elements of Sandino's emphases on "redemptive

\textsuperscript{56} IES 035: 4-5.  
\textsuperscript{57} IES 102: 3.  
\textsuperscript{58} IES 059: 4.  
\textsuperscript{59} IES 091: 8.  
\textsuperscript{60} IES ms., p. 14.
blood" and "revolutionary process" as "a beacon of light" was not wholly lost on Barahona at the time.

How was Sandino remembered? Primarily as a Christ-like caudillo: physically insignificant by but spiritually invincible, energetic, iron willed, fatherly, combining profound wisdom, uncanny intuition, depthless knowledge, perfect altruism, absolute selflessness. Only thirty-five years old in 1930, he was commonly called "El Viejo" (The Old Man) by all who knew him, according to both his own recollections and those of many of his followers.61 "He was very friendly with everyone, formal in his speech," recounted Balbino Blandón Díaz. "He spoke with a pleasing harmony and any little thing he discerned very easily, he was a very wise man, and he never offended or bothered anyone, he was a very tranquil man."62 "He was my father, oh how we loved that man!," recalled Francisco Centeno Fonseca. "I cried like a child when they killed him, he was my father, with him I was raised!"63 From the first, Sandino's self-abnegation merged seamlessly into his fatherliness. "Fellows, I care for you all like you can't imagine, like my own sons," José Flores Gradys recalled him saying after the uprising at San Albino. "My life is yours."64 "This man was extremely well prepared, he was good, he loved us like a father loves his sons," remembered José Flores Gradys. "He'd arrive at a place and buy food, and he'd attend to us first.

'Look, General, you eat first.' 'No,' he'd say, 'my soldiers eat first, and afterward if there's enough, I'll eat, and if not I won't eat. I'm just content to know that all my boys have full stomachs.' See what I mean? We loved him so much we'd have gladly died for him.65

"He was a man of much spark, it seemed like he was going to burn up, that man!,"

recalled Feliciano Garcia Castro. "That man gave such inspiration from his lungs, to hear him speak! What capacity!"66

61. E.g., Román (1983); Joaquín Fajardo Arauz, IES 100-1-2: 3.
63. IES 066: 5, 7.
64. IES 058: 1.
65. IES 058: 4.
66. IES 048: 14.
Sandino cultivated an image of himself, and was generally looked upon, as something of a prophet, a link with God and the eternal; as he informed Pedrón in January 1930, "I am nothing if not an instrument of divine justice to redeem this nation."67 One morning Sandino, passing by, saw his men praying and making the sign of the cross, recalled Macario Calderón Salinas. "There is no need to cross yourselves," he told them. "Speak to God with your heart, and He will hear you."68 He was a "a man who partook in many volumes of the Bible, he gave us what we wanted to hear," remembered Joaquín Fajardo Arauz. Asked which passages were read to them, he explained that "they weren't read, they were expressed. For example, that all of this that we're now seeing right now, he has told us about. He told me some secrets which have served me well." Asked to divulge them, he said he could not, for then they would no longer be secrets.69

To become Sandinista was to empower oneself; it was to become immersed in a cultural world that placed supreme emphasis on the formation and nurturing of a sense of dignity and self-worth -- a process that included appropriating the tools of the culturally dominant, including literacy. "We maintained schools in the following places: San Carlos, San San, Krasa, Asán, Bocay, and Raiť," Sandino told José Román in early 1934.70 Macario Calderón Salinas, among others, recalled how he and his fellows learned to read and write in the Army. "There were many who knew and so he said they should teach those who didn't. I learned to know the letters and to sign my name, thanks to God."71 Joaquín Fajardo Arauz remembered: "I took advantage of the situation to learn some letters, we learned it from his wife, she was called Blanca, and his brother Sócrates. I liked Sócrates because he was a poet, a good poet."72 Francisco Lara López

68. IES 044-2-2: 9.
69. IES 100-1-2: 5.
70. Román, p. 140; these were all camps deep in the interior.
72. IES 100-1-2: 3; also Francisco Zepeda Galeano, IES 076-1-2: 12.
recalled that he learned a little ("well, not much") from Sandino's partner Teresa Villatoro, and from Pancho Estrada, his Chief of Staff. 73

All of this suggests a very small and concentrated circle of intellectuals, a conclusion supported by other evidence. 74 The intellectual energies of the movement were not, on the whole, directed toward the formation of a class of Nicaraguan intellectuals, who in turn would be charged with propagating the faith. For reasons explored more fully in chapter 11, the movement gained the active support of only a handful of Nicaraguan intellectuals outside of Sandino's immediate circle.

* * *

This, then, is a brief and cursory survey of what it meant to be Sandinista in the 1920s and 30s, an overall portrait of an identity formed over the course of five-and-one-half years of rebellion and war. The survey has, of course, at least one gaping hole: by focusing exclusively on how Sandinistas have constructed themselves and their enemies, the discussion elides what Sandinismo elides: constructions of the Guardia, and more generally, of the civil dimensions of the conflict. Any treatment of Sandinista remembering must encompass Sandinista forgetting. At the same time, consideration of the erasures and silences in Sandinista historical memory would lead the present discussion too far afield. These erasures are therefore reserved for a later chapter. Here I would like simply to note the existence of such erasures before turning to the other half of the nation-state dyad: the Sandinista state.

* * *

73. IES 059: 15.
74. On intellectuals in the movement see the Epilogue.
The evidence is overwhelming that what Sandino struggled to create across the Segovias was, at least in part, what Weber defined as a modern state: a particular kind of political community, a centrally-directed, legal, bureaucratic, and administrative order that established its own laws and codes; that exercised binding authority over all persons within a territorially-bounded jurisdiction, including a uniquely legitimate right to tax and to mint and control the circulation of money; that exercised an effective monopoly over the legitimate use of force within that territory; and upon which was conferred by other states a uniquely legitimate sovereignty over a given population and territory.\textsuperscript{75} The Defending Army, of course, ended up meeting these criteria only partially and unevenly. So too, as we have seen, did the "official" state. In the end, what early Segovian Sandinismo failed to constitute was of less moment than what it did constitute, what the impetus behind it was striving to create. From the first days of Rebellion, Sandino modelled the Defending Army along the lines of a modern state. And while he was only partly successful in creating one, his rebel organization became more and more state-like as time went on. The bureaucratic-administrative apparatus that ended up being erected in the Segovias was something of a compromise between what Sandino willed and what the social milieu of the Segovias permitted. The Defending Army was conceived and, to a degree, practiced as a state; its proto-functionaries and proto-bureaucrats behaved, to a degree, as the functionaries and bureaucrats of a state; they demanded that Segovianos treat them as the sole legitimate authorities of the region: they taxed (or tried to), they issued laws and decrees, they worked to regulate production and commerce, to mint money, to define crimes and prescribe punishments. Their Army became, virtually overnight, a kind of state.

Sandino has long been accused of conspiring to divide Nicaragua by creating a state within a state, a republic within a republic. In early 1929 Moncada issued a proclamation accusing him of wanting "to divide the republic in two sections," a charge

\textsuperscript{75} Weber (1978).
Sandino vigorously denied but did not effectively refute. The accusation was levelled with increasing frequency as the war progressed, in newspapers, in broadsides, in daily conversation. Foreign policy specialist Raymond Buell, who conducted extensive research in Nicaragua in 1930, remarked that Sandino "goes through the forms of maintaining a government... he issues paper money and grants leaves to his soldiers."78 Recall Ascención Iglesias Rivera mouthing the words of the Guardia officer charged with overseeing the surrender of ex-Sandinistas after Sandino's assassination: "Sandino's opinion was to make two governments: he would command in the Segovias, and in Managua, the government."79 Salvador Calderón Ramírez, one of Sandino's representatives during the peace negotiations, wrote of "two equal and contrary forces" after the Marine withdrawal, the Guardia and the Sandinistas, an observation echoed by Sofónías Salvatierra, Ramón de Belausteguigoitia, and others.80 "The bandits [Sandinistas] have in operation a government of their own," the Marines-Guardia finally acknowledged late in the war. "Bandits appear to have confidence in Sandino's triumph and believe that he will ultimately become ruler of the entire northern part of Nicaragua."81 The accusation continued long after Sandino's assassination. "[Sandino] wanted to form a state that was his exclusive property, inside of the nation, dividing it," charges the 1976 preface to Somoza's El verdadero Sandino. "He wanted to dismember the country and take power, in sovereign control and possession, of the entire northern

76. Moncada's proclamation is reprinted in Somoza, p. 123. Sandino attempted to refute Moncada's "base, dirty, and cynical lie" by denigrating Moncada and the yankees and reasserting his desire for a "Central America... unified morally and materially for its defense against Yankee imperialism." Conrad, pp. 234-236.
77. Samples of Marine-GN handbill propaganda are in GN-2 Report, 1 October 1932, p. 33, NA127/43A/29; exemplary newspaper articles include Diario Moderno, 22 Jan. 1933, and El Centroamericano, 1 Jan. 1933.
78. Buell (1930), p. 336; I have found no evidence to suggest that Sandino printed paper money; perhaps Buell heard of the coins and reported the existence of paper money.
79. IES 065: 11; see ch. 1, above.
80. Calderón Ramírez, pp. 91-93; Salvatierra (1934), pp. 99-103; Belausteguigoitia, pp. 88-89.
81. First quote from GN-2 Report, 1 October 1932, pp. 26-27, second from GN-2 Report, 1 August 1932, p. 22, NA127/43A/29; see also ch. 9, below.
region, founding a new nation under his absolute command. "We were going to have two republics in one," echoed ex-Guardia Leo Salazar in the early 1980s. "He [Sandino] was going to take control of the whole mountain area, [and] we couldn't swallow that." 83

This is one instance in which the guerrilla chieftain's severest critics were not mistaken. Though Sandino denied that his goal was to divide Nicaragua, the de facto political, legal, and juridical division of the country was one practical result of the manner in which he chose to rebel. Indeed, he acknowledged many times the state-like qualities of his Defending Army. He could hardly have done otherwise, since that was, at bottom, how it was constituted.

In evidence of this, one could cite Sandino's explicit admissions, late in the war, that a parallel state was essentially what his Army had become. 84 One could cite his repeated attempts to gain diplomatic recognition from other Latin American states for the Defending Army as the sole legitimate representative of the Nicaraguan people. 85 More revealing, in terms of the day-to-day operation of his Army, are bountiful references in Sandinista correspondence to "our civil and military authorities," to "the laws of our military institutions," and to "the legal authority" of the Defending Army over all of the inhabitants of the Segovias. 86 Consider, for example, the following, hitherto unpublished decree, issued by Sandino on January 1, 1931:

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82. Somoza, p. vi; the 1936 edition makes the same charge via Moncada's proclamation, p. 123. The US political scientist Thomas Dodd agreed, remarking that he was "satisfied" that "stories that Sandino wished to establish his own republic in northern Nicaragua and make himself President of it" were "true." Dodd, p. 98.
84. E.g., three days before his death Sandino spoke of "the fact that here there are not two but rather three states: the power of the president of the republic, that of the National Guard, and my own." A year earlier he proclaimed in a public manifesto and in private letter that "I am independent of the government." Conrad, pp. 463, 466, 490.
85. E.g., Conrad, pp. 246-262.
86. Sandino and his subordinates very commonly employed the convention "our civil and military authorities," in their letters and correspondence, e.g., Gen. Pedro Altamirano, "Circular" to "All the Civil and Military Authorities" of the Defending Army, published in Diario Moderno, 23 January 1931; second quote from a tax notification sent to Carlos Potter, 20 July 1930, NA127/205/2/19.1; third from the document following.
REGULATIONS FOR CIVIL AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES OF LOCALITIES BELONGING TO OUR DEFENDING ARMY OF NICARAGUAN NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY

The undersigned General and Supreme Chief of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, in view of numerous complaints presented to these Headquarters from the local authorities, as well as from the inhabitants of this vicinity, decrees:

That all of the inhabitants who live in the areas in which our forces are operating will recognize as legitimate authorities of our Army, in their civil and military capacities, those who have in their possession the credentials issued by this Headquarters, and in which their duty is specified.

The jueces de canton [canton judges] will be appointed by the jueces de mesta in the locality in which the juez de canton lives, but the juez de mesta who appoints any juez de canton must bear on hand his own credentials of these Headquarters, or signed by one of our Chiefs, Expeditionary Chiefs, etc., of our Army.

The municipal mayors, commanding officers of the posts, and chiefs of police, must have their own credentials signed by this Command or by any of our Expeditionary Chiefs of our Army. The mayors can only be elected by a solemn assembly of our Staff headed by this Supreme Authority.

The appointments for commander of posts, chiefs of police, and jueces de mesta by our Expeditionary Chiefs will be as provisional ones, while the proper appointments signed by this Supreme Authority is provided. When by a mistake several persons are performing the same duty in the same locality, legal authority will devolve to the one who has the order of this Supreme Authority. In the case that none have credentials from these Headquarters, legal authority will devolve to the one who has a previous appointment; besides, all of our Expeditionary Chiefs are well instructed about this matter.

These regulations for the authorities must be read to the inhabitants of every place by the authorized person. Headquarters, Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, January 1, 1931.

Homeland and Liberty
/s/ A.C. Sandino [seal]

One sees here a concerted effort to inject a greater degree of order and regularity into what was, in practice, a very ragged, loosely constituted, and conflict-ridden rebel government. The appointment of such local officials began in mid-June 1927, with Sandino's appointment ("for all legal purposes") of Francisco Estrada as Jefe Político of Nueva Segovia, and continued through 1928 and 1929, though evidence for them -- invariably in the form of captured letters and correspondence -- does not begin to surface

87. English trans., Northern Area Intelligence Report, 8 March 1931, Ocotal, pp. 3-4, NA127/209/2.
until around mid-1930.\textsuperscript{88} One might cite in this regard the appointments of Gustavo Möller Díaz as \textit{comandante de policía} for San Rafael del Norte ("who is authorized to give orders of his own to the residents of said town and districts"); of Blas González \textit{juez de mesta} of the Cuje Valley; of Catalino Olivas as \textit{juez de mesta} of Palacaguina -- only three of hundreds of such appointments.\textsuperscript{89} Consider, for example, the legalistic, state-like language of Olivas's appointment:

\textbf{APPOINTMENT AS JUEZ DE MESTA OF RIO GRANDE OF PALACAGUINA IN FAVOR OF CATALINO OLIVAS}

The undersigned, General and Supreme Chief of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, by virtue of the authority of which I am invested by the Army itself, issue the appointment of Juez de Mesta of the Valley of Río Grande of Palacaguina, in favor of Señor Catalino Olivas, who is authorized to issue orders to the inhabitants of the mentioned valley and its jurisdiction. Respect and comply with the orders of Sr. Juez de Mesta Olivas in his capacity as authority.

Issued at the Headquarters, Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, 23 July 1930.

\textit{Homeland and Liberty}

\textit{/s/} A.C. Sandino [official seal]\textsuperscript{90}

"Authority" is justified and defined three times in this curt document, a compelling illustration of how popular sovereignty and parallel statehood was intended to work in practice. The source of "authority" was "the Army itself," which in turn (as Sandino made abundantly clear elsewhere) derived its authority from the popular will.\textsuperscript{91} In theory, civil and military authorities were clearly separated; some rebels bore military ranks -- generals, colonels, captains, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, privates -- and some civilian -- \textit{jueces, jefes políticos, comandantes de policía}, etc. On this point, at least, the record is clear: repeatedly, unequivocally, unmistakably, the language used by Sandino

\textsuperscript{88} Conrad, p. 72.
\textsuperscript{89} Möller Díaz's appointment is in NA127/209/3, as is Blas González's of 23 July 1930; Catalino Olivas's of the same date is in NA127/209/2; see Appendix D.
\textsuperscript{90} English trans. only in Northern Area Intelligence Report, 8 March 1931, Ocotal, p. 4, NA127/209/2.
\textsuperscript{91} Recall his first manifesto, July 1, 1927: "...the Army is the foundation upon which the nation rests..." Conrad, p. 75.
and his principal subordinates to define themselves and their organization was the language of sovereign statehood.

Fifty years later a similar language, with a rather different inflection, was used by ex-soldiers to describe their experiences as soldiers and citizens of this state-like army and army-like state. In 1980 Martín Blandón Rodríguez was asked if he could talk about how members of the Defending Army were supposed to act toward "the population."

"Well, that they should behave properly, that the army should behave well and not go and do things that were outside of the law (cosas fuera la ley)," he responded. "Because he didn't like it when people went around doing things outside of the law. With the enemy it was another matter, but with private individuals (la gente particular), one was not able to do things outside the law."92 Most memories of Sandinista "law" were similarly trained on prohibitions against certain kinds of violence -- especially rape -- rather than a goal of sovereign statehood. Secundino Hernández Blandón also spoke of the law of Sandinismo, in a story about a soldier who was accused of rape and shot by a Sandinista firing squad. "These were serious things, man, whoever violated his law (la ley de él) better be ready."93 Others recalled Sandinista law in much the same terms -- as a series of strictly enforced moral and legal proscriptions against certain "unlawful" behaviors. "This part was delicate, it was serious," recalled Asención Iglesias Rivera about the punishments for rape.94 "This was the most extremely delicate thing (lo más delicadísimo) about that army," echoed Sinforoso Martínez on the same subject.95 In Sandinista popular memory, the Sandinista parallel state was commonly remembered not in terms of a parallel sovereignty per se, but in terms of the punishments meted out for transgressions of Sandinista law. Ex-soldiers frequently mentioned the offices of the Sandinista state, but rather offhandedly, as if they were talking about self-evident,

92. IES 033: 10-11.
93. IES 047: 11.
94. IES 065: 15-16.
95. IES 006: 1.
unremarkable categories; rarely were memories about Sandinista judges, field governors
(gobernadores del campo), tax collectors, police chiefs, mayors, couriers -- who were
mentioned often enough -- framed explicitly in terms of a parallel "sovereignty."
Sandino's strategy of carving out a parallel authority in the Segovias was readily
understood and remembered by the rank-and-file, though the sovereignty of that authority
was evidently a less accessible or meaningful concept.

At the same time, for Sandino, sovereign statehood in the Segovias was a
strategy, a means, a stepping-stone to a much deeper social transformation, and not an
end in itself. There can be little doubt that his more fundamental goal was the seizure of
state power, as Somoza and others have charged. Nor is there much reason to doubt
Hodges' assertion that the ideological mainspring driving the Rebellion was Sandino's
vision of a Central American federation, a freshly minted nation-state stretching from the
Río Grande to Panamá and beyond, as the first stage of a coming proletarian revolution
on a global scale.96

Here the focus is less on what the rebel chieftan envisaged as an ultimate goal
than what he succeeded in creating in practical pursuit of that goal. The necessary
prelude to Central American revolution was revolution in Nicaragua, and the prelude to
revolution in Nicaragua was the construction of a parallel nation-state across the
Segovias, with its own laws and codes, its own offices and officials, its own myths and
songs and symbols, its own tax base in local production. And that is, in loose and partial
fashion, what was stitched together.

The principal function of the Sandinista state, in addition to its symbolic and
practical value as a parallel authority, was to provide the rebels with what they needed to
stay in the field and fight the Yankees and Guardia. In this sense, Sandino and his
followers fused languages of nation, state, and military to create something that might be
described as a clandestine army-nation-state. The material needs of that army-nation-

state were many and keen. Most crucially, in order to operate at all, the rebels required constant streams of food and information. Less immediately necessary, but just as essential for the long-term survival of autonomous guerrilla bands (which is how the Defending Army was organized, as explored more fully in chapter eight), were clothes, weapons, ammunition, medicines, horses, mules, money, and sundry other supplies.

Food, intelligence, and supply networks worked hand-in-hand. Most campesinos were jacks-of-all-trades, and so too were most rebels: Sandinista jueces de mesta, jueces de canton, jefes de reten, gobernadores del campo, intendentes, and others, all directed their energies toward the same basic end: keeping the rebels in the field by getting them what they needed. Recall "bandit judge" Hipolito Rivera, who, in September 1932, just before being "shot and killed" attempting to "escape," defiantly informed his Marine-Guardia captors that "he was proud of being a member of the 'Ejercito'" and "that his mission was to steal food, appoint spies, and advise [local chieftans] of all guardia movements." 97 In the 1970s, Santos López likewise told his young revolutionary interviewers that the Sandinista espionage network was but one component in an overall campesino support system. "The most responsible campesinos were trained for espionage," he told them. "They were to cultivate crops, to serve as supply bases, to train their neighbors in guerrilla tactics, and to maintain permanent contact with the general headquarters." 98 This was the ideal.

Nearly every observer of the Defending Army since Sandino has remarked upon the sophistication and excellence of the rebel espionage system. 99 The Marines and Guardia were among its most reluctant admirers. "The grapevine system of communication is as well developed in this country as in any other," judged Lieutenant J.D. O'Leary in mid-1930 in what was, by then, a stock observation. "Guardia and

98. Santos López, p. 12.
Marine patrol movements are known at once."\textsuperscript{100} A few months earlier, another officer took note of how "the natives throughout the countryside . . . seldom give timely information on bandits and their movements, but on the other hand, aid and assist and forewarn bandit groups of movements of Marine and Guardia patrols."\textsuperscript{101} A year earlier, one rabidly anti-Sandinista letter-writer (probably a prominent Ocotal Conservative) informed the Marines-Guardia that, "The information [Sandino] gets is based on the Sandinist feeling among the low class of people scattered all over this department . . . Every small town, every locality, every hut in the country, wherever you find people, are the real hiding places for the Sandinistas."\textsuperscript{102}

The IES testimonies are saturated with similar recollections. "We had spies everywhere, in every nook and cranny, and neither the Guardia nor the Marines had the least idea," recounted Francisco Centeno Fonseca with evident pride. "The message would pass through these hills: 'The enemy is coming from such-and-such.' And the guerrillas were warned."\textsuperscript{103} "We had special couriers who knew when the enemy left a given location and where they were going," echoed Francisco Zepeda Galeano. "When a patrol left such-and-such a village, we knew it instantly.

A runner was sent to warn another, and they warned another, one to the next, till the message arrived. Then we'd have the place ready for an ambush. We placed a great deal of faith in this question of espionage, this was one of our triumphs: To know when the enemy leaves, that they're coming to attack us, how many are coming, it was fantastic! It was like a song to us, it helped make up for the shortage of weapons. We had a lot of successes from such plans.\textsuperscript{104}

These were no idle boasts. At one level, these memories formed part of what might be termed "the myth of the invincible guerrilla," a collective conviction that the Sandinistas formed a fighting force vastly superior to the Marines-Guardia, outfoxing them in countless ambushes, defeating them at every turn, and so on. By most indices the

\textsuperscript{100} Patrol Report, O'Leary, Condega, 5 July 1930, NA127/202/13/56.
\textsuperscript{101} Estimate of the Situation, Racicot, 28 Feb. 1930, NA127/205/2/16D.
\textsuperscript{102} GN-2 Note No. 1, Bleasdale, 5 Feb. 1929, NA127/205/1.
\textsuperscript{103} IES 066: 7-8.
\textsuperscript{104} IES 076-1-2: 9, 4.
constituent elements of this conviction are demonstrably false. At the same time, the Sandinistas did enjoy some relative advantages, and one was in the flow of information. In fact, a large proportion of the Defending Army's energy was directed toward producing and channelling information about the activities of the Marines-Guardia. Such information networks permitted Generals like Carlos Salgado, for example, to flit back and forth around the Somoto-Honduran border region without once getting pinned down, always just one step ahead of the Marines-Guardia: or like Pedrón, snaking around in a region teeming with Marine-Guardia patrols and being surprised only a handful of times. Sandinista information flows were not infallible; they were, however, usually very reliable, and are among the best evidence of the overwhelming popular support enjoyed by the rebels.

"When we passed through these valleys the people gave us food, they'd make tortillas, kill chickens, and give them to us; and the judges knew the routes, how to send it to the areas controlled by General Sandino. There was a judge whose job it was to collect food, tortillas, beans, whatever . . ." In Sandinista popular memory, represented here by the recollections of Abelino López Hernández, "the people" gave freely to The Cause. "Upon arriving at a place where the people already knew us, where everyone was a Sandinista, they'd leave us food in such-and-such a place, or bring it to us in the camps," echoed Ascención Iglesias Rivera. The records of the Marines-Guardia amply buttress such recollections. Information and food, the two primary resources required and the bread-and-butter of the Sandinista state apparatus and war effort, flowed through parallel, overlapping networks. Campesinos across the Segovias not only helped to generate and distribute masses of detailed and timely information, but also to clear new fields, expand plantings, and generally work overtime to provide the rebels with what

105. See ch. 8, below.
106. Ch. 8 below.
107. IES 100: 7.
108. IES 065: 19.
they needed to live and fight. "In all the country surrounding [the Quilalí area] the bandits have planted much corn and beans," ran a typical report. "Several persons were observed working in a corn field in valley [near Yalí]. This corn field is know to belong to bandits," ran another.\textsuperscript{109} "The area in the vicinity of Las Flores is evidently a bandit granary," ran still another.\textsuperscript{110} Colonel Denig's lament was common: "The natives living in the hills throughout this area are actively engaged in banditry . . . scattered farms furnish the main source of food supply to the bandit groups." In his opinion, "Without the means of food supply and shelter afforded to bandits by these aforementioned scattered huts . . . bandit activities could be greatly reduced."\textsuperscript{111}

But this is only part of the story. The question of how the Sandinistas acquired different kinds of resources is a critical one, for on the answers hinge a whole series of answers to questions about authority, property, law, and the kind of civil war the Rebellion became. Here I only wish to note in passing that the evidence is unequivocal that most food was contributed voluntarily by sympathetic \textit{campestinos}, while clothes, medicines, and other supplies, including money, were most commonly procured, following a time-honored Nicaraguan tradition, through forced contributions from the wealthier strata.\textsuperscript{112} Over the course of the war thousands of Sandinista tax notices, or extortion notes, were issued, most to well-to-do coffee growers and cattle ranchers. "To Señorita Doña Elena Munguia, widow of Paguaga, Telpaneca," began one such tax/extortion note of January 1931.

\textsuperscript{109} First from Report from two natives held prisoner by bandits, Apalí, 19 June 1932, NA127/202/1/1.3; second from Report of Contact, Satterfield, 22 Feb. 1931 NA127/202/11/53.

\textsuperscript{110} Patrol, E. Carlson, Jalapa, 5 Nov. 1930, NA127/202/13.

\textsuperscript{111} Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, R.L. Denig, Ocotal, 10 May 1930, NA127/202/17/94.

\textsuperscript{112} Rebel food and supply networks are discussed in greater detail in chs. 8 and 11, below. That forced contributions were a longstanding practice across Nicaragua is evidenced in the records of the Department of State relative to the Civil Wars of 1910-1912, e.g., W.H. DeSavigny, American Consular Agent, Matagalpa, to José de Olivares, American Consul, Managua, 25 January 1910 (USDS 817.00/6369/777, i.e., M632, Roll #4) reported complaints by US property holders in Matagalpa against forced contributions levied by both sides in the ongoing civil war.
Señorita, at this time I direct myself to your honorable and dignified person with affectionate greetings, and after this, Señorita, in the knowledge that you are a legitimate Nicaraguan, and with instructions from my chief and Supreme Leader, Augusto C. Sandino, let it be known that as of this date I notify you to pay a contribution of $500 pesos de cordoba, and after you pay this contribution you will be sent a receipt from the Headquarters of our Supreme Chief. If you do not pay this contribution, you will be prevented from continuing to harvest your coffee, because you will have guarantees for neither your farm (acienda) nor your workers (mosos), or you will have to put a Guardia on every worker and protect their labors with the bullets of the bandits. This is how things stand, whichever seems best to you. I await your honorable decision.

Homeland and Liberty
Colonel Fulgencio Hernández Valle

Such forced contributions, and the explicit threats of violence they conventionally contained, can only be understood in the context of the larger field of violence and bloodshed out of which they emerged. It is worth noting that Colonel Hernández’s letter to the widow Paguaga, like most such tax/extortion notes, employed the same idiom of "guarantees" that Anasacio Hernández, José Torres, and other Conservative and Liberal gang leaders had been using long before 1931. To issue a guarantee, as we have seen, was to sell a promise not to rob or kill, often for a handsome price. Not surprisingly, the propertied classes in general came to construct the Defending Army's taxations as little more than criminal brigandage. Clearly a good deal more along these lines needs to be said, and more will be. Here I only wish to illustrate that such taxation/extortion did exist, to observe that it was exceedingly common (particularly from around mid-1930, after Sandino's failed trip to Mexico), and to suggest that understanding how different kinds of material resources were procured by the Defending Army is crucial to understanding how the whole of the Rebellion unfolded, as an anti-imperialist war, and as a civil war.

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114. See ch. 5, above.
The Sandinista parallel nation-state emerged at the margins of a nation that excluded, in practice, the vast majority of its citizens, and a state whose authority was accepted by only a limited few. Sandino, fundamentally a Nicaraguan and "Indo-Hispanic" nationalist, appropriated for the poor and downtrodden of the Segovias the idioms and practices of nationhood and statehood in order to pursue a far grander vision: defense of the national honor and redemption of the oppressed. In the rustic gold coins minted at the San Albino Mine in June 1927, one sees a brand new identity, a freshly felt and believed and imagined community suddenly exploding into being, and along with it, a new army-state apparatus and moral-political-juridical order. That context established, it seems fitting to return to the Segovias at the formal end of the Civil War, to take a closer look at the social and cultural milieu within which that revolutionary icon and sensibility were first minted.
CHAPTER 7: "THE NEW STRUGGLE": THE EMERGENCE OF THE DEFENDING ARMY IN THE SEGOVIAS, MAY 1927-JANUARY 1928

When Moncada settled with Stimson at Espino Negro, and all those things you know about took place . . . all those who were being persecuted arrived in the Segovian jungles to thicken the ranks of General Sandino . . . campesinos, natives of the area who knew the mountains like the backs of their hands, to begin the new struggle.

- Pedro Antonio Arauz1

The formation of Sandinista identity and authority in the Segovias are revealed with special clarity in their initial burst of creation. The first months of struggle was a period of furious activity, a brief but critical moment of transition during which the groundwork was laid for what rapidly became a parallel nation-state: Supply lines were created, military posts established, organizing in town and countryside begun in earnest; old allies were regained, old enemies dealt with, new enemies made, and new allies incorporated into the struggle. And in the process a new religio-ethno-national identity was rapidly created. From the first moments of Rebellion, Sandino and his subordinates worked tirelessly to weave together a dense fabric of nationalist symbols and icons. Most of the Rebellion's most enduring myths and legends were created during its first nine months, between Espino Negro and the Marine occupation of El Chipote -- from May 1927 to January 1928. It was as if the Rebellion compressed time, like a shock wave, most intense at its point of origin and ever diminishing in frequency and intensity as it passed through time and space: memories, stories, symbols, songs, legends coalesced around a rapid-fire series of events occurring in the first few months of struggle.

After the Espino Negro Accords were signed on May 4, 1927, Sandino and his remaining followers retreated north to Jinotega, and from there to San Rafael del Norte. On May 18, in a private wedding on the outskirts of San Rafael, Sandino married local telegraph operator Blanca Arauz. The following day the Rebellion was officially launched with a "Circular to the Authorities of the Segovias," which declared, justified, and explained Sandino's intention to wage armed rebellion against the US occupation. On May 21, Moncada and a detachment of Marines occupied the plaza at Jinotega and telegraphed Sandino at San Rafael, demanding his surrender. He refused and retreated further north. By mid-June what remained of his army had seized control of the town of El Jicaro (renaming it Ciudad Sandino, or Sandino City), the San Albino Mine, and adjacent towns and villages. In the next few weeks the rebel chieftan and his subordinates undertook a flurry of organizational activities throughout the area, including minting coins at San Albino. Meanwhile, the Marines began encircling the El Jicaro region from the south and west. In early July, Sandino exchanged a series of telegrams with US Marine Captain Gilbert Hatfield at Ocotal, who demanded the rebel's surrender. Enraged at the audacity of the invading forces, Sandino attacked Ocotal early on the morning of July 16 in the first major battle of the Rebellion. The attack was repulsed with heavy Sandinista casualties. The survivors retreated hastily back along their line of attack, and further, to the "mountain fortress" of El Chipote, where they braced for the anticipated Marine Corps assault. From mid-November, when they located it, the Marines bombed El Chipote and its environs almost daily. In late January 1928, Marine-GN ground troops occupied an empty mountain. Days before, Sandino and his soldiers had built grass dummies to fool the pilots and slipped out to the south and east, into the coffee country of Matagalpa and Jinotega. By April their main body was far to the east, raiding the US-owned Bonanza and Pis Pis gold mines in Zelaya department. By this time Sandinista power and authority had spread throughout large parts of the Segovian countryside. The occupation of a deserted El Chipote marked the beginning of the cat-
and-mouse guerrilla war which was to characterize the remainder of the Rebellion (see Map 7.1).

"I offer you hunger, sickness, and death": Official, private and popular memories of the "Decision of the 29" at San Rafael del Norte

Foundational myths are often among the most sacred. In Sandinista revolutionary iconography no event holds more symbolic power than Mocada's betrayal at Tipitapa. And of the mythologies of the Defending Army no event was more momentous than the collective decision made at San Rafael del Norte in late May 1927, when Sandino and his twenty-nine remaining followers chose to continue the armed struggle against the "traitors and invaders." Half a century later Alfonso Alexander, the Colombian journalist and poet who joined the Defending Army in 1930 and served for a time as Sandino's personal secretary, captured the essence of that myth. Though he was not there at the time, he remembered clearly Sandino's words to his men in the dusty plaza at San Rafael, distilled through countless voices reverberating down through the years:

With the gringo dollars, you can have an easy life, and our new grades in the new army that would be called the Guardia Nacional -- or you can have a struggle to the death, a life full of nothing but privations, misery, discomfort, all in the name of liberty. The quotas assigned were: general $20,000, colonel $15,000, major $10,000, lieutenant $5000, sub-lieutenant $2500, sargeant $2000, corporal $1000, soldier $500. At that time the wages of a day laborer were twenty-five cents, so the offer was more than tempting. Every one of you will turn your arms, and you will receive the money straight from the hands of General Moncada. I repeat: I offer struggle, hunger, destitution, sickness, death. He [Moncada] offers a fine and easy life in the new army called the National Guard, or outside of it. Choose tonight and tomorrow we will talk. Now, break ranks.2

Wild exaggerations here blend with the truth -- from all accounts, Sandino did indeed offer hunger, misery, and death. On the other hand, there were no such quotas: the reward was $10 per rifle, regardless of rank.3 The extremes of this portrait point to its

3. In theory, Sandino might have surrendered and doled out lucrative political posts as jefe politico of Jinotega, the job Moncada offered him, thus making the surrender a profitable one, though this possibility is foreclosed by the very symbol of Sandino.
MAP 7.1

MAIN EVENTS FOR THE DEFENDING ARMY
JULY 1929 - MAY 1930
power as a revolutionary symbol: how many men would be so committed to a cause as
to accept such an outlandish proposal? In this moment of collective decision The Cause
was symbolically sanctified, rendered holy and pure: after this moment, all worldly
pleasures were relinquished, all hope for a life of comfort and ease surrendered; only
collective honor, pure and absolute, remained, henceforth the driving force behind willful
submission to sacrifice, pain, and death.

"With every passing minute it became more difficult to control the shirking and
wave of desertions," wrote Sandino in 1929 of the period immediately following Espino
Negro.4 While the mythology sanctified a single purifying moment, in practice a string
of such moments took place from the middle to the end of May. While Alfonso
Alexander was in Colombia at the time of "the" collective decision, many who were
closer to "the" moment in time and space likewise stressed a powerful sense of heroism
and moral purity. Almost seven years later, Sandino retold the story in a rather ironic
tone from his own point of view:

After the pacts of Tipitapa there was a moment, in La Corneta, when only twenty-
nine men remained with me, and even of these few, some vacillated. Well, I
should have gone crazy, as they say, but I didn't lose heart; I insisted, I discussed,
and with more effort than I had thought possible, I can't remember what logic I
used, but I was able to convince those men that 'it's preferable a thousand times
over to die than be a slave.' Only that iron will which armed me and the stoic
enthusiasm and rebelliousness of those Indians made that absurd crusade of
guerrillas a reality.5

By leaving Adolfo Díaz in power for at least another eighteen months, the Espino
Negro Accords generated white-hot resentment across Nicaragua. "It is our duty to
inform you, sir, that with respect to the Accords for the establishment of peace in
Nicaragua . . . we prefer the cruelties of war to a peace that undermines the sovereignty
of Nicaragua," wrote the Secretariat of the León-based Nicaraguan Worker's Federation
to President Coolidge in June 1927, but one of many expressions of dismay at the terms

5. Román, p. 78; emphasis in the original.
of the Accords. Some of the rhetoric came remarkably close to Sandino's. "This population has a large number of Liberal men who are disposed to die before continuing to live as slaves," one anonymous letter-writer informed US Special Envoy Stimson in late April 1927. Others expressed similar sentiments in more prosaic terms. "We figured that we had risked our necks fighting for a lousy ten dollars," recalled Chinandega Liberal blacksmith Martin Tercero in 1984, expressing what was, in the post-Espino Negro period, a widely shared sentiment. Sandino was able to tap into this deep well of resentment, as well as more local resentments against local Conservative functionaries, most of whom remained in power, in Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, and elsewhere, until early 1929.

Francisco Lara López, who fought with Sandino throughout the Civil War and remained a soldier in the Defending Army for most of the Rebellion, likewise stressed the moral purity generated by the sanctifying moment at San Rafael:

Sandino said that whoever wanted to accompany him should take one step forward. Every member of his army, not one sold their rifle, we all went with him... he said he would not sell out, not for any amount of money, and that whoever wanted to sell out should sell out, and no one did.... He said we would never sell the homeland; death or victory, never surrender!

Tomás Jarquín Velásquez, who also stayed on long after Espino Negro, stressed especially, as did many others, the deep moral outrage produced by Moncada's betrayal:

Sandino said [to Moncada]: 'Son-of-a-bitch!... You have sold out for shit! Men -- he said -- whoever wants to follow me, don't turn in your arms.' So all of us who were with him didn't turn them in, and we turned around and went back to La Cruz. And from there we reconcentrated for the Segovias... Many people had already completed a year in these plains, and to sell your rifle for ten pesos?? This was the arrangement he [Moncada] made, and this was why Sandino was pissed off, because he didn't think that Moncada would play so dirty....

6. USDS 817.00/4934.
7. Anonymous to Stimson, 27 April 1927, USDS 817.00/4954.
9. The Espino Negro Accords called for the Liberals to assume six jefaturas político, which they did, though they were barred from replacing the Conservative officials in the sundry posts under their jurisdiction; see ch. 5, above.
10. IES 059: 1, 3, 4.
11. IES 091: 3, 8.
Santos López recalled two key moments, the first in Jinotega, when Sandino called his troops together and said to them:

'Whoever wants to return to their homes can do so now,' but he would leave for the Segovias, and in the mountains he would prepare for his struggle against the parties and the yankees.

A few days later, the scene was repeated in San Rafael, where he spoke with the troops, explaining to them that 'from this very moment, the goldfinches and all the birds would be the songs that would accompany us in our life in the mountains.'

Others remember "the moment" in less romantic terms. Luisa Cano Arauz, who said she was an eyewitness, recalled events this way:

Okay, when Moncada made his arrangements, he [Sandino] returned and arrived at the house of María Arauz and there he fired off a bullet right in the middle of the house and said: 'from here to here, yankees, and from here to here, Sandino!', all those who want to follow me raise their hands. Those who went with him were: Pancho Estrada, Rufo Marín, Coronel Bosque, many colonels who were with him raised their hands. Others said no, for example, the people of the village said, no, they would not follow him any more, and off he went to Chipote.

In a rare admission, Doña Luisa seemed to make a special effort to stress that not everyone followed Sandino, which was of course true. Her remarks indicate that at this critical juncture, the people of the village essentially disavowed Sandino's cause, implying that the villagers saw it as hopeless, that they had followed him long enough, but that this time he was simply going too far. She hints that most people around San Rafael thought that Sandino and his band were onto something crazy, absurd -- and most probably did: of the hundreds who followed Sandino only weeks before in the struggle against the hated Conservatives, only a handful marched north out of San Rafael in open defiance of the Yankees. Sandino himself, with the distance of seven years, dubbed it "that absurd crusade of guerrillas," acknowledging both its religious flavor and how crazy it must have seemed at the time. Many of Sandino's soldiers, perhaps a hundred or more,

12. Santos López, p. 10. Evidently Santos López was not present at the time, as his name does not appear on the list of the "twenty-nine" who followed Sandino north from San Rafael.
13. IES 037: 2.
adopted a wait-and-see attitude, and once it became clear that his army was intact, returned quickly to thicken its ranks. The evidence is strong that the fledgling rebel army grew rapidly in the weeks following its departure from San Rafael.

The only testimonies of soldiers from the "original twenty-nine" in my possession are those of Francisco Centeno Fonseca and Captain Pastor Ramírez Mejía. Francisco Centeno failed to emphasize the critical moment in San Rafael, saying only that Sandino gave them all a talk, explaining the situation with Moncada and the yankees.¹⁴ Captain Ramírez, on the other hand, did see fit to stress the supreme importance of the moment, in terms strikingly similar to those expressed by Alfonso Alexander and others:

'Men,' he [Sandino] told us with these words, 'Moncada has already sold out and the Americans have intervened in Nicaragua, and they have promised to strip me of my soldiers, of my troops, for 100 córdobas for the leaders, according to rank. So if you are disposed to turn in your arms, you'll receive the 100 córdobas, or we are going to start a new fight against the yankees. You decide. If one of you decides to follow me, I will continue the fight. They want to install a yankee as president, and in my opinion it should be a son of the nation, be he liberal or conservative, but a son of the nation -- but a yankee, never. So you decide.' So we thirty decided that we would follow him. With these thirty began the armed protest that he led against the yankee.¹⁵

If the monetary award promised to soldiers who would turn in their rifles is exaggerated here, the rest of the narrative conforms to both the official hagiography and the actual sequence of events. In a sense we return full circle: memories of someone who never witnessed the event, like Alfonso Alexander, were in perfect accord with the memories of someone who did, like Pastor Ramírez, suggesting something of the power and grip and popularity of this particular symbol. Of special interest in Ramírez's account is the statement attributed to Sandino that the president of Nicaragua must be a "son of the nation -- be he liberal or conservative." Can this be interpreted as a rank-and-file

¹⁴. IES 066: 4. The rest of his testimony conveys the impression that for him the Rebellion was so laden with meaningful moments that this one had lost any special luster it might have once possessed; in this sense, this silent deviation from shared memories of this event might be read as an emphatic affirmation of the power of the Rebellion's larger corpus of myths. Or perhaps he forgot to mention it. ¹⁵. IES 094-1: 3. Sandino listed Ramírez as one of the "San Rafael 29"; see Conrad, p. 67.
affirmation of Sandino's new definition of the Nicaraguan nation? As Ramírez remembered it, Moncada, having sold out to the Yankees, became, functionally, a Yankee; as he pictured the past, it was clear to everyone in the plaza at San Rafael that only those who refused to ally with the invaders would henceforth be considered legitimate "sons of the nation." Of course Ramírez was remembering through the prism of the 1980s. How many, at the time, understood what Sandino meant by "son of the nation"? Probably most -- since most of those who continued out of San Rafael were, after months of campaigning at Sandino's side, intimately familiar with his religio-nationalist teachings (see List 7.3, below). In Ramírez's depiction, Sandino's struggle assumed national dimensions from its inception -- which in practice, at the time, for a core group of followers, it probably did. At the same time there remains a deep tension between Ramírez's and Santos López's accounts: López recalled that Sandino proposed a "struggle against the parties," while Ramírez remembered that neither Liberals nor Conservatives were inherently enemies of the Sandinistas. This ambiguity -- how to deal with different political parties and factions of the elite -- would return, in different guises, in the months and years ahead.

In short, waves of desertions and a series of cajolings and individual and collective decisions to continue the struggle were transformed into a single mythological moment marking the symbolic, spiritual birth of a new and redeemed Nicaraguan nation, founded on the proposition that true patriots would gladly offer their lives in the struggle against the Yankee invaders and their Nicaraguan lackeys. And from a string of such moments a new national identity was born.

A list of the "original twenty-nine" appears on the following page, along with a shorter list of the major leaders who joined or rejoined Sandino soon after the departure from San Rafael. It is noteworthy that nearly one-third of this group -- nine of twenty-nine -- were born outside of Nicaragua, and of these, all but two were Honduran. Approximately half -- fifteen of twenty-nine -- were from the El Jícaro region or points
LIST 7.2

THE "ORIGINAL TWENTY-NINE" FROM SAN RAFAEL DEL NORTE,
MAY 1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Blandon, Lorenzo</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Cabrera, Pedro</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>León</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centeno, Abraham</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Yalí</td>
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<td>Centeno, Francisco</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>La Concordia</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Colindres, Juan Gregorio</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Murra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Díaz, José León</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>+ El Salvador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Dietrich, Santiago</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>El Jicaro</td>
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<td>Estrada, Francisco</td>
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<td>Managua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fonseca, Carlos</td>
<td>24+</td>
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<td>Gómez, Genaro</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Somoto</td>
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<td>González, Simón</td>
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<td>Murra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Maradiaga, Coronado</td>
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<td>Murra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Maradiaga, Fernando</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>El Chipote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Maradiaga, Sixto</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+ Honduras</td>
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<td>Pueblo Nuevo</td>
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<td>*Uriarte, Ramón</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Managua</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OTHER MAJOR LEADERS WHO JOINED OR REJOINED BY JUNE 1927

Altamirano, Pedro  45  Jinotega
Blandón, Pedro     35  Jinotega
Girón Ruano, Manuel María 35  + Guatemala
González, Simón    24  + Honduras
López, Santos      12  Yalaguína
Ortez, Miguel Angel 18  Ocotal
Peralta, Ismael    24  Jinotega
Quezada, Carlos    40  + Honduras
Salgado, Carlos    45  Somoto
Umanzor, Juan Pablo 30  + Honduras

* = from Santos López’s original 40 from San Albino
+ = from outside Nicaragua.
further north. Taken together, this indicates the "international" character of the column, its more "northerly" composition, and its lack of rootedness in the San Rafael region. Perhaps the "Indian" designation used by Sandino and others meant that many were recently uprooted members of indigenous communities from Matagalpa-Jinotega or the western Segovias, though without more information it is impossible to be sure. In any case, no one in this group hailed from San Rafael del Norte, and only two were from the San Rafael-Jinotega region. This again suggests that, as seen through the eyes of the people of San Rafael and its vicinity, the column probably appeared as a group of strangers and foreigners. This, in turn, along with other evidence, serves to underscore the strategic and symbolic importance of Sandino's marriage to Blanca Arauz.

"To prepare the conditions for the struggle": The return to the El Jícaro region

In late May, when the Sandinistas returned to the El Jícaro region, Conservative power had collapsed and the Marines had not yet extended their reach much beyond the cities of the Pacific seaboard. For a brief moment -- six to eight weeks -- Sandino and his "regime" filled this power vacuum and became the most powerful single force in this strategically important region. What they did and how they did it speaks volumes about the struggle that followed.

The systematic organization of the entire region began almost immediately. A string of supply and communication posts was set up in all the way from San Rafael to El Jícaro; troops were stationed in some of the larger properties just south of the Río Coco, at Darailí, Las Lajas, Las Nubes, and Los Arcos, and as far north and west as Telpanca; another series of posts were established just north of the Río Coco, in the mountainous region known as El Ojoche, and in the villages of San Juan de Telpanca, Quibuto, and Las Vueltas; and to the north and east, in the towns of Quilalf and El Jícaro, in the mines

of San Albino and San Gregorio, and in the mountain fastnesses of El Chipote. Another key post was established on the property of Guadalupe Rivera called Santa Cruz, located on the strategic bend in the Río Coco, from which point river traffic flowed without hindrance all the way to the east coast. In short, large parts of eastern Nueva Segovia rapidly came under Sandino's nominal control. Let us look more closely at some of the key individuals in this process.

Darailí was a large coffee and cattle finca owned by Moises González, strategically located on the crossroads between the San Rafael-Jinotega and the Ocotal-Telpaneca regions. Literate, propertied, and well-connected, González was an old man in his late seventies, a relatively wealthy landowner and a key player in the early phase of the Rebellion, providing Sandino's forces with vital intelligence and a strategic location along a well-travelled trade route. His allegiances to the Sandinista cause proved ephemeral, however. By early 1928, the Marines-Guardia had recognized the strategic importance of Darailí and pressured González to switch sides and permit a Marine-Guardia garrison to be established there, which he did. His son Moises Jr. was an officer in the Defending Army until early 1928, when he too switched sides and began to serve as a guide for the Marines-Guardia. By 1931, Don Moises and Moises Jr. were reportedly on the Defending Army's death list for their betrayal, though the Marines-Guardia apparently succeeded in protecting them and their property from Sandinista attack.

The post at the hacienda Las Lajas was organized by Colonel Luis Espinoza, who was later killed in the battle of Bromaderos of February, 1928. Enrique Cruz, who would continue the struggle for at least the next five years, was commissioned to

17. Sources detailed in the following paragraphs.
organize the region known as El Ojoche, a towering mountain on the northern bank of the Río Coco which overlooked the river and the undulating hills to the south.20 Zacarías Padilla, a colonel in the Defending Army until at least mid-1932, and Jerónimo Polanco (whose name fails to appear again in the documents) were commissioned to organize a 20-man post at San Juan de Telpaneca, another strategically located town.21 Modesto Torres, owner of a small farm near Las Vueltas a few miles south of San Albino, was reportedly charged with organizing a "Civic Guard" in the Las Vueltas area.22 Juan Colindres, a wealthy property and mine owner who was later accused of treason, was charged with organizing a post at the San Gregorio Mine, which remained in Sandinista hands, off and on, throughout the war.23 Ismael Peralta, a leading general and key figure throughout the war, was commissioned to organize the post at Quilali, with a force of sixty men, a town which six months later became a key Marine Corps garrison.24 Francisco Estrada was named Jefe Político of the Department of Nueva Segovia, with its capital located at El Jicaro, renamed Sandino City (Ciudad Sandino).25

Guadalupe Rivera, whose property at Santa Cruz was strategically situated along the Río Coco, was the brother of Abraham Rivera, the leading Sandinista chieftain in the Atlantic Coast region throughout the war. In mid-1928, the Marines-Guardia,

recognizing the strategic importance of Rivera's property, compelled Don Guadalupe to

21. Santos López, p. 13; Sandino reported Padilla as active around León in July 1932; see Conrad, p. 412.
22. "The Las Vueltas group was organized by Modesto Torres when Sandino was in Jicaro. Torres, long a refugee in Honduras, has since been granted amnesty and when last heard from was living on his finca near Las Vueltas." R-2 Report, Ocotal, 16 June 1929, p. 11, NA127/209/1.
25. E.g., Conrad, 72; Francisco Estrada, Ciudad Sandino, to General Manuel Echevarría, San Albino, 22 June 1927, MCHC- PPC/Sandino; Francisco Estrada, Ciudad Sandino, to Gen. Echevarría, San Albino, 2 July 1927, NA127/205/1.
vacate the premises, which he did, accepting amnesty and forsaking his Sandinista allegiance. In this early phase, however, Sandinista control of this key post permitted unhindered access to the arms and other markets of the Caribbean seaboard, access which was regularly exploited.\textsuperscript{26} Sandino himself apparently spent much of his time at the San Albino Mine, overseeing the extraction of gold by his men after he had wrested control of the mine from its owners.\textsuperscript{27}

These were only the principal and largest posts Sandino established in the region. The bulk of the population in this area lived outside of the major towns and villages, in the rural hamlets or \textit{caseríos} which dotted the countryside. According to Santos López and others, a concerted and systematic effort was made to politicize and incorporate the rural inhabitants of this entire region into the parallel state then being organized. Santos López gave a vivid portrayal of this process:

Sandino directed a tour of exploration in the mountains [around San Albino], in order to prepare the conditions for the struggle, and on his return he had already elaborated a plan. He had purchased an abundant quantity of salt, seeds such as corn, beans, coffee, rice, etc., as well as gunpowder, and he called his principal chiefs together and told them to advise him when they had everything ready to distribute these to the campesinos. These were the preparations he made for the prolonged struggle he proposed.

This zone organized, he crossed over toward Quilalí to give the same orders to Colonel Peralta . . . that he should call a meeting of the campesinos and tell them to harvest their crops and plant new crops of basic grains, and at the same time that they should supply salt and other products. In addition, that they should build huts and shanties at some distance from their current dwellings . . .

When the campesinos of Quilalí had all come together in one place, he spoke to them about the long struggle that he proposed, that with the experience which came from the fight against the Conservatives and Moncada's cowardly surrender . . . He told them of the promise he and his followers had made, that they would not sell out nor commit treason against all those who had fallen, that he would struggle until 'victory or death,' that he knew the yankees were powerful, but that

\textsuperscript{26} A collection of short letters to Rivera were captured by the Marines-GN in early 1928 and can be found in NA127/220/5; letter from Sandino to Colonel Guadalupe Rivera, December 1927 in Ramírez, vol. I, p. 203; Rivera was arrested in August 1928 and requested amnesty from the Marines-GN, which he was granted, R-2 Report, 2 September 1928, p. 3, NA127/209/1; on 7 January 1929, Sandino wrote to Rivera, excoriating him for abandoning the struggle: "Your attitude, like others, is one that keeps our country in a state of slavery..." NA127/209/8.

\textsuperscript{27} Santos López, pp. 12-17.
MAP 7.3

ORGANIZING THE EL JICARO REGION, JUNE - JULY 1927
with the help of the countryfolk he would be more powerful still, that this was a war of liberation against the vendepatria, traitors and invaders. He told them that those who chose to should organize into guerrillas, and whoever decided not to could return to their homes, and no harm would come to them, that all the countryfolk should see themselves as brothers, each helping all the others. The campesinos all raised their hands, and decided to follow him in the struggle to come...28

This is a remarkable portrait of revolutionary organizing: a collective, intensive, focused, and systematic effort, directed by a central will, to incorporate isolated rural communities into the struggle. This was to be achieved at two principal levels: in terms of physical infrastructure -- the creation of an independent food and resource base -- and in the propagation of Sandino's nationalist story, peopled by patriots, traitors, and invaders. At this early stage, however, it is likely that Sandino's appeals were directed -- and understood -- less in explicitly nationalist terms than in the more familiar idioms of social and racial injustice, anti-Conservatism, and asymmetrical power relations, an interpretation borne out by subsequent events.

How many campesinos actually did "raise their hands"? How did different individuals, families, and communities react to Sandino's radical propositions? If the unanimity and unambiguous free choice which Santos López portrayed here was surely exaggerated, earlier and later events do indicate that, at this critical juncture, the great majority of the rural folk in the El Jicaro region did freely choose to follow Sandino and incorporate themselves into the struggle. As discussed in chapter 4, by mid-1926 economic exploitation and political violence in the region combined to produce an extremely volatile social milieu, in which viable alternatives were few and revolutionary world-views like Sandino's would find fertile soil in which to grow. Among the most powerful evidence for the extent of popular support enjoyed by Sandino in the El Jicaro region during this period were the enormous expenditures of labor that went into building the foundations for the proposed struggle -- clearing land, growing extra food, carting supplies, building camps, houses, barns, caches, boats, and so on. One L.J. Matteson, a

North American supervisor at San Albino who witnessed first-hand almost the entire the Sandinista occupation, reported that at the outset of the planting season, "in June, Sandino had his men planting beans and corn or working in the fields already planted, this to insure a food supply for the dry season." Former Defending Army member "compañero Muñoz," born and raised near San Albino and twelve years old in 1927, recalled that during this early period, "this whole zone was Sandino's, everything around here was his, around El Jícaro, everybody was behind him from the beginning." Others from the area voiced similar memories. The claim that Sandino rapidly gained an extraordinary degree of popular support in the region is buttressed by a mountain of evidence, explored in detail below. So too is Santos López's vivid portrayal of how the struggle was envisioned and waged at the time, and particularly, of the sustained effort to politicize the local inhabitants and incorporate them into the incipient Rebellion.

Sandino seized the San Albino Mine in mid-June and held it for the next six weeks. "On arrival at San Albino, he [Sandino] appeared with a troop of about 50 men, stating that he had come for powder to kill Americans," reported its owner Charles Butters. "He demanded from me, upon pain of death, the delivery of 500 lbs. of dynamite, 1500 caps, 200 feet of fuse, with the repeatedly expressed object of killing Americans. He thoroughly frightened our entire white staff." The use of the term "white" here, and the self-identification "Indios" on the coins, suggests that racial differences were keenly felt by rebels and mineowners alike. Captain Hatfield's comment that "the white people at San Albino Mine are in no danger," and Major Floyd's

29. Mr. L.J. Matteson, interview with, E.S. Tuttle to Brigade Commander, USMC, León, 6 Dec. 1927, MCHC-PPC/Sandino (hereafter cited as Matteson interview.)
30. IES 075: 1.
report "that there are no white women at the mine" further suggest that racial constructions weighed heavily on everyone's minds.33

The Marines began to move into the Segovias in late May and early June, when garrisons were established at Ocotal, Pueblo Nuevo, San Rafael, Estelí, Jinotega and Matagalpa.34 Keenly aware that their control over Ciudad Sandino and its environs was only temporary, Sandino and his subordinates directed the systematic appropriation of all useful property found in the vicinity of Ciudad Sandino and San Albino. By early August, Major Floyd, who led the first Marine contingent into the area, reported that "everything from Ocotal to San Albino has been looted, including transportation and stores."35

From early June to late July the Sandinistas were in the initial phase of a fairly massive, highly organized, and sustained effort to build a viable infrastructure for the anticipated struggle. An extensive system of mule trains made regular circuits around and between Honduras, Ciudad Sandino, San Albino, Quilalí, and a place called El Chipote, where the groundwork was being prepared for a "mountain fortress." More than two tons of dynamite, along with all of the blasting caps, fuses, and other useful items, were carted from San Albino to El Chipote.36 Homemade bombs were constructed from these materials for years afterward.37 Former Defending Army soldier Juan Bautista Tercero García recalled that more than one hundred boxes of dynamite from San Albino were cached in a secret tunnel at a place called Las Flores, part of the El Chipote camp

33. Field Message No. 4, Maj. Floyd, San Fernando, 26 July; a week later Floyd corrected this mistake, acknowledging that one Mrs. Madison, "a white woman," was at the mine at the time. Field Message No. 9, San Albino, 2 August.
35. Field Message No. 9, Floyd, San Albino, 2 August 1927.
36. Floyd, ibid, reported "75 boxes (or nearly two tons) of dynamite"; Charles Butters, 21 June 1927, reported only 500 lbs.
37. Commonly heard in the IES testimonies, e.g., Macario Calderón Salinas, 043-2-2: 4; Cosme Castro Andino, 049: 4-5; Gregorio Duarte Gutiérrez, Documentos EDSNN B-4: 2-4.
system. Another ex-soldier, Gregorio Duarte Gutiérrez, recalled that around this time he was commissioned to cart twenty-five mule-loads of provisions, mostly foodstuffs, to El Chipote. In addition, some $39,000 worth of supplies were reportedly taken from the commissary of Antonio García at San Albino, including some "1500 bags of coffee which were sold by Sandino in Honduras for $10 per sack . . . Sandino now [in December 1927] has his men picking coffee from the plantations and is sending the coffee to Honduras for sale." In late July, Major Floyd arrested three armed men leading pack animals from Honduras, and "among their merchandise was a Honduranian paper which bore on the margin a written note to Sandino." The note was reportedly sent by Francisco Barahona -- probably kin to José Paul Barahona -- from Danlí, Honduras. At the same time, a boat-building project was reportedly underway at Monchones, a rendezvous point at the foot of El Chipote, for travel to and from the east coast along the Río Coco.

A sophisticated security system kept the actual location of Chipote a secret: mule trains from San Albino and Sandino City hauled supplies to a rendezvous point, near Monchones to the north of Quilalí, after which they were handled by another group charged with carting the supplies up hidden trails to the fortress-in-construction. In early August, Major Floyd arrested one Isidoro Isaguirre, "who recently acted as Jefe Mulero for Sandino at San Albino," from whom he learned that "the supplies were left at a small group of houses on the Murra River near Quilalí, beyond which point, he, his men, and the animals were NOT permitted to go. One ex-soldier of Sandino tells a similar story." According to Morgan and Matteson, there were from 200 to 400 men, "mostly Indians,"

38. IES 093: 17.
39. IES Documentos EDSN B-4: 3.
40. Matteson interview; García was later suspected of being a Sandino operative; R-2 Report, Managua, 15 April 1928, p. 3, NA127/209/2.
41. Field Message No. 9, Major Floyd, San Albino, 2 August 1927.
42. Matteson interview.
43. Field Message No. 12, Major Floyd, El Jicaro, 9 August 1927.
preparing the facilities at Chipote itself. In late August Matteson observed the arrival of 200 unarmed men from Honduras, and a week later, fifty more; "these men expected to be armed and mounted at El Chipote." Sandino reportedly boasted to Matteson that El Chipote contained "sufficient supplies for two years even if cut off from all communication with Honduras or the rest of Nicaragua." If this was a boast it was no idle one. In late January 1928, when the Marines finally took El Chipote, they found and destroyed enormous quantities of corn, beans, salt, livestock, and other provisions abandoned by the guerrillas. For months afterward these stocks were still being discovered. As late as mid-April 1928 it was reported that

During the last week, the bandits accumulated store of supplies was entirely wiped out by the Marines operating east of Chipote. By rough estimate, outlaw supplies sufficient to last 300 men for six months were destroyed by our column. . . it is more than probable that the above figures will be exceeded.

Major Peard, who led the assault on El Chipote in late January, described the physical layout of "Sandino's headquarters":

It was well furnished with seven modern beds, rocking chairs, dining room chairs and table ware. The house was well kept and was of wooden construction. In front of this building was a Guard House, and in its rear was another building which contained several beds and a small supply of medicines, which I have reason to believe was Sandino's hospital. This group of buildings ran due north and south. East of these buildings, some one hundred yards, was four large barracks and another guardhouse, which would easily accommodate two hundred troops, and a store-room containing military stores, all of which were destroyed.

By late 1927 Sandinista camps, warehouses, and cultivated fields were scattered throughout the entire region north, east, and south of El Jicaro. After destroying what they could of the "mountain fortress" at El Chipote, the Marines-GN criss-crossed the mountains in search of "bandits" and "bandit" camps; scores of such camps, large and

44. Field Message No. 9, Major Floyd, San Albino, 2 August 1927.
45. Matteson interview.
46. Matteson interview.
small, were found and destroyed. One enormous camp was found at El Zapatillal, southeast of Chipote:

The trail from Chipote to Sapatillal was very mountainous and difficult, but showed signs of considerable use . . . it is the opinion of the undersigned that from two to three hundred bandits were normally stationed in Sapatillal, as housing facilities, which showed considerable use, were vastly greater than on Chipote proper. Many newly constructed barns filled with corn were discovered all the way from Chipote to Sapatillal.50

It is clear that the widespread existence of such "camps" and "barns" represented an enormous amount of toil and trouble over an extended period of time, the tangible results of months of meticulous planning, organizing, and very hard work.

The first weeks of Rebellion, in short, witnessed the rapid construction of a parallel state apparatus in the El Jícaro region, with its own resource base and lines of civil and military authority. And as new structures of authority were created, old ones were dissolved. Minting new money was intended not only to announce a new regime but to erase the legitimacy of the old; naming Pancho Estrada Jefe Político of Nueva Segovia was meant not only to announce the creation of a parallel government but to sweep away the old power structure. The new order recognized the authority of neither the Moncada government nor any of his appointees in the region, as Sandino announced to Moncada’s appointee at Ocotal:

We do not accept the interference of any authority in the following places: San Fernando, Ciudad Antigua, Telpaneca, Quilalí, El Jícaro, Murra, and Jalapa. We are already sufficiently able to give guarantees in these places, since all of their inhabitants are clearly liberals and do not believe they are guaranteed as long as Adolfo Díaz remains in power.51

The shock wave produced by the reconfiguration of legitimate authority in the region was felt as far away as Washington. "Considerable criticism is expressed by foreigners here of our policy of having landed marines primarily to protect American and foreign lives and

51. Ramírez (1984), vol. I, p. 114. Sandino did accept the authority of Mondaca’s Jefe Político in Ocotal, doubtless a bid to buy time and political space while his power was being consolidated.
property," lamented the US Minister in Managua, "and then by lack of protection permitting what seems certain early destruction" of that same property.\textsuperscript{52}

In the seizure of the mine, the coin-minting scheme, and the sundry other ways in which a new social order was constituted, the symbolism and practice of early Segovian Sandinismo worked in synergy. San Albino itself, as one major locus of foreign capital accumulation in Nicaragua, was transformed virtually overnight into a powerful symbol for all of the evils associated with US, foreign-owned, and exploitative enterprises throughout Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{53} Almost a year later, in April and May of 1928, the US-owned La Luz, Pis Pis, and Bonanza Mines in Zelaya Department to the east were subjected to similar treatment, a pattern of property destruction and appropriation would continue for the next five years.\textsuperscript{54}

During this earliest phase of Rebellion, Sandinista attitudes toward property, authority, law and morality were expressed in different ways. Soon after the Battle of Ocotal, the Marines-GN occupied Ciudad Sandino and named it El Jícaro once more.

The observations of Major Floyd, whose Nueva Segovia Expedition entered the town in late July, reveal a great deal about the character of the Sandinista occupation:

JICARO is a town normally of about 800 people. It is absolutely deserted . . . Practically every house has in it loot and evidence of soldiers such as small pieces of time fuse, exploder caps -- and property evidently of Mr. Butters is everywhere throughout the town . . . The town of JICARO is simply a MESS, with all evidence of the headquarters of a lawless band. The same set of furniture is scattered throughout the town; the same is true of table ware and dishes. Houses of no value are found to contain loot of every description. But there is nothing of military value except a few scattered pieces of fuse and primers in practically every house.\textsuperscript{55}

The Sandinistas had clearly enjoyed undisputed control of the town, whose entire remaining population was highly militarized and busily preparing for war. The pattern of

\textsuperscript{52} Eberhardt to Kellogg, 30 June 1927, USDS 817.00/4930.
\textsuperscript{53} See Sandino's first manifestos of July 1927 in Conrad, pp. 74-90. The publication Ariel, edited by Froylán Turcios in Tegucigalpa, was one vehicle through which such ideas were disseminated outside of Nicaragua; for a more detailed treatment see Instituto de Estudio de Sandinismo (1985); and USDS 817.00/5800-6300.
\textsuperscript{54} See chs. 8 and 11, below.
\textsuperscript{55} Major Floyd, El Jícaro, to CO, 5th Regiment, 30 July 1927.
"lawlessness" described by Major Floyd reveals something of the beliefs and values of the men and women who controlled the city for the previous months. Consider the furniture, tablewares, and other "loot," doubtless taken from the wealthier houses near the central plaza and distributed throughout the poorer barrios ringing the town. This suggests something of a carnavalesque atmosphere, a ritual reversal of property rights governed by a palpable, popular contempt for everything that luxury items like silver forks and spoons or fancy dishes and chairs stood for -- most probably, an unequal and unjust distribution of wealth and power. The "loot" was probably "looted" from three overlapping groups: the upper classes in general, the town's former Conservative residents in particular, and the North Americans at San Albino. As property rights were redefined, an egalitarian ethic was created: the pattern of "loot distribution" reveals a moral universe in which all were to partake equally in the fruits of labor and the spoils of war.

Similar patterns of property destruction and appropriation were in evidence elsewhere in the region. In mid-August, Lieutenant Bruce (who would soon be killed and mutilated by the Sandinistas and transformed into a legend in his own right) led a Marine Corps patrol to the town of Murra near El Jicaro. According to Bruce, of the thirty-nine houses in Murra, only the house of one Edward O. Alexander, a US citizen and Assistant Manager of the Pittsburg Exploitation Syndicate (!) "which is easily defended and commands the town" was

seriously looted. It was a litter of paper and filth. Wanton destruction of anything heavy or cumbersome to steal. Obscene writing in chalk on plane surfaces. All other houses merely abandoned in an orderly manner. Pigs, chickens, and cows plentiful.56

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56. Patrol, Murra and return, August 17th and 18th, 1927, Lt. T.G. Bruce, El Jicaro, 18 August 1927, NA127/212/1; the firm was probably called the Pittsburg Exploration Syndicate, though Floyd may have had it right. Schoonover, pp. 134-135, tells of former Confederate General Edward P. Alexander, described by a contemporary as "an old man... [who] doesn't believe that a foreigner has many rights in this country [Nicaragua]," who was active against Zelaya in 1899-1900; perhaps Murra's Edward O. Alexander was the General's son or kin.
While the lieutenant did not deem it appropriate to record the "obscenities" scrawled on
the "plane surfaces" of Mr. Alexander's house, "Death to the Yankees" and "Viva
Sandino" were probably among them.

At the same time as useful property in and around El Jicaro and San Albino was
being swiftly and systematically expropriated or destroyed, the "mountain fortress" of El
Chipote was being created. El Chipote itself soon became a powerful symbol, one which
endures to this day. During my fieldwork I spoke with dozens of elderly residents in the
towns and villages of the Segovias, and nine times out of ten, answers to questions about
Sandino would begin along the following lines: "ah yes, Sandino -- he was in Chipote,
he fought the gringos from El Chipote." I would venture that there is not a woman or
man of sound mind throughout all of northern Nicaragua who has not heard of Chipote,
or for whom the names "Chipote" and "Sandino" are not indelibly connected. Major
Floyd caught something of the power of the symbol of El Chipote as it was being created
when he observed, irately, that

Everyone talks about Chipote. No one who talks has ever been there; ask any
man where Chipote is and he will give you an answer, then upon further
questioning it will develop that he has not been there and that even his informant
never was there. Sandino is a notorious prevaricator . . . there never was in this
country a place known as Chipote until Sandino's recent regime; Chipote is a
semi-slang term meaning a bump raised by a blow on the head; Nicaraguans love
the sensational and among their hundred rumors there will always be the one
truth, yet NOBODY has been to Chipote . . .

Chipote is a myth. . . . Sandino has . . . kept these ignorant people working for
him by boasting of Chipote and how they will eventually live there in luxury, ease
and security -- while all the time, only a few trusted men have been engaged in
the actual work of handling the supplies east of Quilali. . . . my opinion is that the
whole thing is a hoax. 58

Four days earlier, Floyd reported that "During the long occupation of San Albino by
Sandino . . . There was much talk about Chipote, but its location was never divulged." 59

57. I would further suggest that this is due primarily to the power of popular memories
and not to the politicization of the countryside after 1979 -- it is difficult to imagine that
such intimate associations were suddenly embraced by old folks so many years after the
fact.
58. Field Message No. 11, Major Floyd, San Albino, 6 August.
59. Field Message No. 9, Major Floyd, San Albino, 2 August.
Here one glimpses a new national mythology in the process of creation: "everyone" talked about Chipote but none knew where it was; it was universally discussed but shrouded in secrecy; its name was associated with "the good life," but only a "few trusted men" had ever been there. Chipote soon came to symbolize a kind of promised land, a new Jerusalem, a mystical, magical, mythical place where slaves were longer slaves, where the downtrodden found dignity, the oppressed freedom. As Floyd correctly noted, Sandino did invent the name; before being called "Chipote," the mountain was reportedly called "Olingo." Even the newspapers of the Pacific region got into the act: "Public rumor holds that General Sandino has his headquarters on the mountain of Chipote," La Noticia reported in mid-July, followed by an extended discussion which placed the mountain fifty miles west of its actual location. Later in the month Jefe Político Ramírez announced that "El Chipote is a fantasy, created by Sandino to beguile and deceive." Such public discussions continued into the autumn and after. In short, if El Chipote was no hoax, it was a myth, and an extraordinarily powerful one, from the very beginning.

Like most symbols through which subordinate groups are mobilized for political struggle, these were open to a wide range of interpretations by those who helped to create them, and who were, in turn, recreated by them. In this period of ferocious activity, actions especially were invested with meanings. Most actions centered on an inversion of traditional property rights and power relations. By Sandino's lights these were all highly symbolic acts of resistance to continuing Nicaraguan political and economic subordination to US imperialism and the Díaz government. For the rank-and-file, these actions were probably infused with a broad array of sentiments, most centered on resentment and a desire for vengeance -- anti-Conservatism, anti-Yankeeism, anti-elitism, anti-ladinoism, anti-Buttersism, anti-Alexanderism -- combined with an attraction for

60. Angel Martínez Soza, IES 060: 1.
61. La Noticia, 13 July 1927.
62. La Noticia, 26 July 1927.
Sandino, the new caudillo of the Segovias. At the same time, one also sees the formation of a revolutionary moral and juridical order and sensibility, governed by collective labor, shared commitment to a cause, and an egalitarian ethic. For some, Sandino's appeal might have included love for an abstraction called Nicaragua, though for the many Hondurans who reportedly streamed into the area this was probably not the case. In addition to their symbolism, of course, these actions attracted large numbers of followers and provided Sandino's army with badly needed supplies. That there was no shortage of men willing to participate in such a radically transformed social and cultural order was evidenced by the scores of Hondurans and hundreds of Nicaraguans who actively joined the movement soon after it began.63

By the time of the battle of Ocotal -- July 16-17 -- the Sandinistas had extended their power north to Jalapa and the Honduran border and far to the west to include the towns of Apali, San Fernando, Ciudad Antigua, Telpaneca, and scores of smaller villages and settlements throughout the region to the south, east, and north of Ocotal. In early June, forces allied with Sandino reportedly seized two managers of foreign-owned stores in Telpaneca, and demanded a substantial ransom for their release.64 By this time, Liberal, Conservative, and Sandinista gangs were battling it out across the whole of the western Segovias, particularly in the Somoto-Ocotal-Telpaneca-Palacagüina region. In mid-June, when the Marines first entered Telpaneca, Major Pierce reported that "most houses [were] deserted," and that the remaining inhabitants were "reluctant to talk about Sandino . . . it is impossible to obtain any information of any value . . ."65 The same was true of the string of villages along the main road which ran from Ocotal to El Jicaro.

About a week after the Battle of Ocotal, Major Floyd reported that "All small barrios from Ocotal to San Fernando are deserted with nothing left in the houses . . . All people

63. Matteson interview; Santos López, p. 16; Floyd's Field Messages.
64. G. Ardon H. to Hipolito Agasse, 7 June 1927; Agasse to American Minister, Managua (no date); H. Agasse to Captain Pierce, USMC, Ocotal, 11 June 1927, NA127/43A/20.
65. Field Message No. 9, Major Pierce, Telpaneca, 18 June.
encountered are unquestionably strong for Sandino." Major Floyd was oversimplifying here; recall the violence of Anastacio Hernández and other Conservative gangs in this precise area around the same time. Still, it is clear that even at this early stage Sandinista power had penetrated deep into the western Segovias. By early September, Lieutenant Keimling could report from Telpaneca that "all natives here are with and for Sandino." Later in the month, Lieutenant Hays reported from Ocotal that "All information this week points to the strong influence of the bandit Sandino over the inhabitants of this department east of Jicaro . . . The city of Jicaro is practically depopulated, only such people remaining there as have the temerity to face his threat . . ." Juan Bautista Tercero García recalled being stationed in Telpaneca before, during, and after the Sandinista attack on Ocotal as part of what he termed a cívica or Civic Guard: "He [Sandino] said that he was going to organize the people, that we should stay put there [in Telpaneca] always, as a cívica, on his behalf, on behalf of the Liberals and Sandino, because it was a struggle of all of us, and that's how things began." Captain Pastor Ramírez Mejía was also stationed in Telpaneca at the time. After Moncada's betrayal at Espino Negro, as he recalled, he and his men went first to Darailí, then to Telpaneca, and from Telpaneca they "left for other villages, to San Juan de Telpaneca, to Jalapa, to El Jicaro, all of this area we crossed on horseback, wherever we wanted to go, with them [the Marines] in Ocotal and Jinotega." Tercero's and Ramírez's experiences here were probably representative of a significant portion of Sandino's followers during this period, ex-Liberal soldiers and inhabitants of the towns and villages to the west and southwest of El Jicaro who were disgusted with Moncada and Díaz, and who allied with Sandino and participated in the struggle at arm's length from the main centers of rebel activity.

66. Field Message No. 4, Major Floyd, San Fernando, 26 July.
68. Intelligence report for the week ending September 17, 1927, Ocotal, NA127/198/1.
69. Juan Bautista Tercero García, IES 093: 3.
70. Pastor Ramírez Mejía, IES 094-1-3: 10.
It is here that the notion of a fluid frontier zone can help one to visualize the nature and extent of Sandinista control over the El Jícaro region and areas west during first months of the Rebellion. On the whole it would be misplaced to argue that zones west and southwest of El Jícaro were either "controlled" or "not controlled" by the Sandinistas, Liberals, or Conservatives. Rather, it would be more useful to think in terms of shifting zones of greater and lesser degrees of power, with gradually and unevenly diminishing Sandinista power as one moved west and southwest from Ciudad Sandino. One might fruitfully visualize Sandinista power as radiating unevenly from the El Jícaro region, a model the accompanying map attempts to capture: the zone highlighted in the western Segovias might be thought of as a region in which political power was being hotly contested, pitting Marine, Sandinista, Liberal, and Conservative gangs and powerholders against one another. Further north and east, Sandinista control intensified; further south and west, it diminished. Along the main roads from Managua and Jinotega to Ocotal, Marine control intensified; away from these roads, other forces gained sway, depending upon ever-changing local political-military configurations.

Across the Segovias, the post-Espino Negro political landscape was one of extreme confusion and violence. "I am convinced that there is a minimum of 250 bandits in the area Telpanca-Totogalpa-Palacaguina," judged Lieutenant Satterfield after patrolling the region in mid-October 1927. "These are divided into several bands of from thirty to fifty men each." According to information gathered by Satterfield, "the bands in this area are being daily augmented by armed recruits from the area of Somoto. They claim that there is a bandit chief or recruiting officer who is arming men in that area and sending them into this" -- probably a reference to Conservative powerholders, since few others had the wherewithal to procure significant quantities of arms. The day before, Satterfield had "located a large bandit camp . . . flying a red flag," showing their Liberal
affiliation. A short while later another Marine patrol stumbled upon another "bandit" camp near the Honduran border flying "a large blue flag" -- a Conservative gang. Reports of gang violence, murders, mutilations, and atrocities continued all through the autumn months. While control of the western Segovias remained bitterly contested, in the east Sandino was able to maintain his hold over the region despite the growing Marine-Guardia presence. In mid-November, Captain Peard in Ocotal reported that "the rural districts, especially east and southeast of Jicaro, are in undisputed possession of the rebel Sandino.

All inhabitants not of his following have utterly deserted the area within the triangle formed by the towns of Jicaro-Jinotega-Telpaneca exclusive. In the area north of the general line Jinotega-Esteli-Limay, many bandit groups range at will, robbing, murdering, raping, and burning the homes of their political and personal enemies, except in the towns actually garrisoned by the marines and guardia troops. These conditions . . . are further complicated by raiding bands of Honduran criminals and remnants of the former Conservative army of Nicaragua who refused to turn in their arms. These bands make their headquarters at the Hacienda of the Jefe Politico of Choluteca, Honduras . . .

Political battles in the western Segovias clearly moved with a momentum and rhythm of their own.

To the east, in the El Jícaro region, residents who were enemies the Sandinistas doubtless fled as soon as Sandino returned, if they were not captured or killed first. Though there is only fragmentary evidence, it is likely that the Sandinistas exacted retribution from Conservative individuals and families throughout the region. Recall the Conservative brutality against Liberals a year earlier, one of the principal sparks for armed Liberal uprisings across the Segovias during the Civil War. As the Marines gradually asserted their control over the area after the Battle of Ocotal, their reports consistently referred to abandoned and deserted towns that had been destroyed and looted

72. Contact with bandits, H.S. Keimling, Pataste, 26 Nov. 1927, NA127/43A/3.
73. Intelligence report for the week ending 13 Nov. 1927, NA127/198/1.
of "any moveable property."\textsuperscript{74} At this early stage, however, Marine-Guardia reports were silent about acts of violence by Sandinistas against Conservatives. Only just before and during the 1927 corn harvesting season (September to November) did the Marines begin to become even dimly aware of the existence of the multiple political conflicts between Liberals and Conservatives in the region. Despite the paucity of evidence, however, it is likely that acts of retribution were commonplace after June 1927 and continued on past the corn harvest, when the Marines finally began to perceive and record their existence.

One such act of vengeance reportedly occurred in Suscayán, a small town a few miles northwest of El Jicaro. Doña Erlina Herrera de Gómez, native of El Jicaro, related the events as told to her by a survivor and eyewitness:

When Sandino arrived at El Jicaro, he preceded his entrance by burning the house of Cirilo Ramírez in Suscayán, where there was a brief shootout with a small group of armed citizens . . . the owner of the house was killed, along with Entimo Altamirano, Gilberto López and an old man named Ramón Martínez, who they captured wounded, tied to a tree, and later cut his throat, leaving the knife in his neck.\textsuperscript{75}

Two servants at the house were also reportedly killed. This and the large quantity of clothing and other goods reportedly lost in the blaze indicates that the owners were relatively wealthy. The wife of Cirilo Ramírez, Doña Ignacia Suárez de Ramírez, was reportedly wounded, captured, and forced to watch the house burn to the ground. Later, she was permitted to escape with her infant son, also wounded. The leader of the group, according to the account, was Camilo Guillén, fifteen year-old son of a prominent local Liberal leader who, as he recalled years later, had good reason to harbor serious grievances against Conservatives in the area.\textsuperscript{76} If there is no direct evidence that the

\textsuperscript{74} Floyd was referring here to the "barrios and houses between Ocotal and San Fernando," the Marines' line of march; Final Report, 21 August 1927.
\textsuperscript{75} Somoza, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{76} See ch. 4, above; Alegría and Flakoll, pp. 51-74; by his own account Camilo quit the struggle soon after the Battle of Ocotal, though at the time of the Suscayán attack he was allied with Sandino. Camilo's father, Manuel J. Guillén, Liberal ex-alcalde of El Jicaro, continued in close alliance with Sandino throughout the Rebellion (e.g., in Bn-2 Report, 22 June 1930, p. 7, NA127/209/1, he was accused of running guns for the Sandinistas from Danlí, Honduras). José Flores Gradys (IES 058: 14) recalled that Camilo and his brother David Guillén fought with Sandino in the El Jicaro region during the Civil War.
victims of this attack were Conservative, the pattern of violence clearly indicated a political motive. Another spate of Sandinista violence against political enemies in the El Jícaro region was reported in early September, and another in early November 1927.77

During the period in which the El Jícaro region was under Sandino's control, the Sandinista forces were rapidly augmented by a host of new allies. Scores of Hondurans reportedly streamed into the area, probably attracted more by the prospect of looting Conservative and US property than defending the sovereignty of Nicaragua. On the other hand, few apparently came from the south; according to Matteson, "never [in] any large numbers, and none of them are armed."78 Sandinista Carlos Salgado, who had served with Generals Francisco Parajón and Benito López during the Civil War and one of the ablest Sandinista leaders throughout the Rebellion, reportedly sent a message to Sandino at San Albino around June, informing him that his troops were at his service, and Salgado and his men arrived soon afterward.79 The band of Pedro Altamirano, or Pedrón, joined with Sandino around the same time, as did the bands of other famous Sandinistas, including Miguel Angel Ortez from the Ocotal district, Pedro Blandón from La Concordia, Carlos Quezada, Simón González, and Juan Pablo Umanzor from Honduras, the former Guatemalan Army officer Manuel María Jirón Ruano, and others. One lesser-known figure among these gang leaders was named Fulgencio Pérez.

Fulgencio Pérez and his band of outlaws: The growth of the Sandinista army in the first phase of the Rebellion

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77. Intelligence report for the week ending September 17, 1927, G. Hays, Ocotal, NA127/198/1; La Noticia, 8 November 1927; Somoza (1936: 65-76). Of the violence detailed by Somoza during this period, the Sandinistas were probably responsible only for the incident at Santa Clara; the rest was likely the work of Conservative gangs.
78. Matteson interview.
79. Salgado was a general under Parajón during the Chinandega battle, according to Cincuenta años, p. 77, and Pastor Ramírez Mejía, IES 094-1-3. Santos López, p. 13, discussed the exchange of notes between Salgado and Sandino, and Salgado's arrival at San Albino; Pedro Antonio Arauz, IES ms. "General Carlos Salgado."
In a manuscript entitled "The worst is lacking" (Falta lo peor), Pedro Antonio Arauz told the story of how Fulgencio Pérez and his band became Sandinistas. It is worth quoting at length:

In the zone where the men of General Sandino were operating there was a place called Los Angeles. Here another band was operating on its own, and they had a fixed camp, and they went far and wide to commit their misdeeds, without letting on when they returned to the mountain. One day the Sandinistas were about to attack this band at their camp, but they surrendered without firing a shot, and they turned over their arms and put themselves at the orders of General Sandino, who gladly helped them and gave them a complete guarantee, since they promised to be loyal and disciplined, and to adhere to the dispositions of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty.

The chief of this band was named Fulgencio Pérez. With him were men of every sort, and in order to admit them to the Sandinista column, it was necessary to select them psychologically, according to a scrupulous interrogation, beginning with the chief, Fulgencio Pérez, who said that they were all being persecuted for diverse offenses; some for one thing, others for another, and that they joined together in order to feel themselves strong and secure, with the hope that there might appear some revolutionary army that they could join, to change their situation.

And that's what happened. All were loyal and disciplined to Sandinismo, to such an extreme that when they took part in their first combats, it wasn't long before Fulgencio Pérez was promoted to the rank of captain, and the others were promoted as well. And in this way, all the bad things they had done disappeared. Pay attention to the name they had put on their camp: 'Los Angeles,' which does not necessarily imply the worst of humanity.

When Moncada settled with Stimson at Espino Negro, and all those things you know about took place, the people who returned to the Segovian jungles with General Sandino, in order to begin the new struggle (la nueva lucha), the best people came to be Fulgencio Pérez and his men, and all of the other recruits who were natives (criollos) of that mountain, with whom was begun the new struggle that gave the yankees such trouble.

And what happened? The news of these events was spread: and everyone who was being persecuted arrived to thicken the ranks of Sandinismo, and very soon they added up to a great quantity of soldiers, in those days there were too many occasions to join and many campesinos did just that, these native peoples (esa gente criolla) who knew the mountains like their own hands. All the people whom the enemy had outraged, all whose property was burned, all had reason to exhalt this immortal Sandinismo, which till this very day is fixed in the minds of all who love liberty: 'Patria libre o morir.'

Arauz's narrative provides a compelling glimpse into the process by which the "new struggle" merged with some "not-so-new struggles" that had been going on long

before Sandino appeared on the scene. Pérez's was a band of outlaws, probably engaged in smuggling and petty thievery. As such it was probably only one of several independent bands operating in and beyond the mountain fastnesses of the El Jicaro-El Chipote region. Arauz painted the members of Pérez's band as unjustly persecuted by the authorities, though he was, tellingly, mute on the precise nature of their previous misdeeds. Subsequent events lend support to his claim: Fulgencio Pérez did become a steadfast and dedicated Sandinista leader -- no small accomplishment -- suggesting that a higher sense of morality was operative among and between band members long before they joined Sandino.\footnote{Captain Fulgencio Pérez's name only appears once in all of the extant Sandinista correspondence I have examined, in a note taken from a dead Sandinista soldier after a combat near El Chipote in late 1930 (Patrol Report, R.G. Hunt, Quilalí, 3 October 1930, NA127/202/13), though testimonial evidence confirms that he was a capable and important leader in the early phase of the war, e.g., Santos López, p. 16, recalled that early on Capt. Fulgencio Pérez was "responsible for the wounded" at a small jungle hospital at División de Aguas, east of El Chipote; Gregorio Duarte Gutiérrez (IES: EDSNN Documents B-4; 3) recalled that he was second-in-command of the legendary attack against the Marine patrol on the trail near Quilalí (of 30 December 1927) which for the Marines was one of the bloodiest battles of the war -- a battle also recorded in the personal diary of Lieutenant Kilcourse (see ch. 9, above). Periodic references to a rebel named Pérez in this region continued for the rest the war.}

Arauz's story offers fresh insights into the process by which rural criminality was constructed by the dominant classes in the Segovias, and a broader perspective on Marine-GN denunciations of Sandino's followers as brigands and outlaws. Technically, of course, the Marines were correct: these were "outlaws," a community of people living outside and in defiance of the dominant culture's legal codes. Yet the moral tenor of the story indicates that Fulgencio Pérez and his band were not criminals because they preferred crime to honest labor, but because they were, from their perspective, unjustly persecuted. Arauz's story, and other evidence about the band, indicates that they saw themselves as decent folks caught in an indecent, unjust situation.

Did Fulgencio Pérez and his band hear rumors about Sandino's band and of its religious-moral qualities prior to the threatened Sandinista attack? The rapidity and ease
with which they reportedly became Sandinistas suggests that this may well have been the case. Pérez's subsequent dedication to the struggle -- running a jungle hospital, leading assaults against heavily armed Marine units -- strongly indicates he and his band were no moral cowards, but indeed, quite the opposite. 82

This in turn suggests something of how law in the countryside worked in the years and decades before Sandino -- that for subaltern groups, the dominant culture's law often meant unequal and unjust power relations, and that for some, submitting to it was perceived as a greater evil than banding together and living outside it. Arauz's description suggests that women and children may well have been associated with the band: they had a fixed camp, called, tellingly, "The Angels" -- perhaps more accurately described as a village -- and went far and wide and then came home again. Some probably came home to families. How many men, women, and children lived in this fashion in the frontier zones of northern Nicaragua in the mid-1920s is unknown and probably unknowable, though in view of the high rates of migration in the Segovias in the decades before the Rebellion, it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was a common experience. 83 Nor would it be unwarranted to speculate that Pérez and his band were uprooted Indians, formerly members of an indigenous community of either the western Segovias or the coffee highlands of Matagalpa and Jinotega, whose previous "misdeeds" stemmed from their resistance to dispossession from their ancestral lands -- though here, too, the evidence is slim. 84

According to Arauz's story, in the earliest phase of the Rebellion these bands were compelled to either join the Sandinistas or face attack -- a very likely scenario. By this time the Sandinistas had learned the most fundamental law of gang warfare: dominate or

82. See the previous note.
83. See ch. 3, above.
84. The evidence is at best circumstantial: this was a frontier zone with plenty of access to land; its inhabitants were commonly referred to as "Indians" (by Sandino and others); and the process of land concentration among indigenous communities across the Segovias had been accelerating in the previous thirty or so years.
be dominated. Sandino was painted as eager to permit them to join his column on the condition that they submitted to and passed what was characterized as a rigorous psychological screening, in which moral character -- seen primarily in terms of loyalty and discipline -- would be the determining factor. Fugitive bands such as Pérez's would likely have little difficulty passing such a test, since the survival of a self-sufficient mountain community would require the constant cultivation of such attributes.

In one of the most revealing part of his narrative, Arauz sought to convey something of the transformative power of the "new struggle": "all the bad things they had done disappeared." He was mute on the nature of their previous misdeeds because, in the final analysis, it did not matter: more important was the possibility of redemption through allegiance to a new and higher morality, which Arauz defined amply elsewhere: the selfless defense of the nation's honor. For Captain Fulgencio Pérez and his men, morality could be reworked, recreated; the "new struggle" possessed a transformative power of its own, the power to absolve previous misdeeds and wrongdoings through the process of struggling for a newly-defined common good: the honor and dignity of a new nation, of which they, in turn, formed the backbone.

Of course it would be foolish to argue that this was always how it worked for everyone who joined the Rebellion; Arauz was representing an ideal, a paradigm, the outer limits of the possible. Some genuinely bad characters -- folks for whom the categories of good and evil meant little or nothing -- undoubtedly seized the moment and allied with the Rebellion, exploiting newly-opened political spaces to continue their evildoing under a new guise. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that this was usually not the case. As is argued more fully in subsequent chapters, the morality and logic represented by Arauz here applied to the great bulk of the folks who joined the struggle. The story of how Fulgencio Pérez and his band became Sandinistas can be taken as emblematic of a much wider phenomenon, repeated, in different ways, for many other groups of "outlaws." The story helps to contextualize one of the commonest charges
launched against Sandino -- that his "so-called army" was made up of little more than "outlaws," "criminals," "thieves," "bush-fighters," and "bandits" -- usually true, as law and criminality were defined by the dominant classes. The story offers a glimpse into how Sandino's nationalist struggle merged into a larger field of pre-existing political-cultural struggles, not all of which fell under Liberal-Conservative rubric, and a concrete illustration of the process by which the rebels extended their power during their first months in the El Jícaro region.

Patriotic myth-making after San Albino: Ocotal, San Fernando, Las Flores, Telpaneca, El Zapotillal, Las Cruces, Rufo Marín, Carlos Fonseca, Lieutenant Bruce, Quilalí, El Chipote . . .

The nine months between Espino Negro and the Marine occupation of El Chipote (May 1927 to January 1928) saw the creation of as many enduring nationalist symbols and icons as any period in Nicaraguan history. We have seen how certain mythologized events -- the "Decision of the 29" and the construction of El Chipote, for example -- came to occupy supremely important positions in a newly constructed corpus of nationalist symbols. A similar myth-making process transformed a whole string of events following on the heels of these, beginning with the Battle of Ocotal -- which also marked a key turning point and the end of the first brief phase of the Rebellion. In terms of myth-making, Sandino, itching for a "dramatic moment," could not lose this battle no matter what the outcome: unforeseeable only in their specifics, a new set of legends and icons were to be -- and were -- created which endure to this day.

By most accounts, early on the morning of July 16 a core group of some 60 soldiers supplemented by upwards of 800 local peasants attacked Ocotal. The thirty-nine Marines stationed in the town (elevated to "400 pirates and 200 renegade Nicaraguans" by Sandino and subsequent hagiographers85) were soon holed up in their barracks near

the central plaza while the Sandinistas controlled the rest of the town. The rebels might have defeated the Marines were it not for the unexpected arrival of several waves of heavily armed Marine Corps airplanes, which began bombing and strafing the attacking forces on the afternoon of July 17. Forty-five minutes after the air attack, hundreds of attackers lay dead. By most accounts, approximately half of Sandino's 800 followers were killed by strafing and bombing during and after the attack.86

The great mass of attackers, armed only with machetes and cutachas, were peasants and Indians from the region immediately east of Ocotal. In order to recruit such a large number of followers, Sandino promised a reversal of property rights as seen in El Jicaro and San Albino: "I called the campesinos from the vicinity together, and told them that they were to go with my soldiers to take everything they wished in Ocotal," he later recorded. "We took Ocotal, and we destroyed it. The campesinos sacked and devastated."87

Patterns of Sandinista-directed property destruction, property appropriation, and political violence were apparently less random and devastating than Sandino suggested, however. Crimes against property and person were apparently limited to a small number of individual Conservatives; the Marines, for instance, reported no Liberal property destroyed.88 In Sandino's orders for the attack, General Carlos Salgado was charged with "dragging out of the houses all of the responsible people who may be hidden," doubtless a reference to particular Conservative enemies; as Sandino reported afterward, "we dynamited the headquarters and houses of the conservatives of Ocotal."89 The Marines reported much the same thing: "All Conservative homes and business places were looted and several Conservative personal enemies were killed by the invaders."90 The Marines

86. For a more detailed account of the battle see Macaulay, pp. 62-82.
88. Attack on Ocotal, G.D. Hatfield, 20 July 1927, USDS 817.00/4993.
89. Plan to Attack Ocotal, A.C. Sandino to his subordinates, c. July 15, 1927, NA127/197/176.1; Maraboto, p. 15.
90. Attack on Ocotal," G.D. Hatfield, 20 July 1927; the irony here is noteworthy, a Marine calling the Sandinistas "invaders."
later reported that the attacking forces killed nine "non-combatants," while *La Noticia* reported four Conservatives killed and two wounded.\(^{91}\)

The attack on Ocotal, in short, was directed only partly against the "Yankee invaders." Sandinista Colonel Rufo Marín, killed at Ocotal and soon transformed into the first martyr of the Rebellion, reportedly harbored a longstanding political and personal grudge against Conservative Luis Aguirre, whom he killed during the Battle; as Arnoldo Ramírez told the story,

Rufo Marín, a young man born of a good and honorable family of El Jícaro, joined the ranks of Sandino because his kindly old mother was beaten by Luis Aguirre, the Agent of Police of El Jícaro during the time of General Chamorro. Marín entered Ocotal like a wild beast, looking everywhere for Luis Aguirre, and when he found him he riddled him with bullets in his own house, satisfying his thirst for vengeance.

Ramírez went on to describe, in an equally plausible vein, "A similar thing [which] happened to Manuel Elizondo, who in times past acted as the *comandante de hacienda* of Nueva Segovia, having hung a poor man from Somoto who was accused of being a smuggler," who was also killed by the attackers.\(^{92}\) Once again, pre-existing Liberal-Conservative struggles merged into and emerged from the Rebellion against the Yankee invasion.

Sandinista historical memories of Ocotal tend strongly to erase Sandinista anti-Conservative violence and the tremendous losses suffered by their own forces, and to coalesce instead around several key moments and aspects of the attack, most notably: the boldness and valor of the attackers; the cowardice of the Marines, holed up in their barracks; the near victory; the sudden and unexpected arrival of the airplanes; and the martyrdom of Rufo Marín. Scores of pages could be filled with detailed recollections of this single battle, from participants like Captain Pastor Ramírez, who told a gripping,

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92. *La Noticia*, 29 July 1927. During the Civil War Luis Aguirre was a colonel in the National Army under General Durón, as reported in *La Noticia*, 20 October and 4 November 1926.
detailed, and eminently plausible story of the attack from an officer's perspective, to non-
participants like Santos López, whose account was so laden with inconsistencies that one
can reasonably suspect that he was never there. 93 Like most mythologized events of the
Rebellion, this one soon became the subject of popular songs dedicated to the heroism of
its martyrs -- in this case, Rufo Marín. One runs as follows:

At one o'clock in the morning
We attacked Ocotal
The only thing to be heard was
"Viva! Viva General Sandino!"

At five o'clock in the morning
The noise of the airplanes sounded
Already everyone armed
With the rifle of pride and honor

At six o'clock in the morning
They so sadly played the clarion
And the sadness that it carried
Was the death of Rufo Marín 94

Like most popular songs, this one was endlessly malleable; in different renditions the
"o'clocks" are scrambled around while the themes remain much the same. And as heroes
were born, so too were anti-heroes. Thanks to a series of frank telegrams to Sandino at
Sandino City demanding his surrender, Captain Hatfield became the first popularly
despised yankee enshrined in the myths of the Rebellion. In his novel To Bury Our
Fathers (1977), for instance, Sergio Ramírez paints him as an ignorant, arrogant coward,
one in a long line of such representations. 95

One could continue, in much the same vein, for the string of events following
quickly on the heels of Rufo Marín's martyrdom. After the military defeat and symbolic
victory at Ocotal, the main Sandinista body retreated rapidly east toward El Jicaro, with
the Nueva Segovia Expedition of Major Floyd hot on their tail. In the battles of San

95. E.g., Colindres, pp. 32-34, Romero, p. 189, and Torres Rivas, pp. 71-73. Campos
Ponce, pp. 48-49, mistakes Stimson for Hatfield.
Fernando on July 25 and Las Flores (or Santa Clara) two days later, Sandino's forces were once again defeated on the military battlefield and victorious on the mythological one. Reduced from "battles" to mere "skirmishes" by the Marines, for the Sandinistas a new set of legends and icons were born: Carlos Fonseca, the young "artilleryman" killed at Santa Clara, was soon transformed into a martyr comparable to Rufo Marín: "I am speaking to you, traitors, imposters, toadies, mercenaries, acolytes," concluded Sandino in a proclamation published soon after the Battles. "Get down on your knees, all of you, because I am going to invoke the blessed names of my companions in arms, who have died in defense of the liberty of Nicaragua: Rufo Antonio Marín and Carlos Fonseca." 96 The memories of Francisco Lara López, who was in the battle -- "[After Ocotal] we left for Ciudad Antigua, we went toward the little river of Santa Clara, and there died Fonseca, the artilleryman" 97 -- were echoed in the memories of Pastor Ramírez Mejía, who was not: "At Santa Clara they killed an artilleryman, Carlos Fonseca, a young man, a Honduran and a good artilleryman he was." 98 Countless tales of heroism, large and small, were born, and no small number survived: "We arrived at Apalí," recounted José Paul Barahona; "the Yankees found General Sanchez, and ordered his hands into the air, ordering him to surrender. But since our discipline was better than to surrender ourselves, Quezada raised his hand with a loaded pistol and shot at them. The Yankees, surprised, retreated ..." 99 The Marines, of course, reported no such thing. 100 Tales were transformed into legends, legends into icons, icons into poems and songs; this rendition, scrawled in almost illegible longhand, was taken from the body of a dead Sandinista in 1930:

I am among the defenders
Who with blood and not with flowers
I struggle to conquer my second independence

96. Conrad, p. 90.
97. IES 059: 13.
98. IES 094-1-3: 12.
99. IES ms., p. 8.
That traitors without conscience
Have wanted to profane
And in the century of light
The combates of Las Cruces
Telpaneca and Ocotal
The same in Santa Clara
But yes, yes, face to face
We defeated the invaders 101

After the Battle of Telpaneca (19 September 1927), another military defeat was transformed into a legendary triumph. "In Telpaneca we defeated the Guardia," recalled Juan Bautista Tercero García.

We threw two bombs and the roof of their house was blown to bits, and those who were in the Guardia headquarters surrendered. The Guardias pleaded with us not to kill them, that they weren't going to fire at us. So we left them there, but we kept on fighting. In this combat two gringos died, and one of our boys too, an artilleryman he was. 102

The Marines agreed that two of their own were killed, though a "conservative estimate of [Sandinista] losses was twenty-five killed and fifty wounded." 103 Sandino turned the figures around, as he invariably did, inflating the two dead Marines to eighty and adding forty-two rifles and 50,000 rounds of ammunition to his already limitless stocks. 104 The Marines, extremely vigilant about such matters, reported no weapons lost.

The death of Lieutenant Bruce -- or, as some remembered him, "Arnold J. Bruce, Five-Star General and hero of the First World War" -- killed and mutilated on 1 January 1928 in the Battle of Las Cruces (Las Trincheras), rapidly became another indelible nationalist icon. 105 His sin? Pretending to defy the hero: "I remember him well."

Sandino recalled, "because he had published a statement that before January 1 he promised to have Sandino's head. Well, before that date he lost his own..." 106 "Ah,

102. IES 093: 4.
105. Alfonso Alexander, IES 011-015: 30-31; Marine report of his death in Engagement with bandits, E.G. Brown, Quillai, 4 January 1928, NA127/43A/20: "Lieutenant Bruce was killed at the beginning of the action and his body looted and mutilated by the bandits, but later recaptured..."
mister Bruce! They cut off his head and stuck a wire through his nose and strung him up on the main road, so everyone could see him," as Calixto Tercero González remembered it. "He was a bad macho, that one. No, no, I wasn't there." 107 "In Las Cruces, below Quilalí, the Sandinistas attacked the Yankees; 200 were killed; there died a chief, one Bruce, yes, Bruce he was called, a great chief of the United States. Juan Gregorio got that macho." 108

Poor mister Bruce
Who in Las Cruces stayed
With his head in his belly
That Estrada had cut off 109

"We fought in Muy Muy," recalled José Flores Gradys, "we fought in Yucapa, in Trincheras, in Ceniceras, in El Chipote, in Las Puertas, Las Cruces, Telpaneca, Ocotal, and Santa Clara. In all of these we fought, my friend." 110 And each battle, in turn, was remembered, recast, retold, reinscribed with countless tales of valor, wisdom, humor, wit, heroism, joy, anger, bitterness, treachery, foolishness; here is Don José's (unedited) story of the Battle of El Chipote, told from four distinct angles:

So we were on Chipote and the airplanes found us. So General Sandino was strolling by one morning, and us watching him carefully. 'General, what's happened?' 'Boys, we've been discovered by the airplanes, the bastards!,' these were his words. 'Ayy! And why don't we wait for them here?' 'No! We can't wait for them here, that will not do. We're going to make some scenery here, some regiments of grass and poles.' All across the camp, which was huge. 'Boys, lend me your hats, will you, to put on the poles, let's go! The machos are coming down the road, and we're going to hit them hard so they know the cost of coming here!' We prepared an ambush in a ravine, far from the camp; the airplanes came and the whole camp blew up in smoke and bombs. And us ambushing the yankees in a ravine, we finished them all, a dance of death in that ravine, all of them we killed. So then Sandino says: 'Boys, that's the last thing I'm going to teach you.' It was to fool the airplanes, so they'd believe we were there. So, when they saw that what had happened, they said: 'These are some men!,' when the yankees saw that we had killed them all. 'That's the last thing I'm going to teach you, boys,' he says. 111

110. IES 058: 5.
111. IES 058: 15-16.
These El Güegüense\textsuperscript{112}, David-and-Goliath themes -- Sandino's uncanny intuition, quick wit, sure-footed confidence, his men's limitless trust in him, their unparalleled bravery and skill in combat, the Marines' brute power and foolishness -- all were endlessly recycled, in tale after tale, for battle after battle. That the "actual" sequence of events bore only the slightest resemblance to Don José's memory of it is largely irrelevant; with legends one does not quibble about details like historical accuracy. "Sandino, like the great captains of history, devised a way to [abandon Chipote] without loss of life," echoed Edelberto Torres Rivas in a literary rendition of the same myth, bracketing his hero with Spartacus, Hannibal, Joan of Arc, and other immortals. Painting a picture of a self-satisfied Coolidge, Díaz, Sellers and Feland congratulating one another on Sandino's demise at El Chipote, the author tears into his punch line: "One has to work hard to imagine the anger of the men in Washington [at] Sandino's ingenious act, ridiculing the implacable attack of the supercivilized aviators."\textsuperscript{113} "So, off he went to Chipote," recalled Juan Bautista Tercero García, who remained behind in Telpaneca; "when he left the grass dummies there, the airplanes came and bombed them, and by that time Sandino was long gone, off toward Jinotega way."\textsuperscript{114}

\begin{quote}
One day said Sandino
Rubbing his hands together
That on the mountain of Chipote
\textit{Macho} meat is sold
That on the mountain of Chipote
\textit{Macho} meat is sold\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

"We were on Chipote awaiting the yankees," recalled Angel Martínez Soza,

Because on Chipote the yankee airplanes attacked every day, we were fighting them from six in the morning till six in the evening, they never stopped coming, but the ground troops were afraid because the passage was uncomfortable, very difficult to arrive where he was on the ground, but the planes, they never stopped coming. But they didn't do anything, nothing, they'd throw thousands of bombs

\textsuperscript{112} The protagonist of many Segovian folktales; a shrewd Indian during the colonial period made famous by his ability constantly to fool the Spaniards; see Álvarez (1992).
\textsuperscript{113} Edelberto Torres Rivas, p. 107 ff.
\textsuperscript{114} IES 093: 16.
\textsuperscript{115} Tomás Jarquín Velásquez, IES 091: 5.
and they'd land on trees and blow up. They'd throw them from way up high and never even come close to his camp.\textsuperscript{116}

For Don Angel, the barbarity of the yankees was indistinguishable from their foolishness and cowardice. "Our lives were destroyed," as he related in graphic detail the burning of Quilalí in early January 1928. "We were forced to live without houses, fleeing in the mountains, without hope of returning to Quilalí again because the houses were nothing but ashes."\textsuperscript{117} Juan Bautista Tercero García, who was far off in Telpaneca at the time, recalled much the same thing: "Afterward, they burned Quilalí, because Quilalí was a village the gringos burned to make an airfield and facilitate the attack on Chipote, so they burned the village."\textsuperscript{118} "In Quilalí they improvised a runway in the village," echoes Torres Rivas' book, tongue-in-cheek, "destroying the miserable houses of the people."\textsuperscript{119}

Such shared memories could fill volumes. From the first days of Rebellion these moments and countless more were seized and infused with a host of newly-forged nationalist meanings -- each individual tale of Sandinista heroism like a drop of rainwater, each legend and myth like a stream, all merging and flowing into a new river of Nicaraguan history.

And in such a fashion, a new Nicaraguan-Sandinista nation-state was born.

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If "myth" and "reality" are not merely two sides of the same coin, neither are they identical. That the Sandinistas remember the blood of thousands of dead yankees fertilizing the soil of their homeland, does that make it "true"? -- a head-splitting question for which there is, in the end, no simple answer. At the same time, just as it is possible

\textsuperscript{116} IES 060: 11.
\textsuperscript{117} IES 060: 13.
\textsuperscript{118} IES 093: 16. For Marine reports on the burning of Quilalí, from their perspective a siege, see \textit{Marine Corps Gazette} 8 (4) December 1928, and 9 (1-3), March-September 1929.
\textsuperscript{119} Torres Rivas, p. 98.
for myth-makers to ignore "the facts" and get on with the business of crafting meanings, so it is possible for historians to bracket the myths and ask, "What really happened?" How many battles were actually fought? When and where and how were they fought? Who were the principal guerrilla chieftains, where did their bands operate, and how did they maintain themselves? What were the primary constraints confronting the rebel forces? What were the principal patterns of property destruction and political violence? What were the main phases through which the Rebellion passed? How to best understand the anatomy of this process called a Rebellion?
"TO DEFEND OUR NATION'S HONOR":
TOWARD A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE
SANDINO REBELLION IN NICARAGUA, 1927-1934

Volume II

by

Michael J. Schroeder

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1993

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Rebecca J. Scott, Chair
Professor Frederick Cooper
Assistant Professor Fernando Coronil
Associate Professor Jeffrey Gould, Indiana University
Assistant Professor Roger Rouse
Professor John Shy
CHAPTER 8: MAPPING WAR: AN ANATOMY OF REBELLION, 1927-1934

The region of the Segovias saw many battles, most undertaken by insurgents who, on attacking, were ninety-nine percent certain of triumph. On occasions the yankee invaders initiated large-scale offensives to try to put an end to the Nicaraguan patriots, but these cost more than ten thousand American lives. For their part, very few Sandinistas died; they knew the land, they found excellent protective shelter, and they easily resisted and repulsed the enemy.

- Xavier Campos Ponce  
  Los yanquis y Sandino, p. 55.

With flying patrols Sandino spread a net over the mountains, made up of his invisible soldiers who appeared here or there as fearsome shadows to the invaders. With them he fought the battles of Zarakusca and El Bramadero, defeating the National Guard . . . In the battle of Telpaneca, Sandino and his generals covered themselves with glory, an action rapid, secure, using the tactics of surprise. Four or five years of fatigue, with stalwart hearts, weather-beaten by the sun, all of this gave the combatants dominion over themselves. At the time there were 3000 or 3500 volunteers on the side of the guerrilla leader.

- Ramón Romero  
  Sandino y los yanquis, pp. 172, 175.

"The historian's most elementary task," cautions the historian David Fitzpatrick in a review of the voluminous literature on agrarian unrest in Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries, "is to construct the anatomy of unrest: when and where did who do what to whom? Once the systematic description, classification, and patterning of unrest has been accomplished, more sophisticated problems may be addressed."1 Here Fitzpatrick is reacting against the tendency of some historians to proffer interpretive judgements on past events before there is even a clear idea of what those events were. His stricture seem especially appropriate in the present case. To put the matter as baldly as possible, much of what has been written about the Sandino Rebellion is just plain wrong.

Particularly misunderstood and misrepresented have been its military dimensions.

"Sandino is advancing in a great sweep that reaches the banks of Lake Managua," writes Eduardo Galeano of the Sandinista offensive of late 1932 in the final volume of his magisterial *Memory of Fire* trilogy. "The occupation troops fall back in disarray." The trouble with this portrait, like many of its kind, is that no such thing ever happened. What did happen is that General Juan Pablo Umanzor, with fewer than 200 troops, launched a limited offensive into northern Chinandega and León departments in September and October and scored a number of minor victories before being forced to beat a hasty retreat back into the western Segovias. Galeano's overly enthusiastic interpretation here is representative of a much broader pattern; indeed, most writers in the Sandinista tradition -- from Salomón de la Selva and Gustavo Alemán Bolaños in the 1920s and 30s, to Gregorio Selser, Ramón Romero, and Xavier Campos Ponce in the 1950s and 60s, to Sergio Ramírez and Oscar René Vargas in the 1980s and 90s -- tend not to adhere too strictly to rules of evidence; most tend to accept Sandino's version of events as authoritative and definitive and leave it at that.

There is also a marked tendency in most pro-Sandinista literature to construct the Rebellión teleologically, to see Sandinista power inexorably snowballing from 1927 to 1932, reaching its apogee immediately prior to the Marine withdrawal of January 2, 1933. If this, as a roadmap of the armed struggle, captures the approximate locations of the Rebellión's "formal" starting and ending points, it conceals the most interesting parts of the journey: everything in between. To date there has been little effort to analyze the Rebellión not as a linear movement but as an unfolding process, with twists and turns, ups and downs.

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3. For cogent synopses of these events see Macaulay, pp. 231-234, and GN-2 Reports, 1 Oct. and 1 Nov. 1932.
4. For North American scholars (with the partial exception of Neill Macaulay) the tendency has been the reverse, with a very Marine-centric approach and a denial that any kind of nationalist impulse fueled the Rebellión; see e.g. McGhee (1963), Wearmouth (1952), and Cummings (1958).
ebbs and flows: Why did it unfold the way it did? How and why did it change, grow, develop, evolve over the course of five-and-one-half years of struggle?

Over the past decades much has been written about the triangular nature of revolutionary guerrilla warfare: rebels battling colonial and/or imperial invaders and their native allies, and both battling for the "hearts and minds" of the civil populace. This chapter focuses on what is in many ways the simplest and least problematic axis in this triangular relationship: that connecting the rebels to the occupying forces and their native allies.

The Sandinistas and Marines-Guardia interacted at two basic levels: directly, through military confrontations and maneuverings between bands of armed men whose basic aim was to kill each other, and indirectly, as mediated through the civilian populace. The latter struggle was primarily over resources: material (food, clothes, guns); non-material (information); and symbolic/ideological (allegiance). This chapter focuses on the nuts-and-bolts of the first-mentioned dimension: the struggle between bands of armed men. Of course it is impossible to separate the two; the struggle for military supremacy was intimately related to struggles over resources, of all kinds. At the same time, the military struggle had a dynamic of its own which needs to be understood in its own terms.

In this chapter I try to map out in time and space some of the most salient features of that military struggle. Several conclusions emerge from this analysis: first, that the Rebellion, and by implication, its social base, was for the most part limited to the Segovias and adjacent areas in Honduras; and second, that in purely military terms the Defending Army was vastly inferior to the Marines-Guardia, whose aggressive

prosecution of the war compelled Sandino to decentralize his forces and wage a protracted guerrilla campaign. The war took on most of the characteristics of most such guerrilla wars, as they are explored in exhausting detail in the voluminous secondary literature on guerrilla warfare. The Nicaraguan case differs from most guerrilla wars in several respects: first, in the extent to which native forces were recruited and assumed responsibility for suppression of the rebellion; second, in the extent to which the occupying forces integrated themselves into the social fabric of the region in which the war was fought; and third, in the degree of native political polarization accompanying the patriotic struggle to expel the invader. In a very real sense the Rebellion created a dual society: one Sandinista, the other stridently anti-Sandinista; one unequivocally allied with the occupying forces, and the other in uncompromising opposition to them.

At the same time, the extreme military imbalance between the two sides forced the rebels to make enormous demands on the civilian economy and on civilian behavior -- which in turn fundamentally shaped the larger triangular relationship. Waging war is not cheap, especially when you are constantly being defeated on the field of battle. The elemental reality of their own extreme military inferiority carried profound implications for the rebels. Always on the defensive, always on the run from the Marines-Guardia -- or almost always -- they had little choice but to tax the local political economy to an extreme degree -- to demand war taxes of every kind from the civilian populace, most especially, of food and information. How different individuals, groups, and classes responded to the political and economic demands of the Defending Army is more the subject of chapter eleven. Here I simply wish to show why such demands existed and why they were so keenly felt and stridently imposed. The propertied classes in general, it was suggested in previous chapters, came to construct the Defending Army as an organization dedicated to systematic pillage, robbery, and murder. A close look at the exclusively military side of the war suggests many of the reasons why this was so: constantly on the verge of defeat, with very little margin for error, the rebels had little
alternative but to be extremely demanding and absolutely uncompromising toward any and all civilian opposition, for if they were not, they could not and would not have survived.

**Periodization**

The question of periodization is clearly key to the larger question of process. In 1986, the Nicaraguan historian and social scientist Oscar René Vargas began a series of five newspaper articles on the Sandino Rebellion with following words:

In July of 1930, the Sandino Movement controlled the Segovias anew and at the end of this year, the Sandinistas were once again on the offensive: on 31 December 1930 they decimated a Marine patrol.

In these last months of 1930, the Sandinistas had entered a second military phase, having an infrastructure of power and controlling extensive geographic areas. For 1932, because of their attacks on the cities, they appeared to be entering into a third military phase, but Sandino considered this to be an artificial phenomenon.

This second military phase was achieved when the systematic and growing efforts to expand the movement were able to create a situation of dual power. The behavior of the population was then favorably oriented toward the Movement of Sandino. This power was coordinated by the infrastructure of the armed movement, which by this time had adopted the attributes of a government: the promulgation of rules, police functions, the administration of justice, the collection of taxes, etc., everything which implied that the guerrilla movement exercised control over a geographic territory.6

Vargas is the only scholar to date to explicitly address the question of periodization of the Rebellion. At one level, his contentions were not unlike those of Romero and Campos Ponce twenty-five years before: a series of implausibly sweeping assertions combined with a set of intriguing possibilities backed up by no supporting evidence. All of the above-quoted assertions are open to serious question, and some are nonsense: Did the Sandinistas "control the Segovias anew" in July 1930? No. Did "attacks on the cities" really begin in 1932? The evidence indicates otherwise. Did a situation of "dual power" begin in mid-1930? In previous chapters it was shown that rebels worked to construct something like a parallel nation-state in the Segovias from the first days of Rebellion.

Did the "behavior of the population become favorably oriented toward the Movement of Sandino" after mid-1930? This is not, it needs hardly be said, a particularly well-framed question or assertion. Like most writers working within the Sandinista tradition, Vargas tended to take Sandino's writings and utterances as historical fact (e.g., note his explicit deference to Sandino's analysis -- "but Sandino considered this to be an artificial phenomenon").

On the other hand, Vargas, like Selser, Romero, Campos Ponce, and other non-North American historians, for practical reasons unable to consult Marine Corps and National Guard records, was working more or less within an evidentiary vacuum. This series of newspaper articles, along with a handful of his unpublished manuscripts, remains among the most serious efforts to analyze and theorize about some key questions posed by the Rebellion, including that of periodization. In particular, Vargas's employment of Trotsky's notion of "dual power" represented an important step forward in thinking about how the Rebellion worked in practice; his insight that the Sandinistas essentially worked to create a parallel state in the zones under their control is on target; and his argument that the period from around mid-1930 witnessed a qualitative transformation in the strength and power of the rebel forces is supported by the evidence, as this chapter tries to show.

How then to periodize the Rebellion? Figure 8.1 provides a graphic illustration of what I see as its principal phases and sub-phases. The process as a whole is divided into four major phases: pre-Rebellion, earlier, later, and post-Rebellion. The critical moment of transition, in addition to its formal starting and ending points, occurred, as Vargas suggested, in the months surrounding Sandino's return from Mexico in June 1930. For a complex of reasons explored more fully below, Sandino's return breathed new life into an almost moribund cause and marked a qualitative shift in the scope and intensity of the struggle, at virtually every level: military activity on both sides reached new highs, as did the number, size, and activity of rebel columns, and the intensity of Marine-Guardia
**FIGURE B.1:**

**PRINCIPAL PHASES + SUBPHASES OF THE REBELLION, 1926 - 1934**

**PHASE I:**
Pre-Rebellion

1926

**PHASE II:**
Earlier Rebellion

1927
1928
1929
1930

**PHASE III:**
Later Rebellion

1931
1932
1933
1934

**PHASE IV:**
Post-Rebellion

**Key Events:**
- May 9, 1927: Espino-Negro Accord Signed; Formal End of the Civil War
- June-July 1927: Organizing the El Jicaro Region
- July 1927-Jan. 1928: From the Battle of Góctal to the Marine-CAR Seizure of El Chiquite; First Phase of the Armed Struggle (Jan. 1928; beginning of Prolonged Guerrilla War across the Segovias)
- Dec. 1928-Jan. 1930: Lowest Ebb of Rebel Activity
- Nov. 1928: Elections
- Sandino in Mexico
- Feb. 1935: Peace and Disarmament
- Jan. 2, 1933: Final U.S. Troop Withdrawal
- Nov. 1932: Elections

**Expeditions/Offensives Outside the Segovias:**
1. April 12-May 8, 1928: Raid into PIS Pis Mining District, Zelaya Dept.
3. April 1931: Pedro Brandon, others, raid into Zelaya Dept.
4. July 1931: Pedron raid into Chontales Dept.; Salgado, others to East Coast
5. Oct. 1931: Salgado, Chavarria to E. Coast
6. Nov. 1931: Umanzor, Colindres into Leon; Chinandega Depts.
7. Dec. 1931: Pedron to East Coast
efforts to hunt those columns down and exterminate them. After mid-1930, for a range of reasons, the struggle was deepened, widened, broadened, and radicalized.

For Mao Tse-tung, perhaps the 20th century's leading theoretician of modern revolutionary and guerrilla war, guerrilla warfare was but one element in a three-stage process of struggle to expel the Japanese imperialist invaders and create a revolutionary communist state across China. Mao conceived of agrarian-based revolutionary war as passing through three overlapping phases. The first was devoted to the formation of a decentralized guerrilla army, the organization and consolidation of base areas and zones of operations in isolated and rugged regions of the country -- "the period of the enemy's strategic offensive and our strategic defensive." In this phase the occupying forces were harassed and impeded by small mobile guerrilla bands, but not threatened militarily. The second phase, which Mao called one of "strategic stalemate," was characterized by the progressive expansion of the guerrilla forces, the increased use of sabotage and terror against "reactionary elements" and "collaborators," and the gradual transformation of decentralized guerrilla forces into a regular army. "The fighting in the second stage will be ruthless," warned Mao, "and the country will suffer serious devastation." The third and final phase was marked by direct military confrontations between regular armies and the ultimate victory of the revolutionary forces. Guerrilla war, for Mao, was a tactic, not a strategy, an important adjunct to, but by no means a replacement for a more orthodox military program. In order for the revolutionary struggle to succeed and seize state power, by Mao's lights, it was necessary that the war be transformed from decentralized, partisan guerrilla warfare to revolutionary warfare waged by a regular army.?

Sandino, it is clear, thought in much the same terms as Mao; from around mid-1930 he worked to transform his decentralized guerrilla bands into something akin to a regular army. During the last year or so of the Rebellion, from late 1931 to late 1932, he almost succeeded. Yet, even at their most highly organized moments, Sandino's forces

never came together to form anything resembling a regular army. Rather, they remained "many armies" right to the end. From early 1928 until the final Marine withdrawal on January 2, 1933, the struggle essentially remained locked, to use Mao's apt term, in "strategic stalemate," with each side enjoying certain advantages and suffering certain disadvantages, but with neither able to decisively defeat the other. The gradual Nicaraguanization of the war, with the phased withdrawal of the Marines from 1930 to the end of 1932, introduced a new dynamic that was not present in China, namely, the gradual disappearance of the external aggressor, and hence of the underlying rationale for rebellion. With the Yankees no longer on Nicaraguan soil, Sandino had little choice but to lay down his arms; the intervening year (from the signing of the Treaty of Peace on 2 February 1933 to Sandino's assassination on 21 February 1934), saw the relatively rapid disintegration of the human and material infrastructure that had been so painstakingly constructed over the previous six years -- at least on the Sandinista side. The National Guard, obviously, underwent no similar transformation. Thus, when the end came, as we have seen, it came swiftly, violently, and completely.

Before analyzing the nature of the military relationship between the Sandinistas and the Marines-Guardia, it will be useful to first sketch the basic organizational characteristics of the latter.

The US Marine Corps and the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua

The Second Brigade of the US Marine Corps returned to western Nicaragua, after an eighteen month hiatus, in January 1927, and remained on Nicaraguan soil until January 2, 1933. The total number of Marines in Nicaragua fluctuated between 500 and 2000 troops, approaching the latter figure in October 1930. By February 1931 the number of troops had dropped to 1500, and by the end of the year, to 530. Most were stationed in Managua, León, and other towns of the Pacific littoral.8

The Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua, conceived as a "non-partisan constabulary" which would replace the Nicaraguan National Army and become the sole military authority in the country, was founded by a provision of the Espino Negro Accord.9 Legally, the US Marines and the Guardia Nacional were wholly separate military organizations. Yet between the two organizations there was, in practice, extensive overlap in function and day-to-day operations. Until very late in the war -- mid-1932 -- Marine and Navy officers had direct responsibility and control over all Guardia field operations. The first Nicaraguan Guardia officers were not commissioned until November 1931. Until that time, all commissioned officers in the Guardia were Marine and Navy officers, while all enlisted troops were recruited locally. The following table provides a snapshot of the number of men, officers and enlisted, in the Guardia from October 1927 to the end of 193210:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Officers</th>
<th>Enlisted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct. 1927</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct. 1928</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>1597</td>
<td>1742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1929</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>2219</td>
<td>2441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1932</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>2240</td>
<td>2507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources for the Guardia were scarce, particularly after the onset of the Depression in 1930, after which the total number of Guardia troops levelled off at slightly below 2500. By October 1932 more than 5200 men had served in the Guardia. Most stints were six months in duration; reenlistments were common, though long stints -- four years or more -- were rare. In the summer of 1930 all offensive operations were formally turned over to the Guardia, though since many Marine junior officers and noncoms held commissions in the Guardia, the Marines continued to head up most offensive ground operations until late November 1932. Indeed, Marine officers were active in the Segovias as late as December 26, 1932.

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9. On the development of the Guardia during these years see Millett (1979) and Smith, et al. (1933).
10. Smith, et al., pp. 11-16.
In the Segovias, Marine-Guardia troops were distributed geographically as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NOV. 11, 1929</th>
<th>OCT. 1, 1930</th>
<th>MAY 30, 1932</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORTHERN AREA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocotal</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telpaneca</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosonte</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dipilto</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somoto</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palacaguina</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patase</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darain</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalaguina</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo Nuevo</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condega</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totogalpa</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Maria</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Manos</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macuelizo</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quilal</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Juan de T.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Jicaro</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jalapa</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apal</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Fernando</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estel</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Trinidad</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limay</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somotillo</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanueva</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Sauce</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CENTRAL AREA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinoteca</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company M</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Milagros</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvadora</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Colonia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corinto Finca</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuma</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Concordia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las Camelias</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yali</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Rafael</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guapinol</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarro</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Sources: For Nov. 30, 1929, and Oct. 1, 1930, NA127/210/1; for May 1932, Distribution Sheet, Northern Area, NA127/202/1/1.3.
The spatial distribution of these garrisoned towns and farms is illustrated in Map 8.2.

The first ground combat patrols in the Segovias (e.g., Major Pierce's patrol into Ocotal, Major Floyd's Nueva Segovia Expedition) were made up exclusively of Marines. This soon changed, so that by early 1928 enlisted Guardia were the majority on more than ninety-five percent of patrols. This continued until late 1932. Typically, junior Marine Corps officers, commissioned in the Guardia, would lead combat patrols from one of the above garrisons. Their explicitly stated purpose was to seek out and destroy "bandit" groups in a specified zone of operations. The number of soldiers on any given "search-and-destroy" mission ranged from under ten to as high as fifty; the average was around twenty. It is difficult to know the precise orders issued to these combat patrols before General Order #109, issued on September 10, 1929. This order, which was still in effect in late 1932, instructed patrol commanders "to gain contact and destroy all bandit groups within the area assigned" to the patrol, though the behavior of such patrols before and after that date indicates that General Order #109 only codified what had been practiced for more than two years. Typically, native information was obtained about a group of "bandits" in the vicinity of a garrisoned town or farm, and a patrol sent out to act upon that information and destroy the group.

The Sandino Rebellion cannot be understood without a fairly solid appreciation of how Marine-Guardia combat patrols worked in practice. Perhaps the best way to

12. Quote from Report of Contact, M.K. Chenowith, Company M, Jinotega, 25 March 1930, NA127/202/11. I have not found the actual wording of General Order #109-1929, though references to it appear at the top of most every patrol and combat report from the period. The contact report of Chenowith, above, is typical; so too is that of Lt. F. Anderton (Yalí, 24 March 1930, NA127/202/11), wherein G.O. #109-1929 is cited as "reference (a)" at the top of the report; the report was in turn "submitted in accordance with reference (a)"; the "Mission of Patrol" was described as follows: "Patrol was sent out to gain contact and destroy a group of bandits who were operating in the areas La Pavona, La Rica, La Constancia, and San Antonio."
MAP 8.2
LOCATIONS OF MARINE-AVARIA GARRISONS IN NORTH-CENTRAL NICARAGUA, 1927-1932

SOURCE: SEE TEXT
illustrate the phenomenon is to describe a handful of typical cases. Second Lieutenant M.C. Levy's patrol report of May 23, 1929, distinguished primarily by its unremarkable qualities, is quoted in full:

58th Company, 3rd Battalion, 11th Regiment  
Yali, Nicaragua  23 May 1929

To: The Commanding Officer, Northern Area.  
Subject: Patrol, report of.

1. In accordance with orders from Bn. Commander, 2nd Bn., I took command of thirteen enlisted and cleared Yali at 0939, 17 May 1929 to work Zacaton, La Laguna, La Mesa area, to block trails in that area, and follow any bandit trails picked up so long as there was prospect of contact.

2. The patrol proceeded to the south for about six miles where at about 1145, 17 May, information was obtained that a group of bandits had passed toward the west on a side trail, at about 24 hours previously. This trail was pointed out to us. The patrol proceeded along this trail, which described a big horseshoe (west, south, southeast, and then to the north-west) for about 4 hours, checking information as it proceeded. The bandit trail was lost about 1530 P.M. The patrol proceeded along the trail until 1800 in an effort to again pick up information of bandit movements. The patrol arrived at 1830 at a place called Bella Vista, about 9 miles south-southwest of Yali. The patrol blocked this trail for the night.

3. The patrol cleared Bella Vista at 0530, 18 May 1929 and proceeded toward La Laguna. Arrived at La Laguna at 1200 18 May and halted for food. Plane drop came to us at 1300 that reliable native information from Esteli was to the effect that Pedro Blandon was proceeding from Guayucali to Rodeo for the purpose of securing supplies and mounts from Moises Perez. The patrol cleared La Laguna at 1400, and proceeded west arriving at 1800 at a vacant house on the La Laguna-Guayucali-Rodeo trail where camp was made for the night and this trail blocked.

4. The patrol cleared at 0600, 19 May and proceeded northwest. Arrived at 1000 at western end of Yulucu and halted for food. Cleared Yulucu at 1130, and proceeded to the west-north-west along the Guayucali Valley having as our objective the reaching of the junction of the Yulucu-Guayucali-Rodeo trail.

5. At 1330 the patrol heard firing - small arms and bombs, over the mountains to the east and at an approximate distance of 8 miles. The patrol turned back and proceeded to the scene of the firing, arrived at 1545. This place was Quebrado Arriba and the firing had taken place in the western edge of said scattered group of fincas. The natives admitted hearing the firing but all claimed they were afraid to go out of their houses and find the cause. A native boy finally admitted that he saw mounted Marines who wanted to know the trail to Guayucali and that he heard firing a few minutes later. The hills and brush thereabouts were searched carefully but no trail of bandits could be picked up.
6. The patrol cleared Quebrada Arriba at 1800 and arrived in Yali at 2025, 19 May 1929.

7. The attitude of the natives throughout the section covered was unfriendly or at the least evasive. I believe part of this to be due to fear of the bandits. Most claimed when asked at what time they had last seen bandits, that it had been a long time ago. When asked to state a definite time the usual answer was a shrug of the shoulders and the words "maybe a year." The territory covered was very mountainous, most of traveling was over side trails which were very rough. There was little mud. Estimate of distance covered 57 miles.

------------------------------------------M.C. Leveic-----------------------------

Map 8.3 traces the route of this patrol. Throughout the course of the Rebellion there were at least 20,000 such Marine-Guardia patrols in the Segovias alone.14

The basic rules of the game, as revealed in this and hundreds of similar reports, were simple: The Marines-Guardia were on the offensive, "hunters" in search of "contact" with "bandits." What they required to fulfill their mission was information about the enemy's whereabouts. In this instance the hunters were frustrated, a typical outcome. Only a small fraction of patrols ever succeeded in their basic aim: making "contact." A "contact" was defined as an encounter between enemy forces in which shots were fired by both sides. The "Official List of Contacts" of the Guardia Nacional recorded 510 contacts; lists in-the-making during the war recorded more than 640; my estimate approaches 750. If the definition of "contact" were broadened to include shots fired by one side only -- the Marines-Guardia -- the total number would soar into the thousands. The category of "contact" also excludes the air war, further diminishing the overall salience of "contacts" to the Rebellion as a whole. Piloted exclusively by US Marine and Navy officers, airplanes shot and bombed enemy columns and civilians with a frequency matching, if not exceeding, that of their counterparts on the ground. Still, if

14. Written reports exist for approximately one thousand patrols in the Segovias; there were perhaps twenty times as many for which no detailed reports were submitted or retained. By mid-1931 the Guardia Newsletter was listing an average of seventeen patrols per day across the Segovias; much of this was routine patrolling along major arteries (M1273/21/198). A conservative estimate of ten patrols per day in the Segovias for five-and-one-half years yields 20,000 patrols.
Route of patrol led by 2nd Lt. M.C. Levis, May 17-19, 1929
in region south-southwest of Yali
"contacts" describe only part of the war, they were an exceedingly important part, for whoever controlled the ground controlled, in the end, the country.

Second Lieutenant Marshall Leveé's was a wild goose chase, a three-day, fifty-seven mile march through mountains and jungles, a futile hunt for "contact" and its progenitor, information. In the first paragraph describing the patrol's first day, information was mentioned three times: once it was "obtained," several times it was "checked," and finally it was "picked up" -- or at least an "effort" was made to pick it up. The next day an airplane dropped it, regarding the possible location of a particular "bandit" leader, who in turn was hunting for supplies; information about his suspected supplier was also included. Following up that lead, the next day's information arrived in the form of small arms fire and bombs heard eight mountainous miles away; deeming this information more reliable, "the patrol turned back" and arrived more than two hours later at what was thought to be the scene of the firing, only to run headlong into a group of reticent, "unfriendly, ... evasive, ... fear[ful]" campesinos who gave no information. Stymied, the patrol returned. End of story. Many natives were questioned but no shots fired, no injuries inflicted. This was typical; probably fewer than one quarter of all patrols injured or killed Nicaraguans.

Another case will shed more light on the phenomenon; the following combat report, quoted in full, is by most measures rather ordinary, even though what it reveals is by most any measure extraordinary:

Guardia Nacional
San Juan de Telpaneca
13 January 1931

From: 2nd Lieutenant Joseph M. Broderick, G.N.
To: Area Commander, Guardia Nacional, Northern Area
Subject: Combat report.
Reference: General Order #109, 1929.

1. Received orders to clear San Juan with 16 enlisted and one native guide and patrol the Cantil and Barial areas.
2. Patrol cleared at 07012 [7:00 a.m., Jan. 12] and proceeded to Cantil via Balsamo (222-371). At Cantil (225-375) it was noticed that all trails had been frequently used. We continued up Río Guali until a trail up a hill was discovered. This trail was followed to 223-376, where the rear guard captured Toribio Sanchez, well known bandit jefe whose head carries a $500 reward. Sanchez wrenched away and began running and was shot through the neck by the Thompson [submachine gun] man. Another bullet struck him between the shoulders and came out his chest, another went through his left shoulder. Sanchez lay on the trail a few minutes, then rolled into the brush and was gone. At 1130, while searching the brush for Sanchez, we were fired on by rifles and pistols. Fire was returned and a hand grenade was thrown, causing the bandits to retreat. This engagement lasted about a minute and a half.

3. It is believed that no more than eight bandits were involved. There were no Guardia casualties, while the bandit jefe, Toribio Sanchez, was seriously, if not fatally wounded. Sanchez was recognized by Raso [Private] Florian, #2849, who was his neighbor at one time.

4. About a hundred yards from scene of contact a house was found. The two women (brought to San Juan) had made forty tortillas, about four gallons of deer meat soup and a large pot of beans. They tried to tell us that this food was for their own consumption. House and supplies were destroyed.

5. We then cleared for Barial (219.5-372.5), hoping to recapture Sanchez at that place. At 220-372 the point emerged, unexpectedly, into a clearing where there was a house. A group of men began running into the brush and were fired on by the entire column. Three fell, two of whom crawled into brush and escaped. One was captured, unwounded and dead-drunken. The wounded prisoner had been hit three times, one shot breaking his left leg and two passing through his body. This engagement began at 1530 and lasted less than a minute. The wounded prisoner made the following statement: "If you hadn't broke my leg I'd never have been captured. My name is Canuto Melgaro. My Jefe is Valentín Muñoz and he has twelve men. At present we have no ammunition and have our arms hidden in a camp near Ologalpa. We come to this house (of Felix Guerrera) frequently for refreshments. They are always informed when to expect us. We operate in the Barial district and our mission is to prevent the harvesting of the coffee crop. How many more of my companions have you captured?" Melgaro died at 1545. The unwounded prisoner, Agapito Muñoz, is a halfwit.

6. There were twelve men in this group, Jefe Valentín Muñoz. Guardia casualties: none. Bandit casualties: one dead, two wounded and one captured.

7. The following is a complete roster of my patrol:
2nd Lt. J.M. Broderick -- pistol and hand grenade
Cabo Coronado, Juan J. #1888 -- Thompson and hand grenades
Raso Rico, Manuel #1828 -- Thompson
" Centeno, Luis #1621 -- B.A.R. [Browning Auto-
" Tellez, Aurelio #3136 -- B.A.R. matic Rifle]
" Jiron, Juan #2324 -- Rifle grenade
" Rodriguez, Feliz #3244 -- Rifle
" Aguilar, Carlos #3452 -- "
" Castro, Agustin #3507 -- "
" Centeno, Santiago #3676 -- "
" Obregón, Lorenzo #3510 -- "

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8. The house of Felix Guerrero, where Muñoz' group was encountered, was destroyed and the women brought to San Juan. The following articles were captured:

1 cutacha
8 machetes
Prepared food (eaten by patrol)
2 arrobas beans (destroyed)
1 quintal corn (destroyed)

9. It is recommended that Señor Gomez be granted permission to re-enlist in the Guardia Nacional. He will be a very valuable addition to the garrison due to the fact that he knows every cowpath in this district and knows a large number of bandits. The bandits have threatened his life.

10. The conduct of the men was very gratifying in both engagements. Fire discipline was excellent.

--------------------Joseph M. Broderick

In many respects this report was, as noted above, eminently typical: a Marine-Guardia patrol on the prowl, relentlessly hunting down the enemy, carrying with them the ever-present advantage of vastly superior weaponry; specific kinds of violence meted out to enemies and civilians (discussed in greater detail in chapter 10); the effort to extract every last drop of information; the accidental nature of the "contact"; the extraordinary physical stamina of Nicaraguan campesinos (something that emerges time and again in patrol and combat reports). One also sees the civil dimensions of the conflict played out in this anti-imperialist war of national liberation: the Marine lieutenant's patrol was, after all, 95% Nicaraguan; several Guardia were ex-residents of the areas they patrolled; even the opportunity to enlist in the Guardia was, by this time, highly prized; helping the patrol as a civilian, ex-Guardia Gómez was soliciting permission to re-enlist -- which was in his interest, since "the bandits have threatened his life."

15. NA127/202/11.
Yet the analysis of individual "contacts" can only be taken so far; the ground war needs to be understood in more general, global terms.

Analyzing "contacts"

It is useful to begin with the simplest questions. First, where were these "contacts"? Maps 8.4 through 8.10 provide one way to view the answer. As Summary Map 8.10 indicates, ninety-five percent of all "contacts" between the Marines-Guardia and Sandinistas took place within or on the southern border of the Segovias; the remainder -- 35 -- took place in Zelaya, Bluefields, and Chontales departments. It is reasonable to suppose that those Segovian micro-regions which show the greatest number of contacts also saw the greatest expression of popular support for the rebels, an hypothesis which is supported by a mountain of other evidence, and which is explored more fully in sections to follow.

When did these "contacts" take place? The maps provide year-by-year summaries; Graph 8.11b gives a monthly breakdown. Both also constitute rough indices of the qualitative shift in military activity that took place after mid-1930.

Beyond the basic questions of "when" and "where," it is difficult to bring under any sort of "objective," quantifiable compass the basic features of the military conflict between the Marines-Guardia and the Sandinistas. Any attempt to measure something so inherently multifaceted and messy as a guerrilla war inevitably carries with it untold practical problems -- some having to do with definitions and categories, others stemming from the reliability of the data. Still, as biased and partial as the data are, and as problematic as the categories might be, it is worth it to try.

As the maps illustrate, there were some 735 "contacts" between the Marines-Guardia and the Sandinista rebels from July 1927 to November 1932, as "contacts" were defined by the Marines-GN. The original Marine-Guardia reports for 350 of these "contacts" have been carefully analyzed for what they reveal about different aspects of
MAP 8.4: CONTACTS 1927

Unable to locate: none

Atlantic coast region: none
MAP 8.5: CONTACTS 1928

Unable to locate: none

Atlantic coast region: 2
MAP 8.6: CONTACTS 1929

Unable to locate: 5

Atlantic coast region: none
MAP 8.7: CONTACTS 1930

Unable to locate: 6

Atlantic coast region: none
MAP 8.8: CONTACTS 1931

Unable to locate: 2

Atlantic coast region: 15
SUMMARY MAP 8.10: ALL CONTACTS, 1927-1932

total number=735
Unable to locate: 15
Atlantic coast region: 30
the ground war. Various types of information were compiled about each of these 350 contacts. Some was purely numerical: how many soldiers on each side; how many casualties inflicted by each side; the duration of each combat; who fled the scene of the battle; the number of rebel prisoners captured; the number of rebel camps discovered and destroyed; and others. Two basic interpretive questions were also asked of each contact: first, who "initiated" the contact, i.e., who attacked whom, and second, who won the battle, and, conversely, who lost.16

The results are not surprising. Of the 350 contacts analyzed, 248, or 71%, were determined to have been initiated by the Marines-Guardia. In other words, for seven of every ten contacts, Marine-Guardia patrols, following General Order #109-1929, intruded into what can be called "Sandinista space" -- a camp, a house, a resting spot along a trail, wherever an armed band was located -- and that space was in turn defended by those who occupied it. Here is a typical report of one such "hunting" expedition:

On 22 April 1932 the patrol [of two Marine officers and 16 enlisted Guardia] proceeded to Pamali where we captured two civilians, Tiburcio Cruz and Habran Garcia, reported to be runners for the bandits. Habran Garcia proceeded to lead us to the bandits camp. With Garcia acting as guide . . . we proceeded to La Rica, where we surprised a camp containing about ten men and large enough for forty. The men ran, and we fired upon them killing one and wounding others from blood trails in the brush. We captured one shotgun, correspondence . . ., much food, a victrola, and other loot . . .17

Here is another, from a nearby station around the same time:

1. Cleared this station [San Juan de Telpaneca] at 0800 11 June [1932] to operate on local information of Bandit Camps in vicinity of point 238-365. Informants stated that Salgado with 100 well armed was in camp of Sisto Acuña in this

16. These 350 original contact reports were the only ones found in the archives; for whatever reasons, reports for the remaining 300 or so were apparently not archived. There are solid grounds for believing that this sample of 350 is representative of the larger population of such reports, even though they were not selected "randomly," and might thus be challenged as unrepresentative. First, the sample represents fully half of the population, which for statistical purposes is indistinguishable from the entire population; and second, the numbers add up; e.g., the average Marine deaths per contact in the sample is 0.08 (or 0.06 if a single disastrous contact is omitted), a number which is statistically identical to the figure derived from another method: calculating all Marine deaths in combat (32) in all 735 contacts (i.e., 0.067 deaths per contact). Sources are referenced and computations made below.

vicinity. Arrived at a point 200 yards from camp at 1130 and captured correo who had just left the camp with the enclosed message which he attempted to destroy. Proceeded to the camp and attacked at 1200. Owing to the density of the underbrush was unable to surround the camp or to employ more than six of the patrol in the preliminary attack. The bandits had no sentries posted and we were able to approach within fifty yards before the Bandits saw us and opened fire. We replied and rushed to the edge of the camp where we formed a firing line. When sufficient members of the patrol arrived at the firing line we rushed the camp and the Bandits retreated in small groups into the brush and formed a new firing line. We rushed the new firing line and the Bandits fled in all directions.

2. The camp consisted of seven shacks, total capacity about 85 men. The captured correo stated that there were 100 men in the camp when we attacked. I estimated the number at 50. The following articles were captured or destroyed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500 lbs. shelled corn</td>
<td>15 new blankets, civilian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 lbs. beans</td>
<td>64 no. 8 dynamite caps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 lbs. coffee</td>
<td>20 lbs. Hercules black powder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 lbs. queso</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miscellaneous articles of clothing and small amount of medicine.

3. There were four women in the camp who stated that bandits were preparing to clear for Acuñas other camp at the time of attack. I believe this accounts for the fact that no weapons or cartridges were captured.

4. We were unable to gain contact with the bandits again after the first action. Cleared Acuñas camp at 1300 and destroyed four small camps within a radius of half a mile from the main camp. Cleared for San Juan at 1700. Arrived San Juan 1750.

5. Bandit casualties: 5 killed 7 wounded
No Guardia casualties. A girl of about ten years old was wounded in left leg during contact at main camp, I dressed the wound and urged the mother to bring the child in to San Juan for further treatment. She agreed to but did not come to San Juan.

This extremely aggressive patrol of one Marine and nineteen Guardia was armed with two Browning automatic rifles, two Thompson sub-machine guns, and sixteen Krag rifles. Similar reports were filed with monotonous regularity; literally hundreds of similar cases could be cited.

On the other hand, ninety-five contacts, or 27% of the total, were judged to have been initiated by the Sandinistas. Of these, 63 were ambushes against roving Marine-Guardia columns, and 32 were attacks on garrisoned haciendas or towns. That is, only 18% of the 350 contacts examined were Sandinista ambushes against Marine-Guardia

patrols -- less than one contact in five. Of the 350 contacts analyzed, the Sandinistas fled
the site of the contact in all but thirteen cases -- 96% of the time. Seven contacts of the
original 350, or two percent, fell into a category called "chance/neither," i.e., it was
impossible to tell whose actions initiated the contact.

The second basic interpretive question asked of each contact was: who defeated
whom? Three categories were devised: "Sandinista success," "Marine-Guardia success,"
and "unclear/neither." "Success" was defined in exclusively military terms: whichever
side emerged materially weaker after the battle was deemed the loser, and the other side,
by default, the victor. In exactly ten percent of the contacts examined -- 35 of 350 -- the
Sandinistas were determined to have been successful. Twenty-two of these were
Sandinista ambushes against roving Marine-Guardia patrols. In other words,
"successful" Sandinista ambushes against Marine-Guardia patrols accounted for only
6.3% of the contacts analyzed. Sixty percent of all contacts -- 208 of 350 -- were classed
as "Sandinista failures." And in thirty percent of the cases -- 106 of 350 -- it was
impossible to determine a clear winner or loser. In other words, my reading of the
evidence indicates that the Sandinista "won," on average, only one battle in ten. It further
indicates that they unequivocally lost at least six battles of ten -- and probably more,
since I was rather miserly in attributing failure, preferring the safer category
"unclear/neither" whenever there was any reasonable doubt -- which there was in nearly
one-third of the cases -- though for most contacts -- roughly seven of ten -- it was clear
who won and who lost.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate these criteria is to take a closer look at some
typical cases. Excerpts from reports describing the commonest type of contact --
successful Marine-GN hunting expeditions -- have already been quoted. Here is a typical
report for an atypical contact: a successful Sandinista ambush. A patrol of twenty-three
Guardia was out "hunting bandits" under General Order #109-1929 near Yalí:
Arrived at La Pavona about 1130 and upon approaching a hill a man was seen running from one of the houses. Proceeded toward the hill and at 1300 when near the top the point was fired on by a Lewis [machine gun], a Browning automatic rifle [BAR] and one Thompson [sub-machine gun]. Immediately took cover, returned fire and was able to advance along trail for about 150 yards when we reached the top. Here the bandits opened a heavy fire and the Guardia was forced to take cover behind a crest about 150 yards to the left. Bandits had a line of fire covering some 200 yards and to right of trail. One BAR jammed and was useless and ammunition was running low. The bandits started a flanking movement and killed one Guardia. Ammunition almost exhausted so gave order to retire and reform at bottom of the hill. It was now 1430. Recovered body, performed a retreat and reformed patrol at La Pavona at 1500 and cleared for Yali. Bandits were still firing on patrol and continued until we were out of sight.19

This report represents one of the handful of instances in which the tables were turned on the Marines-Guardia: they, not the rebels, were forced to retreat, carrying their dead from the field of battle -- and for a simple and powerful reason: they were outgunned. The report also reveals that the Marines-GN were indeed capable of writing reports that reflected unfavorably on themselves, an issue explored in greater detail below.

We have seen that, of the 350 contacts examined, 22 were successful Sandinista ambushes. Almost as many -- 21 -- were ambushes that failed. Here is a report describing a typical instance of the latter, which took place on the morning of April 15, 1932 on the trail between San Juan de Telpaneca and Quilalí. Lieutenant F.D. Beans was leading a patrol of fifteen Guardia:

The aforementioned patrol armed with two Sub-Thompson M.G., two B.A.R.'s and one rifle grenade discharger, and ten rifles enroute from San Juan to Quilalí was ambushed in the following manner. The bandits had taken a position on a small hill to the right, commanding about a hundred yards of the trail. As the point, consisting of myself and four enlisted had almost passed the bandits' position, a single shot was fired by the bandits at a distance of ten yards. The point immediately took cover behind a high hedge to the right of the trail. As the point was taking cover, the bandits fired from all positions. The other side of this hedge was occupied by bandits who immediately fled and took cover in deeper brush, one of these men was killed. The main body which was about 100 yards in the rear under Sgto. Ayala took an aggressive position in the brush on the bandits left flank, and after moving forward about fifty yards opened fire on bandits. The bandits returned the fire for a short time and then fled in the brush. It was impossible to pursue bandits due to heavy underbrush . . .20

20. Contact, report of, F.D. Beans, Quilalí, 16 April 1932, NA127/202/12.
How Lieutenant Beans lived to write this report is a mystery. Why were he and the other members of the point not killed? There were no Guardia casualties, though, as the lieutenant reported, "My house boy who was behind me in the point was grazed across the chest by a rifle bullet." The frequency with which such reports were filed suggests that, because the rebels lacked ammunition and were consequently unable to engage in much target practice, they were, at least most of the time, just plain bad shots.

There is every indication that, for the rebels, this fundamental military disparity could be a source of enormous frustration. In early November 1930, for instance, a group of some eighty Sandinistas lay in ambush for more than two days on the main trail leading west from the town of San Juan de Telpaneca. Early on the afternoon of November 3 they finally got their chance, ambushing a combined San Juan-El Jícaro Marine-Guardia patrol as it escorted a group of voters from Telpaneca to San Juan. The rebels succeeded in killing one Guardia in the first moments of contact before being swiftly routed by "fourteen rifle grenades [fired] in quick succession over the enemy's position." As the patrol commander described the action, "The remainder of the reinforcing party took up firing positions and delivered a heavy rifle fire and automatic fire and began working their way uphill toward the bandit position . . . Caught between a heavy frontal fire and a withering flanking fire, showered by rifle grenades, the enemy fire ceased." A detachment took off in hot pursuit of the ambushers, but "contact could not be regained." Inspection of the "bandit" position revealed that the Sandinistas "were evidently using old ammunition -- several misfired con-con cartridges [were] found."

One can only imagine the frustration produced by laying in silent ambush for two full days, only to have one's rifle misfire because of old and rusty ammunition -- not to mention the exasperation of being quickly overpowered -- time and again -- by one's
intended prey. Other empty cartridges found on the scene indicated that the rebels were using a 1917 Remington rifle, a 1917 .38 caliber pistol, and some 1898 Springfields.21

In terms of casualties: in the 350 contacts the Marines-Guardia reported casualties as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rebels killed</th>
<th>Rebels wounded</th>
<th>Guardia killed</th>
<th>Guardia wounded</th>
<th>Marines killed</th>
<th>Marine wounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>951</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we adjust these figures to exclude the inordinate number of rebel casualties in the first battles of the war -- 300 killed and 100 wounded in the attack on Ocotal (July 16-17, 1927), 25 killed and 50 wounded in the attack on Telpaneca (September 19, 1927), and several others, the number of rebel casualties per contact drops substantially. In the figures above, there were 2.7 Sandinista deaths per contact, and 2.5 Sandinista wounded per contact. Adjusting the figures by eliminating six of the largest early battles, the total number of casualties drops to 551 deaths and 645 wounded.22 These figures, in turn, permit a more realistic estimate of the average number killed and wounded per contact:

**AVERAGE CASUALTIES REPORTED PER CONTACT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rebels killed</th>
<th>Rebels wounded</th>
<th>Guardia killed</th>
<th>Guardia wounded</th>
<th>Marines killed</th>
<th>Marine wounded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way of summarizing this data is to say that a typical Sandinista soldier was thirteen times more likely to be killed in any given contact than a typical Guardia soldier, and twenty times more likely to be killed than a typical Marine. Indeed, if we adjust the figures for the Marines by eliminating a single contact -- the disastrous telegraph line

22. The contacts eliminated are: 1) Ocotal, 16-17 July 1927; 2) Telpaneca, 19 Sept. 1927; 3) Zapotillal, 9 Oct. 1927; 4) Espino, 1 Nov. 1927; 5) Pueblo Nuevo, 27 Aug. 1927; and 6) Las Cruces, 1 Jan. 1928, to which were attributed a total of some 400 rebel deaths.
incident at Achuapa near Ocotal on December 31, 1930, in which eight Marines were killed -- the average number of Marines killed per contact drops to 0.06 -- which in turn would mean that an average Sandinista was twenty-six times more likely to be killed in a contact than an average Marine. Indeed, the ratio was probably higher, since altogether only 32 Marines were killed in action during the entire occupation, while another 15 died of wounds inflicted during combat. That is, there was a total of 47 Marine deaths resulting from more than 700 contacts with the enemy -- an average of less than 0.067 Marine deaths per contact. On the other hand, patrol commanders were probably inclined to inflate the number of enemy killed and wounded. Not surprisingly, most reports appear to be phrased in ways that would please superiors and reflect favorably on their authors and their men. Still, even if there was a general inflation of the number of enemy killed and wounded -- which there occasionally seems to have been -- that inflation was, on the whole, probably slight, and the actual number of rebels killed and wounded was probably only marginally lower than the figures quoted above.

These disparities stemmed, in the first instance, from a fundamental inequality in weapons and ammunition. This is evidenced, in part, by a comparison of the number of troops deployed by each side. There was, on the whole, general parity in the number of troops, with the Sandinistas enjoying a slight numerical superiority overall. As illustrated in Graphs 8.12a and 8.12b, in nearly 50% of the contacts the Marines-Guardia had between 11 and 20 troops; in 60%, between 11 and 25; and in 76%, between 11 and 35. For the Sandinistas the numbers were comparable. In slightly more than 75% of all contacts, the Sandinistas had 50 or fewer troops; in 60% of contacts they had 30 or fewer. The Marines-Guardia, it is true, usually had to guess about the total number of enemy troops; on more than a few occasions their guesses were surely wrong. Still, most

23. As noted, Sandinista mythologies posit thousands of Marine deaths in the Segovias. These beliefs, as emotionally appealing as they may be for some, are factually wrong: a painstaking sifting of Marine-Guardia reports and other documents reveals no evidence whatever that the actual figures differ from what those reports and documents say they are.
guesses give every appearance of being informed and judicious (as in Lt. Hays' report, above). In what is in some ways a surprising figure, the Sandinistas were reported to have had 100 or more troops in 13% of all the contacts -- 42 of 304 -- approximately one contact in eight. For the rebels, groups of 100 or more soldiers were difficult to hold together, and there is every indication that, when not preparing for or actually in a battle, most larger bands "disaggregated" into smaller bands of from 20 to 30 each (more on this later). The strength of individual Marines-Guardia patrols never exceeded sixty-five troops, though the practice of temporarily combining patrols in the field, or having multiple patrols operating in a particular zone, meant that Marine-Guardia strength commonly exceeded 100 troops in practice. These were, in other words, relatively small bands of men.

How long did an "average" contact last? The answer, from these data, is slightly over 25 minutes. This is not a particularly helpful figure, however, since averages are easily skewed by outliers. More useful here is a measure of the frequency with which contacts of a given duration occurred. The data on 346 contacts reveals that 138 -- or 40% -- lasted five minutes or less. Fifty-seven percent lasted 10 minutes or less; 66% lasted 15 minutes or less; and 81% lasted 30 minutes or less. Indeed, 91% of all battles were under one hour in length. Only 31 contacts -- nine percent of the total -- lasted more than one hour. And only six contacts -- less than two percent of the total -- lasted more than three hours. In other words, most contacts were very brief (see Graph 8.12c).

Are these data reliable? On the whole, I have no reason to suppose they are not. Of course the reports from which these data were drawn are enormously biased; all sources are. At the same time, there is little reason to doubt most of the basic information in these reports -- number of Marine-Guardia troops, number of enemy troops, duration of contact, etc. -- is accurate, for in these realms at least there would be little reason for patrol commanders to lie. Greater doubt can be legitimately cast on several other categories: who initiated contact, winner/loser, and the number of
casualties. It is undoubtedly possible that some reports were written to suggest that the Marine-Guardia patrol initiated contact and won, when in fact they were ambushed and lost. Yet is very unlikely that this happened on an anything approaching a large scale.

First, as we have seen, Marine-Guardia officers were quite capable of writing reports that reflected badly on themselves; superior officers were well aware that some battles were won and others lost -- that was part of "the game."24 Second, all major Sandinista victories as registered in pro-Sandinista sources -- the battles of Las Cruces, Bramaderos, Guanacastillo, Las Puertas, La Pelona, and others -- were also registered as Sandinista victories in the original Marine-Guardia reports. Third, great care was taken to evaluate each report on its own merits; in cases where even a sliver of doubt was registered, the safer route was taken and a neutral category selected -- "unknown" or "chance/neither."

Finally, perhaps the most important guarantor of the accuracy of these reports stemmed from the demands made on patrol commanders to provide accurate information to their superiors. Whether that information was good, bad, or indifferent, Marine-Guardia colonels and generals would not countenance systematic lying and deception. Instead it was part of the disciplinary code of the organization that at least a minimal level of accuracy be maintained. How those reports were subsequently doctored to make them more palatable to the press, other branches of government, and posterity is another issue.

Indeed, there is much to indicate that substantial revisions were made between the original reports and the versions making their way to the State Department, The New York Times, and the "Official List of Contacts." For instance, in more than a dozen instances, women and children, reported killed and/or wounded in the original "contact" report, were deleted from later edited versions of the same battle.25

24. Contacts with enemy soldiers, and indeed the entire experience of fighting "bandits" in Nicaragua was commonly referred to as "the game," e.g., Patrol Report, W. Elmore, Jalapa, 6 Jan. 1931, NA 127/202/11.
25. For instance: Lieutenant G.K. Burt's contact report of 19 Oct. 1931 (NA 127/202/11) contained three deletions: "Patrol moved forward [after contact] and found one dead Bandit, and one woman also dead." A thick pen had crossed out the clause, "and one woman also dead"; later in the report the phrases "the woman was unidentified" and "1
In summary, then, these data on 350 contacts provide something of an "objective" measure of what one already knows after poring over the more than 750 extant Marine-GN patrol and combat reports: the Marines-Guardia enjoyed enormous tactical advantages on the field of battle and in the day-to-day prosecution of the war. Despite Sandinista and popular mythologies of the "invincible guerrilla," in reality the Marines-Guardia outgunned and outclassed the rebels by virtually every index by which such factors can be measured. This reality, at least, was a simple one: the rebels were the hunted, the Marines-Guardia the hunters. "In Nicaragua, señores," ran one of the most popular verses of one of the most popular Sandinista songs from the period, "the mouse bites the cat." Such a construction playfully mocked, while at the same time ruefully acknowledging, a fundamental reality of the Rebellion: that the relative power of "invaders and traitors" to "patriots" was, indeed, as cat to mouse.

**The Defending Army: Military structure and organization**

Particularly after Sandino's return from Mexico in mid-1930, the Defending Army was modelled, at least in theory, along the lines of a regular army, with a general staff (Estado Mayor), official ranks (generals, colonels, captains, majors, lieutenants, and so on), and a strict chain of command. In practice, of course, there was a constant tension between central authority and local authorities. The Civil War of 1926, as we have seen, was both product and producer of the fragmented political milieu of Nicaragua, a process marked in the first instance by a radical decentering and dispersion of power and authority. And as the Civil War multiplied the sites from which legitimate authority was exercised, so too did Sandino's Rebellion. Recall the organizational dynamics of Liberal

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woman killed" were similarly crossed out. In Lt. Frisbie’s contact report of 5 Jan. 1932 (NA127202/11) the following sentence was crossed out in an identical fashion: "One of the two killed outright proved to be a woman, dressed with clothing trimmed at the neck and sleeves with red and black." In both cases, the "Official List of Contacts" deleted the deaths of the women killed, counting only the men. A dozen similar examples could be cited. The State Department also received condensed and edited versions of these reports. 

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armies during the Civil War -- their "lumpy," aggregated, nodally dispersed qualities. The same dynamics of Segovian warfare held sway, by and large, for the Defending Army. Centripetal and centrifugal forces worked in constant creative tension: as hatred against the foreign invader and internal enemies and love of Sandino and la patria pulled military units together, the enemy's constant patrolling and superior firepower combined with struggles over scarce resources wrenched them apart again. The Civil War and its antecedents in the Segovias "primed the pump," in effect, for Sandino's Rebellion. Sandino's rebel columns sprang up from fertile soil, from a political-cultural milieu already organized around the theory and practice of local gang leaders, gang warfare, gang violence. The techniques, tools, and language of violence used by Sandino's rebels -- local caudillismo, the "guarantee system," selective property destruction, ritual terror, and others -- all were possessed, as we have seen, of long and distinguished pedigrees.

How were the columns of the Defending Army distributed geographically? The map reproduced on the following page (Map 8.14), taken from a pro-Sandinista booklet published in 1986, remains, until now, the most definitive word on the subject; similar maps sprinkle the literature, in magazine and newspaper articles as well as books.26 The map is, in effect, a cartographic expression of a manifesto published by Sandino in mid-1931.27 As a symbol, the map reveals a great deal about how the Sandinistas saw themselves at the time, about their desire to exercise control over the physical territory of the nation, and about the desire of latter-day Sandinistas to see their progenitors as a vast and powerful regular army controlling most of the national territory. The map bears virutually no resemblance to the way things "actually" were, however: At no time did Sandinista control over the national territory even begin to approach what is represented here; "zones of control" -- itself a problematic concept -- were never so neatly fixed or sharply defined; some "Expeditionary Chiefs" operated in their respective "zones" only

26. E.g., see the maps accompanying Vargas's articles in Nuevo Diario, op. cit.; for an earlier version see Alegria and Flakoll, pp. 76-77.
ZONA DE OPERACIONES DE LAS COLUMNAS DEL
EJERCITO DEFENSOR DE LA SOBERANIA NACIONAL
DE NICARAGUA, 1931–1932.

Distribución geográfica de las columnas expedicionarias del
EDSN y sus respectivos jefes 1931—1932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLUMNA</th>
<th>JEFE EXPEDICIONARIOS</th>
<th>DEPARTAMENTO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Pedro Altamirano</td>
<td>Boaco, Chinandega y Matagalpa</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>General Carlos Salgado</td>
<td>Zelaya</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>General Pedro Antonio Irias</td>
<td>Jinotega</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>General Juan Gregorio Colindres</td>
<td>Nueva Segovia y Madriz</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>General José León Díaz</td>
<td>León y Chinandega</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>General Abraham Rivera</td>
<td>Zelaya</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>General Israel Peraza</td>
<td>Estelí</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>General Juan Pablo Urtizcore</td>
<td>Nueva Segovia y Madriz</td>
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MAP 8.14: Mapmaking as Mythmaking:
The conventional Sandinista representation of the geographic distribution of the
Defending Army's Expeditionary Columns, 1931-1932. (Taken from Instituto de
Estudio del Sandinismo, 1986a, p. 29.)
briefly, e.g., Carlos Salgado spent the vast bulk of his time in the western Segovias, around Somoto and across the border in Honduras, and only ventured to the east coast area once -- in mid-1931. This map, in short, is much like the larger historiography of the Rebellion: interpretation-rich and data-poor.

In practice, power and authority in the Defending Army were accumulated and exercised by individual strongmen, local caudillos or jefes. Most -- more than ninety percent -- customarily operated within particular zones, exploiting their knowledge of the land and the people to carve out small jurisdictional niches, little fiefdoms of sorts, shared, bordered and contested by neighboring powerholders.

Who were these men? Fortunately for historians, the Marines and Guardia did a fairly good job of identifying them -- as the first step toward hunting them down and killing them. Reading Marine-Guardia patrol, combat, and intelligence reports, one is immediately struck by the plenitude of names, the thousands upon thousands of names, and among them, the hundreds of alleged "bandit jefes." Who were all these people? Who was this jefe Toribio Sanchez, in Lieutenant Bean's report quoted above? Was he really an important local chief? The super-abundance of names is one of the most interesting and frustrating aspects of researching the Rebellion -- interesting because it becomes possible, in theory, to track the activities of thousands of individuals over time, and frustrating because, lacking some kind of order, the jumble of names means little.

One way to tackle this problem and exploit this opportunity is to produce a master index for all names to appear in the documents. This I have done, after a fashion, organizing on a computer database the names of all Segovianos to appear in the following types of documents: (1) patrol and combat reports; (2) intelligence reports; (3) Somoza's El verdadero Sandino (which is chock full of names, though no edition carries a name index); (4) all extant Sandinista documents (including all captured

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28. It is possible that Salgado made another expedition east in October 1931, though the data on this are unclear.
correspondence, all Sandinista documents in Somoza's book, and Sandino's collected works); (5) documents relating to the Anastacio Hernández case; (6) the IES testimonies; and (7) the secondary literature.\textsuperscript{29} The resulting name index runs to nearly 200 single-spaced pages. Organizing the data in this fashion permits the researcher to investigate aspects of the Rebellion that simply could not be investigated any other way -- tracing the activities of single individuals over time, cross-checking different classes of documents against one another, determining the major and minor actors and the connections between them, and so on.

Here I am concerned with identifying the military authorities of the Defending Army. The database includes the names of nearly 2000 individuals who reportedly actively aided or worked in some capacity with the Defending Army from 1927 to the end of 1932. Most names -- nearly three-quarters -- appear only once, making them useless as subjects of longitudinal investigation. Still, nearly 500 individuals appear in the same locality in two or more separate reports as "bandits" or "bandit supporters," and nearly 350 of these were reported as officers or officials (i.e., holding military rank or civil post).

Of these, one can identify at least ninety-seven men who were, for a period of at least several months, jefes, or leaders of armed bands against the Marines-Guardia. Their names and career histories are presented on Figure 8.15. (In fact there were many more local jefes than listed here; the documents speak of more than 120 additional jefes who are not included here because they appear only once in the documents I have examined.) These ninety-seven bona fide jefes tend to fall into one or more of the following categories: (1) Sandino and his General Staff, (2) the principal generals, (3) local guerrilla chieftains, and (4) special cases. The evidence indicates that some ninety percent of these rebel leaders -- 86 of 97 -- can be classed as "local guerrilla chieftains"

\textsuperscript{29} Certain categories of names were excluded from the index, most importantly, Guardia officers and soldiers, and civilians residing outside of the Segovias; also, only select references to major jefes were included.
### Graph 8.15: Known Sandinista Jefes, 1927-1934 (Cont.)

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<th>Jefe</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
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**Legend:**
- **Killed**
- **Unknown**
- **Active Before War**
- **A** = on General Staff
- **B** = General
- **C** = Known Leader
- **D** = Other Special Case
- **E** = Native of Jinotega
- **F** = Native of Jinotega to Pijao
MAP 8.16
THE USUAL "HOME BASES" OF EIGHTY-ONE "LOCAL JEFS" OF THE DEFENDING ARMY, 1927-1932

SOURCES: SEE FIGURE 8.15. NUMBERS CORRESPOND TO FIGURE 8.15.
MAP 8.17A: APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL ARMED BANDS IN THE SEGOVIAS, MARCH-APRIL 1928

(Sources: Intelligence reports of March 25, April 1, 8 and 15, 1928.)
MAP 8.17B: APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL ARMED BANDS IN THE SEGOVIAS, SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER 1929

(Sources: Intelligence reports of Oct., Nov. and Dec. 1929.)
MAP 8.17C: APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL ARMED BANDS IN THE SEGOVIAS, JUNE-JULY 1930

(Sources: Intelligence reports of July and August 1930.)
MAP 8.17D: APPROXIMATE LOCATIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL ARMED BANDS IN THE SEGOVIAS, JULY-AUGUST 1932

(Sources: Intelligence Reports of August and Sept. 1932)
or "local jefes" -- including Sandino himself, early in the Civil War and perhaps later.

The category "local jefe" is meant to include all those holding rank in the Defending Army who were able, for a period of at least several months, to mobilize and lead a group of local civilian supporters within a particular geographic zone. All of these leaders were able to forge together a group of followers and systematically draw labor, food, information, and other kinds of support from the local inhabitants. These eighty-six local jefes enjoyed a base in local production and the active support of significant sectors of the local population. Their geographical distribution is mapped out, in approximate fashion, in Map 8.16.30

It would take many pages to map the locations of all rebel guerrilla columns from 1927 through 1932. The ideal medium for such an endeavor would be an animated film, with different color shapes designating different guerrilla columns, expanding and contracting through time according to their relative strengths, appearing and disappearing depending upon whether their members were mobilized for battle or home visiting their families or planting crops; moving blips could represent Marine-Guardia patrols on the prowl; flashes of red light could indicate a contact, flashes of yellow political murders, flashes of orange, raids on haciendas, and so on -- the possibilities are intriguing, though unfortunately such a task falls outside the bounds of a history dissertation. The most that

30. On Map 8.16: The locations indicated for each local jefe are in some respects arbitrary; in the clustering of jefes in the Yali-Jinotega region, for instance, the locations of Nos. 96 (Santos Vasquez) and 17 (Dionisio Centeno) could just as well be switched, without altering the relative accuracy of the map; locations, in short, are approximate, though generally accurate to a radius of twenty or so miles. There are clearly many problems with this map. Most obviously, since most local chiefs were constantly on the move, it is impossible to fix a location on a map with any degree of precision. As a result, what might be called the "electron principle" was used, a sort of rough quantum mechanics of guerrilla warfare: given the impossibility of pinpointing on a map the precise location of a particular guerrilla column over time, it is nonetheless possible to determine, more or less, the probability of that column being in any particular area at any randomly chosen time. Most local jefes had what might be called "home bases" -- the Colón Valley for Jesus Valdivia, the area around Totagalpa for Catalino Vargas, and so on. The circles on Map 8.16 represent my best estimate of the "home base" of that particular guerrilla chieftan, the region in which one would have the greatest probability of encountering that chieftan at any randomly chosen time.
can be offered here are a series of maps, four in all, which provide "snapshots" of the locations and sizes of rebel columns according to the best guesstimates of Marine-Guardia intelligence analysts (Maps 8.17a to 8.17d). It is hoped that these maps, combined with other evidence presented here, helps to subvert the more conventional understanding that a handful of major generals operated within extensive and fixed zones of control. The reality, it is plain, was far messier.

At one level, the Defending Army was composed, essentially, of networks of these local _jefes_ and their followers, relatively autonomous nodes of power connected by dense webs of relations to other such nodes of power. Clearly, the categories of local _jefe_ and local gang are key to understanding the practical operation of the Defending Army as a whole. Local _jefes_ can be divided into several types according to how they became _jefes_ and the kinds of power they wielded. In the first category one can place the most powerful Sandinista generals, like Carlos Salgado, José León Díaz, and Pedro Altamirano, military commanders who emerged as notable local caudillos before or during the Civil War and whose power and influence grew dramatically after the launching of the Rebellion. In a second category one can put men like Pedro Blandón, Ismael Peralta, Juan Pablo Umanzor, and Miguel Angel Ortez -- relatively obscure Liberals during the Civil War who rose rather quickly to the highest echelons of leadership in the Defending Army. After these first two categories, the waters begin to muddy. A third tier might be said to consist of less powerful local chieftains who maintained close associations with one or another of the more powerful leaders, who remained formally subordinated to the first tier of leadership but whose cooperation was provisional and whose actions remained largely autonomous -- _jefes_ like Modesto Escalante and Verbonico Vaquedano in the western Segovias, for instance, or Santos Vasquez and Daniel Hernández in Jinotega. A fourth category, a sub-category of the third, was composed of local _jefes_ who served an apprenticeship period of sorts under more powerful local leaders before branching off and becoming independent local _jefes_.
in their own right. Pedrón in particular seems to have had more than half of the local jefes of the Jinotega region under his command at one time or another; indeed, many who later became independent chiefs in this region seem to have been trained, essentially, by Pedrón. A fifth category, also a sub-category of the third, was made up of local strongmen with longstanding criminal records who exploited the opportunities afforded by the Defending Army to continue their criminality under the Sandinista umbrella, but who felt little actual allegiance to the Defending Army. This last criterion is meant to distinguish genuine Sandinistas with personal histories as "outlaws" (like Captain Fulgencio Pérez in chapter six) from those who shared none of the ideals of Sandinismo but who opportunistically allied with one or another Sandinista chief in order to continue their outlawry under a new and convenient rubric -- men like Juan Castillo around San Isidro, or the notorious Conservative Juan Heriberto Rodríguez (or "Juan Botón") of the Estelí district, whose criminal exploits are explored more fully below. It would not be difficult to continue in this fashion, distinguishing various types and sub-types of local jefes, but even this sketch should make clear the tremendous plasticity of the category "local jefe."

Power and authority in the Defending Army, in short, were radically dispersed, decentered, and localized; they could also be hotly contested. Despite Sandino's efforts to impose his will on all the bands operating in the Segovias, there was, in the end, no single authority, no central will directing all local activities. There were, rather, multiple and overlapping authorities, of which Sandino was only one of the most prominent.

The most important resources for local jefes were alliances with local inhabitants; the more alliances a jefe was able to cultivate, the more power he would be able to wield. Local jefes were only able to operate by virtue of dense networks of kin and allies, combined with cunning, charisma, and, at least for some, fighting ability. These were tough, battle-hardened men. "His right hand is dead from a machete cut," wrote one Guardia lieutenant of Sandinista jefe Transito Sequiera. "Both sides of his face are
deeply cut with machete and he has a cut on each shoulder."\textsuperscript{31} Roque Vargas, "the one-armed Vargas," a local \textit{jefe} active around San Juan de Telpaneca, had lost his left hand in a machete fight years before the Rebellion; Colonel Porfirio Sanchez, Salvadoran by birth, sported a "very long scar along the right side of [his] face"; the Honduran Carlos Quesada, pegged as "a real bad hombre," was reputed to be missing a thumb.\textsuperscript{32} Such were the hazards and badges of the profession.

How were local gangs organized? In chapter two, above, it was suggested that the patriarchal family constituted one of the fundamental building blocks of Nicaraguan society. Not surprisingly, families and family networks also formed one of the basic building blocks of the columns and sub-columns of the Defending Army. A large body of evidence indicates, not surprisingly, that political affiliation commonly followed family lines, and that family networks were critical in the overall structure and organization of the rebel organization.

Consider two examples. Figures 8.18 and 8.19 attempt to map out some of the relations among and between some of the major individuals and families associated with the Defending Army in two subregions: around Somoto, San Lucas and the Honduran border (Map 2D), and around La Concordia and the Colón Valley (Map 4E). These examples were selected because they are relatively well documented, and because they are illustrative of the kinds of relationships that existed among and between members of the Defending Army all across the Segovias. Indeed, as complex as these diagrams appear to be, they remain poor substitutes for a comprehensive mapping of what was actually going on; a diagram a thousand times larger and ten thousand times more intricate might approach a closer approximation of reality. Still, these diagrams do begin

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} On Sequiera, Patrol Report, M.D. Smith, Jinotega, 27 Nov. 1932, NA127/202/14.
\item \textsuperscript{32} On Vargas, B-2 Report, 4 June 1929, p. 5, NA127/43A/4, and Contact Report, M.M. Mahoney, Apali, 14 June 1932, NA127/202/12; on Sanchez, personal data sheet, 9 April 1930, NA127/209/10; on Quesada, untitled description of "bandit jefes," 27 November 1927, NA127/43A/3, and same B-2 Report as for Vargas, above.
\end{itemize}
FIGURE 8.19: RELATIONS AMONG AND BETWEEN SANDINISTA JEFS IN THE SAN RAFAEL DEL NORTE-JINTOTECA SUBREGION (Sources: See Appendix 8.1)
to suggest some of the complexities involved among and between local *jefes* and the columns of the Defending Army.

Inspection of these diagrams reveals several instances of serious conflict within and between individuals and families within the Defending Army. Figure 8.18 describing the Somoto-San Lucas subregion, for instance, shows that local Sandinista *jefe* Teodoro Molina reportedly killed three members of the Mejía family of El Roble, while two years later other members of the same family were reported as active members of the Defending Army, under local *jefe* Julian Gutiérrez. The same diagram also shows that Julian Gutiérrez reportedly tried to kill one member of the Alvarado family while remaining in alliance with two other members of the same family. The precise nature of the conflicts in these particular cases is unclear. What is clear is that such conflicts were common.

Indeed, conflicts within and between columns was often rife. Given what we already know about the operation of Liberal armies during the Civil War, this should not be surprising. Consider one further example.

**Local *jefes* in alliance and conflict: The case of Dionisio Arteta, Pedro Blandón, Juan Butón, Francisco Galeano, and Perfecto Chavarría**

In early March 1930, Guardia Lieutenant Buchanan, operating out of Condega, reported briefly on a confusing situation in the Colón Valley and Miraflor Mountains (Map 4E). Sandinista General Pedro Blandón, it appeared, was "trying to gain contact with a group of bandits under Francisco Galiano, as it is reported that Galiano killed one of Blandon's Sub Jefes, Damasiano Orteo, and that Galiano is operating alone . . ."33 This was entirely possible. Two months earlier, in a deposition given to the Guardia by one J. Salomé Herrera, "Director and Professor in the Casa Local de la Escuela Local in the valley of El Carrizo" near Colón, Dionisio Arteta was reported killed by his own men early in the morning of January 2, 1930. In Señor Herrera's words:

At about ten p.m. on the night of January 1, 1930, there came to my schoolhouse a group of 20 bandits, the jefe of which was Dionisio Arteta. They sang and danced and played guitars until about 4:30 a.m. The jefe of the bandit group was sleeping on a table during all this time, but about 4:30 a.m. one of the bandits took the pistol away from Dionisio Arteta and placed it in his own holster, while Arteta was still sleeping. Shortly after this, Arteta woke up and gave the order to march, but the rest of the bandit group all stated that they would not go any further, or belong to this group any longer. During the argument which followed, the bandits fired five shots at their jefe, three of which entered his body, killing him instantly. The argument was over the division of some articles which the group had stolen, but I do not know what it was...

A month earlier, on December 4, 1929, the commanding officer at Estelí reported that "Donico Arteta is a jefe of a small group of twelve reported to be in the vicinity of San Vicente." The known members of the group were named as follows:

Angel Arteta
José Dolores Blandón
Juan Gutiérrez
Secundino Hernández

Bernardo Quintero
Filiberto Rodríguez
Pedro Rodríguez
Pablo Valdivia

"These men," the report continued, "live around Colon and the Rio Negro. Have no property and hide around Zapote near Concordia and Mira Flora mountains. They are part-time bandits. Have made many efforts to get these people but they are all related to people around Rinconada and Colon who hide them."

The first-named man on the above list, Angel Arteta, was the brother of the dead jefe, Dionisio; their father was Luciano Arteta. Seven months later, in July 1930, Angel Arteta was reported killed in a very curious contact near Estelí. On the afternoon of July 5, a combat patrol of fifteen enlisted Guardia led by one Marine officer successfully ambushed a rebel column of seventy-five near El Rodeo, northeast of Estelí in the Miraflores Mountains. The rebels were completely surprised and routed. After the battle, the patrol "found ten dead bandits and one wounded who was unable to escape,

35. R-2 Report, 17 December 1929, p. 4. This is an interesting list of names; to my knowledge, none except Angel Arteta surface anywhere else in the documents. Angel Arteta is mentioned in Lt. G.C. Smith's Patrol Report of 7 July 1930, cited below.
and who was identified as Angel Arteta, son of ex-bandit jefe Luciano Arteta, who stated that the jefes were Generals Reyes López, Juan Butón, and Pedro Blandón.  

Reyes López and Pedro Blandón were well-known Sandinista jefes. Juan Butón was not. Juan Butón, in fact, was the alias of none other than Juan Heriberto Rodríguez, a notorious Conservative henchman active in the region long before the 1926-1927 Civil War. In early 1928, Juan Heriberto Rodríguez, a.k.a. Juan Butón, was charged in Matagalpa with beating a pregnant woman and her unborn child to death. When it became apparent that he was immune from prosecution in Matagalpa due to his close connections with the Civil Police Force there -- "He has a number of influential Conservative friends and relatives in that area" -- Juan Heriberto Rodríguez was conscripted into the Casual Company of the Guardia Nacional. The Casual Company was a branch of the Guardia created, essentially, as a way to circumvent the Nicaraguan courts and imprison known criminals without trial -- a technique used to imprison Anastacio Hernández, for example. Rodríguez served fewer than seven months. Conscription on July 26, 1928, he was released on February 18, 1929. After his release he headed back to the Segovias to continue his earlier vocation, soon linking up with Pedro Blandón and other Sandinista and non-Sandinista gang leaders around the Colón Valley and Miraflores Mountains.

Exactly one month after the contact of July 5, 1930, another took place in which Juan Heriberto Rodríguez -- Juan Butón -- was killed. "On the night of 4 August 1930," the commanding officer at Estelí reported, "information was given me from refugees, who arrived in large numbers, that Pedro Blandón with four other jefes and a group estimated at one hundred twenty-five bandits had sacked all the fincas in the Cacao area

37. Records of Prisoners, Casefiles and Special Orders, National Penitentiary, Managua, NA127/202/16/76.
38. Prisoners confined in this Penitentiary on orders other than Judges, A.A. Gladden, Division de Penitenciaria Nacional, Managua, 13 February 1929; note on his release penned on margin.
on the previous night." Early on the following morning a heavily armed combat patrol left Estelí in hot pursuit. In mid-morning at Cacao they learned that the rebels had split up, Blandón heading north and Butón heading south. They decided to go south; Butón was reportedly nearby. "We found this entire area devastated," the patrol commander later reported, "the women beaten and raped and the houses burned." A little before noon, the patrol "found a boy of about fourteen years of age who, after being threatened with death, admitted knowing the position of the bandit camp, and agreed to lead us to it." Butón's forces were "completely surprised" by the patrol, and after a brief firefight, "General Juan Botón [and] Coronel Palmazón" were found among the dead. Also recovered at the scene of the battle were eight red-and-black hatbands.

The next day, August 6, 1930, "the dead bandits were put on exhibition in the [central] park [in Estelí] for all to see.

Botón and Palmazón were recognized many times by over two thousand people who viewed their bodies, and who were very much elated over the death of these two men. Some of the women who had been raped by these same two men a few days previously were among the onlookers. A committee of citizens from Estelí and the surrounding countryside called in a body at the Cuartel and offered congratulations to all the Guardia.39

Two days later, the Estelí Department Commander commended the work of the combat patrol: "Juan Heriberto Rodríguez... alias Juan Boton, has committed many atrocious crimes, mostly against young girls ranging from eight to ten years of age," he wrote.

On the day prior to his death, he raped a small girl eight years of age at Moropotente, Department of Estelí. His group ransacked the surrounding countryside and was the cause of many farmers abandoning their farms... His death is a serious blow to organized banditry and a great relief to the womanhood of this vicinity.

Butón was positively identified by hundreds of citizens of Estelí by means of "a large machete scar on the back of his neck... his family also stated that there was no doubt that was the body of Juan Butón."40

40. First Endorsement to Smith Contact Report, D. McDonald, 8 August 1930.
On the day Juan Butón was killed, another jefe in his band was positively identified as Pedro Salgado -- apparently no relation to the famous Sandinista Carlos Salgado. Pedro Salgado had long been active as a Conservative gang leader in the Estelí district. In March 1928 he was reportedly in the gang of the Conservative Marcelino Hernández, then active in the area just east of Estelí; in December 1929 he was mistakenly reported killed in a combat near El Sauce. A month later, on the night of January 23, 1930, a group of about twenty "bandits" headed by Pedro Salgado reportedly robbed the finca of one Ponciano Torres at Llano Largo near Colón. Salgado, it appeared, had recently taken over the gang formerly headed by Luciano Arteta. "Salgado is an old bandit," the commanding officer at Estelí reported, "who was second jefe for Marcelino Hernández when he robbed Sebaco. I captured Salgado once and turned him over to Jinotega but he has apparently escaped or been released." After Juan Butón's death, Pedro Salgado was not heard from again.

But this is not the end of the story. We began with Lieutenant Buchanan's curious observation that Sandinista General Pedro Blandón was trying "to gain contact with a group of bandits under Francisco Galiano, as it is reported that Galiano killed one of Blandón's Sub Jefes, Damasiano Orteto . . ." Francisco Galeano, a longtime Sandinista leader, was reportedly with General Pedro Altamirano during the famous San Marcos murders of September 1928; there are scattered other references to him after that.

In early February 1931, tragedy befell Francisco Galeano. It is difficult to tell exactly what happened. The Marines-Guardia reported information from one source that he was killed on February 5 in a machete fight with fellow Sandinista jefe Perfecto Chavarría. A cache of letters captured in a contact a month later revealed a more

43. E.g., R-2 Report, 22 October 1928, p. 10
complicated story. On February 12, 1931, Sandino wrote to "The brothers Sargeant
Major Francisco Galeano, Catalino Olivas," and others in the following terms:

Dear Brothers:

In receipt of the note from our brother Sgt. Major Francisco Galeano, in
which he gives the explanations requested by these Headquarters.
We have also received the reports from the Military Commission of this
Headquarters, which acted under Lt. Colonel Perfecto Chavarría, in which he
declares that he has discharged our brother Sgt. Major Francisco Galeano from his
position as Chief of Police of Palacaguina, due to the fact that Sgt. Major Galeano
committed many abuses of authority in that place.

Exactly how Sargent Major Francisco Galeano had "abused his authority" as Chief of
Police of Palacaguina is unknown; his "explanations" to Sandino have not been
discovered; nor are there any other, more direct references to the tensions at work here.

On February 19, Sandino accepted Galeano's request for a transfer. Two weeks later, on
March 8, an important cache of letters was captured by the Palacaguina patrol; among
them were letters of sympathy to Francisco Galeano from several of his comrades in the
Defending Army. From General Carlos Salgado, dated February 6: "I regret very much
the incident you suffered"; from Elías Martínez, the same date: "I am very sorry for the
unfortunate event which has occurred to you"; from Sargeant Major Teodoro Polanco,
undated: "I regret very much the news which I received in regard to the misfortune
which occurred to you." Francisco Galeano's name does not appear again in the
documents. What he did, and what happened to him, are unknown. Both had something
to do with his "abuse of authority" in the Palacaguina district and a simmering conflict
with Perfecto Chavarría, another important local jefe. One note in the captured cache,

45. A very valuable collection of Sandinista correspondence, reportedly "captured by the
Palacaguina patrol" and in English translation only, appears in the Northern Area
Intelligence Report of 1 March 1931 (NA127/209/2). On March 8, 1931, Lt. J.O.
Brauer's patrol attacked a rebel camp at Cusmaje near Palacaguina (Map 3D-2,
NA127/202/11) "and there found more correspondence of Poncho Galeano and a
'mochilla' [knapsack]." It is curious that letters captured on March 8 got into an
intelligence report dated March 1. Lt. Robert G. Ballance, the report's author, probably
backdated a report he was late in filing. What happened to the originals is unknown.
from Juez de Mesta José J. Martínez to Major Francisco Galeano, undated, reads as follows:

I report to you that I was outraged by the Guardia in the Pueblo Nuevo Valley, that I was threatened with death, and that my houses will be burnt; this is due to denunciations that you and your men have passed through here. Do not send me any communication because I am flying away.

Another note, undated, from Lucia Olivas to Francisco Galeano, was similarly plaintive, though more solicitous than accusatory:

I have to state to you that the Guardia came here a few days ago intending to kill all of us, so we have no hopes but that you come and defend us, as they will return and will kill us and burn the house down.

There are some hints that the conflict stemmed, in part, from the division and requisitioning of supplies -- or spoils. On the day before "the incident [he] suffered," Francisco Galeano received a note from one Diego Dávila. Dávila informed Galeano that he had received "a cargo" for him, and also a letter from General José León Díaz, which he was forwarding, requesting clothing. Galeano was instructed to deliver the clothing to Dávila. In a note from José León Díaz to Galeano dated February 3, Díaz did not mention any clothes. "At present we have nothing new around this camp," he wrote to Galeano,

only I have to report to you that you have succeeded in making the enemy crazy as we are at a distance of four blocks from the town of Pueblo Nuevo and broke [cut?] the lines [telegraph lines?], and they have not pursued us. We made the march during the day and had no trouble at all. I am also directing you to place the cargo of salt at the Limón camp, in case some force comes there, they can take salt but it must not be kept there.

General Díaz was evidently happily surprised that his column could operate so brazenly, and in broad daylight; his rather cryptic attribution of this result to Francisco Galeano's "success in making the enemy crazy" was probably related to the fact that, by late 1930 and certainly by early 1931, the Marines-Guardia were reporting dramatic increases in rebel activity and aggressiveness across much of the north, especially around Palacaguina. They responded in kind, sending out larger and more aggressive patrols, and generally clamping down on the inhabitants with relatively massive shows of force.
And that is about as far as the documents take us; many loose ends must inevitably remain. It is perhaps worth noting that Perfecto Chavarría was reportedly operating with Dionisio Arteta -- with whose death this story began -- in December 1929. Recall that Francisco Galeano was Dionisio Arteta's alleged killer. Perfecto Chavarría continued to operate in the zone generally east of Palacagüina until November 1932, when he was killed in a contact with the Guardia at Las Lajas near Jinotega and his "body absolutely identified."46 Five of the principals in this tale ended up dead -- Chavarría, Blandón, Butón, and the two Artetas -- and two -- Francisco Galeano and Pedro Salgado -- do not appear in the documents again.

This brief sketch of a handful of minor episodes in the life of the Defending Army is suggestive of several broader conclusions. For one, the evidence is clear that power struggles within the Defending Army were common. The conflicts described above were not aberrations; rather, similar conflicts were integral to the practical operation of the rebel organization across the Segovias, from beginning to end. In the episodes described above, conflicts seem to have been fueled primarily by personal feuds and quests for personal power. Winners and losers were commonly determined by differential access to and control over scarce resources, human and material; the personal loyalty of one's subordinates was key, as Dionisio Arteta, for one, learned too late. The ever-present shadow of Marine-Guardia military superiority was also critical, sharpening the exigencies of the struggle while both creating and bridging divisions between columns. At one level, constant Marine-Guardia patrolling kept the rebels divided into smaller groups that had to stay small to stay alive. On the other hand, Marine-Guardia violence against civilians generated intense hatreds and widespread popular support for the rebels and worked to unify rebels and rebel columns. Subsequent chapters explore this latter phenomenon in greater detail.

46. GN-2 Report, 1 December 1932, p. 4.
The episodes described above also suggest that the line between members and non-members of the Defending Army were often fuzzy and difficult to draw. Was Juan Butón a "member" of the rebel organization? What about Dionisio Arteta, or Pedro Salgado? All three were local jefes who were able to effectively mobilize and lead bands of armed men and who acted, at times, in concert with bona-fide Sandinista leaders. Did that make them "Sandinista"? The answer, it seems, is both yes and no -- No because Juan Butón flagrantly violated most every ethical and legal Sandinista precept, particularly the rigidly enforced strictures against rape. For this reason he and others were not included on the list of Sandinista jefes. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Juan Butón was actively allied with bona fide Sandinista leaders. Many similar examples could be cited. Indeed, nearly a third of the local jefes on Figure 8.15 do not appear in any extant Sandinista correspondence. While there is no evidence that any had backgrounds as Conservative gang leaders, there is little reason to doubt that all were relatively autonomous agents with their own personal gripes and grievances and agendas.

Sandino, in short, worked incessantly to impose greater order and regularity into what was, in practice, a very loosely constituted rebel organization. Sometimes he succeeded, and sometimes he did not. "We have been informed that rivalry exists among the small jefes of that zone [between San Juan de Telpaneca and Condega], and we believe that with an Expeditionary Jefe things will be more satisfactory," wrote Sandino on April 24, 1931 to five of his principal lieutenants active in that area. In the same letter he also tried to smooth over a festering conflict between two of his principal subordinates: "I understand there exists antipathy among Major [Ladislao] Palacios and Major [Teodoro] Polanco and other jefes," he wrote, "and that prejudices us, though they may not believe it." As in most such cases, the most Sandino could reasonably do was
cajole and castigate and try to mend fences, in this case giving the job to General Carlos
Salgado -- "a serious man and I believe he is able to settle things in that place."\(^{47}\)

In this same letter, Sandino issued a series of orders reorganizing the rebel
columns in the district: Colonel Inez Hernández Gómez, for instance, was named Second
Jefe of General Salgado's detachment; Lieutenant Colonel Reyes López was named Third
Jefe of the same Expeditionary Force; and so on. This letter was but one in a long series
of decrees and directives, issued by Sandino, intended, ultimately, to impose his will on
and more effectively order, organize, and discipline the unruly rebel columns.
Particularly after mid-1930s, as the Defending Army expanded its size and operations,
Sandino worked furiously to streamline and rationalize its overall organization. A
seemingly endless string of directives and decrees reshuffled and reworked and
remoulded the rebel columns into something that was supposed to resemble a regular
army, though in the end the rebel organization remained as "lumpy" and fractured as
ever.

Elsewhere in the Segovias, especially during 1931 and 1932 in the coffee regions
of Jinotega and Matagalpa, a key source of conflict between rebel columns emerged from
the structural differences between the largest permanent columns, which were very costly
for local inhabitants to maintain, and the smaller rebel groups, which were more locally-
oriented and less demanding on the civilian economy. In October 1932, a Guardia patrol
of thirteen men "dressed in civilian clothes and wearing bandit insignias on hats" began
to operate in the district due east of Jinotega. The lieutenant in charge of the spy mission
uncovered some very interesting information. "It was found that groups operating in the
vicinity of Datanlí . . . are gangs of local people who rob and kill their enemies," he
reported. On the other hand, the local people, he learned, "avoid all contact with the
bandit groups from the larger leaders.

\(^{47}\) Sandino to Carlos Salgado, Inez Hernández Gómez, Reyes López, Teodoro Polanco,
and Laislao Palacios, 24 April 1931, NA127/202/4/35.
On stating that I had come from Sandino's camp it was found that the people avoided me, but on stating that I was working with Emilio Blandón who is the leader in the Los Robles section, I then found that the people were more than glad to give information without even threatening them... The people of Datanli and El Salto... try to avoid the larger groups, and act as bandits on their own initiative, and according to information gained they are afraid of the larger groups because they collect contributions in the name of the Ejercito Libertador, and do not send their contributions to the bandits.  

It is clear from this and other reports that local inhabitants carefully distinguished between rebel columns, and that local initiative was key in the process of mobilizing and supporting such armed bands.

Most of the time it was all Sandino could do to rein in his subordinates and keep them from undermining his own authority even further. In one well-known instance, on 1 January 1930, General Miguel Angel Ortez published a blistering patriotic handbill which prominently featured his own name, an action for which he was severely castigated by Sandino. In another well-known episode, in late 1932 Sandinista General Juan Gregorio Colindres made what Sandino considered to be a criminally stupid blunder when, during the offensive into León and Chinandega departments, Colindres unilaterally and without authorization declared himself Provisional Revolutionary President of Nicaragua. Furious, Sandino was tempted to have Colindres shot, though the whole affair soon blew over.

These two episodes, relatively insignificant in themselves, were also emblematic of a far more widespread crisis of authority within the rebel ranks. This crisis taken to its extreme in the relationship between Sandino and Pedrón. Many ex-soldiers of the Defending Army remembered that Pedrón was completely independent from Sandino. "Pedrón was not a very good friend of Sandino's, they always walked separately, at a distance," remembered Luisa Cano Arauz in an eminently typical testimony.  

49. A copy of Ortez's "Manifesto del Gral. Miguel Angel Orthés y Guillén al pueblo nicaragüense y en general al Centroamérica" is in RG127/202/13; Sandino's response is in Macaulay, pp. 165-166.  
51. IES 037: 3; similar recollections appear in ch. 11, below.
memories are buttressed, in part, by the documentary record. On one occasion, on February 3, 1931, Sandino wrote to Pedrón, mildly castigating him for acting too independently. "I would like to inform you," he ordered, "that you remain solemnly prohibited from responding to any note the enemy sends to you."52 Sandino's efforts to assert his authority over his ostensible subordinate continued until the end of the war. In October 1932 he learned that Pedrón had devised his own official seal bearing the inscription, "Pedro Altamirano, General Libertador de la Patria." (Unfortunately, no known copies of the seal survive.) While Sandino did not forbid Pedrón from using the seal, he strongly advised against using it, suggesting "Divisional General of the Liberating Army" instead of "Liberating General of the Patria." Pedrón apparently complied with the request.53

A web of oppositional tensions tended to determine the size and day-to-day operations of the rebel columns. In terms of size, large groups of 100 or more troops were far easier for the Marines-Guardia to discover, track down, and destroy or disperse. They also required enormous quantities of material resources on a daily basis, most critically food and clothing, as well as money, medicines, arms and ammunition. For these and similar reasons, large columns were relatively rare. Large concentrations of troops, on the other hand, were generally required to effectively challenge Marine-Guardia patrols or garrisons.

Most local groups or gangs were not constantly mobilized. Rather, periods of group activity were commonly followed by the temporary disbandment and dispersal of the column, like the calm following a storm. "I am convinced," declared one Marine-Guardia lieutenant emphatically, "that the group of Julian Gutiérrez have no permanent camp but live in separate houses and only gather just before going on a raid."54 This was indeed the commonest pattern, and not only for Julian Gutiérrez. "The bandit forces are

52. Somoza, p. 201.
only assembled ... to ambush patrols, murder or pillage," lamented Northern Area Commander Colonel Denig in May 1930 in a proposal to forcibly relocate thousands of mountain peasants into reconcentration centers;

and when this purpose is accomplished the group immediately disperses except a small nucleus which acts as a bodyguard for the Jefe ... It may be seen from this, that there are potential bandit forces widely scattered, and over which no surveillance can be exercised ... That these potential bandits can be quickly assembled and formed into a comparatively well-armed group has been repeatedly demonstrated. It has also been repeatedly demonstrated that subsequent to any combat, the bandit group becomes divided into such small divisions that successful pursuit is impossible.53

If Colonel Denig's proposal was highly impracticable, he did seem to have a fairly good grasp, at least, of what the problem was. Even the most powerful jefes rhythmically alternated between spurts of mobilization and activity followed by longer periods of demobilization, rest, and replenishment. "According to all information gathered, there is no bandit stronghold," reported Lieutenant E.E. Leibensperger in April 1929 on the activities of Pedrón's followers in the mountains of Jinotega. "All the members of the gang live on fincas and are peaceful citizens when the marines or guardia are in the vicinity; when a raid is contemplated, they get their rifles from their hiding places and assemble at some appointed rendezvous."56 Nearly a year later, another intelligence analyst, in a synoptic "Estimate of the Situation" in the Northern Area, confidently asserted that "There is no doubt that a large proportion of the 'mozo' type who are recruited by the bandit jefes are 'part-time' bandits who simply hide their arms and disperse under the guise of being only peaceful citizens" -- which in turn "[made] an estimate of the total number of bandits in the area merely guesswork."57 Patrol and combat reports are filled with intimations of this same phenomenon. In early March 1931, for instance, the patrol of Lieutenant Brauer, in search of a reported Sandinista

55. Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, R.L. Denig, Ocotal, 10 May 1930, NA127/202/7/94. The relocation scheme was never implemented; see ch. 10, below.
57. A. Racicot, Ocotal, 28 Feb. 1930, NA127/205/2/16D.
camp, encountered a man on the trail who "agreed," reluctantly, to serve as a guide. He led the patrol along a high mountain trail; in Lieutenant Brauer's words, "from this trail we were visible to any bandit outposts in the vicinity for more than two hours and the guide denied knowledge of any other trail." As the patrol approached the suspected "bandit" camp they were suddenly set upon by some fifty rebels who had chosen an excellent position from which to launch an attack. "We learned from friendly inhabitants later," the lieutenant subsequently reported, "that twenty men all armed with rifles and pistols and carrying extra ammunition entered the camp an hour before we arrived."

From this report it is apparent that the Sandinistas were able to nearly double the size of their forces (from around thirty to around fifty) in one or two hours. The episode also serves to underscore the fleetness and sophistication of the rebel spy system.58

Significantly, similar recollections are not laced throughout the IES testimonies. For a range of reasons explored more fully in the Epilogue, by the 1980s the phenomenon of "part-time" military mobilization of the campesinos on behalf of the Defending Army tended to be erased from personal and collective memories of the period. A few remembered it vividly: "I remember very well how the campesinos rotated their lives between the fields and the guerrilla columns," the Peruvian Aprista Esteban Pavletich (who served as Sandino's personal secretary during parts of 1928 and 1929) told an interviewer fifty years later. "They planted their crops, incorporated themselves into Sandino's armies, and later returned to their fields for the harvest."59 Among Segoviano ex-rebels, on the other hand, the issue was usually dexterously skirted, and sometimes denied altogether: José Ortiz, longtime resident of San Rafael del Norte who fought with Sandino during the Civil War, recalled his role as a "part-time combatant" (combatiente de medio tiempo) in the Defending Army. Asked if there were many who participated in

a similar fashion (and evidently misunderstanding the question), he replied, "No, very few."\textsuperscript{60}

There is, in other words, no way of determining with any degree of precision the total number of soldiers active in the Defending Army at any given time. The rebel organization was more a fluid and dynamic process than a solidified institution; never was there a fixed number of soldiers and columns. Rebel groups were constantly being mobilized and demobilized, activated and deactivated, according to a complex set of criteria we have only begun to glimpse the outlines of here. As might be imagined, these cycles of activity and inactivity proved extremely vexatious for those charged with the "eradication" of "banditry" in the Segovias, for the simple reason that they made it virtually impossible to distinguish between pacific civilians and rebel soldiers -- a paradox explored in greater detail in chapter ten.

Conclusions

It is extraordinary to consider how much of the war boiled down the simple and overwhelming fact of Marine-GN military superiority. Yet it would be a mistake to place undue emphasis on this factor alone. At one level, the evidence is clear that the Marines-Guardia comprised a far superior fighting force, primarily because they employed far better and more deadly weapons. As a result, nine times of ten the Marines-GN were the hunters and the Sandinistas the hunted. Yet this was not the only dynamic at work.

Perhaps the most fruitful way to envision the relationship between the Marines-Guardia and the Sandinistas is in terms of the constraints and enablements each confronted.

These, in turn, were governed by a series of elemental realities: (1) the stocks of material

\textsuperscript{60} IES 086: 4. "[José Ortiz:] Participó en la guerra constitucionalista y el Ejército Defensor, como combatiente de medio tiempo, es decir, por temporadas. . . . [Pregunta:] De manera que usted no fue permanente, usted entraba al ejército y volvía a salir? [Respuesta:] Sí, entraba y salía. [Pregunta:] Y por qué? [Respuesta:] Porque tenía mi trabajo. . . . [Pregunta:] Y había mucha gente como usted que era así por temporada? [Respuesta:] No, muy poco. Aquí falta mucha gente, falta un montón, falta Goyo Gutiérrez, [other names . . .]" It seems clear that Don José misunderstood the question, thinking that he was being asked who survived from that period.
resources enjoyed by each side; (2) the organizational dynamics and capabilities of each side; (3) the geographic and geo-political milieu confronting each side, including the terrain of the Segovias; the semi-porosity of the Honduran border; political-economic relations in the populated regions outside of the Segovias, particularly Matagalpa, Chontales, Boaco, León, and Chinandega; the existence of vast wilderness areas to the north and east of the Segovias; and (4) world-historical events and processes.

Each side was constrained at some levels and enabled at others; each enjoyed certain advantages and suffered certain disadvantages. In strictly military terms, the single most important elemental reality confronting both sides was the overwhelmingly superior military might of the Marines and Guardia. From the beginning to the end of the Rebellion the Marines-Guardia enjoyed an exponentially greater capacity to injure the enemy. This carried a number of far-reaching consequences. First, it allowed the occupying forces to prevent any attack on the cities of the Pacific littoral. It also allowed them, if not to spatially contain the Rebellion, to prevent it from entering the power centers of the country. For the Sandinistas for most of the war, attacks on the Pacific coast would have been suicidal. Second, by constant patrolling throughout the Segovias, the Marines-Guardia compelled the Sandinistas to divide into small guerrilla bands and successfully prevented (at least most of the time) the formation of large guerrilla forces within populated areas. Constant airplane patrol and reconnoissance worked toward the same end. Third, the Marines-Guardia were consistently able to defeat the rebels on the field of battle, due to the simple but critical fact of superior weaponry. Fourth, the Marines-Guardia were able to keep the Defending Army constantly on the defensive, to wear them down by chasing them endlessly about, "hunting" them, flushing them out of their hiding places, burning their crops, killing their livestock, destroying their houses and camps and stores of food. Fifth, given their superior stocks of material resources, the Marines-GN were able to co-opt a significant proportion of the rural populace, to construct dense networks of local allies, supporters, agents and spies.
This last factor is intimately related to another elemental reality which in turn shaped the broadest contours of the struggle: the fractured political milieu of the Segovias. The same fragmented and fluid political-cultural spaces which allowed the Sandinistas to come into being and mobilize the Segovian rural populace also allowed the Marines-Guardia to do much the same thing. Marine-Guardia military superiority combined with the political-cultural environment of the Segovias to radically disperse and decenter rebel power and authority. The decentralized, dispersed nature of the rebel columns was, for the rebels, both an abiding strength and a crippling weakness. On the one hand it permitted them to wage a protracted guerrilla campaign which, in combination with other pressures and processes, eventually forced the Marines from Nicaraguan soil. On the other hand, the fragmentation of the rebel forces in many ways worked to the advantage of the Marines-Guardia, who labored diligently to keep them fragmented and dispersed. A range of Marine-Guardia policies and techniques of war -- the most important of which was the heavily armed roving combat patrol -- were specifically designed to keep the rebel columns separated and decentralized, to keep them from unifying, to foster competition and conflict, not collaboration and cooperation. They succeeded, on the whole, more often than not.

At the same time, pursuing their advantages in the field day in and day out, the Marines-Guardia generated a number of unintended consequences which worked to the advantage of the Sandinistas. In many respects the rebel effort was strengthened by the very actions designed to destroy it: combat patrols that broke up "bandit" concentrations, destroyed "bandit" food supplies, and defeated "bandit" columns also generated deep-seated hatreds and animosities, intensifying and spreading "bandit" support. This was particularly true with airplanes, probably the generator of more anti-Yankee hatred than any other single weapon deployed by the Marines-Guardia. The corpus of Marine-Guardia documents on the Rebellion conveys the impression of a countryside seething in anger and resentment but unable to do much about it except seethe, work, pray, and bide.
time. The Marines-Guardia were generally successful in wearing their enemy down, keeping them on the defensive and on the run. Sandinista mythologies, in turn, reflected much of this reality -- the sacrificial soldier, in rags, starving and suffering Christ-like in the mountains; the wily guerrilla, outfoxing the cloddish Marines at every turn. In its extreme form, the guerrilla becomes invincible, superior both militarily and morally -- a common trope in literary renditions of Sandino and the Rebellion -- as the quotes introducing this chapter illustrate. Questions about morality, of course, cannot be answered through reference to Marine-Guardia patrol and combat reports, though questions of relative military strength can be -- and it is clear that, in this field at least, the Marines and Guardia carried the day.

It was observed, above, that the relationship between the Sandinista rebels and the Marines-Guardia can only be understood within the broader context of the larger triangular relationship between these two groups and the Segovian civil populace. Before attempting to consider the mutual interactions of all three sides, however, it will be useful to isolate and explore in greater detail another side of that triangle: the relationship between the Marines-Guardia and that same civil populace.
CHAPTER 9: "EXTERMINATING BANDITS": SELF AND OTHER IN THE MORAL IMAGINATION OF THE MARINES

[Great] friendliness exist[s] between the bandits and the inhabitants through-out practically the entire country.

- USMC Major R.R. Wallace

[The goal of the bandits is to prevent] the expression of the popular preference.

- USMC 1st Lt. A.C. Larsen

"The forces opposed to the government are revolutionists --" wrote United States Marine Corps Lieutenant T.J. Kilcourse in his personal diary on New Year's Eve 1927 -- regardless of the fact that we call them bandits as an excuse -- an effort to screen our actions -- to fool the public of the United States whose opinion would demand our immediate withdrawal were they to realize the true facts.

Lieutenant Kilcourse was angry that night -- angry, saddened, and embittered by what he saw as the utter betrayal of the organization to which he had pledged his honor and, if duty demanded, his life. He had just helped bury five of his fallen comrades-in-arms, victims of an "expertly laid" Sandinista ambush on December 30, 1927 near the village of

1. Memorandum on Patrolling, 10 March 1928, NA127/212/1.
2. R-2 Report, Managua, 29 Oct. 1928, p. 8, NA127/209/1. Larsen's full remarks refer only to his belief that no "organized revolt" would "prevent the expression of the popular preference" in the November 1928 elections, but I take his remarks -- which might also be read: "[Our goal in Nicaragua is to ensure] the expression of the popular preference" - - as emblematic of the deeper ideological constructs informing the entire US intervention.
3. This and subsequent quotations are taken from the personal diary of U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant T.J. Kilcourse (typed ms., copy, 7 pp.), USMC-PPC/Kilcourse, T.J./item 2A47-PC169, hereafter cited as Kilcourse Diary.
Quilaf. As he lay in his bunk that New Year's Eve night, surrounded by the silence and blackness of the Segovian mountains, he tried to make some sense out of the senseless tragedy replaying endlessly before his eyes: "Buried our dead --" he began his entry --

-- 5 marines . . . and 1 enlisted . . . Graves dug in open space at south end of town -- marines in one grave -- guardia is separate grave. Sad ceremony -- americans giving their lives for no cause of their own . . . Some New Years eve -- and what a greeting on New Years Day for the families and friends of the dead -- slaughtered like rats in a trap -- without a chance for their lives -- to keep in power a man who, when he got himself in a mess and about to be thrown out of office by a revolution -- called for, and got the aid of the American Marines to keep him in power -- which means nothing but with his snout in the trough of the public treasury -- to keep in power a man with a reputation of being the father of 28 children by as many different women -- to keep a man of that type sitting on the upper floor of the Palace guzzling champagne -- the lower floor being occupied by marines for his protection -- to keep him there in absolute safety -- while he should be out leading his forces against the revolutionists -- is beyond comprehension.

Kilcourse's sharp anger and deep moral outrage, prefiguring much of what would emerge forty years later in Vietnam, were aimed in several directions at once. As a soldier, he was angry at the gross incompetence of his superiors:

[I]t was a blunder . . . before we started . . . the greatest military blunder the Marine Corps has made in years . . . the Brigade Commander has no more idea of what this country is like than a rabbit . . . I doubt if he could find this place on the map . . . this debacle . . . was a stupidly criminal blunder that should be punished. (Jan. 4)

As a soldier, a Marine, and an American, Kilcourse also felt morally anguished because the honor of the Corps and the good name of the United States were being sullied by association with the immoral regime of Adolfo Díaz and his cronies:

If the American people really understood the politics of this -- knew what a bunch of grafting scoundrels the politicians of this country are -- they would give them all the arms they want and let them kill each other off -- the world would be better off. (Jan. 7)

With all of these moral judgements being made, there remained a deep silence in Kilcourse's diary: the morality of the enemy's cause. Only once, on New Year's Eve, did he attempt to construct the enemy's morality, in the passage quoted at the beginning of the chapter. And here he remained ambivalent, giving "revolutionists" no firm meaning;

nor did he ever return to the question. In his entry for January 5 he reverted to the "bandit" label once more. In the end, whether Sandino and his followers were "bandits" or "revolutionists" was a question of no real importance to Lieutenant T.J. Kilcourse. The "true facts" which would cause the US public to repudiate the intervention had nothing whatever to do with the justice or injustice of the enemy's cause. He never pretended to know or ask who these "bandit-revolutionists" were or what they were fighting for, except in the generic sense of those seeking to overthrow the government in power. He felt morally anguished not because he was compelled to fight against a righteous enemy but because Marines were senselessly dying in order to prop up a morally bankrupt regime.

Lieutenant Kilcourse's diary was as close as any Marine came (at the time and in writing and as far as I know) to repudiating US intervention in Nicaragua. Yet even in this potentially subversive moment, the basic rationales behind intervention remained fundamentally intact: paradoxically, US military intervention was rendered immoral while Marine complicity in "exterminating bandits" was not. The "bandits" themselves remained an unknown moral quantity, the rightness or wrongness of their cause unknown, unconstructed, unimagined. Yet in a short time, the "official" rationale for intervention would change from "supervising free and fair elections" to precisely that of "exterminating bandits." From the perspective of the "bandit-revolutionists," Kilcourse's moral compass excluded that which mattered the most. With Adolfo Díaz out of office and some competent senior officers assigned to the job, the entire edifice upon which his condemnations stood would suddenly evaporate.

* * *

5. The phrase appears in R.L. Denig, Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, 10 May 1930, NA127/202/17/94.
Lieutenant Kilcourse's reflections help to illustrate the depth to which the bedrock assumptions and doctrines which legitimated US intervention -- the familiar litany of fostering "order," "stability," and "progress," of "protecting American lives and property," of supressing "banditry" -- were inscribed into the idioms and practices of the young white men who came to Nicaragua at the service of their country. How the Marines thought about and acted toward Sandino's Defending Army and the "natives" who formed its backbone were of more than academic interest for those being thought about and acted upon -- and who in turn did their own thinking and own acting. From the perspective of the men, women, and children of the Segovian countryside, how the collective moral imagination of the Marines was translated into actions, in concrete instances and over time, was a crucial part of the story of the Rebellion, a story which the following chapter begins to broach. Here the focus is on the imagination itself.

For Lieutenant Kilcourse, the burning anger and moral outrage of New Year's Eve 1927 soon subsided. A few months later he was stationed at Corinto Finca, north of Matagalpa, the commanding officer of a newly-established garrison, heading up patrols in search of the elusive "bandits"; by mid-1929 he was in Managua, producing weekly intelligence reports which were indistinguishable, by and large, from those of his fellows. Yet muted remnants of his earlier moral qualms lingered on. In mid-May 1928, while at Corinto Finca, "a native woman named Ascención Vargas" reported to him that "one Pedro Ramos, who had been with Sandino during [the] early part of this year, was then at San Antonio," an hour's walk due west. A patrol was sent to apprehend Ramos, with orders to "carefully investigate with a view to ascertaining whether or not he was scouting for Sandino"; two hours later the prisoner was brought before the lieutenant. "After careful questioning," Kilcourse reported, "I could find no cause to hold him... he was released, no evidence against him being found -- the complaint due, so I believe, to a
'lovers quarrel.'" Pedro Ramos was fortunate that Lieutenant Kilcourse felt the need to be so punctilious.

"A tolerant scorn of nearly everything else on earth": Marine Corps constructions of Nicaraguan society and culture

"They were the Leathernecks, 'The Old Breed' of American regulars . . . with drilled shoulders and a bone-deep sunburn and a tolerant scorn of nearly everything else on earth." With these words Captain John W. Thomason, Jr. lovingly described his Marine Corps comrades-in-arms from The Great War. The historian Bill D. Ross seized on this imagery and applied it wholesale to the men of the 1st Marine Division who fought against the Japanese in World War II, though he could just as well have pinned it on the Marines who served in Nicaragua. Indeed, many of the 1st Division's gnarliest old-timers had earned their stripes in that country's "nasty little bush war" a decade before -- including Brigadier General Robert L. Denig (Colonel Denig in 1930), Major General (then-Colonel) Julian C. Smith, Lieutenant Colonel (then-Captain) Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, Colonels (then-Lieutenants) Hanneken, Edson, Ballance, Hunt, and others.7

Along with their "bone-deep sunburn," the Marines carried with them into Nicaragua -- as they carried into Cuba, the Philippines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, China, and elsewhere -- a "bone-deep" set of assumptions and values relative to the "natives" perhaps best described as fundamentally racist, culturally arrogant, and shot through, paradoxically, with good intentions.8 Most Marines who served in Nicaragua were from

working-class backgrounds, were poorly educated, and had had few opportunities for pursuing the American Dream before entering the Corps. All were born as white males in a profoundly racist country whose dominant culture was deeply inscribed with various strands of social darwinism and pseudo-scientific racism; all were reared in a cultural universe which ascribed higher levels of intrinsic worth and intelligence to white males; and all became members of an exclusive and exclusively white male military organization.9

To "make" a Marine was to discipline the body and mind of the recruit; through a multitude of disciplinary regimes deployed by drill sergeants and others intimately familiar with the micro-physics of power, certain axioms were drilled, "bone-deep," into the hearts and minds of recruits, to be embraced as unquestioned truth: above all else, that they were Marines, "ever faithful," Semper Fidelis, to their flag and their comrades-in-arms. Faith is the keyword here: to make a Marine was to create a quasi-religious faith in the Corps as a military organization and brotherhood; it was to forge an identity, a deeply spiritual belief in the honor of the Corps and its traditions and myths and legends. "It was not patriotism alone that bound together and motivated these men. It was faith in themselves and in one another in a way that is both unexplainable and unfathomable to non-Marines, even to family members and the closest of friends."10 To be a Marine was to be feel an "indestructible bond"11 with one's comrades-in-arms, to feel immersed in a grand and glorious fraternity: "You must remember at all times that you are a Marine... Half soldier and half sailor, but all the time a faithful servant of the

10. Ross, op. cit., p. xiii; emphasis added.
republic, ever ready to go where needed and *ever faithful* to the trust reposed in him --
that is the Marine."\(^{12}\)

In their overseas interventions, the flip side of this identity, "Fused in the [same] crucible of shared hardships and good times,"\(^{13}\) was the "native," the dark-skinned, savage, violent, filthy, inscrutable Other. The very idea of "the native" was itself an imperial, colonial construct, much like the notions of "the bandit" and "the tropics." Just as an "indestructible bond" bound together the destines of all Marines, from Shanghai to Port-au-Prince to "the jungles of Neuevia Segovia [sic],"\(^{14}\) an unbreachable chasm separated the uniformed, white-skinned Marines from the "tropical natives" of their "host" countries. To remember at all times that they were Marines was never to forget that the "natives" were not. In their "tropical" interventions, this intensely felt and imagined sense of "Marine-ness" and "native-ness" combined with the racist discourses of US culture to produce a tight-knit community of white men who felt and imagined a robust sense of superiority over the innately violent, not-so-well-disciplined, and racially inferior Other.

Constructions of "native" violence were key here; by constructing the "native" as irredeemably and treacherously violent, the Marines came to see and experience their own violence as less than extreme, and indeed, as something quite ordinary and justified, considering the circumstances. Through a complex process of moral legitimation, the "Little Brown Brothers" and "Gooks"\(^{15}\) of Nicaragua came to feel the full weight of the "tolerant scorn" drilled "bone-deep" into the mind and body of the typical Leatherneck.

For the average Marine in the 1910s and 20s, one "tropical" country was the same, more or less, as another. "To one who has been stationed in the Philippines, Cuba, Haiti, and Santo Domingo, orders to Nicaragua meant simply a new location in the same

\(^{12}\) *The Leatherneck* (January 1928), p. 17; November 1928, p. 47; emphasis added.
\(^{13}\) Ross, op. cit., p. xiii.
\(^{14}\) *The Leatherneck* (November 1928), p. 47.
\(^{15}\) *The Leatherneck* (February 1928), p. 46.
old tropics with promise of a few skirmishes against an ignorant and poorly armed people," wrote one Marine captain in late 1927. For the average footsoldier, the least desirable aspect of overseas duty was being out "in the jungles playing tag with some spick bandit general with the unpronounceable names," though most aspects of everyday life were no more appealing. "Somotillo, Nicaragua . . . is but a crossroad town, with nothing to see, no place to go, nothing to do and all the day long to go there and do it in," lamented E.W. Tobin of the 57th Company in late 1927, though the duty did have its occasional bright spots: "We had all the aristocrats of the town to dance with (I mean the good looking ones wearing shoes)." A few months later his replacements, Garner and Morris, bewailed being stationed in "Somotillo, the town that God forgot . . ." A few years earlier, the same town, along with some neighboring villages, were described by a passing Marine as "barracks towns with only a few miserable huts, greatly overcrowded."

"Race" was clearly among most salient categories in the Marines' moral and intellectual arsenal. "General Chamorro came to Matagalpa on August 17th," reported Privates Barrows and Wacker in 1928. "Oh Boy! How these 'gooks' celebrated." As with the "Chinks" in China and the "darkies" in Haiti, sex with the "dusky maidens" in Nicaragua was better than no sex at all: "There is something that you'll learn from the yellow and brown that 'elp you a lot with the white," as Kipling was approvingly quoted on several occasions in the pages of *The Leatherneck*, to which was added: "the other

16. *The Leatherneck* (January 1928), p. 43. To his credit he noted, forebodingly, "how different was the reality."
evening this loud retort was made: "I'll swear she's white.""25 Knee-slapping humor from the "Skimmed From the Scuttlebutt" section of the same semi-official publication carried unabashedly racist jokes, like the one about "A darky from Central Avenue," or the one next to it which began: "Jemima was a young negress, fresh from the cotton fields of the South"; others carried punchlines no less thick with racism: "'What I wanna know is dis: Is dis niggah fishin' or is dis fish nigger'n?'"26 Minstrel shows were a regular feature at the Campo de Marte in Managua, as on 28 February 1930, when the "Second Brigade Players" donned their blackface for another hilarious rendition of "Deep Night in Darktown."27 Of course they were really after Sandino -- "The thing the Marines seek is that brown man himself," as the Marine correspondent to Collier's Weekly put it.28

For most Marines, the "primitive" habits of the "natives" and the "filth" of the living conditions in "backward" countries like Nicaragua were sources of unending amusement and derision. "The tortillas here are made from the poor, stale, worm eaten corn, ground wet and baked into a thin leathery pancake, without any seasoning whatsoever," recalled ex-Sergeant Birnbaumer of his experiences on the "rosebud' trail" in the western Segovias in 1924. "Meat is hung up in the sun, but it doesn't dry, for the flies get to it first and the maggots next. That little fact doesn't bother the natives, though. They nonchalantly knock the worms off with a stick, throw the meat on a hot coal, and presto, you have a nice juicy barbeque." And their table manners? "These people use palm leaves for plates when they aren't too lazy to cut them."29

25. *The Leatherneck* (September 1927), p. 14; January 1928, p. 18; February 1928, p. 47; the latter issue (p. 50) also carried a story about "'Chick' Gunnels. Chick is stepping out into society these days and we have it on reliable authority that he has kissed his first white girl. In case you don't know, Chick has been down with the Haitians so long it is something of a novelty to be mixing with people of his own color."
27. Program in MCHC-P/PPC/Eldred, Carl P.
FIGURE 9.1

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF OCCUPATION: SOME REPRESENTATIVE MARINE CONSTRUCTIONS OF MARINES AND "NATIVES"

THE LEATHERNECK

September, 1928 Single Copy. 25c

Marines in Shanghai:
Happy masters, happier servants.
Cover of The Leatherneck.

African explorers ran across many such villages as this during expeditions into the interior of the Dark Continent. This Indian village of Twapi, however, was discovered by Marines a scant seven miles from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua.

Conrad in Nicaragua: Images of the Dark Continent. From The Leatherneck (October 1928, p. 16), accompanying an article on the "Rambles of the Sixtieth Company at Puerto Cabezas."
From 1912 to 1925 (except for occasional excursions like Birnbaumer's), the Marine contingent in Nicaragua consisted of a 100-man Legation Guard limited to the Campo de Marte in Managua, where a physical and psychic wall separated the Leathernecks from the "natives." "During the thirteen years spent there it was the ambition of every commanding officer and man to make of it the very neatest, trimmest and most hygienic spot south of the Rio Grande," reminisced an old-timer in mid-1928.

Within these high walls the Marines created a new and refreshing world all of their own. . . . Every man in the detachment took the greatest pride in making the 'Campo de Marte' a real model of beauty which every Nicaraguan could visit, inspect, admire and imitate if he felt so inclined. . . . Every Nicaraguan visitor . . . came away secretly wishing that his own home surroundings were as pleasant as those of the 'Gringoes' . . . .

It was not until mid-1927 that the Marines began to operate in rural areas. From the first, the Nicaraguan countryside was compared to "the Dark Continent," with its "vast and dense jungles, . . . dark, dank, mysterious . . . still harbor[ing] tribes of wild Indians" -- though those in contact with "civilization" were not much better off. From the garrison at Darailf, Private Lory reported that "Our friend, Moises Gonzalez, Sr., is getting to be quite jocular lately.

For example, he will ask some Marine what State he comes from. If the answer is 'Illinois,' Gonzalez will reply: 'I thought so. I've got two hombres working for me from that State.' Then he will point to a couple of ragged looking derelects.

After expressing satisfaction that "at last we have obtained a flag out here to keep us from forgetting that we are Americans," Private Lory concluded "with the fervent prayers that we will be pulled out of Nicaragua to the good old Estados Unidos." 32

The "bone-deep" racism and cultural arrogance of the average Marine was, at one level, a product of the world in which he lived, a faithful reproduction of the dominant culture of the US -- white and male, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant -- in which the discursive field of civilization and barbarism was "as thick as cheap perfume in a French

32. The Leatherneck (October 1928), pp. 21-22.
whorehouse." In that culture in the 1920s, as in the decades before and after, racist doctrines flourished. "There is a vast difference between Nicaragua and Argentina," averred Assistant Secretary of State Francis White in mid-1927 in a comment distinguished only by its ordinariness for the times, "namely, Argentina has a homogeneous white population living in a temperate climate, whereas Nicaragua has a very mixed population living in a temperate climate." The consequences of this were, for White, self-evident: "racially, of course, there is no more reason for Central Americans to call them brothers than there is for them to call us brothers." Nor was Francis White in any way peculiar in this regard. Teddy Roosevelt's writings from around the turn of the century fairly brim with references to civilization and barbarism, to the "backward dusky races [of] various shades and hues." "Barbarism has, and can have, no place in a civilized world," he wrote in 1910.

It is our duty toward the people living in barbarism to see that they are freed from their chains, and we can free them only by destroying barbarism itself. . . it is our duty to put down savagery and barbarism.

"The dark-skinned races that live in the land vary widely," he wrote of his experiences in Africa. "Some are warlike, . . . some till the soil . . . some are ape-like, naked savages, who dwell in the woods and prey on creatures not much wilder or lower than themselves." (It is worth recalling that it was Roosevelt's Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, proclaimed in 1904, that had legitimated direct US military intervention in Nicaragua from 1909.) Nor had the years leading up to the late 20s dulled the edge of these racist doctrines. "They need a leader, not of their mixed blood but a man who is human," wrote the wife of the former US Minister to Nicaragua in March 1927, "a man who is firm, who can reason with leaders as same as you can reason with a child . . .

33. The Leatherneck (June 1927), p. 13.
34. Francis White to Mr. Olds, 16 June 1927, USDS 817.00/4906.5.
Since these people do not trust one another with the dark eyes and hair, they do have faith in an American who has the clear blue eyes . . . Idolatry is still practiced in Nicaragua, and without the knowledge of God, people are like animals. So it is with the lower class of people in Nicaragua.38  

In the 1910s and 20s, theories linking race and climate and universal progress were ubiquitous, providing a prism through which reality was filtered, a set of categories through which a rapidly changing world was rendered intelligible. If the racist idioms which informed Marine Corps practices in Nicaragua surfaced with less frequency and pointedness than in Haiti and elsewhere, a wide range of Marine-produced texts from the period make plain the fundamental centrality of racialist discourses in explaining the character of the "banditry" and the Marines' role in eradicating it.  

Marine Corps Major Julian C. Smith's officially commissioned History of the Guaria Nacional de Nicaragua, for instance, offered a measured evaluation of the "factors entering into and affecting the police mission" of which he was a leading architect. "The American officers of the Guardia Nacional were immediately confronted," he began,  

with the problem of personal adjustment to a situation requiring a sympathetic understanding of a people who had originated from different racial strains and who had developed under entirely different conditions of environment and who were animated by different ideals . . . Each strain [Spanish, Indian, and African] had its corresponding effect upon the psychology of the people . . .  

Emphasising particularly "the fundamental differences between Latin and Anglo-Saxon ideals and characteristics," Smith quoted approvingly the following lines from the abolitionist and Social Darwinist Henry Ward Beecher:  

'There are two dominant races in modern history; the Germanic and the Romanic races. The Germanic races tend to personal liberty, to a sturdy individualism, to civil and political liberty. The Romanic race tends to absolutism in government; it is clannish; it loves chieftains; it develops a people that crave strong and showy governments to support and plan for them.'  

38. Mrs. J.E. Ramer to Kellogg, 3 March 1927, USDS 817.00/4645.
For Smith, coming to grips with the survival of "organized banditry" in Nicaragua despite "so many tactical defeats and indecisive actions" required a "sympathetic understanding" of the peculiar "racial psychology" of "the poorer classes of Nicaraguans":

densely ignorant, . . . little interested in principles . . . naturally brave and inured to hardships, of phlegmatic temperament, though capable of being aroused to acts of extreme violence, they have fought for one party or the other without considering causes since time immemorial . . . a state of war is to them a normal condition. . . . Then the unusual poverty of their country, the low wages for which they are accustomed to work, the primitive conditions under which they live, made their lot as bandits certainly no worse, and probably easier than that of the ordinary mozo, living on the verge of starvation in a grass covered hut in the hills.39

Like countless other imperial ethnographers of his day, Smith naturalized, essentialized, and dehistoricized the colonial Other, taking historically-produced social and political conditions as natural and immutable realities.40 The categories of civilization and barbarism both informed and cut across the grain of the racist doctrines informing Smith's construction of the Nicaraguan common folk; he observed that

the concentration of the population in a few cities has intensified the conditions that have worked against peace and made Nicaragua the most turbulent of the Central American Republics. The Mestizo artisans, especially those of the larger cities, are always ready to drop their work and take up arms . . .

The cities, the paradigmatic bearers of "progress" and "civilization" in US and European colonial and imperial discourse, and Latin American elite discourse, had been despoiled of their "civilizing" influence in Nicaragua by the "ignorance and poverty" of the poor and the "eternal bickering" of the elite. Implicit here (and explicit throughout much of Smith's text) were the racist idioms of benevolent patronage which had legitimated US interventions in Nicaragua since well before 1909.

Major Smith's assessments were echoed repeatedly by his superiors and subordinates alike. "It is evident that the Guardia, and for that matter the Marines, cannot completely stamp out banditry in this country within any measurable time," observed Captain L.B. Moore, in his intelligence report of 31 December 1929. "This will come

only with the opening of the country with good roads and the general advance of civilization." In Captain Moore's view, this was especially the case "considering the general condition of the people -- edical, economical, and political [sic]."\textsuperscript{41} The further removed from "civilizing" influence of the cities, the more "barbarous" the "natives" became. "[Sandino] has been routed from his selected region east of Chipote," wrote an intelligence officer in mid-April 1928, "and will probably drive farther into the wild fastnesses East of the Coco, said to be inhabited by Indians who are little removed from savagery."\textsuperscript{42} References to "the ignorant Indians living in the mountains"\textsuperscript{43} were scattered throughout Marine patrol, combat, and intelligence reports from the period. That "race" was a salient category for the occupying forces was evidenced time and again in their official reports; the basic impulse behind Captain Holmes' offhand remark on the veracity of the information received from a well-to-do informant -- "as usual with his race, he is reliable subject to check" -- was as common as mud in May.\textsuperscript{44}

"The political situation there is very bitter, and that is really the cause of all the trouble in Nicaragua," wrote Major General J.A. Lejeune in early 1928. "The Nicaraguans are all interested in politics, and it is a very violent interest . . . Politics there is very much more serious than it is in this country." How to explain this phenomenon? "The people in Western Nicaragua have a great deal of Indian blood in them," he observed in the following paragraph. "Some families are pure Spanish descent, but the majority have Indian blood," making them "a very courageous race of people; nothing cowardly about them" -- "courageous" here being a synonym for "violent."\textsuperscript{45} Lejeune first set eyes on Nicaragua in late 1927.

Marine Corps Colonel Robert L. Denig (Brigadier General Denig in World War II) shared Lejeune's snap assessment of the Nicaraguan "racial character." "All towns

\textsuperscript{41} B-2 Report, Managua, 31 December 1929, pp. 13-14, NA127/209/1.
\textsuperscript{42} R-2 Report, Ocotal, 15 April 1928, p. 12, NA127/209/2.
\textsuperscript{43} GN-2 Report, 1 May 1928, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{44} GN-2 Report, 1 July 1932, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{45} The Leatherneck (April 1928), pp. 10, 52.
except Esteli are small and squalid looking," he wrote in his personal diary only two days after stepping off the boat to take over as Northern Area Commander at Ocotal. After days later, after reaching his designated post, he recorded a hearsay tale of unspeakable horror in the matter-of-fact tone of a seasoned veteran concerned only with reporting the facts. The tenor of his observations during his first month in Nicaragua make his diary worth quoting at length (I have tried to indicate, where necessary, the contexts out of which these snippets were taken):

[13 November 1929: arrival in Nicaragua.]

17 November 1929: A couple of miles out [of Ocotal] is a cross by the wayside. Here a few years ago a bandit cut the heads off four of his mozos [workers] as he did not like them. He also killed his mother and cut out her heart, killed his father and ate his tongue. On hill tops are crosses to indicate a village is near . . .

19 November 1929: We have a lot of recruits here. Indians all. Their shoes hurt. They seem clumsy. Can't read . . . We have a ten year old kid who sleeps on the back porch and is being trained as a messenger boy. His father was killed by bandits. His mother then deserted the kid and ran off with another bandit. When found he was living in a lean-to that he made himself and was rapidly turning into a wild animal. [end]

23 November 1929: One of the prisoners died today, which is not pleasant as only $2.50 is allowed for a coffin and all other expenses. Will have to take steps to see that they are released in time to walk away.

30 November 1929: Reported today that the kidnapped boy was found killed, all hacked to pieces. Picked up a guardia deserter . . . Established two new outposts . . . There was a dance . . .

2 December 1929: Post at Las Manos established. The Guardia officers on these posts certainly earn their pay. All alone in the wild mountains, no one to talk to except Indians. Native food, no beds, mud houses, no news. There are no settled inhabitants near this post, all having fled to Honduras or been killed off. Hamas is in command. A prisoner, a bandit, was shot in trying to escape. He will probably die. Sta. Maria post established, with Ferguson in command. [end]

7 December 1929: The only result of all the operations last night, was, that one 'razo' [private] shot and killed and one 'capo' [corporal] - personal row. I have come to the conclusion that 75 percent of this contact stuff is the bunk. The people generally are hysterically nervous and shoot on sight. Life to them is cheap, murder in itself is nothing. It only interests them when it hits at home. It now seems that the Guardia patrol from Totogalpa has all gone to hell, got most of them locked up for being drunk. The killing last night was due to booze. Marines are going to sit on the town . . . tomorrow . . . the Annunciation of the

46. R.L. Denig, *Diary of a Guardia Officer*; subsequent references by date of entry.
Virgin Mary is going to be the excuse for the mozos to get gloriously drunk...
[emphasis added].

8 December 1929: There were a lot of drunks last night. ... The game is to get
pie-eyed and beat up your wife or woman. Last night the women had the best of
it ... [One] woman battered up her man's head with some heavy instrument in
great style. ... the jail is full of others who took part in equally pleasant episodes
...

9 December 1929: ... there are cases of smallpox around Trinidad,] they want
vaccine. A patrol just brought in the Guardia murderer of the other night. He had
his arms tied behind him and a rope about his neck, made fast to the saddle horn
of his guard. He must have had a pleasant walk from Totogalpa, especially at the
crossing of the Coco. Despatch from Mosonte that the Guardia there had
indulged in a friendly fight, and one of them had his hand cut off ... sent the
medico out ...

13 December 1929: [possible mutiny in Telpanca ...] Lt. Harris, G.N. had
contact ... three bandits killed. At Jicaro a prisoner attempting to escape was
killed. My laundress is drunk and I have so far recovered one shirt, rest being
traced. She is overpaid also. [end]

15 December 1929: [story of one boy accidentally killing another with a shotgun]
He is the only person I have really felt sorry for so far.

Especially irksome to Denig were the locals' utter dirtiness and lack of hygiene,
combined with a seemingly ubiquitous lack of common sense:

They can't understand why wash before eating (Dec. 22); The stores [in Managua]
are dirty and poor (Jan. 23); Every orderly I have tried is dumber than the next,
they insist on dumping the waste paper basket on the floor, then sweeping the
trash out (Feb. 5); Yalaguina is just a mud town, filthy dirty (Feb. 12); The food
[at the post at Limay] is served by a dirty woman with from three to five dirty
little kids hanging on her skirts (Feb. 14); Limay [is a] hell-hole (Feb. 15);
Trinidad is another dump (Feb. 16); Palacaguina ... is a small dirty place (Feb.
20).

Though it might seem remarkable, Denig was often a sensitive and perceptive
observer. His diary is filled with ethnographic details and personal observations on a
wide range of subjects: native marriage ceremonies, Indian processions and festivals,
types of dress, social structure, the landscape, the plants, the psychology of the people.
What interests me here are the ways in which Denig rapidly rendered differences
between Marines and "natives" intelligible through a set of prefabricated understandings
of what this particular "Latin" culture was all about.
Denig's diary conveys the distinct impression of a man with his mind made up: he knew, for example, what "the game" was; he knew that the coming festival was "an excuse . . . to get gloriously drunk"; that the men beat the women and the women beat the men was something that required no explanation, no commentary. The silences in Denig's text speak as loudly as the ironic, sardonic tone they create; Denig knew he was a man from a superior culture, that he was observing, like a benevolent father-figure, the follies and foibles of an inferior breed of people, little more than "children . . . at heart" (Feb. 12).

Indeed, one of the most remarkable things about Denig's diary is that he never asked himself, "why?" It almost seems as though, for him, the question had no existence. During his first month Denig continually signalled to himself that there was no reason to ask "why?" because he already knew the basic moral fabric of the people he was dealing with. He had learned and confirmed that, here among these "dusky races of the tropics": the death of a prisoner was of less moment than the cost of the burial; an oral tale of intra-family mutilation and cannibalism was a fact of history, a datum, and a rather unremarkable one; mothers abandoning their children was a routine occurrence; life among the "natives" for "someone like him" was sheer misery; drunks and thieves were as plentiful as cooties, and almost as bothersome; the torturing of prisoners was common and could even be a source of mild amusement; prisoners being shot and killed "attempting to escape" was nothing to ruffle one's feathers about; in short, "Life to them [was] cheap," cheaper than a coffin. From the moment he stepped off the boat, Denig's daily conversations with himself brimmed with implicit comparisons between the moral universes of the Self and the Other, and every time, the Self came out on top.

In this sense it is curious that on more than a few occasions Denig displayed genuine respect and admiration for certain aspects of local life. The beauty of the landscape, and at least some of the women, enchanted him. He found certain customs and behaviors, such as marriage ceremonies and styles of dress, genuinely interesting.
Yet at the same time, his respect and curiosity were also highly selective, seemingly piqued by the utter quaintness of what was being observed, and its apparent unrelatedness to the larger cultural universe of violence and ignorance and filth which his diary entries tended to privilege.

The following chapter attempts to reconstruct the nature of the Marines' selectively restrained violence against the lower orders of the Segovian countryside. To jump ahead for a moment, consider the following extracts from the opening paragraph of Denig's "recommendation for" the "restriction" of "certain areas of Nueva Segovia" of 10 May 1930:

[I]t is believed [that] unless drastic steps are taken, little improvement in exterminating bandits can be hoped for. The natives living in the hills throughout this area are actively engaged in banditry, but, unless actually killed or captured in a combat, proof of this is very difficult.47

One is reminded here of the "lose-lose" logic of a witch trial: "unless actually killed, proof is difficult." Denig's recommendation, submitted around the beginning of corn planting season, and the policy of reconcentration which resulted from it (which was never fully implemented) were prefigured in his diary long before 10 May 1930, even before the cornstalks from the last season were bare.48 Time and again during his first month in Nicaragua (and for a long time afterward), sometimes subtly and sometimes blatantly, Denig represented the inferiority, immorality, violence, filth, drunkenness, and savagery of the "natives" as innate, natural, self-evident, amusing, irritating, annoying, and of little ultimate importance. And this way of "seeing" the "natives," in turn, rendered legitimate the extreme violence of the Marines-GN.

The fundamental irony here is that Denig, like most of the men under his command, was a genuinely well-intentioned fellow. He personally directed several smallpox vaccination campaigns in the "outlying districts"; he and his fellows took the

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47. Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, Denig, 10 May 1930, NA127/202/17/94.
48. See ch. 10, below.
orphaned ten year-old boy under their wing, making him the company mascot; he expended considerable effort to investigate various crimes and bring the perpetrators to justice; once he likened himself to Solomon after settling a family dispute (Dec. 22). He saw himself, in short, as just doing his job, as best he could under the circumstances, and if the "natives" were "elevated" along the way, so much the better (though he doubted they would be). Of course he preferred not be there at all (he was assigned to his post.\textsuperscript{49}) In these and many other ways he was not alone. As Staff Sergeant Earl B. Hardy put it in 1932, "No one realizes more than the writer that the people of Nicaragua disliked the idea of their country being policed by an armed force of a foreign nation as the people of any nation would dislike foreign intervention.

However . . . the people of our little sister Republic realized that such intervention was necessary and chose America as the most fair, most impartial, and most unselfish friend to restore law and order.\textsuperscript{50}

This sense of selfless altruism was a staple feature of many Marine Corps reports.


We halted at all inhabited centers enroute talked with the people giving them a correct conception of the mission of the U. S. Marine Corps and the Guardia Nacional. We were cordially received at EL BALSAMO the column billeted at the home of Vicente Gomez, Judge of the Mesta, Gomez is a good Nicaraguan and intensely pro-American. He has a sympathetic understanding of the Marine task here and our police of pacification has his unqualified approval. At my request he assembled the entire male population of EL BALSAMO. The situation was fully explained and the circulars, 'A los que andan armados' and 'A los seguidores de Sandino' were read and clarified in their minds.\textsuperscript{51}

Surrounded by upward of sixty local men, Davis got them to agree to disregard party affiliation until complete tranquillity has been restored and asked that they be good patriots rather than politics and keep us in order than we might more efficiently and effectively help Nicaragua. Their sincere demonstration of friendship was gratifying.

After two full weeks of continuous patrolling, Davis summed up his observations:

\textsuperscript{49} Denig's marching orders preface his diary.
\textsuperscript{50} The Leatherneck (April 1932), p. 7.
\textsuperscript{51} Patrol Report, Ula Ranch, 16 July 1928, NA127/197/176.1; all grammar and orthography in the original here and subsequently.
Throughout the area patroled the grave necessity for medical attention to alleviate the sufferings of the inhabitants was found. Every case of illness coming to our attention was treated which went far to convince the people of our sincere altruism.

Davis was young, only nineteen, and bursting with enthusiasm -- too much so, according to several senior officers. His high idealism and keen moral sense reached full blossom at the end of his report; after suggesting that "any and all foodstuffs procured for use of troops on patrol be paid for and in cash," he continued:

Finally it is believed that patrols must not alarm the inhabitants through roughness or unedessari [unnecessary] violation of the sanctity of private homes. Promiscuous firing at people who fly at their approach should be stopped as it is believed that the nerves of the average mountain dweller are in such a condition due to constant harassing by bandits and revolutionaries, that they have no moral courage left and cannot resist the impulse to flee upon the approach of armed parties. It is ridiculous to assume that every native who endeavors to escape from his home or the trail as [many do on] approach is a bandit and I am convinced that discretion and judgement [be exercised] in such cases or our usefulness in pacifying this country will . . . [unintelligible].

Concluding the report in a virtual fit of rhetorical passion, Davis offered his fellow Marines both praise and a warning:

The Marines and Guardias have done splendid work in these hills and I feel that it must not remain for a few to jeopardize the reputation which is being carved out through noble self sacrifice and devotion to duty so characteristic of our Marines and by the Guardia who endeavor so zealously to amulate them.

From these quotes it is not difficult to grasp the general moral sensibilities of Lieutenant Davis. A genuinely well-meaning fellow, he wanted only to "help Nicaragua"; only "sincere altruism" motivated him and his men. The moral universe which he patroled was a sharply defined and sharply bifurcated one: the Marines were the "good guys," helped along by "good Nicaraguans"; sometimes "good Nicaraguans" were victimized by "bad" ones, the "bandits and revolutionaries," and this was unfortunate; sometimes the Marines-GN behaved poorly toward "good natives," and this ought to stop. A "good Nicaraguan" was, by definition, "intensely pro-American," with a "sympathetic

52. According to Captain L.B. Reagan, Davis' "report contained a lot of 'hoey' . . . Davis . . . is a good man and has done some good work -- but is inclined to exaggerate. The Col . . . said he wanted to put a stop to 'bull' in official reports." (A pity for historians.) Memo for Mjr. Schmidt, 30 July 1928, NA127/220/5.
understanding" of the Marines' "sincere altruism"; regrettably, many "natives" were too ignorant to know the difference between "good" Nicaraguans and "bad," and it was the Marines' duty to "explain" and "clarify in their minds" the differences between the two. While I have no wish to caricature the moral universe of Lieutenant Davis, in the end it was a rather simple and straightforward one, at least as he represented it in this detailed and heartfelt report. The lines separating good behaviors from bad were sharp and clear, and in need of constant vigilance; that a suspected "Sandino adherent" like Montayo Rivas, Juez de Canton of El Silencio, "should be seized and pressed into service as a guide" (as he was) was just a normal part of a moral policeman's job. In its basic moral constructs, Davis' is exemplary of most such reports (of which there were thousands), though the explicitness of its categories and clear-eyed honesty brings to the surface what more commonly emerges only as subtext.

When they were not poking fun at or trying to improve Nicaraguan society and culture, some Marines tried to learn something about it. "A number of the boys have been having quite a bit of trouble trying to 'habla' the language here, but all are improving as they learn perfect control of the hands," wrote the Fifth Regiment's correspondent to The Leatherneck in late 1927. "The language consists mostly of gestures and hand signs. It is felt that the natives . . . understand the hand signs of the Marines thoroughly." 53 (A few months later the same correspondent wrote of the nasty business of "playing tag with some spick bandit general with the unpronounceable names . . . ") "The boys are learning Spanish," wrote Private Lory from the Marine garrison at Daraili in mid-1928. "They consider themselves fluent speakers if they can ask how much anything costs or tell the wash woman to mend their clothes." 54 In the early years, only a handful of Marines spoke Spanish, while perhaps ninety-nine percent floundered about with a few phrases and depended heavily on "native" interpreters to make day-to-day interactions with the

locals even possible. From around 1930 the foreign language skills of some field officers improved, but on the whole the recollections of Juan Ubeda ring true: "The machos didn't speak Spanish."\textsuperscript{55}

This lack of facility in Spanish is not difficult to understand; as Richard Millett observed, "Officers assigned to Nicaraguan duty were rarely, if ever, given any prior orientation as to the culture, political situation, or even United States policy goals in the nation."\textsuperscript{56} To make matters worse, most Marines never graduated from high-school, and many had difficulty writing in English. The following handwritten patrol report is atypical but not without parallel (quoted in full; all grammar and orthography correspond to the original):\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{quote}
Statement of
Cadet Chapman G L L

While on patrol to Pacalla with 4 enlisted G.N. On My return to Trinidad In about 1/4 of a mile of Trinidad on or about 8 P.M. was attacked by bandates. Just crossed the river when bandates attacked. On the wright bandates was behind rock fince. And on the left bandates was behind river Bank. Jefe bandates unknown, bandates estemated about 8 men I returned fire, Firing only lasted about 15 minutes, And Bandates escaped. One Girl 2 1/2 years old was shot by Bandates, But Shot only thru flush in wright hip, one Guardie saddle was shot by Bandates. I was reinforced by Guardie from Trinidad I Patroled and serched that districted, But found nothing, I returned to Trinidad at 10/15 pm and reported by Telegram to My divison comander at Esteli that I had haded contack. But secure now.

Gordon L Chapman
comander Sub station Trinidad
\end{quote}

"Robbery, pillage, rape, and murder": Marine Corps constructions of Sandinismo

The fundamentally racist, culturally arrogant, paternalistic categories that shaped Marine constructions of Nicaraguan society and culture likewise shaped their perceptions of Sandinismo. In this robustly delegitimizing idiom, the Sandinistas were "bandits" and

\textsuperscript{55} IES 086: 2-3.
\textsuperscript{56} Millett, p. 71.
\textsuperscript{57} 1 May 1929, NA127/202/13/55.
"outlaws," "murderers," "criminals" and "marauders" engaged in "robbery, pillage, rape and murder" against the "defenseless people" of the countryside; their actions, shrouded behind Sandino's "false standard of patriotism," were inspired by no ideology or "cause" other than "pillage and loot" and fostering "unrest" and "disorder" in the "bandit infested" areas under their control.\(^{58}\) The "bandit hordes" were like a "cancerous growth," a "disease," a "virus" which had "invaded" the Nicaraguan social body.\(^{59}\) "Exterminating bandits," as one exterminates vermin and other pests, thus became the Marines' official raison d'etre in the countryside. Predictably, this "official" moral universe saturated most every report the Marines produced during the period of the occupation. In response to Sandino's repeated public insistence that the Rebellion was motivated by fundamentally nationalist aims, the Marines constructed Sandino's "alleged" patriotism as a smokescreen a pretense for common criminality. Even Marine-sponsored propaganda was devoid of any but the most muted patriotic imagery.\(^{60}\)

The Leatherneck's account of the deaths of Lieutenant Thomas and Sergeant Dowell was paradigmatic of how the Marines came to construct Sandinismo. (Thomas and Dowell's plane was shot down over Zapotillal Mountain on 8 October 1927, where they were pursued into a cave and killed.) "[B]oth were later surrounded by the murdering machete bearing bandits, followers of Sandino," reported "a Plane Observer," who likened the scene to the "black" days of his own country's past. "The English translation of the word Nicaragua is 'black water,'" he wrote imaginatively; and

Black it is indeed to fly over the charred remains of the crash and look away down there in a native banana patch on a little black spot where the skeleton of

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\(^{58}\) The phrase "robbery, pillage, rape, and murder" is in Lt. H.R. Huff, R-2 Report, 17 Dec. 1929, p. 6, NA127/209/1; the phrase "false standard of patriotism" is in J.C. Smith, et al., p. 22; the other terms are so diffuse throughout the literature they require no reference.

\(^{59}\) E.g., "bandit hordes" appears in The Leatherneck (January 1928), p. 13; "cancerous growth" in General McDougal to Francis White, 10 October 1930, USDS M633/1; "invaded" in G.D. Hatfield, "Attack on Ocotal," 20 July 1927, USDS 817.00/4993.

\(^{60}\) See ch. 10, below. It is not difficult to understand why, since nationalist aspirations throughout the circum-Caribbean region were systematically deemed contrary to U.S. "national interests," as the records of the Department of State make clear.
the battle plane reposes not unlike a covered wagon in the early pages of our country's history possibly burned by some marauding band of Indians and rests there until the transpiration of the ages.\footnote{61}

Sandino and his "murderous hordes" were "treacherous," like "the wary redskin . . . ever lurking just around the bend in the trail,"\footnote{62} lacking all scruples, all decency, all honor. "Warfare is cruel, bitter, and without definite rules," editorialized \textit{The Leatherneck} in September 1928, "but certain ethical actions are usually observed by belligerent nations."

Ten years ago German Kulture was denounced by civilization; but they were never guilty of violating the graves of their fallen enemy. Sandino does not only that but traffics in the hearts of grieving mothers, holding a handful of bones as hostage from them until they cry: 'Down with the Marine Rule in Nicaragua!'\footnote{63}

This was the extremity of the construction. More commonly, Marine officers implicitly denied, in the very architecture of their prose, any morality or higher purpose whatsoever in the Rebellion, its adherents, or the anti-imperialist, anti-interventionist sentiment which fueled it. Consider the case of Lieutenant Larsen, a representative Managua-based intelligence analyst. In January 1928 Sandinista courier Julio César Rivas, formerly an official in Sacasa's government-in-exile, was arrested and confined in the Managua penitentiary. "Rivas," wrote Lieutenant Larsen,

is quite boastful about his admiration for Sandino and wishing him every success in his efforts. Rivas appears to be a dangerous criminal type and a general bad actor. He had evidently led a soldier of fortune existence in Central America, flocking to any banner where loot and other revenue may exist.\footnote{64}

For Larsen, Rivas' "admiration for Sandino" automatically made him a "dangerous criminal type" whose only motives were "loot" and "other revenue." The possibility that he might have believed in the cause he espoused was foreclosed by the structure of the

63. "Sandino and His 'Glorious' Exploits," \textit{The Leatherneck} (September 1928), p. 8. The charge was based on a letter from Sandino to Turcios (in Conrad, pp. 198-199), in which Sandino wrote: "The graves of the bodies referred to were changed and their bones will be sent to their families only when the latter offer proof that they have tried to achieve the withdrawal of the invaders from our nation's territory."  
64. B-2 Report, 30 January 1928, p. 2, NA127/43A/3; see also Statement of Julio Cesar Rivas, 21 April 1928, NA127/198/1928 Misc.}
language used to discredit him -- but one of scores of such anti-imperialist activists to fall victim to such logic.

A month after Rivas' arrest, Larsen explained to his fellow officers the reasons behind "the strength of the main enemy force." Observing that "some recruiting" by Sandinista forces "has been going on," he imagined the reasons behind the success of such efforts: "The life promised is one of banditry and looting, which is a means of existence for many persons." Intertwined with this criminal greed was gutless cowardice: "There is very little fighting to do which is another added attraction . . . the smaller bands are being held together by promises that there will be little if any fighting. . . . They will seek to ambush small columns if assured of a quick and safe retreat." Playing devil's advocate for a moment, he conjectured that "the absence of an adequate supply of ammunition may be the reason for avoiding action," before immediately foreclosing that possibility: "but I do not believe it to be the real reason," for "once these men have to do any great amount of fighting it is believed the majority will give up this life of banditry." In early February 1928, the lieutenant felt compelled to wax didactic on the "passionate political speeches" being delivered by political candidates in anticipation of the November elections: "The sole purpose" of these speeches, he explained, was that "of arousing the unwarranted suspicions of the natives against the American Forces." The possibility that some anti-interventionist sentiment might have actually been "warranted" was foreclosed by the tautology implicit in the phrasing. The net effect of Larsen's wording was neologistical -- "unwarranted-suspicions" -- a new word both constituting and constituted by the moral universe he imagined.

67. A more detailed investigation than can be undertaken here into Marine neologisms like "suspicons-unwarranted, "bandit-infested" and "bandit-supporter-bad-actor" might reveal how these word-sets represented deeper structures of feeling and thinking which oriented Marine constructions of reality in countless ways.
Major Floyd, who led the first ground offensive against Sandinista forces after the Battle of Ocotal, shared Larsen's outlook, mixing remarkable insights on the "mythological" character of El Chipote with a complete misunderstanding of Sandino's motivations and status among his followers. Immediately following his observation that "Sandino is a notorious prevaricator," Floyd averred that

Sandino is out for the money and nothing else. . . . [He] has covered up his actual work of getting supplies down the Coco or perhaps to Honduras (or both) and kept these ignorant people working for him. . . . I do not believe Sandino has a fortress known even to himself as Chipote . . .

Floyd's tone in his field reports was spontaneous and genuine (and often spiced with ill-restrained frustration), a voice replicated time and again by field and intelligence officers. The perception that Sandino and his "bandit hordes" were just "out for the money" was nearly universal. "[H]e [Sandino] gathered together a motley throng of laborers from the mine area in northern Nicaragua . . . to whom he promised spoils of wine, women, and song in unending amounts if they would join him," as one correspondent to The Leatherneck pretended to explain the formation of Sandino's original group of followers at San Albino. "The first city . . . they encountered was sacked and robbed, and the experience was so exhilarating that his mob continued to rob and kill, gaining numbers until it reached several hundreds." On the eve of Sandino's trip to Mexico in the spring of 1929, Captain L.B. Reagan collapsed Sandino's base material motives into his fundamental cowardice:

Sandino . . . is an organizer and not a fighter. He has never personally led his troops in combat . . . I believe it to be more probable that he will make his escape while he can, and turn his popularity, with certain elements, into cash in a foreign country.

On occasion, mid-level intelligence analysts did broach the possibility that Sandino might have been acting out of genuinely patriotic motives: "If he [Sandino] is

68. See ch. 7, above.
70. The Leatherneck (October 1932), p. 59.
the patriot he claims he is," wrote Major Schmidt a few weeks before the November 1928 elections, "he will do everything within his power to obstruct the elections. If he is a common bandit, the operations here have become so unproductive that he will probably operate in Honduras."\(^7^2\) When Sandino fulfilled Schmidt's criterion for patriotism, Schmidt disregarded his own logic.

Years later, at least one ex-Marine recalled that he knew that "Sandino was no bandido, not by a stretch," and that he was ordered to refer to his followers as "bandits." First Lieutenant Stanley D. Atha, USMC, Retired, recalled half a century after the fact that "Bandidos never commanded the loyalty, never had people voluntarily giving them food and animals for the soldiers... Sandino paid as he went."\(^7^3\) If there were others like Atha (assuming his memory was not playing tricks on him), there remains precious little evidence of them.\(^7^4\) Rather, the weight of the evidence points in precisely the opposite direction: that with respect to constructing "natives" and "bandits," the "private" moral universes of most Marines were indistinguishable from the "public" face of "official" reports and publications. It might be argued that this uniformity was more apparent than real, a product of pressures to conform, to please senior officers in one's "official" voice; this in turn raises the possibility that we are witness to a subtle process of coerced conformity, in which large numbers of Marines unwillingly painted the enemy in the hues of criminals and murderers.

The evidence is overwhelming that this was not the case. Public and private faces were plainly at loggerheads on a number of key issues, not the least of which was the "official" rationale for being in Nicaragua in the first place. By the latter half of 1928 a cantakerous, quasi-insubordinate tone began to resound through the The Leatherneck's section devoted to "News From All Posts" that went a step beyond the customary

\(^7^4\) Denig (Diary, 12 Feb.) noted that Atha was rather different from the average Marine: "clean as they make them, all his clothes and linen just so, all marked with care. Table cloth and napkins on the table, always clean. He is quiet, knows his job."
grousing. In the December 1928 issue, for instance, all three updates from Nicaraguan posts expressed the same fervent desire, couched in a coded language that neither superiors and subordinates could fail to recognize: from Matagalpa: "Orders for us to leave this country cannot come too soon"; from Condega: "All the gang here is happy enough, but no one would object if we were ordered to the States"; from El Sauce: "No ice, no running water... no electricity. It kind of makes a fellow wish he were home mucho... We look forward with anticipation for the rumored day of our departure."  

These were not happy Leathernecks. Indeed, a substantial body of evidence suggests that while most Marines sincerely believed that the Sandinistas were "bandits," most also rejected the notion that it was their job to fight them, and that in this sense there were many more Kilcourses -- "[fighting] in [a] cause in which they [had] not the remotest interest" -- than official reports suggest. The vast majority wanted the hell out of Nicaragua.

**Front-line humor: The News and Gaboon**

In June 1930 -- after nearly three years of inconclusive guerrilla war -- two of the principal garrisons in the Northern Area began publishing weekly newspapers, The Great Northern News out of Ocotal, and The Telpaneca Gaboon. These are extraordinary documents -- full of wacky humor, silly poems and drawings, ridiculous "news stories" of every description -- essentially extended parodies of themselves, their mission, and the bewildering, maddening culture in which they found themselves.

At one level, The Great Northern and Gaboon served as a kind of emotional safety-valve, a release from the frustrations, fears and anxieties of the young men off serving their country in the "hell-hole" of Nicaragua. Rarely was an opportunity missed to poke fun at themselves, the food, the "brass," the conditions, Sandino (endearingly...

76. Kilcourse Diary.
nicknamed "Sandy"), his followers (like "Big Pete," i.e., Pedrón) and the natives and their incomprehensible ways. The sheer informality, honesty, irreverence, and vivacity of these satirical newspapers are as refreshing as they are illuminating, permitting a peek into the categories and constructs always lurking just beneath the surface of the more constrained and sterile tone of the "official" discourse.

The same deadpan sense of humor which coursed through the pages of Denig's diary shed any remaining inhibitions in the Gaboon and Great Northern. In many of the stories and poems, the voice was that of a haughty aristocrat peering disdainfully down at the ridiculous antics of his subjects. Nicaragua was transformed into the country estate of a Victorian gentleman, replete with foxhunts and gala balls and elegant tea parties:

El Chipote and environs will soon resound with the happy laughter of jolly sportsmen and the crack of the Krag's [rifles] while the game scurries for cover. Never in the history of the Segovias has the outlook been better for a successful season. The costumes of the huntsmen are more varied than ever and one of the outstanding improvements are the new styles of footwear . . .

(The men were always complaining about their shoes.) The unrestrained violence of the "huntsmen" and their "game" was an unending source of amusement: "No dynamiting or wholesale killing will be authorized except in certain areas," announced one "story" from Telpaneca; another from Somoto announced:

Society is all aflutter over the promise of the [Sandinista General] Salgado's to return and open up their country place there; business interests also indicate their early return as there are a few throats left to be cut near the Guardia Barracks.78

It would clearly be misplaced to interpret these parodies in anything approaching a literal fashion, e.g., to argue that the Marines dehumanized the "bandits" by casting them as lowly four-legged creatures, or that the injunction prohibiting "wholesale killing except in certain areas" was an unmediated codeword for their own unrestrained brutality.

Rather, poking fun at things, making a joke -- humor -- is to turn the "real" world upside down, to unexpectedly, serendipitously juxtapose a set of images that just don't

77. Denig, Diary, p. 113.
78. Denig, Diary, p. 115.
FIGURE 9.2
SOME REPRESENTATIVE ARTWORK FROM THE TELPANECA GABOON
JUNE-JULY 1930

1. "General Sandino": A laughable concept. Note the unmasculine, twig-thin arms, the starving horse with ribs protruding; images of smallness, weakness, laziness, moral and material poverty, profound meaninglessness.

2. Dark-skinned head-on-a-post: Poking fun at "native" violence and bemoaning "native" distances ("all fi más" translates loosely as "right around the next bend").

3. A footsoldier's nightmare: "Get us the hell out of here!"

Source: Faithful reproduction from Denig Diary, pp. 230-231.
"fit," to cram together radically ill-fitting opposites, as when Denig writes, "my bandit friend," and everyone knows he really means "bandit enemy." More elaborate jokes are constructed by aggregating different sets of radically ill-fitting opposites and combining them in all sorts of creative ways.

Thus, if the Marines saw themselves as immersed in savagery and misery, they turned the world upside-down and pictured themselves as jolly country gentlemen having a jolly old time of it; if they saw that the violence was intruding on all sides, was remorseless, relentless, and basically senseless, they turned it around to make such violence an occassional bit of fun, nothing serious, just a laugh now and again; if they saw the "bandits" as murderous criminals motivated by no higher morality or purpose, they painted them as honorable gentlemen out on a leisurely stroll, politely cutting the throats of the gentlemen they chanced to encounter.

The politics embedded within these parodies were intimately related to real-life constructs which informed their creation. At one level, such tomfoolery permitted junior-level officers and enlisted men to be subversive without "really" being subversive, to challenge authority without "really" challenging it. For example:

Captain Pefley and Lieutenant Burns have landed and have the situation well in hand. Lieutenant Burns reports that they have been on a continuous patrol for the last two weeks. Keep up the good work that's what keeps the bandits guessing.80

The first sentence here deployed an ancient phrase and longstanding joke -- under these circumstances, "to have the situation well in hand" was code for "doing the best we can under out-of-control circumstances." The next set of codewords -- "continuous patrol for the last two weeks" -- were phrased in the conventional wording of an official report, and readers of The Gaboon grasped the subtext instantly: two weeks of continuous patrolling meant mud, misery, bad food, sore feet, the common complaints of the common footsoldier. And for what? The last sentence told for what: first, it referred back to the

79. Denig, Diary, p. 62.
bad food and sore feet, and asked, jokingly: "Isn't it worth it?," and it provoked a chuckle because everyone knew that it was not, that ultimately it did not matter in the least, except to the extent that one got sore feet and went hungry. The punchline might translate today as: "Get real!!" Readers well knew that the ostensibly laudable goal of "keeping the bandits guessing" was nonsense in practice, both because of the utter ridiculousness of the situation -- in the sense of, "what the hell are we doing here in the first place?" -- and because everyone knew that because of their sophisticated spy system and intimate familiarity with the land and the people, the "bandits" rarely had to guess about the positions of nearby Marine patrols. The implicitly paired opposites here were "reality" and "pretense": at one level it was funny because none of it mattered and everyone knew none of it mattered, except to the extent that one's feet grew sore or belly grew empty or one's head was chopped off whilst strolling the peaceful countryside; at another level, everyone knew that the "official" rationales for such patrols were no less nonsensical, eliciting a muted, sarcastic "yeah, right" from the lowest rungs of the military hierarchy. But it "passed muster" with the "brass" because it reflected part of reality and because it respected the outer boundaries of the "official" version of "the truth": roving patrols did their part, in reality and in "official reality" to upset Sandinista movements and logistics; soldiers were commended for their "good work" in reality and in parody.

More instrumentally, The News and Gaboon disseminated information and "let the boys blow off steam." Colonel Denig was tickled by The News and Gaboon, and the rest of the "brass" probably were too. At bottom, in the extremity of the construction, the intervention was a game, a deadly serious game, with real winners and real losers, but in the end a game, a big fat ridiculous tragic joke.

Of course the Sandinistas never lacked for knee-slapping humor, but they did not, as far I know and am able to imagine, ridicule the ultimate purposes behind the Rebellion -- or if they did, they did so in a different way, warping and twisting reality into a very
different kind of shape. But the Marines did parody the purposes behind the intervention, and with great frequency and gusto. A powerful current in Marine humor made a complete mockery of the whole of the intervention and the rationales behind it, from top to bottom, rendering it senseless, purposeless, meaningless, and at the same time deadly - - and therefore deadly serious and profoundly meaningful: it was the juxtaposition of utter senselessness with profound seriousness that made many of these jokes "work."

The Marines were poking fun at everything around them; there was nothing that did not have a ridiculous edge to it. But most ridiculous of all was the basic setup, and the senseless suffering it caused -- what might be called the "what the hell are we doing here anyway?" trope.

The other principal site of amusement centered on the Other -- the "natives," the "bandits," and Nicaragua as a whole. There were countless takes on the general theme of casting the "bandits" as honorable country gentlemen, and Nicaragua as a serene country estate. For example:

Many society leaders are returning to the capitol by plane from the provinces for the season, amongst the most prominent of the inner circle is Lola Matamoros and Mrs. Sandino.81

(The writer was referring to the release of these locally well-known individuals from involuntary exile in prison in León after several months of confinement.) At one level, in the eyes of the Marines who laughed at this imagery, Nicaragua was the perfect antithesis of a country estate: not peaceful but violent; not clean and orderly and pretty, but dirty and chaotic and ugly; not pleasant and quaint and charming, but miserable and deadly and deadly boring. The keywords here signaled the opposite of "prominent society leaders" in a dual sense: on the one hand, inconsequential nobodies, and on the other hand, common criminals.

Implicit in the imagery of the serene country estate and the "prominent society leaders" who populated it was the opposite notion that Nicaragua as a whole was devoid

of any such personages. This imagery was so commonly deployed in *The News* and *Gaboon* that it must have struck most Marines as hysterically funny. Why? Because it was an absolute joke to think of Nicaragua as inhabited by anything resembling "prominent society leaders"; because in their day-to-day interactions with the locals (as much as amongst themselves), the Marines saw themselves as so far removed from the ideal of "prominent society" as to make the whole notion of "prominent society" in Nicaragua laughable in the extreme. In this dirty, violent, barbaric place, such people simply did not exist. Even the most notable notables, the most eminent eminences, the most prominent prominences in this tiny, backward, provincial country were neither notable nor eminent nor prominent: they were small fry, little fish in an enormous sea, and only the Marines knew how big that sea was, because they, and not the prominent little nobodies of Nicaragua, made their living by sailing it.

*The News* and *Gaboon*, in short, suggest that most Marines saw local eminences as provincial and unimportant; Nicaragua and its people as basically dirty, violent, ignorant, primitive, savage, barbaric, chaotic, and lacking any redeeming value whatever; the Rebellion and its adherents as fundamentally immoral, honorless, and senseless; and their own mission as devoid of any larger meaning other than the suffering it imposed upon themselves.

These conclusions do not differ substantially from those advanced earlier: the pages of *The Leatherneck*, Major Smith's *History of the Guardia*, Colonel Denig's *Diary*, intelligence, combat and patrol reports, the *Gaboon* and *Great Northern*, all point in the same direction, with one exception; only in the latter were the rationales behind the Rebellion subjected to sustained (if ultimately nonsubversive) criticism. The humor in these satirical newspapers supports the assertion that the Marines looked on Nicaraguans as a fundamentally inferior breed of folk deserving of little more than contempt, for whom "tolerant scorn" was the most that any could reasonably expect.
And this, in turn, helps to explain the Marines' persistent refusal, even at the level of "official" discourse, to treat the Rebellion with any degree of seriousness, to consistently ridicule it, misunderstand it, malconstruct it, and render it weaker, smaller, more limited, and motivated by completely different aims than it actually was.

"Quitter, opportunist, deserter, failure": A chronology of Marine malconstructions of Sandinismo

United States military and civilian leaders never really understood the nature of the enemy they were confronting in the Segovian mountains. At the level of mid-level intelligence analysts (the backbone of the Marine-GN intelligence apparatus), constructions of the enemy went through three distinct phases or tendencies: the first and longest lasted from the beginning of the Rebellion until around early 1931 (almost four full years), and was characterized by an utter miscomprehension of the enemy at most every level of analysis, except in the realm of raw military capabilities. The second, roughly comprising the year 1931, marked a transition to the third, comprising, roughly, the year 1932, during which time Marine assessments began to fall more in line with the shape of the enemy they had been confronting all along. Yet it would not be difficult to overstate the differences between these phases. The notion that the Sandinistas were run-of-the-mill criminals lacking any motivating ideology was never entirely abandoned. The Marines never grasped their foes' fundamentally nationalist aims; they never knew, in short, what they were fighting -- and as any military strategist worth her salt can attest, next to gathering together soldiers and guns, the first step in waging a successful war is identifying who and what the enemy is.

The typical Managua-based intelligence analyst received hundreds of reports from dozens of stations in the course of a month. It was his task to compile this data, to present it in a concise, readable form (on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis) -- and to interpret it, to assess the enemy's movements, locations, strengths, weaknesses, and so on, so that the "brass" could prescribe policies to meet the goal of "exterminating bandits."
Most intelligence officers became competent compilers but inept interpreters and synthesizers (as most anyone would in such a situation), buried under an avalanche of conflicting information, pressed for time, and woefully distant from realities "on the ground."

At the same time, the reports of these intelligence analysts constitute the single most detailed account of the "nuts-and-bolts" of the war, with masses of detailed information on the ebbs and flows of Sandinista activities and capabilities, their leaders and zones of operations, their enemies and allies, and sundry other topics. The Marines-GN did their utmost to track a maddeningly elusive and shadowy enemy, and sometimes they succeeded. Yet more often they failed, blinded by their own conceptual blinders and the structural shortcomings of their information processing apparatus.

This is evidenced at one level by a remarkably consistent tendency to underestimate the strength and popular support enjoyed by the Defending Army. "The civil war in Nicaragua is now definitely ended," announced Colonel Henry Stimson in a press release immediately following the signing of the Espino Negro Accords, despite the actions of "an extremely small group of . . . malcontents" who were refusing to abide by the agreements. A day before the Battle of Ocotal, Brigadier General Logan Feland announced that "no particular campaign against General Sandino is contemplated at present." "General Feland," noted the Associated Press reporter who filed the story, "did not appear particularly concerned over the situation." Several weeks after the Battle of Ocotal, US Minister Eberhardt announced to the press that Sandino had "disbanded his followers." General Feland repeated the claim a few weeks later, remarking that, "The people do not like failure, and he [Sandino] has failed with his inferior force . . . [he] is through."

Such pronouncements were not limited to press releases. Internal Marine Corps
documents mirrored such unduly optimistic assessments of the "bandit situation" for the
next four-and-one-half years. In June 1928, Major Schmidt waxed confident about the
success of Marine-GN operations, concluding that, "as far as banditry is concerned, I
believe we are entering the final phase of our operations... [our actions are] gradually
reducing him to a state of impotency." 86 Two months later, Lieutenant Larsen noted that
"over six-hundred outlaws have surrendered in Nueva Segovia within the past two
months," leading him to conclude that "the situation appears favorable." 87 Neither he nor
his colleagues realized that most of these "surrenders" were phony, since many
Sandinistas accepted "amnesty" only to quickly reintegrate into the Defending Army. 88
By late September, Major Schmidt was of the opinion that the "bandit" groups had lost
any unified control they may have once possessed: "I believe there is no longer what has
been known as a main force." 89 "Sandino's power is broken," announced an intelligence
report a few months later. 90

Such sanguine assessments continued through the winter and spring of 1929.
Sandino's departure for Mexico (in mid-1929) gave Marine Corps intelligence analysts
reason to pause and reflect on the shining successes of their operations in the field and
the curious phenomenon of Sandino, who by all accounts was now finished. In a lengthy
assessment of the successes and failures of the past two years, entitled "Exit Sandino,"
Major Schmidt mixed a grudging admiration for Sandino's knack for propaganda-making
with a rather severe assessment of his military capabilities. "It serves no useful purpose
to belittle the qualities of the enemy," he began,

certainly not in an intelligence report; but we now know from long observation
and study of his activities that Sandino is not a fighter. Although there is a
popular belief to the contrary, the truth is that he contributed no such capabilities

86. B-2 Report, 3 June 1928, pp. 3-4, NA127/209/2.
88. See ch. 10, below.
to the bandit 'cause' ... in every contact with Marines where he was personally in command, Sandino bungled the engagement. ... Colorful stories about the 'daring Sandino' are nothing more than mere fiction. ... Sandino was the beneficiary of a combination of circumstances which he inherited as an opportunist and for which he was in no way responsible ... For him to have been killed in battle against our forces would have made him a hero to many Nicaraguans. As it is, he is a quitter. Monuments are not erected to soldiers who desert their comrades in arms and desert the country.

Yet Schmidt was not one to understate Sandino's ideological successes. "Sandino is an organizer and propagandist of no mean attainments," he continued,

He has exhibited a brand of Latin pose and theatrical make-believe that caught the imagination of many people. As an enemy, it is not safe to discount his capabilities in this field. He organized and held together for a long time a force of outlaws which contained some of the best and most experienced 'bush-fighters' in Central America and Mexico. ... it is ... a fact that he has attained a measure of success that is surprising to many. ... he had defied the White House, and he immediately became a hero to anti-Americans and to the disgruntled. Tramp journalists everywhere had a chance to glut their appetites for sensationalism. They did it well -- and none better than some in the United States. As a result, criminals, radicals, the jobless, and soldiers of fortune from many lands came to join Sandino.

Schmidt concluded his self-congratulatory if premature eulogy to Sandinismo by observing that "the campaign now settles down to the task of destroying individual groups of outlaws ... anti-Americanism has spent its force for the present."91 "Sandino is through," echoed Captain Geyer at the same time, acknowledging that "he has all the makings of a good (?) communist" and predicting, with a touch of restrained amusement, "his attendance at the next meeting of the Red Internationale."92

Within a year, to the surprise of Schmidt and his colleagues, Sandino had returned from Mexico to resume the armed struggle in the Segovias, while Marine intelligence officers continued to grossly misconstrue the nature and underestimate the extent of "bandit" capabilities. Immediately prior to a sustained Sandinista offensive, Major Salzman concluded (on 1 September 1930) that "The bandits have felt the effects of the Guardia's persistent and successful campaigning against them during the past three months and that the backbone of banditry is breaking and that Sandino's so-called army is

A month later, he opined that "Sandino's army is a failure." In his assessment of the following month, Major Stack stressed the "bandits" growing "lack of unity." Yet in his summary of the events of November 1930, Salzman noted "a surprising increase in recruitment" and acknowledged that "their operations during the month have increased over those of previous months." His tendency was to naturalize this increase, to attribute it to the movement of the Earth around the sun and changes in the seasons: "The coffee season," he explained, "is always one of increased activity."

Two months later, after an unprecedented level of Sandinista activity, Major Salzman felt compelled to revise his earlier estimates of "bandit" capabilities. "Bandit tactics appear to have changed," he noted with more than a hint of trepidation, and seem to indicate that they are being directed by a different hand. Every effort is being made to change the complexion of banditry in the Segovias and give to it a genuine revolutionary character -- a sort of liberation movement.

Salzman averred that "other minds, more capable than Sandino's, are committed to the cause," and named Autonomist Party leader Toribio Tijerino as one likely suspect. (There was no such leadership change, though Tijerino may well have been involved by this time.) Nearly four years after the Rebellion began, Marine intelligence failed to grasp that it had been characterized by a "genuine revolutionary character" from its inception.

This misunderstanding of the basic character of the enemy was mirrored in others. As late as the autumn of 1930, Marine intelligence had only the most rudimentary notion of the nature and extent of the parallel nation-state the Sandinistas had painstakingly constructed throughout broad sections of the mountainous north. "It appears," wrote Major Salzman in early September, "that Sandino is attempting to organize the various

93. GN-2 Report, 1 September 1930, p. 6, NA127/43A/29 (GN-2 Reports hereafter cited only by date and page number).
96. GN-2 Report, 1 January 1931, p. 5.
bandit forces along some military lines, to be known as the "ARMY DEFENDING THE NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY OF NICARAGUA."\textsuperscript{98} This, almost three full years after the Defending Army had been officially founded.

The intelligence establishment’s attitudes toward propaganda during this period were curiously lopsided, providing another window into their perceptions of the enemy. Many officers expressed concern over the loyalty of the Guardia and the effect of Sandinista propaganda on both the Guardia and the local populace. Curiously, however, they tended to attribute increases in enemy propaganda-making to their growing weakness. On 1 January 1930, for example, Sandinista General Miguel Angel Ortez published a manifesto denouncing the intervention and its collaborators and pleading with "all Nicaraguans who love their country" to consider the morality of their alliance with the occupying forces.\textsuperscript{99} From Managua, Lieutenant Huff attributed the manifesto to weakness, not strength: "The frustration of his [Ortez's] plans by constant patrolling and alertness along the border has completely demoralized his forces," he asserted. "It is my opinion that he now realizes the uselessness and impossibility of continuing his deeds of robbery, etc., in Nicaragua."\textsuperscript{100} A month later he echoed this optimism: "The net is drawing closer, . . . [with the] constant pressure [that] is being brought to bear upon them from all sides, comes a diminishing freedom of movement and a reaction which takes the form of propaganda."\textsuperscript{101} Huff attributed the manifestos to unspecified "other influences" that were "placing all sorts of obstacles in the path of the present government and progress of our forces in the infested areas." The Marine-GN response to such propaganda campaigns should take the form, in Huff's view, of the heightened militarization of the countryside: "The counter movement employed against such propaganda should be a continuance of rigid enforcement of all laws and the constant

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\textsuperscript{98} GN-2 Report, 1 September 1930, p. 6.  \\
\textsuperscript{99} Ortez Manifesto of 1 January 1930; original in NA127/202/13.  \\
\textsuperscript{100} R-2 Report, 20 February 1930, pp. 10-11, NA127/209/1.  \\
\textsuperscript{101} R-2 Report, 22 March 1930, p. 8, NA127/209/1.
\end{flushleft}
patrolling of all districts, especially along the border."102 This was the standard and primary Marine-GN response to any perceived deterioration of their power: a more intensified application of their raw military strength, focusing on the "infested" zones.

On the other hand, the successes of Marine-GN propaganda campaigns were seen to derive from their own superior military position: "bandit morale is at a low ebb," claimed Major Schmidt in mid-June 1928, "and we should do our best to induce him by means of propaganda to come in."103 A few weeks later, after noting the "hardships" imposed on the "bandits" by relentless Marine-GN patrolling, Lieutenant Larsen confidently asserted that "It is sure that the handbill distribution is now bearing fruit and is causing many of the outlaws to realize the fruitlessness of waging further banditry."104

So while Marine Corps propaganda was viewed as a legitimate adjunct to military operations, most effectively deployed from a position of superior strength, "bandit" propaganda was generally seen as a last-ditch effort utilized by cowards and criminals, a final gasp before their inevitable defeat. At the same time, the Marines usually failed to recognize Sandinista propaganda even as it stared them in the face. "As a bit of homely humor," chortled one analyst in reference to Sandino's published claim to have defeated 800 Marines in the famous Battle of Bromaderos of 27 February 1928, "it is interesting to be told by Sandino that the 28 Marines who composed O'Day's patrol at Bromaderos, looked like 800 to the bandits."105 Sandino, as we have seen, consistently and wildly inflated such figures, part and parcel of his efforts to create new national symbols, to spotlight and magnify key events, to grab the attention of his countryfolk and the world. To this intelligence analyst, the "amusement produced by this letter" (along with a few "particulars" and names) comprised its most salient features. That such exaggerations could in themselves constitute a powerful instrument of propaganda -- particularly in a

part of the world in which the vast bulk of information was spread by word of mouth, in which rumors and perceptions of reality were of far greater moment than "reality" itself -- apparently never crossed his mind.

Around early 1931, a new awareness of Sandinista capabilities began to percolate down to many intelligence analysts, one consequence of a rather sharp increase in the Defending Army's overall strength after Sandino's return from Mexico in June 1930. "There has been a considerable increase in bandit strength," warned Lieutenant Ballance in Ocotal; "their morale is very high and they are receiving more recruits than they can arm."106 Others began to echo these warnings around the same time.

Still, the overriding tendency to downplay the Defending Army's strength and unity of purpose proved difficult to shake. In March 1931, years after Sandinista General Pedro Blandón had joined the Rebellion, Major Salzman continued to view him as something of a lone wolf: "Blandón . . . can be expected to join any revolutionary movement."107 More tellingly, Salzman continued to deny the very logic implicit in his analyses: after noting an increase of nearly one hundred percent in the number of "full-time bandits" over the past several months, he repeated his timeworn assertion that "our system of constant patrolling is believed to be gradually but surely whittling down the bandit forces."108

How do we understand analyses such as this, which fly in the face of all logic and evidence? Some possible explanations have been offered: a profound ignorance of Nicaraguan society and culture; deeply rooted racism and cultural arrogance; a desire to please senior officers; distance from realities "on the ground." To this might be added another: a particularly static and number-oriented cognitive universe. Marine perceptions of the "bandit situation" tended to be informed by the "body count" mentality

which emerged during the Vietnam war -- a mentality marked by the perceived need to
quantify the quality of a dynamic balance of power, to measure success and failure in
terms of numbers: numbers of "bandits" killed, enemies eliminated, camps and supplies
destroyed. There is precious little evidence of dialectical thinking in Marine Corps
assessments, very little awareness that "bandit" forces could grow and multiply, that a
Marine offensive which eliminated a certain number of "bandits" could spawn twice the
number eliminated. Analysts tended implicitly to assume that they confronted a fixed
number of "bandits" and "bandit" camps which, once eliminated, would lead to the
elimination of the "banditry" itself. The gap between this conceptual straitjacket and the
dynamic realities they confronted formed a constant source of bewilderment, even
disbelief: "The known killed in contacts totalled 21, wounded 6, and captured 3," wrote
Major Salzman in October 1930, summarizing the major developments of the previous
month. Yet he remained confused, even baffled, by the apparent contradiction
confronting him: "Even if only a reasonable percentage of the numbers reported were
considered and totalled," he continued, "it would be surprising to note how the number of
reported bandits increases each month instead of decreasing." 109

By the middle of 1931, this paradoxical tone of tentative bafflement mixed with
sure-footed confidence began to give way to palpable frustration, and indeed, open
bewilderment. "Sandino's determined desire to remain hidden," complained Major
Salzman,

rather than engage in an open fight for the 'cause' he boasts is for the national
sovereignty of Nicaragua, makes his capture difficult and provides a safety
similar to that secured by the frightened rat who crawls into his hole and stays. It
is rather hard to understand the peculiar hold he has on his followers, when a brief
study of his activities and operations for the past 12 months have so utterly and
miserably failed to achieve any one thing he has promised.

Major Salzman's frustration here is palpable; his biggest complaint was Sandino's
apparent "reluctance to actually take the field, even if only once to set an example to his

soldiers . . . in time it is believed he will be faced with the problem, as expressed in the vernacular or slang, 'putting up or shutting up.'

Here he evokes the image of the mythical gunfighter of the Old West howling angrily into the saloon at a cringing enemy: "come out and fight like a man, you cowardly rat!" (To expect the same of Marine Corps generals was of course unthinkable.) Salzman's transparent confusion at "the peculiar hold [Sandino] has on his followers" renders equally transparent the conceptual blinders worn by the Marine intelligence apparatus as a whole.

These misperceptions were mirrored in Salzman's self-contradictory assessments of the Defending Army's information networks. "There seems to be but little doubt," he observed,

that Sandino and the chiefs operating under him are reliably informed of our every movement. There knowledge is pretty complete and enables them to avoid us. Sandino's information is obtained from spies mostly, and not from any well regulated reconnaissance or intelligence service.

That such obviously conflicting conclusions could be combined in this way (i.e., "bandit" intelligence was "reliable," "complete," and successful, but was not very well regulated) is emblematic of a much broader pattern: the Marines' persistent desire to confine their judgements to what they wished to hear.

Perhaps through some psychological process by which collectivities in conflict project their own fears and fantasies onto their adversaries, Marine intelligence officers consistently ascribed a whole range of negative emotions and feelings to Sandino and "his ignorant followers," ascriptions based more on wishful thinking than substantive evidence. Thus, in a typical pronouncement, Major Salzman could proclaim that the Guardia's policy constant patrolling had "kept the groups in a continual state of perplexity," when instead the evidence strongly suggests that Sandinista perplexity rarely if ever exceeded that of the Marines-GN.

111. GN-2 Report, 1 July 1931, p. 11.
113. GN-2 Report, 1 November 1931, p. 9.
Perhaps in recognition of Salzman's palpable frustration and overactive imagination, Colonel L.P. Hunt replaced him as the compiler and editor of the monthly "GN-2" intelligence reports in December 1931. His first report evidenced a far more realistic and thoughtful assessment of "bandit" capabilities: "Their operations showed considerable organization and indications of more or less . . . intelligent [and] efficient leadership," he wrote. "They also showed marked . . . strength [and] aggressiveness on quite a few occasions."\(^{114}\) Unlike his predecessors, Hunt did not attribute periods of relative "bandit" inactivity to cowardice: rather, he judged that "their apparent inactivity has probably been due to lack of ammunition,"\(^ {115}\) an appraisal more in line with realities. Soon afterward he readily admitted the rather impressive success of a sustained "bandit" propaganda campaign in the western zones, cautioning officers to avoid carelessness and any erosion of morale, "the inevitable tendency" of constantly moving from "place to place," since -- in a move to acknowledge the considerable sophistication and intelligence of the enemy -- "it is not improbable that the bandit leaders have this in mind."\(^ {116}\)

In brief, around the end of 1931 the Marines and Guardia finally began to give the Defending Army its due. Largely in response to the first sustained Sandinista military movement into the Departments of León and Chinandega, Marine constructions of Sandinismo began to fall more in line with the actual shape of the enemy they had been facing all along. Though the language of "bandits" and "outlaws" was never abandoned, the growing power of the Rebellion compelled a slight shift in thinking, enough to prod the Marines into recognizing the genuinely revolutionary threat posed by Sandinismo. Serious attention began to be paid to "unrest caused by bandit propaganda," cited time and again as a source of genuine concern;\(^ {117}\) Sandinista propaganda pamphlets and bulletins began to be published in full in the monthly GN-2 intelligence report,

\(^{114}\) GN-2 Report, 1 December 1931, pp. 10, 16.
\(^{115}\) GN-2 Report, 1 January 1932, p. 7.
\(^{116}\) GN-2 Report, 1 March 1932, p.
\(^{117}\) GN-2 Report, 1 March 1932, p. 32.
unaccompanied by disparaging commentary. The sophistication and extent of the Sandinista parallel state apparatus finally began to be recognized for what it was: "the bandits have a rather well organized 'civil government' of their own," acknowledged Colonel T.E. Watson in March 1932, drawing new conclusions from previously available information.\(^{118}\) "Recent incidents in León show that they have a system of espionage in that city that is highly efficient," he warned in the same report. The extent and sophistication of the "bandit system of espionage and supply, . . . extending into the whole interior zone of operations" was finally if belatedly acknowledged.\(^{119}\)

In short, by early 1932 the raw data upon which the Marine intelligence apparatus was moulding its construction of Sandinismo had not changed substantially, but the shape of that construction had. The tone was different than in previous years, far more judicious and prudent and a touch more respectful; no longer were the "bandits" the object of open ridicule or disparagement (except of course by the terms used to describe them, though even here a slight shift was evident, as "Sandinistas" occasionally replaced "bandits"); blatantly oxymoronic conclusions disappeared; interpretations grew more accurate and penetrating. In addition, military operations during this period took on a new and more deadly character, a reflection of this shift in emphasis at the highest levels of intelligence analysis. As the perceived threat to the national state grew, so too did the sophistication of Marine-GN evaluations of the enemy. By 1932 Sandinismo came to be represented as a potentially revolutionary force and a serious threat to the US-supported regime; senior officers began to remind themselves, their superiors, their subordinates, and the National Guard (which would soon assume full responsibility for itself) that the

\(^{118}\) Summary of Combat Intelligence, 21 March 1932, in GN-2 Report, 1 April 1932, p. 13. Watson (referring here only to the Las Cañas district around San Juan de Telpaneca) cited recently "captured correspondence" as the source of this information, but as subsequent chapters demonstrate, the Marines had sufficient data to draw this conclusion long before 1932.

"bandits . . . ultimate goal is the same as always: the overthrow of the present administration."\textsuperscript{120}

Despite this shift, the old view remained fundamentally intact. "Thus the curtain falls on the attempt of bandit robbers to gain in a foot-hold in the departments of the west," reported Captain Carlson in December 1931 on the first sustained Defending Army movement into Chinandega and León, in a replication of the undue optimism and overconfidence of years past.\textsuperscript{121} References to "Sandino's so-called main headquarters" and his "so-called prestige and following" continued unabated, as if unqualified the phrases were nonsensical.\textsuperscript{122} Even the perspicacious Colonel Hunt could never fully shake old habits of thinking: "efforts are being made to give SANDINISM a genuinely revolutionary character," he observed in mid-1932, reflecting an inability or unwillingness to acknowledge what had in fact been the case all along.\textsuperscript{123} Instead, the potentially illuminating observation "that they are not bandits but a revolution in todo forma [sic]" was cited as an example of "bandit" propaganda, not as something to be actually believed.\textsuperscript{124}

The Marines, in short, never fully knew what they were fighting, despite some last-minute and partial steps in the right direction. Over the course of the occupation, judgements tended to grow marginally less disparaging and more insightful, but they remained fundamentally wrong-headed right to the end. This is not to argue that the Marines' superiors failed to understand the seriousness of the threat Sandinismo posed to the survival of the US-supported regime, or the most effective way to eliminate it. Quite the contrary -- as the following chapter tries to show, the Marines-GN, acting on orders

\textsuperscript{120} GN-2 Report, 1 March, 1932, p. 44. Such reminders became increasingly frequent, e.g., GN-2 Report, December 1931, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{121} GN-2 Report, 1 January 1932, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{122} GN-2 Reports, 1 November 1932, p. 9, and 1 December 1932, pp. 1, 12.
\textsuperscript{123} GN-2 Report, 1 June 1932, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{124} GN-2 Report, 1 June 1932, p. 26.
from above, spared few efforts to destroy the Rebellion and the popular base which sustained it.

* * *

By constructing the Sandinistas as bandits and criminals, the Nicaraguan populace as ignorant and backward, and themselves as morally and culturally superior, the Marines imagined out of existence a fundamental contradiction which lay at the heart of US intervention. As the epigrams at the beginning of this chapter attempt to illustrate, the Marines' raison d'être in Nicaragua was to ensure "the expression of the popular preference." Yet as their own reports repeatedly claimed, "nearly 100% of the people in the countryside" supported their foes. 125 How to resolve the contradiction?

Walter Benjamin suggests that every document of civilization is equally inscribed with the barbarism it seeks to vanquish. 126 For the Marines in Nicaragua, the contradictions staring them in the face were most commonly resolved by banishing the possibility of their existence. The ruptures and fractures in the Marines' collective moral imagination were rarely hidden or suppressed; most often, they simply did not exist -- or better, they were forcibly willed out of existence, while seeds of doubt, like Kilcourse's, found little soil in which to grow. That the "natives" could not comprehend the Marines' "sincere altruism" only showed how "densely ignorant" they really were. By the lights of most Marines, the Nicaraguan people were "densely ignorant" and the "bandits" were criminals. And even the densest of the dense should have been able to comprehend that a "criminal," in the words of Lieutenant Kilcourse, "should be punished."

125. GN-2 Report, 1 May 1932, p. 31.
CHAPTER 10: MYTHICAL DEMONS AND LOOSE CANNONS: THE MARINES-GUARDIA AND THE SEGOVIAN FOLK IN POPULAR MEMORY AND HISTORICAL PRACTICE

The Yankees were cruel, the Yankees were cruel, the Yankees were so cruel -- they'd grab hold of children, look, like this -- little babies -- they'd grab them and throw them up in the air and spear them on their bayonets. How could you possibly believe that we would've been able to live in tranquility until now with these things we remember so very well?

- Angelina Rugama¹

It will take a lot of better lying to make the intelligent people of America believe that our service in Nicaragua has transformed us into fiendish murderers of children and old women... Better lies should be invented.

- The Leatherneck²

In his collection of short stories *Contra Sandino en la montaña* (1942), Manolo Cuadra tells of two Marine Corps officers, Phillips and Hays, who, in the process of investigating the death of a fellow Marine, derive an almost orgasmic pleasure inflicting electro-shock tortures on their prisoners in their barracks in the village of Quilalí. "Oh, Phillips! Delicious! Fantastic!," shorties Hays, as the electrical current surges through the nameless prisoner, strapped upright in a wooden chair, his thumbs wrapped with wires leading to a hand-cranked generator. "In a high voice, Phillips marked the movement of the needle which indicated the increase in the voltmeter: 'Hundred...two hundred-sixty...three hundred-ten...!' The operators continued cranking the handles. 'Three hundred eighty,' sings Phillips." As the prisoner's flesh begins to burn, "the rancid smell of burnt skin fills the room. A satanic enthusiasm colors the face of Phillips. Hays

¹ IES 046: 3.
only smiles." A few minutes later, the limp prisoner is taken out and shot, and the cry goes out: "Next!"³

Manolo Cuadra's immensely popular story is but one drop in a river of nationalist literature devoted to the theme of yankee brutality against innocent civilians -- "human rights violations" in today's lexicon -- during the Rebellion. The power of the story derives less from its undeniable artistry than from the larger nationalist narrative from and into which it flows -- a narrative in which the "Yankee invaders" have been imagined and represented as perfect evil incarnate. This demonization of the Yankees has in turn permitted the Sandinista patriot to imagine, represent, and create a particular kind of Nicaraguan national identity -- or at least to push that identity in certain unequivocal directions.

Ironically, the more intensively US-backed forces punished and pummelled the Segovian countryfolk, the more they promoted the cause they sought to destroy. Casting themselves as liberators, protectors of order, bearers of civilization and progress, the Marines came to be (and in many locales remain) popularly viewed as ruthless, heartless barbarians. The Rebellion generated an entire universe of nationalist symbols, myths, and legends which inverted the dominant paradigm of "civilization" versus "barbarism" to cast the US and the US Marines as demonic savages purposely inflicting untold pain and suffering on the humble, righteous mountain folk of the Segovias. Representations like Cuadra's form a powerful stream of nationalist literature stretching from Sandino to the present.⁴

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3. Torturados, in Cuadra, pp. 23-25; in his poem Solo en la compañía, p. 13, Cuadra claims to have been ex-Quilalí area Guardsman #4395, but according to numerous Marine-GN reports this number was assigned to one Tomás Linarte, stationed at Cuatros Esquinas and Navarro, east of Matagalpa and far to the southeast of Quilalí (e.g., Patrol report, Uriza, Navarro, 21 June 1932, NA127/202/14). A thorough search has failed to reveal Manolo Cuadra's name among former Guardsmen, suggesting that he changed his name or that this self-portrayal was fictional.

4. The works comprising this literature are too numerous to list here; see the Bibliography.
At the same time, the metaphors and imagery deployed in this corpus of nationalist texts -- most produced by literate urbanites with no direct experience of the invasion -- were (and are) replicated in the collective historical consciousness of broad segments of the Segovian countryfolk. A relatively independent universe of orally transmitted folktales, songs, myths, and legends devoted to the theme of yankee barbarity, by now a permanent part of Segovian popular culture, offers a striking complement to and affirmation of the written tradition.

Yet mythologies are, and tell, only part of the story. Just as Marine-Guardia-produced texts shed only the dimmest of lights on "bandit" motivations, the nationalist myths and legends of the Segovian countryfolk distort and shroud the past as much as they illuminate it. By demonizing the Marines and Guardia utterly, popular memories elide some crucial historical realities, most critically: the self-imposed limits of the Marines-Guardia in their production of violence; widespread collaboration between the "invaders" and Segovianos; and the beginnings of a self-sustaining and home-grown (if externally introduced and nurtured) antipode to Sandinismo: the Guardia Nacional, the handmaiden of Somocismo.

In practice, Marine-Guardia relations with Segovianos were double-edged and ambivalent, though always asymmetrically so. Ultimately defined by violence and its omni-present potential, such relations could be both brutal and amiable, deadly and mutually beneficial, contingent upon time, place, person, and circumstance. Marine-Guardia violence against Segovianos -- like the violence of the Ocotal Chamorrista elite -- was both selective and capricious, discriminating and random, with patterned variations according to class, ethnicity, age, gender, and region. Wielding the stick of superior military might, the "barbarians of the north" also dangled carrots and imposed limits; burnings, bombings, rapes, and murders were combined with propaganda and amnesty campaigns, the cultivation of strategic alliances with different sectors, communities, and
individuals, and, in general, the creation of an enduring human infrastructure -- a multi-tiered collaborative apparatus -- to aid them in their cause.

If the literature generated by the Rebellion has tended to ignore the alliances, it has also inadequately documented the violence. In most cases, concrete empirical evidence was unavailable to researchers, and allegations of Marine-GN atrocities either took the form of fiction, á la Manolo Cuadra, or remained unsubstantiated, dismissed by "serious" scholars as empty rhetoric. On the one hand there is a need to explode the myth of the "benevolent Marines," to explore and to document the horrific realities of Marine-Guardia violence against Segovianos. On the other hand it remains necessary to critically appraise popular mythologies which turn Somoza's *El Verdadero Sandino* on its head to paint the Marines-Guardia only as indiscriminate bloodthirsty killers. At the same time, those nationalist mythologies possess an historical autonomy and power of their own which, together with the antitheses they elide, constitute perhaps the most important legacies of the Rebellion.

Manolo Cuadra was not the first to see a certain irony in Marine-Guardia violence, though he was among the first to render that vision in literary form. At the end of his story, the next prisoner (who happens to be the son of the prisoner just tortured and shot) somehow manages, as the electricity surges through his writhing body, to join his wire-wrapped thumbs together and short-circuit the generator, blowing himself and his Marine Corps captors to smithereens. The unintended consequences upon which I would like to focus are not entirely dissimilar, though some are less frequently explored.

**From The Butcher to The Black Legend: Yankees in Segovian popular memory**

In his book *Sandino y los yanquis* (1961), Ramón Romero devotes several pages to the Marine called The Butcher (*El Carnicero*): Lieutenant Lee. "The chief of the

Nicaraguan constabulary in Jinotega was Lieutenant Lee," writes Romero, "of unknown origin, but surely a criminal escaped from the penitentiary." Romero's depiction of Lee is of a piece with Manolo Cuadra's portrait of Hays and Phillips: a campesino "with a song on his lips" is leaving his home for his daily labors in the fields when

suddenly he stumbles into Lieutenant Lee, the monster, the murderer. And he asks the peasant, 'Where are you going?'
'To my garden señor, over there,' and he points with his finger.
'Are you a Sandinista?'
'No, señor . . .'
'Can you see the bird over there in that tree?'
'No, I don't see it, señor . . .'
And in this moment Lieutenant Lee thrusts a dagger into his throat and his victim falls, with his eyes wide open. Lee cleans the dagger slowly. There is a strange shine in his eyes, an undefinable pleasure spreads over his face. The North Americans who are with him laugh and dance.6

Lieutenant Lee, no fictional character, was "probably the subject of more atrocity stories than any other American officer in Nicaragua," according to Neill Macaulay.7 Macaulay, dismissing "many" of these accusations as "purely imaginary" and "patently absurd," acknowledges that "the guerrillas certainly feared" the "aggressive and ruthless" Lee.8 Yet Macaulay's rejection of what he terms "anti-American atrocity propaganda" ignores the most important feature of the phenomenon: the fact that many people believed it. Judging especially from the testimonies compiled by the IES in the early 1980s, the conviction that Lee was a typical Yankee and a bloodthirsty murderer remains to this day an extremely popular one.

Old-timers interviewed by the IES, especially from Jinotega and Matagalpa departments, invoked Lee's name with striking regularly and painted him in remarkably consistent hues. Like William Walker and other anti-heroes of the Nicaraguan past, he

6. Romero, p. 162. Romero does not specify his sources, though he suggests that one informant was an elderly resident of the region; one un referenced charge against Lee made by Romero (regarding the death of the infant daughter of one Manuela García) was lifted en toto from Bolaños (1980), p. 187 (orig. pub. 1952).
8. Ibid, pp. 228-229; Macaulay cites only one example: Bolaños's charge (1980, p. 187) that Lee forced his men to eat bread cut with a knife dripping with the blood of murdered Sandinistas.
was invariably remembered (in these testimonies) in morally unambiguous terms: as absolute evil in human form. Consider for example the flow of memory in the testimony of Luisa Cano Arauz, whose remembrances here are representative of popular memory more generally in the San Rafael-Jinotega region: "The Guardia did damage with every step they took, with every step they took.

They wanted to kill me infinite times, and the yankees were going to kill me too. See, because they'd arrive at the house and take the pigs and eat them because if they didn't eat them, they were lost because Sandino's troops would've eaten them. Sandino's troops never took a single cow from us -- not so much because we were completely on their side you understand, it's just that they weren't bad like this damned Guardia, 'the M' they were called, these men were terrible! I don't know why they were called 'the M,' I think they belonged to this lieutenant who killed some people here in La Corneta, I'm going to tell you his name: it was Lieutenant Lee. This man did away with half of Nicaragua!! He was a Yankee, the worst man they had in all of the United States! They say he was killed there, and that's the end he should've had, but it's for that reason that they say that they say M, that the M is bad.  

Dofia Luisa's narration flowed along a typical course: the Marines (and the Guardia) were remembered, above all else, for their evildoing; memories of evil Yankees, in turn, sparked memories of Lieutenant Lee, "the worst" of them all, the archetypical "bad" Yankee. Such sentiments and patterns of thought echo repeatedly in the IES testimonies. To her cousin Pedro Antonio, "this so-called Mr. Lee was the most murderous Yankee in the whole United States." Secundino Hernández Blandón, a soldier under Emilio Blandón in the Jinotega district from around 1930 to 1933, told of how he and his men ambushed and mortally wounded Lt. Lee; "the last macho who died here was this Lieutenant Lee," he recalled; "He was the macho who would throw little babies up into the air and wait for them with his bayonet, like this, with a yataghan he'd spear them; but he finally met his end." Lieutenant Lee, as Don Secundino remembered it, was on patrol with some thirty National Guardsmen; they had all just sat down to eat some sandwiches when the Sandinistas opened fire. "We didn't have orders to kill any Guardia, our orders were only to kill this macho Lee. Well, those same thirty Guardias carted this macho Lee

9. IES 037: 5.
10. IES untitled ms., p. 12.
out of there on a hammock, four of them were carrying him, and *adios macho* Lee."

Fittingly, Don Secundino concluded the tale by assuring his audience that Lee never went on to fight in Vietnam, that such stories were nothing but -- could be nothing but -- lies.11

The memory of Sixto Hernández Blandón, a soldier under Pedrón for most of the Rebellion, followed a similar train:

On a hill called La Mula we ran into a patrol of yankees; their chief was named *macho Ali*, *macho Ali* they called him, *macho Ali*, this man was a barbarian with civilians, he'd take little children and throw them up in the air and spear them with his yataghan. Well, there he was killed, finished off, that cursed *macho*.12

Lieutenant Lee was, according to Marine-GN records, wounded in battle toward the end of the war, near Agua Carta Jinotega on 26 September 1932. "The smaller groups are rejoicing that Lieutenant Lee has been killed," observed Lt. Stevens in a report a few weeks later. "All of the people stated that he was the only man who made them worry because they had found that he kept on their trails longer than anyone else."13 Stevens also reported that he judged it best to confirm the rumor of Lee's death amongst the populace, perhaps contributing to the popular belief that he was killed -- although rumors of his death had been circulating since at least mid-1931.14

Tales of *macho* Lee were told and retold in the hamlets and villages of the San Rafael-Jinotega region for decades after he was mythologically killed in battle. Juan Ubeda, a merchant from San Rafael del Norte who lived at arm's length from the actual fighting, was asked in the early 1980s if from time to time the Yankees organized expeditions against Sandino. "The one who lived against Sandino permanently," he responded, "was this Lieutenant Lee.

He was a Yankee, one of the chiefs, and he was the one who loved to persecuted him... Well when he'd grab hold of a humble campesino he'd tell him, 'possible usted finish,' putting the knife into him little by little. 'I am Lieutenant Lee!!,' he'd

11. IES 047: 6-8. In a remarkable coincidence, Romero, p. 162, charges that one Secundino Hernández was killed by the Marines under Lt. Lee near San Rafael.
12. IES 036: 5.
say, burying the knife little by little, and when he killed him he'd put the knife back in its sheath to dry it off and then send it to the United States, like a trophy.\footnote{IES 086: 3. Similar IES remembrances abound.}

Why were the Yankees called *machos*? Luis Boedeker González was asked this question in 1983. "Because they were brutes," he responded. "A Yankee didn't understand, since they didn't speak Spanish, they hardly understood anything, the bloody murderers." This train of thought led in the next breath to

Lieutenant Lee, who was the chief of the M of the Guardia Nacional in Jinotega, [who] was the most murderous of all. Entering the valleys he'd say, 'We're gonna kill us some bandits!', and he'd come in and gather the people together and kill them, cut off their ears and kill them. And the children and women, he'd take the children and throw them in the air, and, and those he captured he'd make them sit down, 'sit here,' and paa! he'd slit their throats.\footnote{IES 055-1-2: 11.} Francisco Centeno Fonseca's memory followed a path identical to Don Luis's; asked in 1983 about the Yankees, he responded: "Eh! They were terrible!, there was one Yankee called Yankee Alí who was the worst, a cold-blooded murderer, throwing little babies up in the air and spearing them!"\footnote{IES 066: 9.} Martín Blandón Rodríguez, kin of Sandinista General Pedro Blandón, was asked in 1980 about the "comportment of the Yankees" during the occupation. "We can't say that the Yankees were good," Don Martín explained,

better still, we can say that they were bad, because when they came in here into these mountains, into these places, the Yankee called Alí grabbed a baby by its arms and threw it into the air and waited for it with a sword where it landed, and he cut open its chest and pulled out its heart, and he ate it, the heart of that little baby.\footnote{IES 033: 10.}

Whether or not Lee actually did throw little babies up into the air, spear them, and devour their hearts is of less historical moment than the immensely popular belief that he did, and that he epitomized "Yankees in general." Especially in the Matagalpa-Jinotega region, private memories of the Marines tended immediately to fix on this single individual, suggesting that over time, private memories have coalesced into a broader, collective representation of what the Yankees really did, were, and meant. Of the dozens of elderly residents of the Jinotega region with whom I spoke, *all* remembered *el gringo*
Lee, the majority in terms indistinguishable from those discussed above. Over time Lee was transformed in the popular mind into the quintessential Yankee, his name indelibly associated with the worst imaginable atrocities. This chain of equivalent meanings -- "Yankees = Lee = atrocities = evil" -- fed out of and into a larger corpus of nationalist symbols; anti-heroes like Lee became antipodes of martyrs like Rufo Marín -- morally and emotionally charged symbols of the perfect evil and moral cowardice of the anti-patriotic Other.

Are these atrocity stories "purely imaginary" as some have maintained? There are, on the contrary, sound reasons to think that the legend of El Carnicero is solidly rooted in fact. Second Lieutenant William A. Lee, "a tall lanky native of Massachusetts [and] woodsman by instinct," was second-in-command of "Company M," commanded by "Chesty" Puller of World War II fame -- who in turn was nicknamed, so the legend goes, "The Tiger of the Mountains" (el tigre de las montañas) by allies and adversaries alike.¹⁹ According to several US military historians, none of whom could be described as pro-Sandinista, Company M was the deadliest, most feared, and most effective Marine-Guardia military unit ever to operate in Nicaragua.²⁰ Adopting many of the guerrilla tactics of their adversaries, "The M" formed a small, tight-knit, well-armed band of professional soldiers roving independently throughout the jungle fastnesses of the Jinotega region for months at a time in search of the elusive "bandits." Lee, Puller, and their thirty-odd followers learned and practiced, with a degree of competence rarely matched by other Marine-Guardia commanders, the underlying principles of effective counter-guerrilla warfare: stealth, cunning, group cohesion, and most importantly (lacking, as they did, popular support), the incessant cultivation of fear among the civilian populace. Lee was also a key player in two "reconcentration" campaigns in the Jinotega region, in 1929 and again in 1930; his unit operated throughout the Jinotega
region from early 1929 until the end of the Marine occupation in late 1932; especially
during the last year of the war, Company M was responsible for more deaths and the
destruction of more Sandinista infrastructure in the Jinotega region, human and material,
than any other Marine-Guardia unit.21 Even as early mid-1931, Lee had earned a
reputation as the most fearsome Yankee operating in Jinotega. "They stated that they
were afraid of Lieutenant Lee," reported a June 1931 summary of information obtained
from Guardia deserter Alberto Rivera, earlier held prisoner by the Sandinistas. Rivera
also reported the widespread belief that Lee had been killed, a recurring rumor that was
more a reflection of what people wished than of what they knew.22

At the same time, judging exclusively from extant Marine-Guardia patrol and
combat reports, little appears to distinguish Lee from dozens of other Marine-Guardia
patrol commanders. Lieutenant H.H. Hanneken and ex-Liberal General Juan Escamilla,
co-leaders of the infamous squad of "Volunteers" (Voluntarios) which terrorized Jinotega
in mid-1929, for example, were by all appearances just as brutally familiar with the basic
principles of counterinsurgency campaigns as their more infamous compatriots in
Company M.23 For whatever reasons, Hanneken, Escamilla -- and Pennington, Croka,
Brauer, McQueen, and dozens of others -- were largely forgotten as identifiable
individuals, telescoped out of the past; collective memories of the Yankees instead
coalesced mainly around "Lieutenant Lee, the worst Yankee of all,"24 a man who over
time became seared into the popular consciousness as a specific, nameable, fingerable
symbol for the all of the hatred, anger, sadness, and pain produced by the Yankees and
the war.

21. The GN-2 Reports for 1931 and 1932, NA127/43A/29, make this point abundantly
    clear.
23. On the Hanneken-Escamilla Voluntarios, see pp. 52-61, below; see also Macaulay,
    pp. 139-143; on Hanneken's reputed exploits in Haiti see Thomason's story "Hanneken"
    in Fix Bayonets!
The depth and breadth of the collective memories of Marine brutality are only faintly suggested by the figure of El Carnicero Lee. IES testimonials like Calixto Tercero González's could fill a fat volume:

If the machos were going along the road, and someone came along, then paa! they'd kick them and shoot them, right in the main road! You didn't walk near them but kept your distance; if you saw an American nearby, you'd stay away and not come near. If for example some little child went near them, 'Oh! I'm going to see if I can hit that little monkey!' and paa! they'd shoot him, a little baby who was crawling around, just for the pure pleasure of it! If there was a poor fellow out working, 'Oh, that monkey is working for Sandino,' and paa!, kill him for no reason!25

Here as in most such depictions, the Marines' senseless brutality coexisted seamlessly with their utter moral cowardice -- who but the most wretched coward kills little babies "just for the pure pleasure of it"? Pedro Antonio Arauz's story about "Marine Captain Major Power," killed by Pedrón's soldiers during the battle of Embocaderos, offers a common variation on the theme: after found hiding under a bed in the barracks and ordered out of his hiding place, Power begged with his captors to be shot by a firing squad, not killed by machete blows. "Well, so great was the indignation that they took him outside and broke his head into little pieces with a peasant's hatchet."26 For Pedro Antonio Arauz, as for numberless others, the "Yankee invaders" were cowardly murderers utterly lacking in courage, honor, or humanity, "the most brutal enemies of all time . . . committing untold horrors . . . without the slightest glory nor cause to defend, sustaining a war of 'the ant against the tiger.'"27 Most IES memories of the Marines run parallel to Martín Blandón Rodríguez's -- "they did nothing but kill, kill the people" -- Macario Calderón Salinas's -- "they burned our little houses, our animals, everything we

25. IES 097-2-2: 4-5.
26. P.A. Arauz, IES untitled ms., p. 8. USMC 1st Lt. Power was killed and mutilated at Embocaderos on 15 June 1931; Marine Corps Casualties in Nicaragua, NA127/43A/15/17.5.
27. IES untitled ms., pp. 1, 4.
had" -- and Cosme Castro Andino's -- "whoever they grabbed they killed, the Yankees
did."28

In the popular lexicon, machos, or male mule, soon came to mean yanqui.
Segovian peasants, with as keen a sense of irony as anyone, inverted the dominant
discourse to cast the "civilized" as the "barbarous" -- following Sandino's unceasing
denunciations of the Marines as "barbarians," "savage hordes," "Yankee pirates," "blonde
beasts of the north," and sundry similar epithets. "The Yankees were the same as the
Conservatives and the Guardia," recalled José Flores Gradys. "They were brutes, pure
and simple."29 One popular song from the period denounced "the imperial Yankee
brutes"; another deployed imagery from the days of William Walker: "I am a noble
guerrilla fighter / Terror of the filibuster / Who tries to humiliate . . . the nation."30 In the
early 1980s, when these testimonies were recorded, the "bandit" label was commonly
inverted as much in present tense as past: "It's clear we were not the bandits, they're the
bandits because they're the shameless foreigners who have come from their own country
to inflict damage on a foreign country, they are the bandits!"31 "Why were they called
machos?" Susana Morales asked Feliciano Garcia Castro in 1983. "They say it's because
they didn't understand Holy Mary, ha ha ha!" he retorted, in a bitterly amused
denunciation their religious and moral vacuity. "Well it seems to me that they were the
bandits, in my foolishness I tend to think that to be a bandit means to do nothing but kill
and rob, ha ha ha!"32

The Yankees, "dressed in olive green, blonde, bigghish, were easy to kill," recalled
José María Cerro Castellón, echoing a common sentiment which inverted some
fundamental aspects of the actual state of affairs. "They fell like little guineo stalks, they
were deathly afraid of us because they knew how sly we were; from afar we'd see them,

29. IES 058: 2.
31. IES 058: 10-11.
32. IES 048: 9.
and paa! they'd bite the dust, nary a one still standing."33 "To kill Yankees was like killing a fat pig," recalled Feliciano Garcia Castro. "They were idiots, pure and simple."34 Popular songs from the period were infused with derisive condemnations of the barbarity and stupidity of the invaders and homages to the Sandinistas, valiantly "resisting the savage blows / of the tyrant and his vile invader."35 What is probably the most popular verse of the most popular song from the period, commonly sung with a wry smile in a voice at once irreverent and solemn, captures eloquently how most rural folk came to see their relationship with the Marines:

Said Sandino one time
Squeezing his hands together
For ten cents I'm selling
The heads of North Americans36

Nicaraguan National Guardsmen were commonly seen as no less blameworthy, sharing equally in the invaders' fundamental moral flaws. "The Guardia were equal to the machos," recalled Joaquín Fajardo Arauz. "These men were there to protect José María Moncada, who was the traitor."37 One of Ascención Iglesias Rivera's stories, exemplary of a much larger genre, told of the cowardice of National Guardsman Pancho Salgado, who feigned death after the battle of Las Puertas in 1932, throwing himself on top of his fallen comrades and permitting his enemies to rifle his "corpse." Half a century later, justice finally prevailed when "this poor man lived long enough to see the true history (la historia de veras)," i.e., the 1979 Sandinista triumph. For Don Ascención, the "dogs" (Guardia) were not only cowardly but arrogantly inhumane, endlessly inflicting indignities on his family, even in the smallest details of daily life, e.g.: "My family, every time they bought a little blanket, the Guardias would come and paa! they'd take it,

33. IES 088: 14.
34. IES 048: 13.
36. E.g., Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo (1985), p. 141. Most Segovianos, young and old alike, are familiar with this verse, which invariably provokes smiles and laughter when sung to a North American (in my experience).
37. IES 100-1-2: 9.
various times they did this to my poor family, which soon took ill." Don Ascención joined Sandino's forces when he was fourteen because, as he recalled it, the Yankees had murdered three of his brothers unarmed and defenseless in their home; the implicit contrast with the moral courage of the Sandinistas could not have been stark. 38

Counterparts of the machos, the perros (dogs) of the National Guard were so called "because," in the words of Cosme Castro Andino, "they were like dogs tracking you down." 39

The United States had been alternately scorned and praised by Nicaraguans since at least the 1850s. While many literate urbanites condemned US intervention during the years of US-backed Conservative rule (1912-1924), on the whole their collective voice remained weak and their audience small; print media, consisting mainly of newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides, were few and of limited circulation. It was not until mid-1927, when the Marines began the military occupation of the Segovias, that the imagery of the Yankees as evil cowards and barbarous baby-killers began to be propagated by Sandino and take root in the popular imagination. At this moment a fortuitous conjecture occurred: just as the Marines were beginning their ground war against Sandino, the first major wave of literature devoted to Nicaraguan subordination to the US appeared, part of the larger anti-imperialist intellectual movement discussed in chapter two. A torrent of anti-imperialist books, pamphlets, journals, and other publications, most highly polemical and some of more scholarly merit, began to circulate in intellectual circles throughout Latin and Central America. 40

Popular perceptions of the Marines in the Segovias were (and are) linked to, yet autonomous from, this explosion of written texts. Collective Sandinista imageries and memories of the "Yankee invaders" in the Segovias were (and remain) based not on

38. IES 065: 3, 4.
39. IES 049: 2.
40. E.g., Cox (1927), Nogales (1928), Quijano (1928), Soto Hall (1928), Haven and Melinda (1928), Cramer (1929), Denny (1929), and Ghiraldo (1929).
written texts but on direct personal experiences condensed over time into what appears to have become, by the 1990s, a viable oral tradition.41 This immense body of stories powerfully influenced literary representations of the Yankees, providing fresh and hair-raising ammunition for an already well-stocked arsenal of accusations against the "Colossus of the North." Jerónimo Aguilar Cortés's novel Memorias de los yanquis a Sandino (1972), to cite one lesser-known example, opens with a memorable scene which plays beautifully on what many see as the fundamental irony of the invasion: after being unjustly imprisoned by North American Guardia officers, the narrator demands his constitutional rights; "'You don't have any rights,' thundered the official clenching his fists; 'you're all nothing more than mangy Indians, you're savages that we're here civilizing. Obey the order and shut up.'"42 (In an unexpected twist, the story goes on to paint Sandino's nationalist rhetoric as a smokescreen for common criminality.) This literary Black Legend in turn derives, in large part, from the experiences of the Segovian countryfolk, their songs, folktales, myths, and legends, a tradition of which we have only glimpsed the outlines here.

Yet every gain entails a loss. The profound ambivalence of many Nicaraguans toward the US was supplanted with a far blunter, less textured, and in the end, less realistic portrait. Caricaturing the "Yankee invaders" as mythical demons, Sandinista popular and nationalist mythologies have elided some crucial historical realities. The Black Legend ignores that the Marines were commonly no less cunning, pragmatic, and sensible than they were brutal and stupid. It ignores or consigns to the one-dimensional category of "traitor" the thousands of Nicaraguans -- rich and poor, young and old, male and female -- who chose to cooperate with the Marines, and the many more who were not

41. Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition As History (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 27, defines oral traditions as "verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation." While much research remains to be done on Segovian popular memory, anecdotal evidence indicates that such stories will circulate for a long time after the deaths of all original Sandinistas.
42. Aguilar Cortés, p. 7.
in fundamental disagreement with the occupation. Like all myths, it erases much of the past and simplifies the rest. At the same time, like many others, it is built upon a bedrock of truth.

"It is them who we wish, in our humanity, to save": Marine-Guardia violence against Segovianos in historical practice

"These poor natives are the sufferers," wrote Northern Area Commander Colonel Dunlap in a May 1928 memorandum "addressed to every officer and man of the Marine Corps and Guardia of the Northern Area,

because, in many cases, they have no way of proving to our forces that they have no connection with the bandits, they hide out, act suspicious and, in short, become hunted creatures by both bandits and Marines. Their life, you can see, is a most miserable one and it is them whom we wish, in our humanity, to save, as much as possible.

Dunlap's argument, simple, straightforward, brimming with praiseworthy sentiments, was based upon a less-than-half-true premise. "The bandits are . . . in fairly well-defined groups," he maintained; ". . . they are not there in their own home territory, are not occupying their own houses, are not eating their own cattle or food." Instead, "they take what they want from the natives," ergo, "the natives are the sufferers." 43

The underlying premise of Dunlap's memo flew in the face of the experiences of his men and the realities of the war and pointed to the fundamental paradox confronted by the Marines from the beginning to the end of the Rebellion: an inability to distinguish between the general populace they sought to protect and the enemy they sought to destroy. Compare Dunlap's memo with a strikingly similar one issued exactly three years later by Colonel Smith. "Every effort will be made to assure them [the rural inhabitants] of the friendliness of the Guardia toward all peaceable citizens," Smith directed. On the other hand,

bandits, bandit suspects, and anyone giving assistance to bandits may be placed under arrest, guides may be impressed, food stuffs and animals may be

commandeered, property camps and dwellings in use by bandits may be destroyed and any measures taken that will injure the cause of the bandits and lead to their defeat (emphasis added).44

In fact, Smith's directives had been practiced since the first days of the invasion. For the Marines and Guardia, the tension between carrot and stick was rooted in a paradox which everyone saw but none could resolve: the natives were the enemy. "These natives," lamented Dunlap's successor Colonel Denig in May 1930, fingering his single greatest source of frustration (and justifying an abortive scheme to forcibly depopulate huge areas of the north), "join with various Jefes for an ambush or attack on some town, and then after the combat, conceal their arms and go to their huts, where, to all intents and purposes, they are peacefully farming."45 A year earlier the commanding officer at Yalí, in his praise for a failed "reconcentration" program such as the one Denig now proposed, came at the same problem from a different angle. "I believe," he wrote,

that the rounding up of the natives in this area was justified in view of the fact that all natives in this area have been harboring bandits in their houses and feeding them and not one has ever reported to this company when bandits were in their fincas.46

Even footsore, monolingual second lieutenants quickly became keenly aware of the central dilemma confronting them: "residents . . . who pose as 'bueno gente' and are . . . bandits."47 As a result, the Marines-Guardia, in most cases unable to distinguish between innocent civilians and enemy soldiers (primarily because in most cases the distinction did not exist), were compelled to wage a multi-pronged assault against both.

The strategies deployed in this assault ranged from direct physical violence from heavily armed combat patrols and airplanes to a variety of more subtle mechanisms designed to survey, regulate, discipline, and control the rural populace. All were selectively, simultaneously, and unevenly deployed on multiple sites -- the body, the

44. Authority and Duties of Guardia Nacional . . ., Col. J.C. Smith, 26 May 1931; reprinted in Smith et al., pp. 413-414.
45. Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, Denig, Ocotal, 10 May 1930.
46. B-2 Report, Managua, 26 June 1929, pp. 6-8, NA127/209/1.
47. Patrol Report, Corbett, Telpaneca, 11 Nov. 1929, NA127/212/1.
family, the community, the household economy, various forms of property, and most
crucially if most difficult to document, the dignity and integrity of the person. From May
1927 to December 1932, physical violence by the Marines against Segovianos was
selective, systematic, routine, quotidian, and ubiquitous. This is revealed especially in
Marine-Guardia patrol and combat reports. Biased and subjective as they invariably are,
these documents describe, often in stunning detail, thousands of individual episodes;
taken together they tell an extraordinary story of precisely how the Marines and Guardia
practiced war against the Segovian civil populace.

It is perhaps useful to begin with some basic human rights. There was never any
pretense of freedom of expression. Reports like Lieutenant Buchanan's from Palacaguina
-- "The father of Felipe Cruz was locked up last night for making remarks to and against
the Guardia" -- were commonplace.48

Nor was there ever any pretense of protection against unreasonable search and
seizure. Segovianos were routinely interrogated, their bodies and homes routinely
searched, poked, prodded, scrutinized. Hundreds of reports like Lt. Nordstrom's -- "Upon
arriving at Santa Rita my patrol searched the houses and questioned the natives regarding
bandits" -- were filed.49 The procedure followed in mid-1930 by Lieutenant Smith's
outgoing patrol -- "All natives encountered on trail were carefully questioned and
examined" -- and on its return -- "The area was carefully searched and all natives
interrogated" -- was repeated by virtually every patrol that ever went out -- and over the
course of the war there were, as we have seen, tens of thousands of them.50 More than a
few reports suggest that such searches could be thorough indeed; e.g., in July 1930,
Major Croka's patrol near Yalí discovered a "Salgado Boleta"51 on the person of José
María Aguilera. "The Boleta," reported the major, "was rolled up in a hankerchief and

50. Patrol Report, Smith, Esteli, 7 July 1930, NA127/202/10/52; see ch. 8.
51. Like a "guarantee"; a safe-conduct pass issued by Sandinista General Carlos Salgado.
tied around below the knee of the left leg of Aguilera under his trousers and leather puttee"; what he did not report is why he felt compelled to search there.52

From early on, "impressing" natives as guides and porters against their will was deemed entirely legitimate. "Night march was made without incident except for mules tiring, rain, and the impressing to our service of two Nicaraguan men," wrote (the soon-to-be-legendary) Lieutenant Bruce in mid-August 1927. "This was imperative," he explained, "as we left one mule in their corral and were apprehensive that they might enter Murra by another trail and give notice of our coming."53 For patrol commanders after Bruce, the only aspect of the "impressment of natives" which ceased was the felt need to justify it in written reports. "Impressed as guides two boys," reported Captain Hakala without elaboration two years later.54 Hundreds of similar cases could be cited.

It frequently happened that those impressed as guides were Sandinista sympathizers; for the latter the results were often fatal. On April 3, 1930, Lt. Pilcher set out in search of the group that had attacked Yali two days before. "A guide was picked up," and about half a mile further on, "the guide shouted, 'Los Machos vienen!' ['the Yankees are coming!'] and we were fired on by the bandits. The guide was killed by the first burst of fire."55 This report, like many others, smells fishy: Why would the "bandits" kill the man who warned them? Pilcher did not specify whose "first burst of fire" killed the guide, though it seems more than likely that in this case the Marines-Guardia purposely killed a hostile guide for revealing their position.

From the beginning the Marines assumed that any house or village deemed suitable for rest or billeting was theirs for the taking. Many early reports carried inventories of the positive and negative features of different houses, settlements, and locales for future reference, e.g., "Guapinol (House of Santos Vasques) Shelter for 20

53. Patrol to Murra, Bruce, Jicaro, 18 Aug 1927, NA127/212/1.
men. Good pasturage and water supply. Strong position... Five shacks scattered over the mountain... Each would furnish shelter for about 10 men..."56

Out on patrol, food, livestock, and other property of rural folk were routinely "confiscated," i.e., stolen. In garrisoned towns, villages, and ranches, the Marines generally contracted with private individuals for the provisioning of foodstuffs. Combat patrols were a different matter. In theory, each patrol was either to carry its own rations, pick up ration drops from airplanes, or carry sufficient money to purchase food from local producers. In practice, rations were bulky and difficult to transport, money scarce, and airplanes difficult to signal from jungle trails. As a result, stolen food frequently supplemented purchased food, and vice versa. Marine-Guardia patrols commonly paid for food. "I noted an abundance of corn between here and San Juan. It is coming on the market there at 30c a robe," reported Lt. Winans in October 1929. "We found sufficient turkeys and chickens for sale to enable us to supplement our three meals taken with us."57 Lieutenant McDonald noted that his patrol carried "ration money" in addition to arms.58

It was no less common to simply take what was needed. "On January 22nd the ration was exhausted," reported Lt. Kenyon on the movement of his column toward El Chipote in early 1928. His men did not go hungry, however; "there was ample native coffee, beef, beans, and fruit" for the taking.59 "In Suyatal valley killed two young bulls and two cows for food for GN patrol," reported Lt. Hamas in April 1929.60 "I gathered replacement animals, 2 bandit and 2 local property apparently," reported one nonplussed patrol commander after a brief firefight in December 1928.61 "Found eight head of horses in vicinity [of]... thatched house," reported Captain Pefley of his patrol through

60. Report of Patrol, Hamas, Ocotal, 8 April 1929, NA127/212/1; it should be noted that except in emergencies young bulls are never slaughtered for food (at least by their owners).
the Pantasma Valley. Though the most incriminating evidence he could find were "signs of recent use," Pefley "burned [the] house as [a] bandit concentration camp and confiscated [the] horses."\(^{62}\)

Depending upon the time of day, purchased goods could supplement "confiscated" ones. "Guardia will hike all day and be satisfied if allowed to search shacks for bananas and plantain, etc., during the day," reported Captain O'Leary in July 1930. "At the night halt," he added, without remarking on the shift in his assumptions, "a beef may be purchased for about three dollars or a large pig for about $2.50."\(^{63}\) Operating a few weeks later, Captain Croka made some very similar observations. "Food was cheap in the more isolated sections of the mountains and better than $18.00 was saved on the 22c ration in feeding the Ocotal detail," adding that "Confiscated food helped to effect this saving also."\(^{64}\)

Beasts were routinely "confiscated" from "bandit suspects," even when evidence implicating them was slim or nonexistent, as in the case of Captain Pefley, above. On the other hand, beasts rented from local proprietors were usually cared for diligently and returned in good condition. "The pack animal I rented in Santa Fe escaped from the corral I had him in . . . and was unable to find it, although a thorough search was made," reported a visibly concerned Lt. Stewart in late 1929. "It is probable that it went back home."\(^{65}\)

Along with pillaging came destruction. "Suspicious" houses and fields were routinely destroyed, most commonly by setting them afire. "In addition to our policy of exterminating bandits when and where they are found, it is also extremely important at this time that the operations of destroying their shelters and food supplies be intensified," wrote Major Schmidt in March 1929.\(^{66}\) In fact, such a policy had been practiced since

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the first days of the invasion, Colonel Dunlap's May 1928 admonitions against burning the houses of "innocent people" -- "make sure that it is their [the bandits'] house before destroying it" -- notwithstanding.67

For some patrol commanders, strong evidence was sometimes required before houses and villages were burnt to the ground. "Natosa has all the signs of being the stopping place for bandits and supplies," reported Captain Stent in August 1929. "Its destruction is recommended as soon as sufficient evidence can be found in the houses, 6 in all, to warrant destruction."68 At times even strong suspicions were insufficient. In November 1929, Lieutenant Corbett was investigating the Telpaneca mutiny of the previous month. He received information that one Gregorio Martínez at Cerro Grande might have assisted the mutineers. Searching Martínez's house, he found a small quantity of Guardia clothing and equipment. A nearby house contained other "suspicious" items. "The two above described houses . . . appear very suspicious to me, but I did not feel justified in damaging or destroying them, from the evidence I found in them," he reported. "But certainly would recommend that these two houses be checked up on again later."69

Reports like these were clearly in the minority. For most patrol commanders, the slightest incriminating evidence warranted the complete destruction of houses, fields, and stores of food. "On ZAPOTILLAL, we destroyed three (3) houses, enroute, one containing a good supply of corn, one of frijoles, and the other empty," reported Captain Spicer in a typical report, this one from early 1929. The reason? "The first two contained a small quantity of powder, and the third . . . contained dynamite." The next day the patrol "found one house containing powder and percussion caps, which we burned, and one containing a wooden basin with fresh bloody water in it." Both were

burned, along with "two cane fields nearby."\textsuperscript{70} It should be noted that "houses" in this context commonly referred to thatched huts, fifteen by twenty feet on average, each of which represented, at minimum, a full week's labor for an adult -- a substantial amount of work.\textsuperscript{71} Many houses, of course, were larger and invested with more than the labor put into their construction.

Hundreds of similar cases could be cited. In February 1930, Lieutenant Fagan's patrol came upon the house of Juan Matey near San Juan de Telpaneca "and camped for the night. A hand grenade containing powder was found in this house and on the following morning the house was destroyed. Juan Matey was not in his house," but only "a woman servant." Four days later a patrol cleared San Juan "to attempt to apprehend Juan Matey."\textsuperscript{72} Perhaps Fagan was trying to teach Matey a lesson, since eight months before, Matey had been implicated in two murders committed by Conservatives in the district and had "turned states evidence" against eight of the perpetrators.\textsuperscript{73} Fagan's subsequent reports do not bear this out, however. "Three houses were found on the [Zapotillal] ridge which showed signs of having house[d] transient groups recently and these houses were destroyed," he reported in April 1930, though he did not specify what "signs" he had in mind. Later on the same patrol he destroyed three more houses for the same reason.\textsuperscript{74}

Some patrols were more destructive than others. Major Croka's patrol, operating between Palacaguina and Yalf in July 1930, burned sixteen houses and sheds in five days. At Gamalote two sheds were burned "as a signal for air planes in case they were trying to locate us"; at Robledalito "two houses showing very recent signs of occupancy but abandoned by the owners were burned"; at Canto Gallo two more houses were burned "as the remains of food and other signs showed occupancy recently." Immediately after

\textsuperscript{70} Patrol Report, Spicer, 22 Jan. 1929, RG127/212/1.
\textsuperscript{71} From my field notebook.
\textsuperscript{73} R-2 Report, Ocotal, 16 June 1929, p. 6, NA127/209/1.
\textsuperscript{74} Patrol, Fagan, San Juan de Telpaneca, 6 Apr. 1930, NA127/202/13/56.
describing how he signalled the airplanes, Croka noted: "No bandit information gained and natives mostly very hostile," while following his description of the burning of another house, he observed that "Natives not pleased to see Guardia in their midst" -- all without the least hint of irony. A month later, Captain Fagan's patrol burned ten houses, killed seven head of cattle, stole a dozen chickens, and burned 500 pounds of corn in three days in the Pantasma Valley. Particularly after mid-1930, reports like Croka's and Fagan's became exceedingly commonplace.

It would be impossible to calculate how many houses and sheds and shacks and huts were burned, how many tons of corn, beans, cheese, meat, sugar, salt, lard and other foodstuffs destroyed, how many cows and horses and mules and pigs and chickens killed or "confiscated" by the Marines and Guardia during the course of the war. Suffice it to note here that their own internal records make abundantly clear that all of these practices were commonplace, that all were deemed legitimate within certain very elastic limits, and that all occurred with increasing frequency, reaching their height in 1931 and 1932. Indeed, toward the middle and end of 1932, the Marines and Guardia went on a veritable frenzy of destruction throughout large parts of the north. Hundreds of houses and fields were set ablaze, thousands of tons of food destroyed, thousands of animals slaughtered or taken. This was especially true in the San Juan de Telpaneca-Murra region and the Pantasma and Tuma Valleys, where support for the Defending Army was strongest and the social and geographic terrain most propitious for waging guerrilla war.77

77. GN-2 Reports for 1931 and 1932, NA127/43A/29, provide detailed accounts of this frenzy of destruction; indeed the reports make it appear as though patrol and combat commanders were engaged in competitions to see who could report the most "bandit" property destroyed. There appears to be little reason to doubt the approximate accuracy of these reports -- except with respect to corn. Patrol commanders commonly reported that they burned hundreds of pounds of corn in its storage bins (or trojas); I would reduce these figures by some 90%. Experiments I conducted on a farm near Yali lead me to believe that most fires probably damaged only a very small proportion of corn en troja; dry corn in the husk (as it is invariably stored) is in fact very fire-resistant.
With respect to violence against the body, it was deemed legitimate by the Marines-Guardia to kill any (non-allied) native seen with a firearm, as it was to shoot unarmed civilians who fled on approach. In late May 1929, a patrol of seventeen Marines (with no Nicaraguan Guardia accompanying) was sent to disinter the bodies of three Marines killed in battle five months before. During the exhumation, "members of [the] patrol had attempted to halt about six natives who ran away." Though automatic rifle fire was trained against them, "so far as is known no one was shot. No shots were fired at the marine patrol." 78 Were some of these seventeen Marines, furious at the deaths and mutilations of their comrades-in-arms, venting their anger in this emotionally charged moment by shooting unarmed natives? Such suspicions do not seem unwarranted.

Whatever the case in this instance, Marine-Guardia records make it clear that firing automatic weapons at fleeing unarmed civilians was not deemed excessive use of force. To cite a handful of examples: In late June 1929 the Hanneken-Escamilla patrol "spied a native in the woods, who, upon being seen was told to halt but took off and was fired upon and shot thru the arm ..." 79 A few days later a patrol from Ocotal looked "across a deep ravine and [saw] men running from one of the houses ... The guide immediately stated that these were bandits. About 30 shots were placed in ravines into which this group had disappeared." 80 In late August, National Guardsmen under Captain Hakala "noticed a man in the brush and called upon him to halt. The man continued to run and was fired upon ... killing him instantly." 81 In early 1930 a patrol was "descending [the] mountain-side" near Colon when "four mounted natives were seen coming out of the brush along river bank. Upon sighting the patrol they ran up the river. We opened fire ..." None had firearms, though three were "armed with daggers and

fighting machetes, [and one] was unarmed and totally drunk." In April 1930, Captain Hunt's patrol out of San Juan de Telpanecca "noticed three men running from [a] house. The point opened fire with the result of killing one and wounding another." Neither was armed. Four months later Captain Fagan reported that "this country around Mojón [east of Yali] is quite well populated but everybody runs from patrols. Three men were called upon to halt but failed to do so. They were fired on but escaped." Further examples could fill scores of pages.

Individual Marines and Guardia occasionally expressed remorse for having killed innocent people. In November 1929, Lieutenant Torres set up an ambush for "bandits" near Pueblo Nuevo. At midnight two travellers were challenged; "it was half light and these people were in the shadow, instead of halting or answering the man who was ahead charged the men who were on watch; the man was instantly killed and . . . the woman was wounded and . . . later died." Torres, admitting a mistake had been made, laid the blame elsewhere: "The cause of all were the false reports, or rather reports from people who were badly scared. Everything has been done to console and aid the family of the two dead." He ended by offering to provide, "if necessary, . . . a detailed account of what happened," though no additional report was filed.

From the outset the Marines and Guardia followed the unwritten rule that prisoners could be either taken or killed, at the discretion of the patrol commander. "Going down ravine, took 1 bandit prisoner, fully armed and equipped," reported Lieutenant O'Shea in early October 1927, describing the aftermath of the (legendary) Sandinista ambush at Las Cruces. "Were afraid to shoot him for fear of giving away our position." Almost apologizing for taking a prisoner (whom his report does not mention

again), O'Shea implied that had his unit not been in such a jam the prisoner might well have been executed -- an interpretation borne out by a mountain of indirect evidence.

The summary execution of prisoners was a common practice of the Marines-Guardia, as their own records make plain. The most famous instance was General Juan Escamilla's execution of Defending Army General Manuel Jiron Ruano on March 4, 1929 (after he had been squeezed for weeks for every drop of information).87 "Escamilla reports . . . having executed Jiron. . . . Believe method pursued was excellent," averred the Northern Area Commander in Ocotal.88 The larger goal of producing fear among subaltern classes was well served by the execution, according to Captain Reagan:

"Bandit jefes will continue to be successful in recruiting until the mozo class of the population becomes afraid to join them," he observed. "The recent execution of Gen. Giron by Escamilla will have a most salutary effect in discouraging bandit recruiting."89 Summary executions continued. In early April, Escamilla captured four Sandinistas; an intelligence analyst noted without further comment that "Two of the . . . bandits were tried, convicted, and executed by Volunteer Court-martial."90

In all hundreds of prisoners were "shot while attempting to escape," a euphemism for murder. Consider the death of Victor Bellorin of El Zapote, who was denounced by "native laborer" Juan Herrera at the post at Apalf. In an account typical for its implausibility, Lt. Munn reported that after arriving at El Zapote and arresting several men, he decided to question Victor Bellorin separately, taking him into a banana grove some thirty feet from Bellorin's house. Just as they entered the grove, "I noticed he had no rope on and turned to call one of the Marines at the house to bring one. Just then one

87. On Giron's execution see Macaulay, pp. 140-141. On 4 February 1929 Hanneken wrote: "He [Giron] has and can give much information" (telegram, 4 Feb. 1929, NA127/212/1). The information extracted from Giron fills fourteen single-spaced typewritten pages; Capture of General Manuel Maria Jiron Ruano and information obtained from him, L.B. Reagan, Ocotal, ca. March 1929, MCHC-PPC/J.C. Smith/7/Nicaragua.
of Victor's guards cried out that the prisoner was escaping," so he was shot and killed. The patrol was "unable to find any firearms or incriminating possessions" at the Bellorin house.91

As the practice grew commoner, reports of shooting "escaping" prisoners grew increasingly terse. "A bandit captured on the TUMA-CARRATERA trail tried to escape and was shot and killed," read one report of February 1929. "Agintino Martinez a bandit spy attempted to escape from a Marine sentry at FUNDADORA and was killed," read another.92 Less than two years into the war there was no need to provide a scenario to justify the practice; it is likely that just as often there was no felt need to report it unless there were civilian witnesses. Marine-Guardia reports document over one hundred such murders.

Of course, not all prisoners were shot, and most were released after a brief confinement. Sometimes, those shot in "battle" were doctored by those who wounded and captured them. Felipe Talavera, who "admitted running when he saw the Marines but said he had no rifle and that he was running to catch a horse, [and later] said that when he heard the firing he ran to call his boy and was shot," was treated for his wound by the hospital corpsman, though his eventual fate went unrecorded.93 Francisco Baldonado, resident of Sabana Grande near Matagalpa, was shot at for running from a Marine-GN patrol in August 1930. "A half hour later he was found in a shack . . . wounded in the belly . . . He cold not or would not give any reason for running . . . He was given medical attention . . . [and] should make a quick recovery."94 Scores of similar cases could be cited, particularly for women and girls accidentally wounded in firefights; e.g., "Girl who was wounded Sunday, accidentally by [Marines] was evacuated by native bearers to Ocotal."95

91. Patrol Report, Munn, Apalí, 12 May 1929, NA RG127/212/1.
Did the Marines and Guardia sometimes torture prisoners, as Manolo Cuadra and others have charged? Records of such practices appear occasionally in patrol and combat reports, though they probably occurred far more frequently than was recorded. In January 1930 a patrol under Lt. Smith captured "bandit suspect Bernadino Ortez. Ortez at first denied all knowledge of bandits, but was finally made to confess and give information desired."96 How he was "made to confess" Smith did not divulge, though a report of eight months later suggests some possibilities. "A boy of about fourteen years of age was found," the same Lt. Smith reported, "who, after being threatened with death, admitted knowing the position of a bandit camp, and agreed to lead us to it."97 In February 1930, Lieutenant Cunningham was out on patrol near Embocaderos in Jinotega. He dressed three Guardia "as Sandinistas and sent them ahead with a twenty minute start to gain information." They soon encountered one Juan Blandón, who "entertained the three Guardias, fed them and divulged information." Soon after Blandón was arrested. "I questioned BLANDON at length," reported Cunningham. "By promising BLANDON his life, I got him to agree to lead me to the main bandit encampment." Two days later, "the bandit BLANDON made a break from the advance guard" and was killed.98 Scores of similar examples could be cited.

Marine-Guardia physical violence against civilians was highly gendered. Soon after Juan Blandón was shot and killed, the patrol came across a house of six young women and four children which contained some Marine-Guardia equipment and clothing. "The inhabitants refused to give any information. The house was destroyed and all occupants made prisoners," though the next day the "women and children prisoners [were] released." Women and children, collapsed into the same category, were commonly considered inappropriate "targets" under most any circumstance, at least in the

representations of official reports. In November 1927, Lieutenant Brown was creeping up on a suspect house at El Potrero near Telpaneca when he was discovered; "all hands immediately yelled 'Los Marinos' and broke for the other side of the house. I had a hand grenade in my hand," reported Brown, "but the presence of two women and several children made it impossible to throw it." A few minutes later a detachment of Guardia "deployed on the other side of the ravine shot through the shoulder of a woman who was running up the hill behind the men. When she screamed I noticed her and ordered cease firing." The woman, badly wounded, ran over the top of the hill and escaped. About a week later, Brown led his patrol to another suspect house near El Cuje near Telpaneca. After a brief firefight, "there were not more targets at which to fire" and the area was inspected. "All the [six] houses were found to be full of foodstuffs and ammunition ... [and] all but one were burned." This "separate house was not demolished as one woman [who] was living there had been accidentally killed and a small boy wounded."

Presumably in atonement for killing the woman and boy, Brown decided to leave the house intact; inside were left several corpses along with "three wounded bandits [who] were left there with several other women who were found in both houses."  

On the whole, judging from their own reports, the Marines and Guardia tended to treat women, children, and the elderly with far more deference and circumspection than men. In cases where men would be shot at or arrested, women were usually harassed or ignored. In June 1930 a Marine-Guardia patrol stumbled upon a "newly erected house" northeast of Yalí. "It turned out to be [Sandinista General] Pedro Blandón's house and

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99. Here the silences of Marine-GN records are contradicted by vociferous Sandinista accusations of Marine-GN rape and abuse of native girls and women; since no Marine ever admitted to any but the most honorable behavior toward the latter, however, no comparison of the two narratives can reveal what actually took place; in any case, such practices were at odds with implicitly and explicitly sanctioned Marine-Guardia policies, which are more the subject of this section.


was occupied by Blandón's wife, two other women, and twelve children . . . The inhabitants were evicted and the house and contents burned." No prisoners were taken, even though Blandón's wife made no attempt to hide her identity. Two months later, the patrol of Captain McAfee operating east of Jinotega "fired on a man running from the Andino house, well known bandits," but later, when two men who from a house, "due to the presence of an old man and woman they were not fired on." A month before, Captain O'Leary's patrol was approaching the house of "Antonio Mareno, a well known bandit" southeast of Palacaguina, when "five men ran from the house, two of them obtaining horses, and all escaping through a rear gate." At the house, "four women, of a much higher type than generally found in the bush, together with three children, were busily preparing food enough for about fifteen persons." Captain O'Leary gave the women ten days to leave, "in order that the place may be destroyed" -- which, ten days later, it was. One detects in the captain's moral constructs not only a powerful social darwinist sensibility, but in his actions a highly gendered notion of legitimate violence. Both were shared by most of his fellows.

In such a milieu, "loose cannons" could and did flourish. Patrol commanders, making up many of the rules as they went along, usually determined for themselves the precise configurations of violence and restraint appropriate under any given circumstances. At the same time, those rules emerged from the Marines' shared moral universe combined with what they learned from their scouts, guides, spies, and native Guardsmen with respect to what constituted legitimate violence, making their actions highly patterned if not always consistent. Restraints were rarely imposed from above. Due more to the exigencies of politics than geography -- though both played key roles -- superior officers routinely allowed patrol commanders great leeway and tacitly approved

their worst excesses. As a result, the Marines-Guardia came to function, essentially, as an army of loosely controlled cannons.

Consider Captain Stent's investigation into Captain Grayson. In April 1930, Grayson led a patrol to the village of Los Angeles, east of San Juan de Telpaneca. There he and his patrol interrogated the inhabitants with great thoroughness and vigor, burned four houses, killed one "bandit prisoner . . . attempting to escape," and generally terrorized the community for the better part of a day. Yet Stent's investigation had nothing whatever to do with any alleged abuses -- his only concern was that Grayson had disobeyed orders and thwarted "an effort . . . to block the . . . lines of escape" of some "bandit groups" in the vicinity. 105 Stent's charges, eventually dismissed, never touched on the issue of human rights violations. Only a handful ever did. 106 Consider also the well-publicized case of Lieutenant Pennington, who in mid-1930 hunted down, killed, and decapitated "bandit" suspect Silvino Herrera, carting the severed head back with him to Matagalpa. Pennington's superior officer, noting that a number of "prominent citizens who knew Herrera were called to identify the head, which was identified," commended the Lieutenant's "excellent work." 107

In light of this evidence it is not surprising that from early on the mythology of yankee demons had spread throughout large parts of the north. "Many women and children who appeared frightened on our appearance sought cover until seeing we would do them no harm," reported Lt. Atkinson on his patrol's journey through the area south of

105. Grayson Contact Investigation, April-July 1930, NA127/43A/30/9/10.
106. Formal investigations were occasionally launched into what were usually termed "native grievances" (e.g., NA127/203), but these were usually limited to high-profile cases involving well-to-do natives; Marine-Guardia records reveal only a handful of investigations into human rights violations against poor natives, none of which resulted in any remedial action being taken.
107. Patrol Report, Pennington, Matagalpa, 13 June 1930, and 1st Endorsement, White, 13 June 1930, NA127/43A/30. Pennington's troubles only began after a snapshot of him triumphantly holding the severed head of Herrera began to circulate in the press and be used by the Sandinistas as evidence of Marine-Guardia atrocities (e.g., handbill, "El martiriolego del pueblo de Nicaragua en pleno siglo XX impuesto por los E.E.U.U." by Arturo Vega, NA127/202/1/1.3; El Popular, Matamoros, Mexico, 22 March 1932).
Photo 10.1
Photograph of United States Marine Corps Second Lieutenant Orville E. Pennington holding the severed head of Silvino Herrera, near Matagalpa, Nicaragua, June 1930. Taken from Jerónimo Cortés Aguilar, Memorias de los yanquis a Sandino (San Salvador: I.T. Ricaldone, 1972, p. 51).
La Trinidad in March 1928. "They stated that they had not seen marines before and that they were told that we killed all we saw." 108 Two months later, the patrol of Lieutenant Claude, passing through the mountainous region east of Jinotega, stumbled upon the settlement of Guapinol, "five widely scattered houses in rough but cultivated country."

All the houses except one were deserted. The head of the remaining family, one Benavides Gutiérrez, "offered a very plausible explanation of the deserted houses. He said that [Pedro] Altamirano had told them that marines were coming and that they would kill all babies and burn all houses and advised them to flee." 109 In August 1930, Captain Carlson stumbled upon "an abandoned camp" near Jalapa that "was originally constructed by a LIMON family about three years ago to enable them to avoid the Marines. At that time," Carlson explained, "it was the general opinion in this district that the Marines killed the natives who lived in the vicinity of bandit trails." 110

* * * *

The air war, no less destructive or deadly than the ground war, produced a different order of violence -- mediated more through technology, more faceless and impersonal, and thus, from the perspective of its victims, more cowardly and invidious. Partisan observers since Sandino have maintained that the Marines' aerial bombardment campaigns were key to generating intense popular hatred for the Marines and support for the Sandinistas, a perspective shared by many who remembered the period first-hand. 111

"The Yankees would gun down all the cattle in the mountains so we wouldn't be able to eat," recalled former Defending Army combatant José Antonio Ucles Marín in an oft-

repeated accusation. "The planes, when they saw smoke, when they saw someone making food for their children, they'd bomb them, they'd kill them all. When they saw someone, it was a question of dropping bombs." 112 Juan Sanchez Ramos remembered much the same thing. "The Yankees came and destroyed all of these villages . . . The planes, whenever they would see houses, would destroy them." 113 The daily reports of the Marine Corps Aircraft Squadron indicate that these memories are one-sided and exaggerated if applied to the whole of the air war, but are neither unreasonable nor implausible in the context of individual and collective experiences. Pilots neither bombed every house nor killed everyone they saw, but they did bomb and kill routinely and often.

During the first year of the war an elaborate code developed between the people on the ground and the men in the planes, a deadly, ritualized, almost surreal dance in which body language and gestures supplanted words and sounds. On hearing or sighting an airplane, folks on the ground had only a handful of options. Those inside a house could stay inside, run and hide in the brush, or go outside to show themselves. Those already outside could run and hide in the brush or a house, ignore the plane completely, or stop what they were doing to look or wave.

How the plane crew responded depended less on what they saw than how they interpreted what they saw. Everything hinged on their conception of "suspicious" and "normal" behavior -- which in turn was based mainly on ignorance and guesswork. Crewmembers' preconceptions of what was and was not "suspicious" would be laughable were the results not so tragic. Ironically, the Sandinistas learned the rules of the game from early on, while many innocents, running from the planes or otherwise behaving "suspiciously," ended up wounded or killed.

Running away and hiding were invariably considered "extremely suspicious" behaviors. On March 15, 1928, a typical day for the Aircraft Squadron, Lieutenant Shilt, recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, was flying low over the coffee country east of Jinotega when saw two men run from a house and hide in the brush near a creek. "Fired a burst with the front gun through the roof but no others came out. Strafed the creek bank but without results." Shilt was of the opinion that "The actions of the two men who ran for the creek was suspicious as they ran while the planes were fully a quarter of a mile away and headed away from the finca." Earlier in the day, Major Rowell was flying over a small village near the Río Coco when he "Observed a white saddled mule being hidden in a house. Fired a burst from a machine gun at house and observed six or eight men run from the bushes in the yard to thicker cover" -- all of which constituted "extremely suspicious" behavior on the part of those being fired upon. An hour earlier, Rowell had flown over a valley northeast of Yalf which he considered "very suspicious as every one hides when the planes approach." He also observed that "In the area immediately NORTH EAST of [Yalf], every house and every coffee finca for a distance of ten miles had white flags hoisted." He surmised that "This probably means that outlaws are nearby," though in fact he had no idea what it meant.\footnote{114} Two weeks later, at Espino near Somoto,

Two men and two saddled horses were observed at a shack. Five other men were seen to run into the house. Plane circled the house and the two men that were outside started to run into the bushes. A burst was fired from the rear gun and they ran for the house. One man was seen to fall and crawl into the shack. Fired a burst through the roof but nothing further was developed.

The conclusion of the report noted tersely that "The area SOMOTO - ESPINO - PATASTE appears suspicious."\footnote{115} Two miles east of Murra nine days later, "Six horses

\footnote{114. Report of Air Mission, R.E. Rowell, Aircraft Squadron, 2nd Brigade, Managua, 15 March 1928 (two reports), NA127/220/2/816; hereafter cited by date.}

\footnote{115. Report of Air Mission #1, 3 April 1928.}
were observed around a group of three houses and three men were seen to run into the brush. Four bombs were dropped, making direct hits on the houses."  

The Murra-Chipote region was particularly hard-hit by the air war, probably due as much to physical and political geography as institutional inertia, since this rugged, sparsely settled, pro-Sandinista region had also experienced the first sustained Marine Corps air assault in late 1927. The earliest reports from the area consistently evidence an austere disregard for lives and property. "At San Juan de Telpaneca five or six men and horses were observed around a house," reported Lieutenant Schilt in mid-December 1927. "The planes strafed them with bombs and machine guns . . . At Portal several horses were seen under the trees. These were strafed with rear machine guns and they scattered in all directions." Reports from the Murra-Chipote region reveal consistently severe assaults on seemingly benign targets. "One armed bandit and nine others were seen to run from a house" near Murra, read a report of 6 April 1928.  

There were approximately fifty head of cattle and numerous fowls near the house. Twelve bombs were dropped on and in the vicinity of the house; 1200 rounds of ammunition were fired near the house; casualties unknown; approximately 25 cattle were hit.  

Here we find explicit confirmation of the mass slaughter of livestock so frequently alleged by Segovian countryfolk. Less than a week later, two miles east of Murra, "Six horses were observed around a group of three houses and three men were seen to run into the brush. Four bombs were dropped, two making direct hits on the houses." Three weeks later in the same area,  

A group of three houses, occupied. Upon the approach of the plane, four men were seen to run into the brush and hide. Dropped one bomb and fired about three hundred rounds of ammunition . . . Nothing further was developed.

120. Report of Air Mission #1, 5 May 1928.
Hundreds of similar reports were filed in the months and years ahead. During the month of January 1929, for example, targets in the Murra-Wiwill region were bombed and strafed not less than eleven times.\textsuperscript{121} Weather permitting, the planes returned every day.

Plane crews imagined themselves to be communicating with natives on the ground by firing brief machine-gun bursts and dropping bombs into nearby hills or ravines, hoping that something would "develop" or "result," though it rarely did. "The MURRA - TAMIS area was reconnoitered," reported Lieutenant Bourne in October 1928. "Several suspicious places were ground strafed but nothing was developed."\textsuperscript{122} Two weeks later Lieutenant Williamson, flying east of Jinotega, spied a village.

"Families were in the yards and in two cases, the man was carrying a baby in his arms. Fired a burst of machine gun fire near several of the houses but nothing developed."\textsuperscript{123}

People on the ground were damned if they ran and damned if they remained aloof. "At SANTA ANA . . . six horses were grazing at a small shack. Two men were sitting in the doorway," reported Major Rowell in February 1928. "Fired two short bursts . . . The horses bolted but the men did not move. They seemed suspiciously unconcerned."\textsuperscript{124} Two weeks earlier, a group of six men and four women were seen "digging holes on a knole about 600 yards east of" Guali near Jinotega. The pilot surmised that

They were either burying or uncovering something. Planes circled over these people but they did not stop their work to look up at the planes . . . This looked suspicious as all the people in the vicinity around the fincas stopped their work and watched the planes.\textsuperscript{125}

Any concentration of horses or cattle was deemed "suspicious." "Around several of the fincas in this vicinity, about twenty-five horses were seen," Lt. Scribner reported of the area around San Andres east of Palacagüina. "The plane fired at one finca where

\textsuperscript{121} R-2 Reports, Managua, 28 January and 12 February 1929, and B-2 Report, Managua, 14 Jan. 1929, NA127/209/1 and 43A/4.
\textsuperscript{122} Report of Air Mission, 15 October 1928.
\textsuperscript{123} Report of Air Mission, 24 October 1928.
\textsuperscript{124} Air Patrol Report #2, 19 February 1928.
\textsuperscript{125} Air Patrol Report #2, 9 February 1928.
some of the horses were tied, but no one appeared."126 "The Pantasma Valley is very suspicious," reported Major Rowell three weeks later. Why? "There are an unusually large number of horses in the valley and the horses are in small groups near the various huts . . . ."127 Apparently pilots were unaware that such congregations of horses and livestock were routine occurrences in many areas, especially toward the tail end of the coffee harvest.

Livestock inside buildings was deemed "extremely suspicious." On March 20, 1928, Major Rowell was flying over San Bartolo near El Chipote. "At a large ranch house here, several saddled horses were seen inside of the building. Fired machine gun burst through the roof and the animals stampeded . . . This place looked suspicious but no persons appeared." Five minutes later, at "a ranch near Coco River directly east of San Bartolo, a small group of horsemen seen taking cover in woods. Dropped two bombs and horses stampeded. The men ran into thick cover," which was also "extremely suspicious."128

People soon learned that the planes would usually not bomb houses with women and children nearby. On 10 April 1928 Major Rowell observed seventy-five horses at a large ranch near Jocomico. Two men were in the yard. As the plane approached, "A woman with a baby and two children came out and stood in front of the house." Rowell could see several saddled horses inside the house. "Several bursts were fired into the yard of the house but no one paid any attention to them. . . . The actions of the persons there appeared abnormal," he concluded, "and they were not attacked on account of the women and children."129 Three weeks later, Lieutenant Williamson, flying south of Somoto, "Observed three horses tied up under the porch of a house." After firing "a burst

128. Report of Air Mission #4, 20 March 1928; it should be noted that buildings in rural areas can sometimes be "seen through" due to the spacing of the poles and sticks composing the walls.
into the hill" the plane "circled the house. One woman and a child came out and walked around . . . Nothing developed."\textsuperscript{130}

The safest response was an appearance of friendly submission. Those who acknowledged the presence of the plane and displayed some fear, but not too much fear, were usually deemed "friendly" and "normal." Flying over San Juan de Telpaneca in February 1928, one pilot "observed several men in one house. They were unarmed and appeared friendly"; ten minutes later another pilot flying over the same town noted that the few townsfolk "did not hide and behaved in a normal manner." Later in the day, the first pilot noted that the people living on the north side of the Río Coco from Telpaneca to Quilalí "show no signs of being afraid of the planes and are working around the houses and in the fields." On this day at least, no guns were fired, no bombs dropped.\textsuperscript{131} Grim humor was sometimes detected in the antics of those on the ground. "At one house," a pilot reported, "a man came out and after making an elaborate bow removed his hat and displayed a bandaged head." He was not fired upon.\textsuperscript{132}

On the other hand, massacres of innocent civilians sometimes occurred. On 2 July 1928, in but one recorded example, a group of seventy-five to one hundred machete-wielding men were cutting weeds on the side of the Quibuto-San Juan de Telpaneca road. Such road-clearing gangs were and are common throughout large parts of Central America. Flying over the group, a pilot determined that the men were working "in a manner that was noticeably theatrical . . . There is no possible excuse," he continued, pretending that he knew what he was talking about, "for a group of men of that size in the sparsely settled region... the labor that they were performing was obviously a sham." The group was attacked with machine guns and bombs. Though no figures were reported, it is not unreasonable to suspect that casualties were high. A brief investigation followed;

\textsuperscript{130} Report of Air Mission #3, 5 May 1928.
\textsuperscript{131} Report of Air Mission, 27 February 1928.
\textsuperscript{132} Report of Air Mission, 29 March 1928.
the Area Commander "confirmed . . . that there was not sufficient evidence to justify attacking these people as bandits," and the case was dropped. 133

* * *

Less overt forms of violence infused Marine-Guardia-native relations at every level. A variety of mechanisms were devised to regulate, control, and discipline the populace, beginning with the "Plata boletas," issued during the first half of 1929 by former Liberal General Plata in the vicinity of San Rafael del Norte and Yalí. Part registration papers, part identification papers, and part "guarantee," boletas had been used by coffee growers in the Matagalpa-Jinotega highlands as a labor control mechanism since at least the turn of the century. 134 Both the Marines-GN and the Sandinistas adapted the idea to suit their own ends; by mid-1930 it had become standard practice for both sides to issue boletas to their friends and deny them to their foes.

Among the first to broach the idea of issuing boletas was USMC Major Schmidt in March 1928. "[A] great number of bandits hide their arms and spend considerable time in the villages," Schmidt wrote from his desk in Managua. "Town commanders might find some way to check up on their inhabitants and catch some of these people who apparently engage in periodical banditry." 135 In a bid to co-opt potential adversaries and augment limited resources, in late 1928 president-elect Moncada with the approval of the US State Department authorized the formation of Volunteer columns "to be officered by selected leaders," including former Liberal Generals Alejandro Plata, Juan Escamilla, Augusto Caldera, Clemente Torres, Felipe Flores, Simon Jirón (Pichingo) and others, to operate independently of the Marines and National Guard. 136 A short-lived experiment,

133. Air observations and air deductions, R.H. Dunlap, Ocotal, 15 July 1928, NA127/220/2/816.
by the end of July the Voluntarios were "disbanded," though many of their leaders and members continued to work with the Marines-GN into 1930 and beyond.\textsuperscript{137}

Unfortunately the records on these rogue columns are slim. If Plata's experience was typical, Voluntario generals issued and denied boletas to the residents of the areas they patrolled, a replication of earlier forms of regional caudillismo now under the politico-military umbrella of the Marines-Guardia. Rural folk as far north as El Jícaro and as far south as Jinotega were required to procure boletas from Volunteer columns and show them on demand to any passing patrol. Failure to do so commonly led to arrest and confinement. Doroteo Gómez, walking alone along a trail near Yalí one night in March 1929, encountered a Marine-GN patrol and was detained. Soon after it was discovered that "he had not registered in Jinotega and secured his good-citizenship paper from General Plata, so he was held as a prisoner."\textsuperscript{138} In early 1929 General Plata notified the wife of Pedro Reyes "to tell her husband to report to Jinotega and he would be granted immunity and issued a card." By late May he still had not done so, so he was arrested.\textsuperscript{139} "All but the two apprehended had boletas," wrote Captain Stent in August 1929 regarding his arrest of two men near El Jícaro.\textsuperscript{140}

The "Plata patrol" began operating in the Jinotega area soon after the November 1928 elections.\textsuperscript{141} In March, Plata reported that "many people in YALI area want to come to him and ask for guarantees." He evidently obliged most of them.\textsuperscript{142} In Captain Hanneken's opinion, however, Plata's boletas were woefully inadequate for the task at hand. "General Plata has issued passes to everybody in the area, including bandits and their spies," Hanneken complained in mid-June. "I am destroying all passes issued by

\textsuperscript{137} R-2 Report, Ocotal, 28 July 1929, p. 10, NA127/209/1. Pichingo was the leader of a small group of armed "scouts" working for the Marines-GN as late as April 1930, Bn-2 Report, Managua, 29 Apr. 1930, NA127/209/1.
\textsuperscript{138} Patrol Report, Hohn, Yali, 20 March 1929, NA127/212/1.
\textsuperscript{139} Patrol to San Antonio, Lewis, Yali, 25 May 1929, NA127/212/1.
\textsuperscript{140} Contact Report, Stent, Jicaro, 31 Aug. 1929, NA127/202/10/51.
\textsuperscript{142} B-2 Report, Managua, 11 March 1929, p. 2, NA127/43A/4.
Plata.” By this time, many agreed that stronger measures were needed to stem the tide of "banditry" in the area. "After having studied first-hand reports from . . . the bandit infested region immediately East and Northeast of YALI . . . over a period of seventeen months," opined the commanding officer at Yalí, explaining his support for Hanneken and Escamilla's tactics, "I am inclined to the opinion that practically every man and woman living there is either a bandit, an agent, or a sympathizer." 

The first effort to forcibly remove the residents of rural areas and register them in the towns was directed by none other than Lieutenant Lee, in February 1929. "We moved the people living here [in La Pavona] to YALI and the men to JINOTEGA for registration. They want Government protection during the vacating of this section," he reported on March 1. He added that "none were molested, we remained in vacated area protecting their houses. None were robbed . . . They are all moving back home now to find things as they left them. All are registered." (It is difficult to imagine that any of these last reports were true.) Soon after it was reported that "Bandit agents and sympathizers are being arrested or concentrated in towns where we can keep track of their activities." 

These efforts were prologue to the first concerted "reconcentration" campaign in the Segovias, which took place during the first three weeks of June, 1929, around Yalí. Devised and executed by General Escamilla and Captain Hanneken with the support of their superiors, the campaign was a brief and relatively spontaneous attempt to address the core problem confronting the invading forces, viz., the popular support enjoyed by...

144. B-2 Report, Managua, 26 June 1929, p. 6, NA127/209/1.
147. Macaulay, p. 143, erroneously attributes the swelling of Yalí's population at this time to fear of General Escamilla; instead, the evidence is plain that these were not refugees but prisoners of a poorly planned and executed reconcentration effort. Unfortunately Macaulay's error is by now dispersed throughout the literature; see e.g. Torres Rivas (1983), pp. 170-171.
their enemies. This was not, it should be stressed, a massive or prolonged reconcentration campaign, as has sometimes been charged; it was very limited in time (three to four weeks) and space (the region immediately east and northeast of Yalí).

Never did the campaign even begin to approach the scale, for example, of General Weyler's reconcentration program during the Cuban War of Independence. At the same time, and despite its limited scope, its consequences were evidently precisely the opposite of what was intended.

The Hanneken-Escamilla column began operating in the region east of Yalí in late March. By mid-May it was reported that "Lt. Hanneken's drive [has] made banditry as a profession, exceedingly unpopular" in the area -- bureaucrats for the systematic destruction of all suspect property. Hanneken, one of a handful of Marines fluent in Spanish, had earned a reputation in Haiti as one of the most effective "bush-fighters" in the Corps; nor did he slacken in Nicaragua. On June 1 he ordered Escamilla to "gather all men (natives)" in the vicinity of San Antonio, due east of Yalí, "for questioning" upon his arrival. In the interrogations which followed, Hanneken procured an enormous quantity of detailed information on the activities and relationships of individuals and families throughout the area, after which he executed his principal informer. Six days later Hanneken's patrol brought "all bandit's families in San Antonio area" into Yalí.

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150. R-2 Report, Ocotal, 12 May 1929, p. 6, NA127/209/1; testimonial evidence (e.g., Feliciano Castro García, IES 048: 1, 3) and Marine-GN records (e.g., Tiburcia García Otero of La Flor, Jiotega to Claims Commission on the destruction of her house and all household goods totalling $1,983 on Good Friday, 1929 by "the American troops which accompanied Escamilla," 29 May 1930, NA127/205/1/3.12) indicate that the Hanneken-Escamilla column was extremely destructive of lives and property.
151. See the story "Hanneken" in Thomason, Fix Bayonets!.
152. Report, Hanneken, San Antonio, 1 June 1929, NA127/212/1; Information obtained from Toribio Davila, bandit, captured at San Antonio, Hanneken, 1 June 1929, in R-2 Report, Ocotal, 16 June 1929, pp. 8-10, NA127/209/1; Davila gave detailed information on more than 32 individuals and was then executed, on June 1; two days later, Hanneken executed Policarpio Molina.
Hanneken and Escamilla then decided, apparently of their own accord, to expand
the reconcentration order to include all persons living in "the bandit infested region
immediately east and northeast of Yalí." During the first three weeks of June some 1500
to 1800 inhabitants of this region, two-thirds of whom were women and children, were
"brought into" Yalí by the Hanneken-Escamilla column. Euphemistically termed
"refugees" in official reports, these were not refugees but civilian prisoners of an
undeclared war.\textsuperscript{154} "These natives were examined, registered, and cared for while in
Yalí," wrote Captain Reagan from his desk in Managua. "In addition, they were told the
truth about existing conditions in Nicaragua."\textsuperscript{155} The commanding officer at Yalí
described this process in greater detail:

The procedure used by the Hanneken-Escamilla Patrol here was to assemble
about three hundred natives at a time, examine the (General) Plata 'Boletas,'
register the natives, and then the General [Escamilla] would talk to the natives
explaining the situation, then food was distributed.\textsuperscript{156}

Reports on the food situation in Yalí echo with the sound of the guilty protesting too
much. On June 20, Hanneken assured his superiors that the "refugees" were being fed
with "Beef and other Provisions secured from the fincas of known bandits," while the
next day Yalí's commanding officer offered his judgement that, "Although there was an
acute shortage of food in Yali for the refugees during the first few days, I believe that at
present the food situation is not serious." Though he did not specify what he meant by
"not serious," he did report that "permission" had just been granted for some "refugees"
to "return to their homes and bring food and supplies" back with them. During the past
weeks, he reported, Hanneken and Escamilla had "distributed from one to three beefs per
day. Corn was distributed at about twelve ears per family. There was," however, "no

\textsuperscript{154} In their reports Hanneken and Lewis employed the term "refugee," a term later
adopted by Macaulay, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{155} Situation in Yali, Lewis, Yalí, 21 June 1929, NA127/212/1.
\textsuperscript{156} Situation in Yali, Lewis, Yalí, 21 June 1929.
flour, rice, or beans available in this area . . . even if there had been money to purchase it."\textsuperscript{157}

As they were going hungry and thirsty, prisoners were being subjected to rigorous and lengthy interrogations and propagandizing. "From this examination," Yalí's commanding officer reported on the activities that took place prior to the distribution of food, "bandit suspects were apprehended and men wanted for the crime of murder also a great many were apprehended and most of them admitted furnishing the bandits with supplies and allowing the bandits to use their houses" -- confessions clearly made under duress. On June 21, confronted with an increasingly hungry and, one presumes, restive population, Hanneken and Escamilla permitted two hundred prisoners to return to their homes, some with permission to return with food; soon after the remainder were reportedly released. "I believe the operations of this patrol was of great value in this area, in spite of any discomforts which the natives may have sustained," averred the commanding officer at Yalí.\textsuperscript{158}

The methods employed in the Yalí reconcentration campaign were intended to terrorize the inhabitants of the region, to send an unmistakable signal that "bandits" and their supporters could expect to be met with an iron fist. According to one source, some two hundred Yalí reconcentrados died due to poor sanitation and inadequate supplies of drinking water and food, a figure which is probably high but does not seem altogether unreasonable.\textsuperscript{159} On the other hand, this was no massacre, no El Mozote; it was a

\textsuperscript{157} Quotes from Report, Hanneken, Yalí, 20 June 1929, NA127/212/1, and Situation in Yali, Lewis, Yalí, 21 June 1929. It might be noted that one "beef" can feed fewer than one hundred persons per day; that each family of six was issued approximately 20\% of their normal daily consumption of corn (one ear of corn makes approximately one tortilla; average adult consumption is 8-10 tortillas per day per person, children 3-5 per day); that good nutrition dictates that corn and beans must be eaten together; and that eating corn kernels in lieu of corn flour products carries a heavy cultural stigma.

\textsuperscript{158} Situation in Yali, Lewis, Yalí, 21 June 1929.

\textsuperscript{159} The estimate is from Buell (1930), p. 338.
restrained application of specific kinds of violence intended not to kill but to cow, intimidate, and discipline a hostile and uncontrolled populace.160

Soon afterward, Hanneken, Escamilla, and their superiors devised the next phase of the re-concentration scheme. Since "many women residents of [the Yali area] have readily admitted to our patrol leaders that their husbands were then active members of the various groups," it was decided to detain these women in Yali and provide employment for their men on local road gangs -- or so it seems.161 In mid-July, Captain Geyer reported with an ominous confidence that "The area north of Yali will not be a foraging center from now on." The reason?

Some two hundred men (many of whom have acknowledged being ex-bandits) from that area are being employed at road work. Their families are with them. As men will under no circumstances make their own tortillas and as no more women, bandit sympathizers, are in the section generally North of Yali, this means the bandits will get but few tortillas there hereafter. The clearing up of this area is entirely due to the concentration and excellent propaganda work performed by the Hanneken-Escamilla patrol.162

By July 14, two hundred and five men had registered for work with the government road gangs constructing the Yali-San Rafael Road, though it was reported that they "do not desire to leave this area for work."163 Were these men "being employed at road work"? Or were they and their families prisoners of war in forced labor camps? By forcibly detaining the women, or making their homes unliveable (and it is unclear which strategy was followed, though both probably were), Hanneken, Escamilla, and their military and civilian superiors sought to have it both ways, to combine coercion and persuasion by imposing a handful of unappealing choices, the least repellent of which was working on a

161. Quote from Situation in Yali, Lewis, Yali, 21 June 1929.
162. R-2 Report, Ocotal, 14 July 1929, pp. 5-6, NA127/209/1.
road gang. This scheme, too, was soon abandoned, probably more for a scarcity of resources than a lack of enthusiasm on the part of its sponsors.164

One year later, the same intractable problem led to a second, expanded recentration campaign which failed to constrain popular support for the Rebellion just as utterly as the first. The brainchild of Colonel Denig, the plan for "Restriction of Certain Areas of Nueva Segovia" called for the forcible depopulation of a vast area of northern Nicaragua. Denig imagined that, "Once having presented themselves . . . the natives may be kept under surveillance, and an effort made to get them to engage in a peaceful occupation."165 A similar plan was devised for "certain bandit infested areas in [the] department of Jinotega." On 4 June, General McDougal rescinded the order due to a complete lack of facilities in the towns designated as recentration centers, insufficient troops to effectively implement the plan, and a desire to avoid causing "distress and embarrassment to the Government."166 In Matagalpa the US Legation reported that "a stampede of over four thousand inhabitants . . . caused by the evacuation order is causing great distress," even though the orders did not apply to that department; he was probably exaggerating.167

Denig's plan was soon abandoned, though the impetus behind it never entirely disappeared. Individual Marines-Guardia sometimes proposed recentration plans of their own. In January 1930, after an aborted Sandinista attack on Palacaguina, Lt. Buchanan angrily told the alcalde to write an open letter to local residents stating that "if another attack was made on Palacaguina the Marines [are] going to combine with the Guardia and make a general clearing of the entire area," though nothing ever came of the

164. I was unable to find further mention of this scheme after the 28 July 1929 R-2 Report cited above.
165. Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for, Denig, Ocotal, 10 May 1930.
166. McDougal to Area Commanders, 4 June 1930, NA127/220/2.
threat.\textsuperscript{168} Two months earlier, Lt. Marcos had reported that while on patrol in the Yalí district he "noticed that in almost every house I inspected there were from three to eight women living." He recommended "that the women living in this area be forced to abandon their houses and make them move into a Town for at least three or four months," though on the margin, added by his superior, was handwritten an emphatic double line and the word "not!"\textsuperscript{169} By this time Hanneken's reconcentration program evidently served as an object lesson in how not to fight "banditry." Efforts to impose different kinds of disciplinary and regulatory mechanisms continued through the remainder of the war, though none were even marginally effective in stemming the Sandinista tide. Indeed, as the Marines-GN well knew, the precise opposite was more often true. As a result, particularly after Sandino's return from Mexico in June 1930, schemes to control the populace through \textit{boletas} and other regulatory measures gradually succumbed to a more nakedly militaristic logic.

A fistful of carrots: The emergence of Sandinismo's antithesis in the Segovias

Writing in Palagüina in early January 1930, Lieutenant Makus recommended to his superiors "that serious steps be taken with the residents of this area" for providing the "bandits" with "food and other necessary items" and because "they will not help our forces in any way whatever." (What "steps" he had in mind he did not say.) Yet in the next paragraph he changed his tune: "I recommend that the civilians that formed part of my patrol be sent letters of recommendation . . . I believe this would encourage more help from the civilian population."\textsuperscript{170}

For Lieutenant Makus and his fellows, stick and carrot coexisted in unremitting tension: some natives deserved to be met with an iron fist, others handled with kid

\textsuperscript{168} Report on attack at Palagüina, Buchanan, Condega, 12 January 1930, NA127/198/Contacts 1930.
\textsuperscript{169} Patrol, Marcos, Jinotega, 30 Nov. 1929, NA127/202/13/55.
gloves. Sandinista national mythologies tend to erase this simple but powerfully important reality: as the enemies of the occupying forces multiplied, so too did their allies. Throught the course of the Rebellion the Marines and Guardia systematically and painstakingly integrated themselves into Segovian rural society, stitching together a dense network of friends and allies throughout the social fabric of the north. After five and a half years of armed struggle, a new politico-military order had evolved in the Segovias, a "culture of occupation" predicated upon the extermination of Sandinismo.

Sandinista mythologies posit a sharp class division between their enemies and allies: on the one hand, the "traitors," composed of the wealthy and propertied classes or "oligarchy," and on the other, the "patriots," comprised of the masses of rural poor or "popular classes." And, indeed, the overwhelming weight of evidence affirms that, in the most global terms, most poor folk allied with the Sandinistas and most propertied folk -- including the "better class" of townsfolk, municipal officials, coffee growers, ranchers, middling farmers, and foreigners -- threw in their lot with the Marines-Guardia. Yet such generalizations based on social class elide as much as they reveal. In practice, Marine-Guardia collaborators ran the gamut from poor, illiterate, barefoot Indians to wealthy property-holders and merchants and excluded members of no social class. In fact, a significant proportion of the Marines-Guardia's staunchest allies were from the lowest rungs of society. Without the willing collaboration of thousands of peasants, workers, and Indians -- as Guardia troops, guides, scouts, agents, spies, and in many other capacities -- the Marines would have been as ineffective as Sandinista national mythologies have painted them to be.

The Guardia Nacional was only the most blatant and powerful expression of collaboration between Segovianos and the Marines. From 1927 to 1932 more than five thousand men served in the Guardia.171 Most of these came from the lower rungs of

171. Each Guardia was issued a number; by the end of 1932 these numbers exceeded 5000 (e.g., Francisco Paniagua was #5224, Patrol Report, Stevens, Jinotega, 9 Oct. 1932, NA127/202/14).
Segovian society. In his seminal study, Richard Millett convincingly explains why so many poor Nicaraguans chose the Guardia: "Regular pay, improved equipment, and medical care combined to make conditions for Guardia enlisted men much better than those of the average Nicaraguan," he writes. "Compared to the majority of his countrymen, the lot of the average Guardia was not bad at all, and he knew it. After the first year, the forces never lacked recruits." To the chagrin of North American recruiting officers, most well-heeled natives balked at the prospect of Guardia service. "Young men in [the Northern Area] who might be considered as desirable candidates for commissions [in the Guardia] have business and property interests which cause them to reject any [such] suggestions," lamented Lieutenant Colonel Rossell in late 1929. On the other hand, in spite of the heavy-handed racism of the Marines-Guardia in general, Indian recruits were seen to possess some highly desirable qualities. "[O]f the men of the Guardia . . . Those of pure Indian blood are especially proficient in many ways," wrote one intelligence analyst. "[T]hey often are expert in reading signs on the trail and in this respect are of the highest value on patrol." Other Indians were recruited as civilian allies, such as Macario Martínez, Capitán de Cañada of Guasaca in Jinotega, "captain of a friendly band of well disciplined conservative Indians [who] has proved himself to marine patrols," but one of hundreds of Indian allies of the Marines-Guardia.

172. Extant Marine-Guardia records do not include the recruitment papers of National Guardsmen from these years, precluding a definitive assessment of their social origins. Most evidence, including an interview by the author with former Guardsman Santiago Delgado in Ocotal in October 1990, indicates that the great majority, like the great majority of Nicaraguans, were from worker and peasant background. Scores of patrol and combat reports contain brief references to Segovian-recruited Guardsmen, e.g., Patrol Report, Hakala, Somoto, 30 August 1929, NA127/202/10/51, in which none of the "guardia from that locality," i.e., the Somoto area, were able to identify a man shot and killed by the patrol; and Report of Patrol, Rimes, Telpaneca, 17 July 1929, NA127/212/1; Rimes arrested several local men with Guardia discharge papers in their possession. 173. Millett, pp. 78-79.
175. Estimate of the Situation, Racicot, Ocotal, 28 Feb. 1930, NA127/205/2/16D.
It would be difficult to overstate the extent to which Marine-Guardia operations depended upon the support of local individuals and communities. Most logistical problems -- procuring foodstuffs, beasts, town space, services like laundry, cooking, etc. -- were most commonly resolved by negotiating contracts with local residents. Not uncommonly, those providing the goods or services soon came to see the Marine-Guardia presence as an interest to be protected. "The attitude of individuals varies greatly in accordance with their relations and contacts with the Marines," correctly observed one officer in late 1930. "Those in a position to profit financially are glad of the Marines." 177 Some went to considerable lengths to preserve a local Marine-Guardia presence.

Beginning in March 1928, for instance, native reports from the coffee region east of Jinotega consistently claimed that groups of from 400 to 800 outlaws were concentrating in that vicinity, figures rightly deemed excessive by Managua-based analysts. 178 By August, Marine officers began to realize that "some false reports of banditry have been made to retain Marines in that locality. The informants sell some food products to those garrisons." 179 Coffee growers in Matagalpa and Jinotega frequently petitioned the Marines and Guardia for "protection against banditry," and were commonly suspected of using the Marines and Guardia "to assist in obtaining labor and controlling this labor during the coffee season." The Jefe Director of the Guardia even suspected that "some bandit raids have been inspired so as to give color to these reports . . . of banditry" -- a recurring suspicion that was rarely proved. 180

Dense networks of spies, agents, and informers from every social class and walk of life were woven together over time by the commanding officers of most garrisoned towns. Initially unable to procure even the most basic "dope" on the enemy, by the last

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177. Estimate of the Situation in Nicaragua, Bradman, 11 Nov. 1930, p. 11, NA127/201.
178. B-2 Report, 18 March 1928, NA127/43A/3, cited native reports of "800 bandits . . . in the TUMA-CARATERA Area" and 600 in Cuchillo Valley; also Bn-2 Report, Matagalpa, 24 June 1928, NA127/209/2 and subsequent.
years of the occupation the Marines-Guardia had constructed sophisticated intelligence networks spanning large parts of the north. Consider the case of Captain Brauer, stationed in Palacaguína, who regularly received detailed reports from the spies he had personally hired.\footnote{I. Molina R. to Brauer, July-Aug. 1931, NA127/202/1/1.3.} His methods, like those of his fellows, vacillated between brutality and congeniality. In June 1931, for example, he reported that one Ramon Centeno, arrested as a "bandit" suspect, "refused to give any information . . . or divulge the whereabouts of any of his companions. His wife was found and thru her he was induced to talk," after which Centeno "was shot when attempting to escape."\footnote{Special Report, Brauer, Palacaguína, 26 June 1931, NA127/209/8.} Six weeks later, Brauer supervised the surrender and interrogation of longstanding Sandinista leaders Catalino and Marcos Olivas. "We did not harry them with questions," reported Brauer, "as they were very timorous but instead attempted to inculcate in their minds that we were their friends, that we were sent here to help them in every possible way." He concluded on an optimistic note: "It is believed that the affluence of information which we will receive after they become more confident will indeed reward us for the patience had on this first meeting."\footnote{Catalino Olivas, bandit chief, Presentation of, Brauer, Palacaguína, 13 Aug. 1931, NA127/202/1/1.3.} Brauer was apparently very effective in winning the confidence not only of the Olivas brothers, but of many other residents of the Palacaguína area, including Miguel López ("who had known Sandinista chief Miguel Angel Ortez for many years previous to 1927"), Santiago González ("who had been a servant in the home of Ortez"), Ildefonso Molina (whom Brauer sent on numerous information-gathering "missions,"\footnote{The body of M.A. Ortez, Brauer, Palacaguína, 20 Aug. 1931, NA127/209/8; in addition to Brauer's previously cited reports, see Intelligence, Palacaguína, 20 Aug. 1931, NA127/202/1/1.3.} Adrian Gómez, Antolin Gadea, Isidoro Polanco, and many other unnamed informers, agents, and spies.\footnote{Cultivating friendships in towns and villages was an arduous task that could take some time, as evidenced by Captain Frisbie's experiences in and around Jinotega in 1928.}

183. Catalino Olivas, bandit chief, Presentation of, Brauer, Palacaguína, 13 Aug. 1931, NA127/202/1/1.3.
184. The body of M.A. Ortez, Brauer, Palacaguína, 20 Aug. 1931, NA127/209/8; in addition to Brauer's previously cited reports, see Intelligence, Palacaguína, 20 Aug. 1931, NA127/202/1/1.3.
"The people of Jinotega all, or nearly all, profess to be anti-Sandino, but I doubt it," he reported in late May. "No one seems willing to talk at all." The Captain was quick to learn, however. "No matter how much one tries to keep it from being so, the securing of information from residents is a personal matter," he reported little more than a week later. Six weeks later he looked back and recalled that "Two months ago the people were almost sullen and rarely spoke . . . Now they are openly friendly and, wonder of wonders, some of the officers were asked to an impromptu dance at the club the other night." Frisbie, modestly attributing "most of it to Captain Shaw's considerate and polite treatment of all natives" (though his own sensitivity to the issue likely played a role in the turnaround), advised his superiors to "keep up the propaganda."

It would not be difficult to list hundreds upon hundreds of such "traitors" among the propertied classes: For example, there was Presentación Ortez, owner of the Orosi Ranch near El Jicaro, described by Major Peard as "very friendly and where our troops invariably spend the night." There was Nicanor Espinosa, attorney and resident of Telpaneca, "whose information has always been reliable," according to one officer writing in late 1927, primarily because "Don Nicanor . . . has incurred the personal enmity of Sandino and therefore finds it in his interest to aid our forces in all ways possible." There was Moises González and his family at their ranch at Darail, who

185. Frisbie to Schmidt, 22 May 1928, NA127/220/11.
188. Situation in Quilalí, Peard, Ocotal, 6 Nov. 1927, NA127/212/1.
189. First quote from Patrol Report, Brown, Telpaneca, 11 Nov. 1927; second from Brown, Telpaneca, 7 Dec. 1927, NA127/212/1. Two years later, on 14 October 1929, Nicanor Espinosa was captured by forces under Sandinista General M.A. Ortez; fifteen days later residents near Somoto reported seeing him being dragged along "without shoes or trousers"; soon afterward he was killed. On his capture see R-2 Report, Managua, 31 Oct. 1929, p. 3; B-2 Report, Managua, 11 Nov. 1929, p. 5, NA127/209/1; on his death see Somoto (1936: 65-66). In late 1927 Espinosa wrote an vicious article denouncing Sandino's struggle as 'the extermination of the property of the Segovias, murder, robbery, and fire' (Somoto 1936: 65-66) and went on to accuse Sandino for the deaths of Mateo Hernández and Mateo Ochoa. Here Nicanor Espinosa lied, since he was the attorney who took the deposition of Celedonio Martínez, who deposed that the murderer of Mateo Hernández was -- Anastacio Hernández!, i.e., the Chamorrista mass murderer; see ch. 5, above, and the Hernández File, Appendix C.
went from being a trusted allies of the Sandinistas to being villified as their arch-enemies; Domingo Matute, owner of the hacienda Las Mercedes near Jalapa, "who has a creditable reputation for honesty"; Monico Moreno, resident of Cua near the mouth of the Río Cua, "a well educated man . . . who has cause to hate the bandits"; and so on.190

Prominent citizens sometimes went to great lengths to join the fight against "banditry." In March 1930, four well-heeled residents of Yalí -- Victor Rodríguez, Luis Frenzel, Braulio Torres, and Ildefonso Molina -- accompanied the patrol of Lt. Anderton to the La Rica district. "[E]ach of the above named civilians were willing for their property to be destroyed in order to help down the bandits," reported Anderton. Four houses were burned down on Molina's coffee finca, and two on Torres's. They "were willing to go at any hour, day or night, and are willing to go on patrol with the Guardia at any time, also are willing to furnish mules and horses . . . without charging anything." Anderton recommended that they be furnished a permit to carry weapons "in case some bandit should happen to try to murder them because they are co-operating with the Guardia Nacional."191 Such cooperation was common. From Jalapa Captain Carlson reported that "the local gente willingly lend their animals to the Guardia" -- though "local gente" in one part of his report meant "the Alcalde and five other prominent citizens" in another -- a telling elision.192

Most municipal officials (of the "official state"), including mayors and judges, were also allied with the Marines. The alcalde of El Jícaro, for example, proved useful in verifying information and furnishing patrols with "very capable" guides.193 The alcalde of Telpaneca assisted greatly in the investigation into the Telpaneca mutiny of October

190. On Moises González and his family, see ch. 6 above; on Monico Moreno, Combat of 1st Lt. Neel and Guardia with bandits on 4 July 1929, further data on, Stent, Jicaro, 4 August 1929, and Statement of Monico Moreno, Santa Cruz, 29 July 1929, NA127/202/10/51; on Domingo Matute, Contact, report of, Krebs, Jicaro, 1 Nov. 1929, NA127/202/10/51.
1929, while the alcaldes of Palacaguina, La Concordia, Jalapa, and many other locales rendered repeated assistance to the Marine-Guardia garrisons in their towns. On the other hand, Major Spotts harbored suspicions against the alcalde of San Francisco de Guanijiquilapa. "I would not be surprised if he is in league with the bandits," he reported after a Sandinista attack on the town.

Informers and spies regularly provided Marine-Guardia officers with detailed and up-to-date information on every aspect of the enemy. "Sent three native agents out during the night . . . to obtain information," reported Lieutenant Corbett from Somoto in an extremely common tactic. "My natives claimed it is the route the bandits prefer," remarked Captain Holmes, who, like Captain Frisbie and others, had apparently learned the importance of personalismo. Toward the end of the occupation, some of these spies had become extremely well-placed. "The following information was received from a messenger of Sandino's who came from Danlí (Honduras) about Feb. 1st.," began a report of March 1932. The informant not only provided copious information on Sandinista General "Juan Gregorio Colindres [and] his incursion into the departments of Leon and Chinandega," but also on Sandino's precise whereabouts only days before, alleging at one point that "The woman which the guardia took prisoner to Jicaro [recently] knows exactly where Sandino is." Not surprisingly, such work could be exceedingly dangerous. "Two guardia agents reported captured and killed by Salgado," tersely noted the forty-four page single-spaced GN-2 Report of the same month, only one of hundreds of such cases.

The *Voluntario* system, discussed above, was not only used to fight "bandits," save money, and co-opt potential adversaries -- like the criminal Rubén Barreto, "the famous headcutter" (*el famoso cortacabeza*) Pichingo, and the infamous Juan Escamilla, who was granted the plum of supervising the road-building project from El Sauce to Ocotal after he and Hanneken parted ways.200 From the perspective of those doing the volunteering, the system also permitted old scores to be settled under new guises of authority. In June 1929, for instance, the commanding officer at Somoto reported that Pancho Cerro of Somoto had shot and wounded Voluntario Macario Isaguerrres, and that the next day another Voluntario, Isidoro Ponce, shot and killed Pancho Cerro.201 Whatever the precise nature of the conflict between these men -- and the commanding officer at Somoto did not pretend to ask, though he did recommend Isidoro Ponce for commendation -- it is apparent that long-simmering disputes were frequently played out under the new authority structure afforded by the National Guard and its auxiliaries, including the *Voluntarios*.

Propaganda and amnesties were two other strategies regularly deployed by the Marines-Guardia to defuse and deflect opposition. Beginning soon after El Chipote was taken in January 1928, strenuous efforts were undertaken to convince Nicaraguans and others of the benificence of the occupation. In early April, district commanders were ordered to ask leading citizens in their districts to reply in writing to the question of whether or not the Marines should remain in Nicaragua. Scores of letters were received from priests, judges, mayors, landowners, and others across the country, and excerpts from those praising the Marines-GN and their salutary effect on the "tranquility, life, and

interest of all the people" were published in major newspapers inside and outside of Nicaragua as proof of the virtues of the occupation.202

Handbill propaganda directed at Segovianos began around the same time. One such handbill, proclaiming that "Sandino Opposes the Well-Being of the Segovias," appropriated the language of patriotism while playing off fears of social unrest:

The banditry, the pillaging, the despoilation are alarming, and only with decided cooperation and patriotism will the people be able to live in tranquility, to work, to send their children to school, and to live in peace in their homes.

Another, addressed to the "Sons of Nicaragua," pleaded with its readers to accept the government's offer of amnesty by September 15, 1928 (independence day) after rhetorically (and ironically) asking if they knew that Sandino was "receiving his instructions from FOREIGN COUNTRIES?" and warning that "You might be ordered to go fight in a foreign country." Most such propaganda understandably appealed less to nationalist sentiment or xenophobia than to fear -- of the "bandits" and the Marines. One warned against "The Dangers of Kidnapping" and pleaded with "all Segovianos" to "talk to the Marines to let them know all the news regarding the bandits." Another, entitled "Paper and Bullets," omitted all talk of patriotism to starkly warn that if amnesty (paper) was not accepted by September 15, "only bullets will speak." Still another, addressed "To the Followers of Sandino," invoked the honor and altruism of the Marines and the cowardice and immorality of Sandino, "a bandit like any other."203 Patrol commanders, in addition to their duties as "bandit hunters," were to double as propagandizers by assembling the natives of the communities through which they passed, reading and explaining selected handbills to them, stressing particularly the selfless motives behind the occupation.204

From May to November 1928, a concerted effort was made to induce gang leaders and members to accept amnesty. Many did, including Liberal Santa María

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202. Letters in NA127/43A/14; quote from A. Benard, Granada, 11 April 1928.
203. RG127/220/6/85.9, handbill propaganda.
204. E.g., recall Lt. Davis's exploits in ch. 8.
Sevilla and most of his gang of thirty, Conservative gang leaders Alejandro Cruz, Marcelino Hernández, Primo Picado, and Julian Sevilla and many of their followers, and many more.205 "It is believed that more will be accomplished in the next six weeks by means of propaganda and inducements for outlaws to quit than by other means," opined a Managua-based intelligence analyst at the height of these efforts.206 Amnesty offers were extended via special couriers to all known Sandinista leaders, including Pedrón, Salgado, Ortez, Díaz, and others.207 "No answers have been received to overtures made to . . . bandit leaders," it was reported in early July, with the exception of Miguel Angel Ortez who dispatched "a letter of a very patriotic nature" refusing the offer.208 Amnesties were offered long after the initial expiration date. In April 1929, for instance, Lieutenant Hamas "asked David Umanzor, uncle of [then Sandinista Colonel] Juan Pablo Umanzor to come to the GN camp for a short interview." On his arrival, Hamas asked David to tell his nephew that a complete amnesty awaited him and all his men. Señor Umanzor "assured Lieut Hamas that he would inform his nephew."209 Juan Pablo of course did not surrender, and five years later he was assassinated by the Guardia, along with Sandino and three others, in a field on the outskirts of Managua.

While amnesty programs were in place until the end of the war, after the November 1928 elections it became increasingly clear that most Sandinista leaders would not surrender and that, outside the towns and cities, propaganda was yielding diminishing returns. As a result, after Moncada had assumed the presidency and with Liberal-

Conservative conflicts apparently defused for the time being, this garden-size carrot

207. Communication to Jose Leon Diaz, Berry, Jinotega, 3 June 1928; Gurdian to Altamirano, Guale, 6 June 1928 (re: Pedrón), NA127/220/5; Frisbie to Schmidt, 1 July 1928, NA127/220/11. Salgado was first offered amnesty soon after the Battle of Ocotal; Pears to Salgado, 1 Sept. 1927, and Salgado's response, NA127/43A/20/22.6.  
patch was augmented by a fistful of bigger and more powerful sticks. Martial law was declared in January 1929, new regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms like the Plata boletas and boletas de ocupación were imposed, and the war settled down into the patterns of violence and alliance discussed above, patterns which in many respects continued long after the final (and false) disarmament and amnesty of February 1933.210

* * *

In practice, then, and gauging from their own reports, the Marines bore no small resemblance to the caricatures populating the Sandinista Black Legend. With no clear line separating enemy from innocent, the occupying forces were confronted with the paradox of waging war against the civilian populace in order to defend it. The results were horrific. To the Marines the Sandinistas were a shadowy, slippery, exasperating foe which they could indirectly pummel and punish and spatially contain but not defeat -- a foe which seemed to grow stronger with each passing setback. In their efforts to resolve this paradox the Marines-GN alternated broadly between carrot and stick, though no amount of propaganda or goodwill could erase the elemental facts that they were foreigners, they were invaders, and they were popularly despised.

The Black Legend, a very partial, partisan, exaggerated portrait, does capture a fundamental reality: the relationship between Segovianos and the Marines-Guardia was, at bottom, defined by violence, racism, and unequal relations of power. The very structure of the relationship -- technologically superior, racist, white male English-speaking Marines suppressing a peasant-based rebellion in a rural, non-modern, Spanish-speaking mestizo and Indian world -- created a milieu of "the permanent violation of the

dignity of the person," irreducible to actions or events. To paraphrase Fanon, the relationship devolved into an atmosphere of violence, a field of violence, an ecology of violence, saturating everything, imbricating everything, always lurking, always just under the skin. At the level of daily practice, bodies, families, homes, and possessions were routinely searched, prodded, poked, shot, bombed -- in a word, violated -- by groups of men popularly defined as foreign invaders. To the extent that the invasion constituted a constant violation of the basic human dignity of its victims, foes, and survivors, the Black Legend rings true.

Yet, for the Sandinistas, the Marines and Guardia and their allies were more than a font of pain and suffering. They equally represented a foil against which to define and create a new Nicaragua, a land of free and sovereign and dignified men and women, slaves to none, men and women who determined their own destinies. In Sandino's vision, the vehicle through which this redemption was to take place was _la patria_, the nation, Nicaragua. Yet in this struggle he and his fellow rebels confronted a paradox not unlike that which vexed their adversaries, waging war to liberate their compatriots from a foreign and domestic foe which many had no wish to be liberated from.

212. Frantz Fanon, _The Wretched of the Earth_ (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
CHAPTER 11: PEASANT NATIONALISM?: CONTENDING NARRATIVES OF PATRIOTISM, REBELLION AND CIVIL WAR IN THE SEGOVIAS

If you do not help the cause which we defend, you will be obliged to abandon your property as you will be declared an enemy of the Army, in which case you will lose all guarantees for yourself and your family and will be subjected to whatever punishment from us that you merit as a traitor to your country. . . . All orders which this Headquarters issues which are not complied with obligate me to have them complying with by blood and fire. . . . Think carefully and well, because if you do not feel inclined to help us, only God will keep you and your family from falling into my hands and your properties from being left in ashes.

- Sandinista General Pedro Altamirano, standard letter to property owners

Sandino is not a patriot but a bandit . . . his so-called 'Movement for the Defense of the National Sovereignty' is not only dedicated to expelling the Marines, but has attacked, sacked, and burned towns and killed their inhabitants, most of them Nicaraguan.

- El Centroamericano, 21 June 1931

The days of Sandino and his so-called Rebellion are among the darkest in all of Nicaraguan history.

- Dr. Emilio Gutiérrez, Ocotal

In 1983, ninety year old Feliciano Garcia Castro, resident of Llano de Las Tejeras, Jinotega, and ex-soldier of Sandino, was asked how members of the Defending Army obtained food. Was it was freely given, or did they have to take it? "They gave it to us and we took it," he replied, "any way we could get it, because when you're on the fly you can't just wait around; there was nothing more to it than to grab and run." But didn't the people help them? "Of course," he answered,

2. Interview with the author, Ocotal, October 1990.
the people loved us, because we didn't go around bothering any of us, Nicaraguans I mean. Sandino's dispute was only with the Yankees, not with the Guardia, until they committed themselves to getting Sandino's head, then they threw themselves on us, attacked us, Nicaraguans like them! They were the ones who were guilty of the killing amongst ourselves.  

In a representative display of creative forgetting, Don Feliciano remembered civil conflict only after Sandino's assassination, a memory completely at odds with on-the-ground realities of the period. Yet at the same time, Don Feliciano's own account of how he came to join the Defending Army provides a powerful illustration of how those conflicts and divisions were created and reinforced through the process of guerrilla war. As he told the story, Sandinista General Pedrón used to arrive at his family's house near Los Cedros in Jinotega every fifteen days or so. "García," Pedrón would say to his father, "I need a fried pig, tortillas, and a load of sugar. You're going to leave it in that camp, over there." After they brought the food, "Then comes this Escamilla, he was with the Somozas, and he burned our house down, with everything we had. So then I went to join General Sandino."

Don Feliciano painted three critical moments here, each linked in a causal chain: Pedrón (representative of the Sandinistas) demanding and receiving food, Escamilla (representative of the Marines-Guardia) burning their house down, and his own decision to join Sandino. Once Pedrón had made his demands, Don Feliciano's father confronted an inescapable dilemma: If he refused Pedrón his house would probably be burned down. If he delivered the food the family would be guilty of aiding the rebels and vulnerable to attack by Escamilla and the Marines-GN. The only real choice made by Don Feliciano or his family in this story was young Feliciano's decision to join Sandino. This, in turn, was by no means self-evident or inevitable, since he could just as well have chosen to join the Guardia or flee. Feliciano Castro seems to have divided the blame equally between Pedrón and Escamilla; asked if he knew Pedrón (the question which sparked the telling of the story), his first reaction was a rueful-sounding "uuuhhh!..."

"That's why they burned down our house," he explained, "because Pedrón and his men used to come." 4

Don Feliciano's story provides a useful entry into one of the most difficult aspects of the Rebellion to analyze -- the myriad ways in which this anti-imperialist war of national liberation was also, fundamentally, a civil war. The story is instructive precisely because it is so grounded in material realities, because it so powerfully illuminates and is so eminently representative of the core dilemmas confronting thousands of Segovianos throughout the course of the Rebellion. The dilemma facing Don Feliciano and his family was really very simple. On one side was the Defending Army, demanding food. On the other side were the Marines and Guardia, demanding that no food be provided. And that was about the extent of it. A middle ground, room for maneuver, space for compromise and negotiation, simply did not exist.

* * *

Previous chapters have explored in some detail different sides of the triangular relationship between the Marines-Guardia, the Sandinistas, and the Segovian civil populace. Chapter five focused on the language and mechanics of political violence and gang warfare in the Segovias before the Rebellion, focusing on ritual terror, fear-production, and the "guarantee system." Chapters six and seven explored different aspects of the formation of the Sandinista army-nation-state in the Segovias; it was suggested that most food and information was contributed to the Defending Army voluntarily by the peasantry, while clothes and other goods, including money, were procured through forced contributions from the wealthier strata. Chapter eight showed that the Marines and Guardia formed a fighting force vastly superior to the Sandinistas, the former typically playing the role of the hunters, and the latter, the hunted.

4. IES 048: 1,3.
This chapter attempts to put these different aspects together to explore what remains the most politically sensitive and least understood aspect of the Rebellion: the relationship between the Sandinistas and that segment of the Segovian civil populace that was reluctant or refused to ally with them, opting instead either to straddle the fence and commit to neither side (or try to), or to throw in their lot with the Marines-Guardia.

As suggested at the conclusion of chapter six, the relationship between the Defending Army and the Segovian civil populace was shaped most powerfully and directly by Sandinista demands for resources: food, information, support, i.e., for labor and the products of labor: expanded plantings, runners and couriers, clothes, arms, money. It was shown that much of this support was given willingly, volunteered by a converted or at least sympathetic peasantry. It was also frequently the case, however, that many of these resources were simply taken when and where they were needed. By the lights of the Defending Army, such "taking" represented legitimate taxation, appropriation, requisitioning, contributions to The Cause of a Free Nicaragua. By the lights of those whose goods were being appropriated, however, such "contributions" could be interpreted as either legitimate taxation by a legitimate authority, or as robbery and brigandage undertaken by common criminals.

And it is here that one arrives at what is perhaps the most troubling, revealing, and crucial dimension of the Rebellion. In the language of the dominant culture, Sandinista demands for resources from the Segovian civil populace were constructed as criminality, as robbery, i.e., as a violation of the fundamental underpinning of liberal-capitalist society, the sacrosanct principle of private property. In the language of Sandinismo, on the other hand, the Defending Army's demands for resources were constructed as entirely patriotic, legitimate, honorable and just, the necessary precondition for freeing the beloved homeland and expelling the hated invader. And it was the clash between these two very different constructions of the same phenomenon that defined, in the end, the fundamental difference between the two sides, and,
ultimately, the fundamental point of contention between the Sandinista and the Somocista narratives of Nicaraguan history. Allegiance, identity and ideology hinged, in the end, on differential constructions and definitions of property, i.e., on fundamentally opposed visions of property relationships.

**Sandinista subversion and reconfiguration of property relations in the course of the Rebellion**

Property, of course, is not a thing but a social relationship, defined and codified by the state through law. The Sandinista parallel state, arrogating unto itself the legal authority to create and implement laws, recodified and redefined property relationships in a number of fundamental ways. This reconfiguration stemmed in part from Sandino's efforts to inject a new set of meanings into the social construct called "the nation," and in part from the process of war in the Segovias. At one level, Sandino's nationalist analysis led him to conclude that the primary US interest in Nicaragua was exploitation of her natural wealth. The critical shift here was coming to see this wealth in *national* terms, as the property and patrimony of the nation as a whole. The Rebellion, in turn, was legitimated, at least in part, in terms of the defense of that national treasure -- what might be called the doctrine that "The gold produced within the bowels of the Nicaraguan earth belongs to Nicaragua."\(^5\) Beyond the level of discourse, however, property relations were also redefined through the process of armed struggle, reconceived and recodified according to the exigencies of war within the social-cultural space of the Segovias.

The occupation and looting of the San Albino Mine in June and July 1927, followed in April 1928 by raids on the Pis Pis and Bonanza Mines in Zelaya department, loudly announced the redefinition of property relations within Sandinista-controlled zones, wherever they may be (and for however long they might be controlled). These

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5. From "Manifesto to Nicaraguan Compatriots," c. July 14, 1927, Conrad, p. 80; cf. pp. 248ff., "A letter to the Leaders of the Americas: Proposals for a Continental Congress," March 20, 1929: "... the magnificent natural advantages with which God has endowed these countries [of Latin America], which are the reason for the attempts to oppress them."
early actions made abundantly clear from the outset that foreign capitalist enterprises in Nicaragua were deemed legitimate targets of Sandino's nationalist cause. These actions alone were sufficient to alienate many Nicaraguan liberal-capitalists and property owners from the Rebellion. Soon, those who adhered to bourgeois definitions of private property had even greater cause to disavow Sandino's brand of nationalism, as attacks on business owners, merchants, ranchers and farmers became widespread and systematic. One consequence of this redefinition, and of the violence which accompanied it, was the increasing political polarization of the countryside along class lines ("class" defined primarily in terms of property ownership, i.e., relationship to the means of production), particularly from around mid-1930.

There are many ways to trace this reconfiguration of property relations and the political polarization which accompanied it. One is through Sandino's writings. In August 1930, for example, he informed his representative in Mexico City that Contributions valued at fifty thousand cordobas have been assigned to the principal capitalists of Ocotal, Esteli, Jinotega, and Matagalpa. I know very well that they will laugh, but I also know that in regard to their state of mind I make them fear the day when any of the towns where they're established may fall into our hands.6

Two months later, in an October 1930 "circular" to his principal subordinates, Sandino, citing severe shortages of salt and medicines, authorized the confiscation of all merchandise passing through the countryside and its redistribution to local residents. More striking were his orders to execute by firing squad all those who refused to receive such merchandise, in addition to those who opposed its seizure. "The motive for ordering the execution of those who do not want to deliver or do not want to receive what our Army orders," he explained, "is the following:

That the merchants who travel on these roads, without any concern for the pain of the Defenders of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, are complicit with the Yankee invader in the sacking and murdering of our people; and because they are

complicit, we should make them feel with even more force the rigor of justice in defense of the Nation. 7

A year later the order was still in effect. In a letter of October 3, 1931, Sandino informed General Francisco Estrada that "General Colindres has been able to seize various cargos of merchandise from the capitalists of Ocotal." 8 Less than three weeks later he issued a very frank and revealing "Communiqué" to his principal subordinates which spelled out concisely the core dilemmas confronting their cause. Advancing many of the same arguments made here, it is worth quoting at length:

We have come to realize that we do not have at our disposal one single Indo-Hispanic government, much less any other nation of the globe. Nicaragua is directly and solely represented by our Army and thus left to its own efforts and resources. For this reason orders have been circulated among our expeditonary columns that they may collect from nationals and foreigners everything essential for our maintenance. Many times there have been cases when, with the arrival of one of our columns at some hacienda or farm in national territory, the merchandise and provisions existing in the place were taken, and there are even cases when our soldiers take shoes and clothing from the proletariat because our brother soldiers need them more than they do, and because it is not right that the men who are establishing the freedom of Nicaragua should go about in rags. It is because of this that many miserable people have called us 'bandits,' but history will see to it that justice is done to us, especially if it is remembered that the capitalist despoilers are the ones mainly and directly responsible for everything happening in Nicaragua, because they brought the Yankee mercenaries to the national territory.

Sandino then instructed his troops in the proper way to behave toward their civilian foes, explicitly justifying the use of terror for political ends while endeavoring to blunt its sharpest edges:

Avoid fires at all cost. There is no need to leave ruins behind. It would be enough if the men took screwdrivers along to unscrew doors and windows, and then burnt them along with the household equipment that must be destroyed as punishment and in order to spread terror. This procedure is very practical and effective, and it would be good if you instilled it in your subordinates. Burned houses remain behind as a kind of accusation. Houses without doors provoke smiles, and the punishment remains visible to all. 9

This was followed by the better-known "Manifesto to the Capitalists" of the Segovias, of 15 November 1931, in which Sandino denounced their collaboration with the "Yankee

invaders," justified Sandinista atrocities and mutilations against civilians, and explained that "as long as foreign intervention exists in Nicaragua, guarantees will not exist for either lives or property."¹⁰ A week later, in a letter to the Gutiérrez family of Jinotega department, he justified the practice of capturing and holding for ransom "the capitalists who are identified with the enemies of our Army." The reason? [We] need to obtain contributions from them," he explained, "with which to buy war materials for the continuation of the defense of our national honor."¹¹ Among Sandino's most explicit iterations of this principle appeared in a letter to British coffee grower Carlos Potter of Matagalpa department. "The money and property of natives and foreigners who live in Nicaraguan territory are to be utilized for the National Defense of Nicaragua," he proclaimed. "Such foreigners as do not agree with this disposition will have the option of evacuating at a good distance our national territory."¹²

Another avenue through which to trace the rebels' redefinition of property relations is through the letters and correspondence of Sandinista jefes. On October 26, 1930, for instance, Defending Army General Miguel Angel Ortez wrote to General Francisco Estrada laying out plans for an attack on Somoto. "I think the most important thing now is to interrupt the next elections," wrote Ortez.

In addition to being an important act for our cause, we will be able to provide ourselves with clothes and all we need for our people; to do this we should bring around three hundred civilians to sack all of the stores, and we with the armed people will draw attention to the headquarters while they undertake the operation.¹³

As we have seen, the attack on Ocotal which had inaugurated the Rebellion more than three years before had followed a nearly identical plan.¹⁴

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¹⁰ Somoza, pp. 280-281; photostat, p. 282.
¹¹ Conrad, p. 389.
¹² Sandino to Carlos Potter, Matagalpa, 20 July 1930, NA127/205/2/19.1; see Appendix D.
¹³ Somoza, p. 180.
Such attacks on garrisoned towns, while not infrequent, were costly and dangerous and never supplied more than a fraction of the goods required by the Defending Army. Far commoner and easier to execute were demands to local landowners for "contributions" to The Cause. Over the course of the war thousands of such tax notifications (or extortion notes) were issued, most to coffee growers and ranchers. "Please send me provisions for this force," demanded General Simon Montoya to the administrator of La Sultana coffee farm east of Jinotega in early July 1930, in a note distinguished only by its sheer ordinariness. "This farm does not furnish sufficient tortillas."¹⁵

Not uncommonly, landowners were forced into the unhappy position of juggling several competing demands at once. In early 1931, for instance, Rumualdo Martínez of Jinotega department penned a plaintive letter to Defending Army General Pedrón, pleading for a little time to pay the C$100 demanded of him. "My situation is difficult," he explained, owing to recent demands made by Inocente Ortiz and Melecio Altamirano for medicine, Humberto Rodríguez for C$200, and others from unnamed "various individuals."¹⁶

Sandino's principal lieutenants were rarely reticent about the penalties awaiting those who refused or were unable to comply with such orders. "If you do not help the Cause which we defend," ran one version of General Pedrón's standard warning to property-holders,

> which is the obligation of all honorable and patriotic Nicaraguans for the well-being of your Homeland, you will be obliged to abandon your property as you will be declared an enemy of our Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, but if you do fulfill your quota, your properties and the lives of all your family and workers will be respected. As I told you before, if you do not choose to help us, be careful to make your repentances, because I am disposed to execute my orders with blood and fire if they are not respected. Think well and

¹⁵. Note captured in contact at La Sultana, 6 July 1930, NA127/205/2/19.1; see also Appendix D.
choose the road that seems best, but if you do not do what is right, may God help you if you fall into my hands!\textsuperscript{17}

Pedrón frequently kept his word, as did other jefes who issued similar threats. Altogether the Defending Army burned hundreds of houses and farms of "traitors" who refused or were unable to pay the specified "contribution."\textsuperscript{18} "So they know not to play with me, I burned the haciendas Chirinagua and Limón," local jefe Marcial Rivera Zeledón reported to Sandino in November 1931. "The Nogueras said they wouldn't pay, [so I] burned their hacienda so they would know not to laugh at my orders."\textsuperscript{19} Such reports were exceedingly common.

Less common but still widespread was the practice of seizing and holding for ransom individual farmers and ranchers. Leonicio Navarrete, for instance, owner of the coffee finca Zaragós a near Caraterra in Jinotega department, was captured by General Pedrón in January 1932 and held prisoner for nearly six months. According to his account, Sandino told him and another prisoner

that all citizens of Nicaragua were obligated to serve the country in the cause of right and justice, but inasmuch as the two prisoners were too old to make good soldiers and also because they were more or less capitalists they would be required to pay ransom or as he put it, to contribute money to further the cause.\textsuperscript{20}

Conflicts over the provisioning of food, especially in the western Segovias, were often related in complex ways to larger issues of political affiliation, betrayal, and reciprocal violence. In one revealing episode, on 23 October 1931, Defending Army Colonel Juan Santos Morales reported to Sandino a disconcerting situation at Cuje near

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Somoza, p. 183; cf. Smith, et al., p. 250.
\item Somoza's 1936 book reproduces hundreds of original Sandinista documents which, combined with the records of the Marines-GN and the IES testimonies, leave little doubt that the Sandinistas destroyed and "stole" a great deal of property, as property was defined in the dominant culture; the documents in Somoza's book must be used with great care, however, as they were carefully selected and often deceptively edited to shed the worst possible light on the Sandinistas, as illustrated in the case of Felicito Prado and Blas Gutiérrez, below.
\item Marcial Rivera Zeledon to Sandino, 11 November 1931, in Somoza, p. 285.
\item Report of Intelligence Received, Apalf, 19 June 1932, NA127/202/1/1.3; Somoza, p. 304. Perhaps the most celebrated case was that of Enrique F. Sanchez, "young capitalist of León" captured by the Sandinistas in early 1932 and held prisoner for several months in lieu of ransom; Somoza, pp. 335-339; Statement of Enrique Sanchez F., 15 July 1932, NA127/202/4/35.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Telpaneca, in which the local residents were refusing to provide his forces with food. In response, he reported, he had organized a commission to go to Cuje and kill all members of the offending families. The conflict stemmed, at least in part, from the "treason" of one Blas González of Cuje, appointed Captain and Juez de Mesta of the Cuje Valley by Sandino in July 1930 and subsequently a sub-chief under General Miguel Angel Ortez. A few months after the 15 May 1931 attack on Palacaguina, in which General Ortez was killed, Blas González surrendered to the Marines-GN and informed on his erstwhile comrades. Less than five months later, on October 9, all of the members of the family of Colonel Cosme Gutiérrez, Sandinista Comandante of Totogalpa, were killed by the Guardia, victims of Blas González's betrayal. In retaliation, the next day, on October 10, Colonel Juan Santos Morales sentenced Blas and Pascacio González and all members of their families to death. As a result of this and related conflicts, by late October some families in the Cuje district began refusing to provide Juan Santos Morales' forces with food.21 Less than two weeks later, in early November, Morales and his forces left the western Segovias for an expedition into León and Chinandega, and after, to the east coast. Similar episodes of betrayal, retribution, violence and counter-violence occurred repeatedly throughout the north.

Years later, ex-Sandinista soldiers occasionally acknowledged that how they obtained goods sometimes amounted to plain robbery. Tiburcio Zelaya Herrera was asked in 1983 how the Defending Army acquired medicines. "This was easy," he explained. "We robbed the apothecaries in the towns, we'd arrive in the towns, the prescription clerk would pick out the medicines and pa! pa!, we robbed because we had

to rob." But didn't the folks in the towns send medicines to them? "Of course, we had people who helped us, who realized what we were doing, but the rest were with the Yankees." But, on arriving at a town, did the population welcome them, or reject them? "All the towns were against us, the majority, because if there had been someone who was with us, well they'd leave directly, or else they'd be shot by the Yankees." 22 Sixto Hernández Blandón, a Pedronista for most of the war, was asked about the main difficulties they experienced. "The hunger!" he responded. "You should have seen, naked, in rags, we arrived at the towns to rob, we had to rob, to take . . ." 23 In the main, however, such memories tended to be suppressed. Far and away the dominant social memory among Sandinistas was that they never robbed anyone. "No!, this was prohibited," responded Francisco Lara López to a query about whether they took things from the people. "That's why there was this 'Coro de Angeles' that went around stopping people from robbing in the name of Sandino. That's what happened.

If a complaint came in saying 'Sandino's troops came and robbed,' the news would get to him in Chipote. 'Which chief was it? Who was there?' So he'd find out who was doing the robbing, and everyone was informed: 'You fools!,' he would say, 'if you're acting like the machos, robbing, they want to rob all of Nicaragua, and you're doing the same? Then what's the point?' He was strict. 24

Yet if ex-soldiers of the Defending Army frequently exhibited selective amnesia regarding the civil dimensions of the conflict, Sandino's property-holding enemies at the time harbored few illusions about where their interests lay.

The emergence of the Somocista counter-narrative of Nicaraguan history and Sandinismo

"What is Sandinismo?," rhetorically asked one member of one of the leading families of Ocotal in early 1929 in an anonymous and highly detailed report to the

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22. IES 072-1-2, p. 7.
24. IES 059: 14. The "Coro de Angeles" is usually remembered and portrayed as a group of young boys who were intensely loyal to Sandino and the cause.
Guardia. "Sandinismo is a modern Latin American School for Banditry," the author explained.

It was founded in Nicaragua in 1927 by Augusto C. Sandino and supported by the false Latin American Patriotic Feeling, exploiting the idea that the Americans have not come to Nicaragua with a friendly feeling but only for the purpose of oppressing the small Caribbean republics.

He then ruminated about what he called "two kinds of Sandinismo . . . Intellectual Sandinismo and Material Sandinismo." "Intellectual Sandinismo" was defined, essentially, as "propaganda" spread inside and outside of Nicaragua. Insidious as this propaganda was, even more distressing was "Material Sandinismo," which was characterized in the following terms:

Material Sandinismo: The so-called General Sandino is followed by a bunch of bandits, most of them Honduran half-wits whose only real activity has been to protect the profits of their banditry by force of arms in order to bring it safely to friendly markets on the other side of the border.

The writer then detailed the "Market for Sandino's Merchandise," listing the proprietors of half-a-dozen trading houses in northern Nicaragua and southern Honduras "who buy from Sandino at very low prices gold, cattle, mules, horses, dry hides, coffee, soap, and everything that the bandits under Sandino rob from the poor people" of the Segovias.25

Not surprisingly, a long string of Marine-GN intelligence reports before and after this date serve to amply confirm the allegations of our anonymous letter-writer; the Sandinista-led market in "stolen" property was extensive.26

From this and sundry similar reports, it is clear that from early on, elite constructions of Sandino and his Rebellion had crystalized into a fairly consistent set of tropes and images. Years later, these images were codified and given a single authoritative voice in Anastacio Somoza García's classic compendium, El verdadero Sandino, o el calvario de Las Segovias ("The Real Sandino, or the Calvary of the Segovias"), first published in 1936 (the same year, not coincidentally, as Somoza's

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26. As one of the primary concerns of the Marines-GN, crimes against property received special attention; e.g., see the intelligence reports in NA127/209/1 and 2.
successful coup d'etat against Sacasa). Somoza's book emerged as the centerpiece of what can now be called, with the benefit of hindsight, the "Somocista narrative of history," a storyline constructed in dialectical opposition to Sandino's version of the Nicaraguan past. The basic outlines of this narrative, as we have seen, were in place long before 1936; Somoza's book became the centerpiece of this interpretation only after the Rebellion had been crushed.27

The plot of Somoza's story is eloquently represented in the iconography of violence sprawled across the cover of his book: a large machete poised over a map of the central part of Central America, dripping torrents of blood across the northern half of Nicaragua (Figure 11.1). Here the Sandino Rebellion is interpreted as common brigandage, gangsterism, lower class social pathology, and a twisted, fanatical bolshevism, all promoted under Sandino's "false standard of patriotism."28 The Marines and Guardia, in contrast, are depicted as the righteous bearers and protectors of civilization, progress, and order against the barbaric criminality of Sandino and his "bandit hordes."29 Condemnations of the Sandinistas rest on two main pillars: violence against property -- the destruction of homes, farms, buildings, mines, burnings, thefts and robberies -- and violence against human life -- murders, rapes, mutilations, atrocities of every kind and description.

The Somocista narrative constituted its own authority in a number of very effective ways. The anchor of the narrative, Somoza's book, is a masterpiece of

27. As is detailed more fully below, most of the newspapers of Managua, Granada and León were stridently anti-Sandinista throughout the Rebellion.
29. The phrase was very commonly employed, e.g., La Prensa, 2 April 1932; The Leatherneck (January 1928), p. 13. Other works in this narrative include J.M. Moncada (1985), and Matagalpa (1984). A substantial US- and Marine-centric literature forms a subset of this narrative; in addition to the publications of the US Department of State, see Wearmouth (1952), Frazier (1958), Megee (1963), and Dodd (1966); other representatives of this narrative include The Leatherneck and The Marine Corps Gazette.
Figure 11.1: Iconography of violence: Early Segovian Sandinismo according to early Somocismo. The words "El" and "Sandino" are the same bright red as the blood dripping from the machete onto northern Nicaragua; the map of Central America is in white on a light blue background, the colors of the Nicaraguan national flag, which the dripping blood appears to be desecrating. From the cover of Anastacio Somoza García's *El verdadero Sandino* (1936).
authority-construction. Considered the gospel truth about Sandino in some quarters,\textsuperscript{30} the book is essentially a compendium of carefully selected and often deceptively edited captured Sandinista correspondence, interspersed with a text which paints Sandino and his followers unambiguously as crazed killers, rapists, thieves and cutthroats.\textsuperscript{31} In addition to selections from more than two hundred original Sandinista documents, most captured by the Guardia, the book contains more than two dozen individual and group photographs of Sandinistas; twenty-five photographs of alleged victims of Sandinista atrocities and their families (most at funeral settings); and twenty photostats of Sandino's correspondence, most including Sandino's signature over the Defending Army's official seal. The photostats appear at roughly twenty-page intervals; the photographs appear more frequently. Both are intended to convey an impression of indisputable authenticity. Accompanying each photostat is the formulaic reminder: "We insert a photograph of the document just transcribed so that our readers will not doubt their authenticity"; the text further reminds the reader no fewer than fifteen times that "the original documents are at the disposal of anyone who still doubts their authenticity, at the Operations Office of the Guardia Nacional."\textsuperscript{32}

Somoza's book, however, was merely the culmination of what had come before it, of years of carefully crafted, politically-charged misrepresentations of Sandinismo. It is instructive to examine the process of counter-narrative construction as it unfolded during the years of the Rebellion. Indeed, the evidence is overwhelming that the sentiments expressed in the anonymous report quoted above (and in Somoza's book years later) were

\textsuperscript{30} An anecdote might help illustrate the point. In October 1990 I had occasion to meet with one of the northern correspondents fo: La Prensa at his home in the northern village of T------. After some discussion about the era of Sandino, he left the room to return moments later cradling a copy of Somoza's book. Wide-eyed, he confided in hushed tones that he had been forced to hide the book under the floorboards during the years of "Sandinista [FSLN] terror," but that the book was absolutely true -- "see, it's all documented!" -- and contained the real truth about Sandino and his murderous followers.  
\textsuperscript{31} For an example of such editorial practices, see fn. above regarding the case of Felicito Prado and Blas González; dozens of similar examples could be cited.  
\textsuperscript{32} Somoza, pp. 253, 317.
widely shared by other members of its author's social class. Without a single known
exception, all of the leading families of Nueva Segovia, Liberal and Conservative alike,
were stridently anti-Sandinista from the beginning to the end of the Rebellion. (At the
same time, members of neither party were averse to temporarily allying with their
enemies if it meant advancing their own ends -- thus, for example, widespread
Conservative complicity in Sandinista pre-election violence in the fall of 1928.33)

Elite representations of the rebels, emerging from the wider semantic field of
civilization and barbarism, were deeply inscribed with imageries of lower class savagery,
disorder and violence, of the racial inferiority of the Indians and the primitivism of the
countryside.34 For most liberal-capitalists of the period, Sandino and his Rebellion came
to represent something truly frightening: the spectre of the rural lower orders committing
organized and directed violence against the ideals they held most dear -- civilization,
order, progress, and, underlying all of these ideals, private property.

This is particularly evident in the newspapers of the major cities of the Pacific
littoral. The commonest depictions of the Defending Army in the urban press,
particularly after mid-1930, were indistinguishable from the imagery deployed by
Marine-Guardia propagandists, and later, by Somoza: barbaric hordes of machete-
wielding criminals and cutthroats savaging the countryside, robbing and killing other
Nicaraguans. Most "news" from the Segovias (which was usually slight, inaccurate, and
sensationalized) took property and violence against property as its central theme;
violece against persons ran a close second. "Bandits Rob Merchandise" announced the
headline of a typical article in mid-1928, which went on to call for "energetic action to
guarantee commerce against those marauding on the roads."35 "They Are Demanding
Contributions From The Principal Coffee Growers!" screamed the front-page headline of

33. See ch. 5, above.
34. On the anti-Indian racism of the urban intelligentsia and bourgeoisie, see Gould
35. El Centroamericano, 19 July 1928.
one of Managua's leading newspapers in January 1931, accompanied by a lengthy article describing Sandinista activities in Jinotega and Matagalpa departments. 36 A typical editorial from Managua's *La Prensa*, dated 31 January 1931, decried the "banditry" in the north and opined that "if the Guardia Nacional could be increased by one thousand men, the results would be wonderful." "Is Sandino a Patriot or Bandit?" rhetorically asked a headline of León's *El Centroamericano* in June 1931. The answer was obvious; in the words of Professor Paul Lavalle, "prominent man of science and French writer" interviewed for the story, "In more than twenty cities and towns that I have visited in Nicaragua,

I have asked people what they thought of Sandino. Everyone invariably answered, 'Sandino is a bandit'... Sandino and his so-called 'Movement for the Defense of the National Sovereignty' is not only dedicated to expelling the Marines, but has attacked, sacked, and burned towns and killed their inhabitants, most of them Nicaraguans. 37

"The Work of Banditry: Complete Paralization of Commerce in the Segovias," announced a headline of *El Centroamericano* on 3 December 1931. Ironically, many of the same newspapers regularly carried articles denouncing US control over the Nicaraguan economy. "Wall Street Ruining Nicaragua: US Bankers Have Usurped $33,209,842.72 Until Last Year," proclaimed the front-page headlines of the same newspaper which cried "Bandits Rob Merchandise" only months before. 38 As the war progressed the denunciations only grew sharper and more vitriolic. "The hordes of Sandino are made up of mercenaries and men without scruples," wrote one editorialist of Managua's *La Prensa* on 2 April 1932.

I civilly deny... the ludicrous patriotism of Sandino and the horde of bandits who follow him... The true patriot attacks the enemy valiently but he does not attack his brother or his co-patriots. He does not kill in cowardly or traitorous manner, does not violate women, does not rob strong boxes, does not burn their homes. To those who proceed in such a fashion I find only these dry and cold-blooded names, thieves, assassins, and incendiaries.

37. *El Centroamericano*, 21 June 1931; it was a common editorial strategy to interview little-known European "experts" and construct them as authorities on a particular topic.
Similar examples could fill a dozen fat volumes.

As these snippets suggest, the nature of the Sandinista enterprise on the ground was such that the rebels were unable to cultivate any significant or organic links with middling or large-scale property owners, or indeed, with any social class outside the ranks of the historically poor and subordinate. Indeed, property owners across the Segovias soon came to form a relatively solid, if internally heterogeneous and still highly fractured, anti-Sandinista front. At the same time, while most Sandinista "crimes" were committed against the relatively well-to-do, many were not; political allegiances, significantly correlated with social class, were in no sense determined by it.

Requests for Marine-Guardia protection against "the hordes of Sandino" poured in from across the north, from Macuelizo, Mosonte, Jalapa, El Jícaro, Colón, La Concordia, and scores of lesser villages, settlements, and farms. 39 For the Marines and Guardia, the refrain soon became a familiar one: "We the undersigned, of age, workers and natives of Mosonte, residing in the villages of El Apamiguel, El Coyol, El Caracol, El Agua Blanca, El Barillal, Alunante, and El Tamarindo," began one such petition to the Jefe Director of the Guardia Nacional:

[We] state as follows: That we are threatened by the bandits who remain in several parts of the department and who go around in the valleys and villages where we live, aided by the cover of night when no military unit may pursue them . . . these groups of bandits are composed of bad men, natives of the Valley of Cuje, jurisdiction of Totogalpa, who continue killing peaceful and honest citizens. . . . We have not as yet been killed due to the fact that we sleep out of our homes . . . The reason why these bandits hate us is because we are not their sympathizers, on the contrary we condemned their activities and criminal proceedings. 40

Exactly who these "workers and natives" were, in this instance, unclear; no names are attached to the English-language copy of this petition that made its way into the archives.

39. Some representative examples are: letter from "workers and natives" of Mosonte to Jefe Director GN, 27 December 1930, NA127/202/1/1.3; letters from citizens of La Concordia and Jinotega, 14 and 15 May 1929, NA127/220/3; letter from "citizens and agriculturalists" of Jalapa area, 15 November 1928, RG127/43A/15/16.5; Matagalpa coffee growers resolution and response, April 1930, NA127/198/misc. 1930. Many similar letters and petitions can be found adjacent to these.
40. Dated 27 December 1930, NA127/202/1/1.3.
Still, other such petitions (and the propensity of members of the elite to identify themselves as "workers" or "agriculturalists"\textsuperscript{41}) leave little doubt that its signatories were not among the lower orders of Nicaraguan society. This was certainly true of the hundreds of requests for protection against Sandino made by merchants, coffee growers, and cattle ranchers across the north, particularly after around mid-1930. The Guardia headquarters in Managua was soon buried under an avalanche of such requests.\textsuperscript{42}

Not uncommonly, elite constructions of the Defending Army were laced with spleen and racism: "This is not an organized army or anything, all they are is a bunch of barefooted indians, who are too lazy to work," thundered one landowner. "It would be an easy matter to hunt them up and exterminate them, if only they were shot when captured."

More commonly, property owners' opposition to Sandino was expressed in less strident terms, as something implicit, assumed, indeed axiomatic. One German-born planter expressed the predominant view of his class when he wrote:

After living in Nicaragua for sixteen years... I am in a position to say that the US Marines in Nicaragua have done good to this country, mainly in maintaining peace and order, except in certain areas where the bands of General Sandino are still at large.\textsuperscript{44}

Among the Segovias' middling social classes -- which as we have seen comprised a relatively small proportion of the populace, reaching perhaps as high as ten to twenty percent in some areas -- the story was much the same. The rebels were able to forge organic links with precious few small- and medium-sized traders, coffee growers,

\textsuperscript{41} A point driven home for me while I was conducting interviews in Ocotal and elsewhere in 1990; upon being asked what they did for a living, it was not uncommon for wealthy landowners with smooth, uncalloused hands to respond that they were "agriculturists" (agricultores) or even "peasants" (campesinos).

\textsuperscript{42} See previous notes.

\textsuperscript{43} H. Samuelson, San Francisco de Guajiniquilapa, to Gen. McDougal, Managua, 10 November and 6 December 1929, NA127/198/1.

\textsuperscript{44} Guillermo Húper, Matagalpa, to USMC, Matagalpa, 13 April 1928, NA127/43A/14. In a doubly ironic twist, Tomás Borge writes: "Somoza, quien tuvo en su despacho, por algún tiempo, los retratos de Hitler y Mussolini, le declaró la guerra al Eje y se apoderó con avidez de bienes y enseres de los ciudadanos de origen alemán. La víctima más conocida en Matagalpa fue don William Húper." La paciente impaciencia (Managua: Vanguardia, 1989: 72).
ranchers and farmers, for much the same reason that they were unable to do so with the truly wealthy: their own systematic violation of private property rights, the superior power of the Marines-Guardia and the "official state," and, on the part of all but the poor and subordinate, a widely shared and deep-seated fear of social revolution.

There are hundreds of Marine-Guardia patrol, combat and intelligence reports which contain detailed accounts of soldiers of the Defending Army robbing and killing small- and medium-sized traders, ranchers and farmers. In the late afternoon of 29 March 1930, to pick one case almost at random, Lieutenant Russell White and his small patrol of four Guardia arrived at the coffee farm named Santa María due north of Matagalpa. "This is a very small finca," the lieutenant reported, "owned by three sisters by name of Ibarra.

Señorita Berta Ibarra was present and stated that on the night of March 27th at about 7:30 pm, six men armed with rifles, shotguns and one pistol entered the house and placed a rifle muzzle against her chest and asked her if she was a 'YANKEE SYMPATHIZER.' She replied in the negative.

The house was reportedly ransacked and, nothing of value being found, 'the leader said that he must have money or he would kill all the persons present.' Señora Berta Ibarra was able to find $40, which she gave to the leader, and they departed.45 Less than two months later, the patrol of Lieutenant Pennington in Matagalpa department "investigated [a] report of the sacking of the house of Miguel Arteta, this man is very poor, found that the bandits took a pair of leather leggings, a pair of trousers, and a small blanket, they also obliged him to guide them to other houses of that vicinity."46

46. Patrol Report, O.E. Pennington, Matagalpa, NA127/202/13; a dozen similar cases are described in the patrol reports of H.C. Roberts, Estelí, 5 April 1928, NA127/204/3/56; F.L Buchanan, Condega, 2 March 1930, NA127/202/13; M.K. Chenowith, Jinotega, 26 April 1930, NA127/202/13; E. Carlson, Jalapa, 10 July 1930, NA127/202/10; O. Pennington, Matagalpa, 23 July 1930 (same); C. Puller, Corinto Finca, 20 November 1931 (same); P. Kerns, Matagalpa, 5 Jan. 1931, NA127/202/11; Broderick, San Juan de Telpaneca, 24 Jan. 1931 (same); Kipp, Palacagüina, 5 March 1931 (same); Brauer, Palacagüina, 18 May 1931 (same); Hámás, Condega, 27 May 1931 (same); Cramer, Corinto Finca, 30 September 1931, NA127/202/14.
Señora Ibarra and Señor Arteta lived to tell their tales. Others were not so lucky. In his 1936 book, Anstacio Somozá García charged that the Sandinistas tortured and killed hundreds upon hundreds of Nicaraguans, mutilating the cadavers of many of their victims. The records of the Marines-GN, Sandinista correspondence, and the IES testimonies all serve to amply buttress his charges. "On the morning of the 18th, a body of a native was brought in to Jicaro who had been murdered by the bandits," Lieutenant W. Davies reported in September 1930. "The body had been badly mutilated with machetes and apparently the man had been tortured before his death. The local system of scalping had been used . . ."47 Scores of similar cases could be cited.48 Indeed, the Sandinistas soon became infamous for their brutality, for their corte de chaleco or "waist cut," in which the victim was decapitated, the arms and legs severed, and the abdomen sliced open; the corte de cumbo or "skull cut," in which the top of the head was cut off and the brain exposed, soon followed by convulsions and death; the corte de blumers, in which the legs were severed at the knees and the hands cut off, the victim left to bleed to death; the practice of placing the severed penis in the decapitated victim's mouth; mutilation of the face and head; and others.49 Captured Guardia soldiers were especially subject to such atrocities. On November 3, 1931, for instance, Lieutenant D.H. Wallace led a patrol of nineteen enlisted Guardia to the scene of a contact that had taken place several days before. "Upon my arrival at the scene of combat I found three corpses," the lieutenant reported, all Nicaraguan members of the Guardia killed in the battle. "All men were stripped of their clothing with the exception of underwear. [Two of their skulls

were] crushed with a rifle butt. The penises of [two of the men] were missing and their mouths were open, it is my belief that they were placed in their mouths."

The Sandinistas made no secret of the methods by which they killed their opponents. Late in the war Sandino tried to justify to the "capitalists" of the major towns in the Segovias his Army's use of such techniques: "Liberty is not won with flowers but with bullets," he explained, "and for this reason we have been compelled to utilize the cortes de chaleco, de cumbo, y de blumers."

Most Sandinista leaders practiced such methods of torture and murder. The most infamous case was General Pedro Altamirano, or Pedrón, an intimate friend of Sandino, a fierce patriot, a deeply spiritual man, and a ruthless killer. In many ways Pedrón represented the logical extreme of the practice of early Segovian Sandinista nationalism: a religio-nationalist impulse driving terror, murder, death, and destruction; systematic pillage and robbery and frequent bouts of hacking of people to bits with machetes, all for the greater good of the Homeland, an extraordinary mixture of murder, mayhem, and national-spiritual redemption. There are scores of well-documented cases in which Pedrón tortured, maimed, killed and mutilated his opponents. He himself openly admitted to such actions. It was obvious, for instance, to the friends and neighbors of the brother of Pedro Zelaya, captured by Pedrón in May 1928, blindfolded,

51. Ramírez, ed., vol. II, p. 203. It is noteworthy that the first clause here is a well known aphorism of Sandino, while the second clause tends to be ignored.
52. The evidence here is overwhelming; perhaps the best proof is that such actions were frequently admitted and never denied. Even Carlos Fonseca Amador, the intellectual leader of the FSLN, readily admitted the severity with which early Sandinistas dealt with "Yankees and traitors," e.g., "Los guerrilleros sandinistas fueron severos con aquellos que prestaban ayuda al invasor, tanto delatores como latifundistas traidores." Fonseca, vol. I, p. 348.
53. Pedrón, like Sandino, frequently made reference to God in his letters (e.g., see his standard letter to property owners introducing this chapter).
54. In a letter from Pedrón to Lieutenant Felix Pedro Herrera of November 12, 1930, for example, Pedrón wrote: "Be on the watch as you may be surprised by the bandits. If you meet anybody and you are sure that he is our enemy, cut his throat ("lo chalequean") and burn his house." NA127/209/5/Herrera, Felix Pedro; the same letter is also reproduced in J.C. Smith et al., p. 249.
and forced to accompany the column for several weeks. He returned with both ears cut off.\textsuperscript{55} It was no less apparent to the friends and neighbors of Madovio Hernández, a Conservative resident of San Antonio, Jinotega, who was captured by forces under Pedrón on September 30, 1928 and forced to carry equipment for the band. He returned from the ordeal blinded.\textsuperscript{56}

The evening after Madovio Hernandez's capture, on the night of October 1-2, 1928, Pedrón's band committed an act which would cause extreme discomfort in the highest echelons of government, cause screaming headlines in the press, and be burned into the popular memory for years to come, when three prominent Liberal propagandists were murdered and mutilated near the village of San Marcos, a few kilometers north of Jinotega.\textsuperscript{57} In this instance, as in others, the choreography of Sandinista methods of torture and murder closely paralleled the rituals employed by Anastacio Hernández and his gang in the service of the Ocotal Conservative elite.\textsuperscript{58} Around one o'clock in the morning the attackers surprised the three Liberal leaders in the house of a fellow Liberal. They were dragged from their beds and killed and mutilated inside and near the house.

In the words of Liberal José Santos Rivera, "I came to town [San Marcos] to assist in conducting the bodies ... where I encountered, horribly cut up and in underclothes, without socks, my unfortunate companions ... That place was the most sinister and tragic that my eyes have ever seen. It was an atrocious crime, a savagery without precedent ..."\textsuperscript{59} (As we have seen, however, such practices had longstanding

\textsuperscript{55} R-2 Report, Ocotal, 27 May 1928, p. 6, NA127/209/2; cf. the testimony of Luis Boedeker González (IES 055-1-2: 4-5), in which a substantially similar story is told; according to Boedeker, the Zelayas were his brothers.

\textsuperscript{56} Additions to list of persons killed, wounded, and molested, Department of Jinotega, R.L. Christian, Jinotega, October 21, 1928, NA127/220/7.

\textsuperscript{57} Some historians implicitly accept the view of the Marines, the press, and government officials that these murders were without precedent and that such brutality was practiced only by Sandinistas; e.g. Macaulay, p. 129. On the murders in San Marcos, see NA127/220/7; Somoza, pp. 98-100.

\textsuperscript{58} See ch. 5, above.

\textsuperscript{59} Statement of José Santos Rivera on the events occurring from the 1st to the 2nd of October 1928, 10 October 1928, NA127/220/7.
precedents.) Pedrón made plain the preeminently public character of the murders: the mutilated cadavers were left on the main road through San Marcos; passersby and local residents were warned that

a similar fate awaited the other leaders of the Liberal party; at least one of these captives was taken down and shown the bodies, so as to further impress the example upon him ... Altamirano took advantage of conversations with various of those he captured to declare the political character of this brutal crime, to state that it was ... intended as an example [to] the Liberals, especially the leaders and propagandists, ... only 'a beginning' of what was to follow ... 60

Such atrocities were not limited to "leaders and propagandists," however. Indeed, throughout the course of the war the Sandinistas killed and mutilated hundreds of Nicaraguans, many of whom were relatively poor peasants and laborers. Most were believed to have collaborated with the Marines and Guardia; indeed, this was far and away the commonest rationale. Francisco Pérez, for instance, owner of a small plot of land near Gualf, Jinotega, had served as a guide for the Marines-Guardia in early 1929, for which he was put on Pedrón's death list. According to Captain Hanneken, who knew Pérez, "[the] bandits were apparently afraid of Pérez as he was of powerful build and well-known for handling a machete." Pérez had told Hanneken previously that "he was not afraid of Pedron and that if he ever came near Pedron he would kill him with his machete." At nine o'clock in the morning of October 15, 1929, Francisco Pérez was out working in his fields when he was shot by someone hiding in the brush. The bullet shattered his lower jaw; soon afterward he died. 61

Sometimes civilian victims of the rebels responded in kind, forming vigilante groups on their own initiative in order to combat what they construed as criminal banditry. On March 19, 1932, a group of nine Sandinistas under Julian Gutiérrez sacked the little village of San Pedro, northeast of San Francisco de Guajiniquilapa near the

60. Memorandum relative to the murder of Dr. Juan Carlos Mendieta and members of his party in San Marcos, Department of Jinotega, on the night of Oct. 1st - 2nd, 1928, F. LeJ. Parker, 24 October 1928, NA127/220/7.
Honduran border. As they left they abducted a young boy named Lino Arce. As a Marine lieutenant later reported, "Ubaldo Arce, father of the boy, and three other civilians, armed with machetes, followed the rear of the bandits, intent upon rescuing the prisoner." Later that same afternoon, and despite the disparity in arms and numbers, "the four civilians attacked" the Gutiérrez band, killing Julian Gutiérrez, wounding three, and taking one prisoner. Three of the four civilians suffered serious wounds, but the boy, Lino Arce, was rescued.62

Townspeople were generally divided in their affiliations, some (usually the propertied) allied with the occupying forces, others (usually the poor) allied with the rebels, and many others with neither. Moments of crisis tended to lay bare these divisions. On the night of 22 April 1930, for instance, rebel forces attacked the garrison at San Juan de Telpaneca. Only ten Guardia were present; the rest were out on patrol. "After departure of Guardia patrol an unusual number of people left the town," reported the commanding officer afterward, a clear sign that many were informed of the impending attack. "Those that remained," he added, "reported to camp for duty during attack."63 In San Juan as elsewhere, some townsfolk were linked to the Sandinista grapevine, while others who were excluded from it saw their fortunes more bound up with the Marines and Guardia.

Less than a year later, similar events unfolded in the town of Telpaneca. As if to begin the new year on an auspicious note, at two o'clock in the morning of 1 January 1931, rebel forces attacked the town. At nine o'clock the previous night, the commanding Guardia officer, Lieutenant William Davis, had received advance information about the attack by radio from Ocotal. In preparation for the attack, "all Guardia were recalled to the garrison and ordered to occupy combat stations"; in

addition, "the alcalde [was] notified to assemble the recently organized civicos. Within fifteen minutes twelve civilians responded." Soon after they were joined by six others. In all, "The defense force of the town consisted of one Marine radio operator, fourteen Guardia, and eighteen civicos" -- that is, one Marine and thirty-two Nicaraguans fending off a Sandinista attack. The lieutenant was particularly impressed with the comportment of the civicos: "Their spirits and morale were good and they cooperated with the Guardias willingly and without friction." By that time, the lieutenant concluded in his report, forty civicos had agreed to work with the Guardia in the town of Telpaneca.64

According to the 1920 Census, there were 487 inhabitants in the town proper, including 232 males, approximately 162 of whom were twenty years of age and older.65 Assuming that the population had remained relatively stable, this meant that 40 of 162 adult males - - approximately one in four -- had decided to actively cooperate with the Marines-Guardia. And that is a substantial number.

Most municipal officials were, predictably, allied with the Marines and Guardia. The alcalde of El Jicaro, for example, proved useful in verifying information and furnishing Marine-Guardia patrols with "very capable" guides.66 The alcalde of Telpaneca assisted in the investigation into the Telpaneca mutiny of October 1929, and generally proved himself useful to the Marines-Guardia.67 The alcaldes of Palacagüina, La Concordia, and Jalapa rendered repeated assistance to the Marine-Guardia garrisons in those places.68 On the other hand, Major Spotts harbored suspicions against the alcalde of San Francisco de Guanijiquilapa. "I would not be surprised if he is in league with the bandits," he reported after a Sandinista attack on the town.69

65. Censo de 1920, p. 274.
The Sandino Rebellion as a social revolution?: National sovereignty and social justice

On December 30, 1930, Lieutenant Paul Kerns led a mounted patrol to the hacienda called El Gurrion, where he "learned that [the] bandits had passed there at about 1700 the previous day.

At this place the bandits left signed receipts for all property taken signed by Pedro Blandon. Also [left behind was a] document signed by Sandino recruiting the aid of the poor people and working class to join in the patriotic move to rid the country of the Yanky invasion. The bandits destroyed all records of the Hacienda and told all the mozos [workers] that they did not owe a cent to the owner. 70

Such occurrences, which were fairly common, beg the question of the nature of the relationship between the patriotic struggle to expel the "Yanky invader" and concurrent struggles for land, fair wages, and decent working conditions among the laboring poor of the Segovias.

Sandino, as we have seen, legitimated the Rebellion exclusively in terms of the defense of the national sovereignty against an outside aggressor. To what extent was the struggle also conceived and practiced as a social revolution against an exploitative and oppressive elite and class structure? The Defending Army was overwhelmingly campesino (peasant and rural proletarian) in composition. In his public pronouncements, Sandino consistently subordinated the struggle for social justice to the larger goal of expelling the Yankees. When he did address social issues it was primarily in terms of fair wages and decent working conditions for rural wage laborers. In his second manifesto (c. 14 July 1927), for instance, he decried the "hard social problems" of his fellow citizens, excoriating the North American owner of the San Albino mine for his treatment of his workers, "miserable, half-naked, sick with malaria . . . forced to earn their living by their physical labor, with their bare hands, in order to eat and dress themselves badly." "I desire," he proclaimed, "only the redemption of the working

class." Here, Sandino was attempting to lay the blame for Nicaragua's "hard social problems" at the doorstep of the "yankee imperialism," a tack he continued to follow throughout the course of the Rebellion.

Indeed, explicit appeals to class struggle in Sandino's public pronouncements were rare. On a handful of occasions he asserted that internal enemies were also to blame for those same "hard social problems," though such pronouncements were few and infrequent. During nearly six years of Rebellion Sandino never spoke publicly (i.e., in letters to allies, subordinates, foreign governments, and the press) of the need for land reform or redistribution of productive resources to the poor; nor did he ever explicitly invoke the phrase "social justice." Indeed, in 1933, when the Basque journalist Ramón de Belausteguigoitia asserted to Sandino that "your rebellion has an obvious social character," and asked, "is there no social program?," Sandino responded:

At various times efforts were made to twist this movement away from national defense, transforming it into a struggle having a more social character. I have opposed this with all my strength. This movement is national and anti-imperialist . . .

Citing his split with the Salvadoran communist Faribundo Martí as evidence of the Rebellion's fundamentally nationalist character, Sandino went on to asserts that the social grievances of the Nicaraguan peasantry were in no way similar to the agrarianism of the Mexican Revolution.

72. E.g., in his conversations with Carleton Beals in early 1928: "As it is, the eighteen years of American meddling in Nicaragua have plunged the country deeper into economic misery." Quoted in Conrad, p. 182.
73. E.g., in early January 1929, in a peace proposal sent to newly-elected President Moncada, Sandino insisted on an eight-hour day for rural laborers, child labor laws, increased state expenditures on schools, and other social programs as prerequisites for peace (Conrad, pp. 221-226); his "Message to the urban and rural workers of Nicaragua and all of Latin America" of 26 February 1930 began by proclaiming that "The working class of all Latin America today suffers a double exploitation: that of imperialism, mainly that of the Yankee, and that of the native bourgeoisie or the national capitalists and exploiters . . ." (Conrad, p. 309). These are the most explicitly class-based pronouncements in all of Sandino's writings and utterances.
74. Translation is Conrad's, p. 455.
In some countries, such as Mexico, many have thought that the Sandinista movement was fundamentally agrarian. I have had occasion to observe during my stay in Nicaragua that property is rather well divided, and that it is a land of small properties. Latifundia hardly exist, and these are not very large. Agrarianism, therefore, does not have a field of action here.  

These remarkable statements need to be seen in their larger political and historical context. At the time of his interview with Belausteguigoitia in early 1933, it must be recalled, Sandino had just concluded the first round of a delicate process of negotiation with the national state; when these words were uttered he was working to transform and meliorate elite constructions of his rebel organization and gain some measure of "official" credibility and legitimacy with the powers-that-be. Despite his protestations to the contrary, Sandino must have been keenly aware that his movement had been profoundly "social [in] character" from its inception, that it had never stopped embodying the dual aims of national redemption and social justice. Still, that he felt compelled to deny the social side of the equation at this particular moment reveals a fundamental ambiguity in Sandinista ideology more generally, and speaks eloquently to the constellation of forces confronting the rebel movement throughout the course of the struggle.

The memories of Sandino's former peasant soldiers mirrored and further exaggerated this basic ambiguity with respect to the role and relative importance of social and agrarian issues in the Rebellion. Most ex-soldiers of the Defending Army (roughly forty-five of sixty testimonies, or three in four) do not mention agrarian or social issues at all as reasons for rebelling. (Far and away the commonest motive invoked, as shown in chapter six, was the felt need to redress extreme levels of Yankee violence.) On the other hand, roughly one in four ex-soldiers did recall that struggles for social and agrarian justice were integral to the struggle to expel the Yankees. In June 1980, for instance, eighty-year-old ex-Defending Army soldier Balbino Blandón Díaz was asked, "And did General Sandino explain to you at some point what he was going to do once he

had triumphed and the Yankees had left Nicaragua?" "To give land to the peasants," he responded,

Because at that time it was obvious that the rich always chose the best lands for themselves, and the poor were left with land that wasn't any good for anything. So he said that no, that when he triumphed he was going to share, so that each village, where you lived, there you'd have your land to cultivate and live on.76

Similar memories were disproportionately clustered among ex-soldiers from the El Jicaro mining region and the zone of intensive coffee expansion east of San Rafael del Norte and Jinotega -- precisely the regions which saw the greatest degree of Sandinista support, as recorded in Marine Corps intelligence documents.77 Tiburcio Zelaya Herrera, originally from around El Jicaro, recalled that Sandino had promised "to always distribute the land to the poor... This was his fight, so that the lands were for the peasants, not for the rich."78 Sixto Hernández Blandón of Jinotega recalled Sandino promise at the disarmament at San Rafael (in February 1933): "I'm going to give each of you fifty manzanas of land with title."79 Luciano Gutiérrez Herrera, originally from around El Jicaro, remembered that what Sandino "wanted was progress for all the poor. He fought so there would be no more slavery; he wanted to make it better for all the poor."80

At one level these and similar memories can appropriately be interpreted as embodying social and economic aspirations of the 1980s, one product of the previous fifty years of land concentration under Somocista rule. At the same time, while it is doubtless true that present-day concerns powerfully shaped these representations of the past, it seems equally clear that the social and class agendas were they expressed were not wholly fabricated, that at some level they accurately represented a perceived reality from the period they were invoking. Early Sandinismo was a very elastic body of

76. IES 085: 18.
77. See ch. 8, above.
78. IES 072-1-2: 10.
79. IES 036: 4.
80. IES 102: 3.
thought; a wide range of evidence makes abundantly clear that Sandino conceived of social justice and national liberation as two moments in the same process of struggle, and that this dual quality of the Rebellion was shared by most of his peasant soldiers.

Keywords such as "justice" and "injustice," "honor" and "dishonor," "slavery" and "freedom" carried multiple and contending meanings, depending on who invoked them and who was listening to them. As a general rule, Sandino's narrative applied these words to the nation as a whole. His soldiers, on the other hand, tended to interpret these words less in purely nationalist terms than in terms of work, labor, and local political and social relations. Divergent meanings of "slavery" in early Sandinista discourse are a case in point. In Sandino's writings, slavery and freedom are invariably applied to the nation as a whole; e.g., in a typical passage he proclaimed: "patriotism . . . is demonstrated through tangible deeds, by offering one's life in defense of the nation's sovereignty, since it is better to die than to accept the humiliating freedom of the slave."81 On the other hand, for his peasant soldiers, "slavery" was most commonly interpreted as in terms of local labor and/or political relations, the consequence of the actions of rich and powerful landowners and mineowners (Nicaraguan and foreign) and the agents of the state (local office holders and soldiers). The evidence is strong that when Sandino declared that he was fighting against slavery and for freedom, most of his peasant soldiers heard something quite different than the meanings explicitly invoked. A similar divergence of meaning applied to "justice." Most commonly, Sandino's intended meaning applied to justice at the level of the nation, i.e, "justice" as the attainment of absolute sovereignty or the redemption of the "national honor"; his peasant soldiers, on the other hand, commonly interpreted justice as either revenge for Conservative or Marine-Guardia crimes or as social justice for the poor and oppressed.

81. Conrad, p. 100; similar references to slavery as a fundamentally national phenomenon on pp. 86, 109, 160, 196, 235, and 243-244.
In sum, the Rebellion was both a movement of national liberation and a social revolution, a war against a foreign imperial enemy and an internal class war, and it is the nature of that internal enemy that constitutes a key arena of ambiguity and slippage in early Sandinista discourse and historical memory.

"To combat the enemy in the interior of our country": The Sandinista construction of treason and traitors

Sandino legitimated the Rebellion exclusively in terms of patriotic defense of the homeland from a foreign invader -- "The supreme ideal of our army is to throw the conquerers out of our territory and promote the formation of a purely national government"\(^{83}\), as he expressed many times -- but that defense was also a civil war waged on a dual front: a war of the popular classes against the ruling classes and an exploitative social system, and a war against native allies of the invaders. These latter categories, in turn, often merged: the patriotic language of Sandinismo was plastic enough to permit the subaltern classes to wage a class and social war under a nationalist rubric, to brand as "traitors" members of all classes (especially the dominant classes) those charged with failing to adhere in any way with Sandinista definitions of "the nation."

Though he had employed the idiom of patriotism and treason for many months before, Sandino's first attempt to officially codify the meaning of "traitor" came in a "Resolution Concerning Traitors to the Homeland," issued in mid-November 1927. A traitor was anyone who

> traffics with the nation's honor, . . . lends support to the invaders and traitors to assassinate Nicaraguan patriots who are defending the nation's sovereignty, . . . solicits protection from the invaders with the pretext of defending his own interest, whether a national or foreigner.\(^{84}\)

This construction of who and what constituted a traitor remained constant throughout the course of the Rebellion. In a mid-1930 letter to Abraham Rivera, for instance, Sandino

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82. The phrase is from a letter from Sandino to Francisco Estrada, c. 31 Dec. 1931, in Somoza, p. 299.
84. Conrad, p. 125.
affirmed that "All Expeditionary Chiefs" remained authorized to convene councils of war to try suspected traitors. "The *corte de chaleco* will continue in vigor while invaders and traitors to the homeland still exist," he instructed.\(^85\) Over time, the language of traitors and treason came to saturate Defending Army correspondence, much like the idiom of "guarantees":\(^86\)

I ordered Lieutenant Medina to kill Balvino Vilchez, it is not convenient that this individual remains where he is. (Pedrón to Sandino, 25 Oct. 1930)

My Brother Altamirano: Try to arrange a meeting between our brothers Villegas and Zelaya, to make them confront one another [and find out] which of them is the traitor, whom you will immediately execute . . . (Sandino to Pedrón, 3 Feb. 1931)

The liberty of Nicaragua is approaching. Already one can hear the final hour of the traitors . . . (Francisco Estrada to Pedro Altamirano, 9 April 1931)

Give to Comandante Cruz the pistol and machete used by the traitor who was decapitated . . . (Carlos Salgado to Dionisio Centeno, 23 September 1931)

On this same commission three traitors were killed; I forget their names . . . (Pedrón to Sandino, 8 Oct. 1931)

. . . Major Rivera has acquired two pistols of the traitors Saturnino Herrera and two of his sons . . . (Francisco Estrada to Sandino, 27 Oct. 1931)

You traitors have caused the ruin of Nicaragua . . . (Marcial Rivera to Trinidad Castellón, landowner, 18 Nov. 1931)

In the past few days I have killed the following traitors: Genero Vásquez, Narciso González . . . (Pedrón to Sandino, 14 Jan 1932)

On our last journey we had three combats, we burned various camps along the rail lines and we killed various traitors . . . (Pedro Antonio Irías to Sandino, 28 Feb. 1932)

The traitors that you killed on your last journey are well executed, and this Headquarters has nothing more to say about it . . . (Sandino to Marcial Rivera, 9 Feb. 1932)

There were solid, practical reasons for the emphasis on traitorousness and betrayal. At one level, no small number of well-placed soldiers did betray or disavow the cause. Liberal Generals Francisco Valle Silva and Francisco Sequiera, for instance, were

implicated early on in unrelated schemes to assassinate Sandino; both were shot for the offense. As the war wore on, and the number of ex-soldiers with valuable information about the activities and hangouts and food supplies of Sandinista columns grew, the concern over treasonous behavior became almost an obsession -- and with good reason: Sandinista soldiers lived in a very dangerous world. The tone and content of much captured Sandinista correspondence is dark and ominous, guarded and cautious, filled with warnings and dangers; "We inform you that the families of Pancho García and señora Inez were captured, and it is said they killed two persons." reads one representative two-sentence note from Juez de Mesta Felix Hernández to Captain Agapito Altamirano. "Be careful," adds a postscript, "it is known they will clear for that place." Spies were everywhere -- or so it was commonly believed. In his oral testimony, Alfonso Alexander told a long and harrowing tale of his own induction into the Defending Army, which included a mock execution intended to prove his trustworthiness. Similar tales of treason and treachery pepper the memories of former combatants, and are amply confirmed in the records of the Marines-Guardia. "Were there cases when someone betrayed you?," IES staffer Susana Morales asked José María Cerro Castellón in 1983. "There were cases," he responded, "including, in the army of General Juan Pablo Umanzor a man betrayed us" by bringing the Marines and Guardia along with the food he carried. One popular song dedicated to Pedro Altamirano employed the idiom of betrayal of the nation to legitimate violence against fellow Nicaraguans:

87. Stories of Valle Silva's and Sequiera's treachery were told by José Paul Barahona, IES ms., p. 9, and IES 102: 1-2; Somoza, p. 106, chronicles Valle Silva's death but paints him as an innocent noncombatant; for Sandino's comments on Sequiera see Belausteguiigoitia, pp. 189-190.
88. Felix Hernández to Agapito Altamirano, no date, English trans. only, NA127/192/1. At the same time, most notes between jefes carried an upbeat, hopeful, fraternal tone: "Receive many regards from your friend and all the family," "we are confident that it will happen entirely in our favor," etc., though the latter tone appears the more formulaic of the two.
89. IES 008: 4-5.
90. IES 088: 7.
It is said of General Pedro Altamirano
That he never tires of fighting
And the vendepatria who falls into his hands
In a very cold grave will rest.  

Another, dedicated to Pedro Blandón's death on the Atlantic Coast, did the same:

That was where they stayed
A great quantity of traitors
That was where they left behind
Their macabre ambitions.

For Tiburcio Zelaya Herrera, as for many others, the signing of the peace accords in
February 1933 was a singularly defining moment which over time came to be associated
with deeper reflections on the nature and meaning of the struggle. "When he [Sandino]
called us from San Rafael to turn in our arms," Don Tiburcio recalled, "he told us . . . that
the Yankees had turned tail and run, . . . that the war was against the Yankees, our war
was not against our own country.

But at that time, well, our own people did not recognize our authority, here in our
lands, because they had had the good will to accompany the Yankee instead of
following him. Because we had resisted our own people and we had resisted the
Yankees, in spite of having such poor weapons . . . ."

Don Tiburcio's narrative reveals a powerful tension between contending versions of what
the Rebellion was all about. Explicitly and vigorously denying that the struggle was also
part civil war, he also explicitly acknowledged that it was, in part, precisely that. At this
critical historical juncture, as Don Tiburcio recalled it, Sandino set out to clarify the
purposes behind the struggle, and in so doing emphasized to his followers -- contra their
experiences over the past five-and-one-half years -- that they were not at war with other
Nicaraguans, that the Yankees had been expelled and therefore the patriot's task was
done.

This tension between Rebellion as defense of the homeland and Rebellion as civil
and class war waged against traitors and oppressors courses through most all of the

93. IES 072-1-2.
testimonies, in greater and lesser degrees. It is most powerfully present in stories about Defending Army General Pedro Altamirano, or Pedrón, after Sandino the most important, enigmatic, and least understood early Sandinista. Ex-soldier Luis Boedeker González told one tale juxtaposing Pedrón, whom he recalled as a murderous assassin, and Sandino: One day Sandino at the head of his troops arrived at an hacienda. There his soldiers captured four Guardia and brought them to their Supreme Chief. "What sentence do you give to these individuals," they asked the General. "I do not touch Nicaraguans," Sandino replied. The narrator interjected, "He did not kill Nicaraguans," before telling of Sandino's courageous and magnanimous decision: "The sentence I give these four individuals is for them to go and tell the Yankees that I am here, that they should come and attack me."94 At another point in the interview, Don Luis was discussing how temporary camps were made in the brush; soon the subject turned to treason and fratricide. "We didn't stay long in one camp," he was explaining; "We were here, we were there, because always among us there were traitors." Did he remember any particular cases?

Many people denounced us, for that reason we -- the people are traitors. In those times especially, in those times they finished off almost all the people. At the time we didn't really realize who was betraying us, because with the people for example, among the people of General Sandino hardly anyone bothered us, never, because we did not go around killing people, Nicaraguans, no! León Díaz, Pancho Estrada, Sócrates, Umanzor, Miguel Angel Ortez, none of these ever killed a single Nicaraguan. The one who killed Nicaraguans was Pedrón Altamirano, what a fool he was195

Francisco Centeno Fonseca was asked what the skull and crossbones which decorated the Sandinista flag were meant to symbolize. "That meant many deaths, the skull and crossbones, pure pantheon, he was not a murderer!," he responded, following closely along the contours of an implicit counter-narrative. "If a captured Guardia was taken to him, he'd set him free. That's how it was! Don't you know that three Yankees were

94. IES 055-1-2: 5.
brought to him, and he let them go free? Yes, he was good; the one who was a bit too heavy was Pedrón . . ."96

Many early Sandinistas were painfully aware that most of their own countryfolk disavowed the Rebellion. "Fellows," Joaquín Fajardo Arauz recalled Sandino telling his soldiers, "most of the people of Nicaragua don't like us; they persecute us and call us bandits, they sell us out with whatever words they want to use." But this was no call for despair: "Even though they don't want us," he assured them, "elsewhere our name will shine like the stars in the sky."97

Later in the same interview, Don Joaquín was describing the details of the battle of Labranza, fought near León late in the war, when he was asked if their opponents were machos or Guardia. His response went right to the heart of the fratricidal nature of the struggle. "Only Guardia," he at first explained, "because at that time there were few machos; fifty Guardia with one macho chief." He then quickly rethought this contention:

Better said, they were all macho, because they all fought for the same opinion, even though they were Nicaraguans, because in effect that's how it was. We had to fight hard, because they were cruel with us, the same Nicaraguans. Like we say nowadays, Nicaragua has had to fight twice with Nicaraguans and with the Yankees. We are fighting ourselves, with the other Nicaraguans being pushed by the Americans. It was happening then, and the same thing is happening now.98

In his next breath Don Joaquín returned to the details of the battle of Labranza, abruptly abandoning a vexatious and troubling train of thought.

In a similar vein, José Flores Gradys was discussing Sandino's moral code, how his soldiers should and should not behave toward civilians. Not only was rape strictly prohibited -- "be careful, fellows, because if you rape a woman I'm going to have to have you shot" -- but their very comportment should have reflected their fundamental equality and brotherhood. "Be very careful with people, civilians, workers, behave as well as you can. With the enemy, of course go at them full guns!," Sandino advised them. "The fool

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96. IES 066: 8.
97. IES 100-1-2: 5.
98. IES 100-2-2: 4.
who's against us, the *vendepatria*, him we shoot." Don José looked back on those years with no small nostalgia, a time and place "cleansed" of moral impurity with the passage of time:

Where we passed by, it was clean! When we'd return from a fight, we'd come into a village -- like right now here in El Jícaro -- it'd be pure happiness, pure joy, but there would only be our own people, only Sandinistas, yes, there wasn't this dirtiness like there is now.100

Later in the interview, Don José looked back in horror at the atrocities committed by the National Guard after Sandino's assassination. "They killed, mutilated, hung -- women and everything -- children too," he recalled. "They made no exceptions.

That race has no conscience, that's why I tell my companions about our law under General Sandino, that where we went it was clean, there was none of this dirtiness of those who obstruct us. When we returned to the villages, only those brothers came to receive us, and with what love, all of them! This was such happiness, this was joyous, but we did not know that we had this dirtiness there.100

Ascensión Iglesias Rivera noted on numerous occasions, in a voice at once indignant, ironic, and matter-of-fact, that many of "the townspeople" (*la gente del pueblo*) allied with the Marines; in fact he laid much of the blame for Marine brutality at their doorstep. At the beginning of the occupation, he recalled, the Yankees were utterly ignorant of market prices. "When the gringos came to Nicaragua, he'd spend ten pesos on a chicken that cost next-to-nothing!" They soon caught on, however, thanks in large part to "the townsfolk" -- "There's no need to pay, you're an army here, why are you going around paying for things?," he had them saying; "The same people of the town helped them. The gringo was stupid, but the people of the town stirred them up (*lo hizo avivarse*). Then afterward they were a threat."101

Enemies in the town were matched by enemies in the Guardia. The tremendous hatred that emerged between Sandinistas and the Guardia was one consequence of a prolonged guerrilla war. From the perspective of the Sandinistas, the "dogs" of the

100. IES 058: 19.
National Guard were simply not to be trusted. "We had a saying," recalled Secundio Hernández Blandón. "Don't use the last two bullets, those two bullets were your own life or death!

In those times, say one of those cursed dogs comes up to you and says: 'Surrender, surrender, we'll pardon your life.' Don't believe him; you can't believe it, because he is armed and maybe you turn in your weapon, and after you turn it in they make you kiss the dirt, torture you, ask you whatever it is they want to know, and you either talk or you don't. And even if you talk, they're obliged to kill you. So, you have two or three bullets; over there one of the assholes says: 'Surrender!' pal, the first; when he falls, the one behind him's going to shoot. So, don't take me alive, that's why there's three bullets. Never, never surrender.\textsuperscript{102}

Perhaps the most powerful aspect of this imagery is its depthless hatred for the enemy, a hatred indistinguishable from that reserved for the Yankees in Sandinista mythology more generally. There is every reason to think that such feelings were mutual. "This demonstrates the hatred that the Guardia feels for the outlaws," observed the northern correspondent for the Managua daily \textit{Diario Moderno} in early 1931, referring to some offhand comments made to captured Sandinista Lieutenant Felix Pedro Herrera by his guards as the prisoner was being led outside to have his picture taken. "They're taking your picture because they know you're going to die, you damn bandit," they reportedly told him, "hurling their hatred at him."\textsuperscript{103}

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In 1986, Oscar René Vargas proposed an intriguing thesis: "between 1930 and 1932," he argued, "the petty-bourgeoisie, pushed by the general deterioration of the country, began to aid the peasant rebels.

This meant that the politico-moral influence of the bourgeoisie was broken; that Moncada's government did not represent more than a sector of the bourgeoisie; and that large private property and imperialism had lost ground, because their

\textsuperscript{102} IES 047.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Diario Moderno}, 23 January 1931.
vassals, the small and medium peasants, looked for their salvation at the side of the propertyless. 104

Vargas' thesis, intriguing though it might be, is based on scant evidence and faulty reasoning. As this chapter has tried to show, a large body of evidence suggests precisely the opposite dynamic, particularly from 1930 to 1932: in terms of the full spectrum of social classes in Nicaragua and the Segovias, not a broadening but a narrowing of the Rebellion's social base of support. Vargas correctly places property relations at the center of analysis but in seeing the middling sectors of the bourgeoisie gravitating politically toward Sandinismo misreads the central dynamics of the period.

Instead, the evidence compels a contrary conclusion: that, ironically enough, the process of guerrilla war in the Segovias undermined the national liberation it was intended to create. The Sandinistas, dedicated to national self-determination and social justice for the majority, waged a prolonged guerrilla campaign against a militarily superior foe. Over time, the social logic of Sandinismo combined with the military logic of an extended guerrilla war to compel the movement's adherents to radically redefine, in theory and in practice, traditional liberal-capitalist relations of private property. If Sandino himself was not anti-capitalist in theory, the historical forces he set in motion became profoundly anti-capitalist in practice. In order to adhere to their own social agenda and military program, the Sandinistas were compelled to subvert and reconfigure liberal-capitalist property relations in favor of a theory and practice of property that was, at least for some, far more national and social. This transformation in how property relations were thought about and practiced resulted in the alienation of large segments of the Nicaraguan populace from the struggle. Most property-owners, inside the Segovias and out, came to look upon Sandinismo and the Rebellion with a deepening sense of fear and foreboding. Fearful of what a Sandinista victory might mean for traditional relations of power and privilege, the class historically associated elsewhere with the emergence of

104. Vargas (1986); the evidence cited in support of this thesis consists of voting returns from 1924, 1928 and 1932.
nationalist sentiment -- the urban, the literate, the propertied -- came to disavow the struggle and ally with the Marines and Guardia. Ironically, popular sovereignty as practiced in and by the Sandinista parallel army-nation-state, an integral part of the struggle to expel the Marines, worked against the longer-term goal of creating a popular, democratic, and sovereign national state after the Marines had gone.
EPILOGUE

I am a fatalist and an optimist. . . . They kill me? And what? Perhaps I have not walked among bullets and dangers during seven years of war against the United States? If I were to look for peace and tranquility, it would be better if I had never started this enterprise and listened to that drunk Mexican, but once you start something of this magnitude, you have to see it through to its ultimate consequences.

- Augusto César Sandino, 1934
  (Román, p. 181)

On the whole the situation . . . today is more advantageous than during Sandino's times. One should avoid absurd and mechanical parallels and comparisons. But the goal has already been reached, or is on the verge of being reached, of forging an indestructible politico-military popular detachment capable of carrying the struggle through to its ultimate consequences.

- Carlos Fonseca Amador, 1976
  (Vol. I, p. 196)

In 1969, Carlos Fonseca Amador, guiding light of the Sandinista Revolution and chief architect of modern-day Sandinismo, offered his explanation for the utter collapse of the Sandino Rebellion some thirty-five years before. "The struggle was carried out without an industrial proletariat," he argued.

The incipient bourgeoisie betrayed the Nicaraguan people and sold out to the Yankee intervention. The bourgeoisie could not be immediately replaced as the vanguard of the people's struggle by a revolutionary proletariat. The Sandinista resistance . . . was almost completely peasant in composition, and therein lies the glory and the tragedy of that revolutionary movement. It was a glory for the Nicaraguan people that the humblest class responded to the stains against the honor of the homeland, and at the same time it was a tragedy because it involved a peasantry without any level of political awareness whatsoever. Moreover, there
were chiefs of important columns who were totally illiterate. As a result, once Sandino was assassinated, his movement could not maintain its continuity.¹

At one level it is difficult to disagree with Fonseca that how the Rebellion was conceived and executed -- as a peasant-based nationalist movement and guerrilla war waged in the mountainous Segovias -- led logically to its eventual defeat and dismemberment. In the Sandinista narrative of history, exemplified in Fonseca's quote above, the collapse of the Rebellion can be attributed to its mostly peasant composition and the "betrayal" of Nicaragua's "incipient bourgeoisie." The key assumptions made in this interpretation -- that the movement "could not maintain its continuity" primarily because so few links were forged between the rebel organization and the intelligentsia and bourgeoisie of León, Chinandega, Managua, Granada, and other cities of the Pacific littoral, are compelling, and amply borne out by the evidence. The reasons behind this "betrayal," and indeed, whether it was a "betrayal" at all, are another matter. Of course, other factors help to explain the Rebellion's swift and sudden demise after Sandino's assassination in February 1934. The growing power of the National Guard and the forces of state repression, and the concomitant centralization of the national state more generally; the organizational looseness of the Defending Army and its over-reliance on a single charismatic individual; the schism between city and countryside; conjunctural factors such as the onset of the Depression, the withdrawal of the Marines, the Sandinista disarmament of 1933, the emergence of fascism in Europe and the related turn to the right in Central American politics more generally in the 1930s; and the simple fact that in war if you don't win you lose, all of these factors and more would have to be considered in any comprehensive investigation into the eventual denouement of the Rebellion.

Fonseca, however, raised what is perhaps the most critical issue: Why were so few links generated between Sandino's nationalist rebels and the urban intelligentsia and

¹ Carlos Fonseca, "Nicaragua Hora Cero," Vol. I, pp. 156-157 (orig. 1969). This remains the scholarly consensus; e.g., see Booth, p. 49: "Sandino was a truly tragic figure, his achievements fatally flawed. The liberation movement he led remained uninformed and unguided by either an ideology or an organization capable of consolidating its ultimate victory."
bourgeoisie? Why did a loosely shared hostility to the US fail to provide the basis for a popular-front style nationalism, which was arguably Sandino's goal?

Students of nationalism have long maintained that urban intelligentsias and literate urban bourgeoisies are historically the producers of nationalist movements and nationalist consciousnesses, particularly in colonial settings. The nationalist movements that emerged in colonial Africa, Asia, and Latin America were intimately connected to the spread of literacy, the circulation of the printed word through newspapers and other media, the expansion of commerce, trade associations, state bureaucracies, educational systems, and, in general, the formation of a class of business owners, professionals, students, and intellectuals within a larger civil society. Much of the literature on anti-colonial and anti-imperialist nationalisms focuses on the ironic process by which the elite strata of subordinate colonial subject populations appropriates from their metropolitan colonizers the idioms and practices of national identity and national sovereignty. As Geoff Eley argues, echoing E.J. Hobsbawm and many others, "There is little disputing the primary role of the intelligentsia in the formative stages of nationalist movements... Nationalist doctrine materializes as the preoccupation of a tiny intellectual elite." When movements with nationalist overtones emerge outside or at the margins of a class of intellectuals -- as in the case of the Hidalgo Revolt in Mexico, for instance, or the War of the Pacific in 19th century Peru -- the extent to which they were "nationalist" at all is not uncommonly a point of considerable contention among scholars.

2. Donald Hodges and Oscar René Vargas maintain that Sandino largely succeeded in forging a multi-class alliance in the struggle against imperialism, a contention that, as we have seen, is simply not supported by the evidence. Hodges (1986, p. 73) argues that, "Historically, he [Sandino] was a progenitor of the policies of a 'popular front' subsequently adopted by the Comintern and later by Fidel Castro and by the FSLN," though no evidence is presented to show that he was even marginally successful in this effort; cf. Vargas, ch. 10, above.
3. Among the best recent works on nationalism are Anderson (1983), Chaterjee (1986), and Hobsbawm (1990).
5. On the Hidalgo Revolt see Hugh Hamill, The Hidalgo Revolt (New York, 1972); Jacques Lafaye, Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe, trans. by Benjamin Keen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); John Tutino, From Insurrection to Revolution in
The stark fact is that the early Sandinistas were unable to generate any organic links with any significant segment of Nicaraguan intellectuals. None of Sandino's major jefes could be classed as intellectuals; most could barely write their own names. Nor, with a handful of exceptions (most notably, Sandino's brother Sócrates), did any intellectuals adhere unequivocally to the cause over the long run. Indeed, the quality of support given by most intellectuals who expressed some sympathy with Sandino was lukewarm at best. The Rebellion's few ardent Nicaraguan intellectual supporters -- Gustavo Alemán Bolaños, Salomón de la Selva, Norberto Salinas de Aguilar, Sócrates Sandino -- could be counted on one hand. Others, most notably Sofonías Salvatierra, Salvador Calderón Ramírez, Hernán Robleto, Toribio Tijerino, Modesto Armijo, Pedro José Zepeda, and Domingo Mairena Hernández, warmly embraced Sandino's ultimate goal of genuine national sovereignty while expressing extreme reservations about the methods used to attain that end.

The Sandino Rebellion, in short, was not a movement of intellectuals, i.e., persons equipped with the means of literary cultural production. It was a movement led by and for Segovian peasant-worker-Indians, the vast bulk of whom were poor, oppressed, illiterate, and of severely circumscribed intellectual horizons. They did not read newspapers. They did not read novels. Most did not read at all, or write, and those who did did so with great difficulty. Who, then, were to be the propagators of the faith once Sandino was gone? Who would carry the struggle forward? There was no class of intellectuals to fill that role. And because it did not produce or win the sympathy of a class of intellectuals who would be able to provide a degree of "continuity" once the

Supreme Chief had achieved his prophesied martyrdom, the Rebellion soon withered on the vine and died.

The question of why these links were not forged is an intriguing and complicated one, beyond the scope of the present investigation. Yet a few remarks might be in order. In the Sandinista narrative of history, the rural and urban bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and intelligentsia "betrayed" the Rebellion because their interests were more closely aligned with US imperialism and the continued exploitation of Nicaraguan workers and peasants -- propositions that are true at some levels and false at others, but on the whole not very useful ways of framing the issue. At one level, most literate Nicaraguans of the period seem to have followed Rubén Darío in his profound and unsettled ambivalence toward the US, attracted by its modernity, repelled by arrogance, fearful of its power: "Primitive and modern, simple and complicated / With a bit of Washington and four of Nimrod!" Nor does it seem helpful to argue that this "betrayal" derived from a collective or conscious desire to continue exploiting Nicaraguan workers and peasants, even if continuing exploitation and heightened social misery were among the consequences of the process.

Like all classes, the Nicaraguan modernizing bourgeoisie and landed oligarchy -- classes that were very small, extremely variegated, deeply divided politically, and only partly self-conscious -- tended to herd toward their most basic material interests. The Sandinista narrative, in maintaining that the bourgeoisie and oligarchy "betrayed" the Rebellion, essentially condemns partly-formed, heterogeneous, and deeply polarized dominant classes for not committing class suicide -- a regrettable outcome perhaps, but not a surprising one.

It would seem more useful to argue that the intelligentsia, oligarchy and bourgeoisie all gravitated toward a position of opposition to Sandino (or, if one wishes,

"betrayed" him) because his Rebellion came to represent the violation of their most cherished ideals, which included the bedrock organizing principles of liberal-capitalist society — most tangibly and immediately, private property relations. For most adherents of liberal-capitalist ideology, as we have seen, Sandino and his Rebellion came to represent something truly frightening — the spectre of the lower orders violating private property rights while at the same time struggling for genuine enfranchisement and empowerment — which in turn was constructed as a grave threat to the ruling orders' privileges and power. And so, when the end came, it came swiftly, suddenly, and, for all intents and purposes, completely — except, that is, for a handful of texts and a field of social memories that remain alive still.

* * * *

There is, to borrow a phrase from Blake, a fearful symmetry in the denouements of the two Sandinista Revolutions. Both, to put the issue as baldly as possible, confronted US imperialism and their native allies head-on, and both lost. Both Revolutions came to represent fundamental threats to the dominance of the dominant classes, private property relations, and US imperial ambitions, and both were systematically destroyed as a result. As different as the historical circumstances were (and are), at the heart of both of these defeats was the threat — real or imagined, in the end it makes little difference — to pre-existing relations of property, privilege, and power. "This year's [Congressional] appropriation [of aid to Nicaragua] is being used to force changes in Nicaragua's internal politics," wrote one analyst recently, "specifically to influence property legislation and the political makeup of the security forces." 7 At the same time, at the current writing more than a dozen semi-autonomous armed bands, some

ex-contra and some ex-Sandinista soldiers, and some a mixture of both, are active across the Segovias, where "unsolved murders with political overtones [continue to] occur almost daily." "Family and personal feuds prevent the government from dealing with the [country's] problems," complained Frank Lanzas, the Mayor of Matagalpa, recently; "everyone is always thinking about how to neutralize his opponents." 8 Meanwhile the crushing weight of poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and unemployment exact an increasingly heavy toll; infant mortality rates, perhaps the most telling index of social misery, have skyrocketed in recent years, to around 150 per 1000 live births, from a low of between 40 and 60 during the early 1980s. 9 Much has changed in the past sixty years, and much has not. In the year of Sandino's death, "tragedy" was the word chosen by Sofonías Salvatierra to capture the experience of the Rebellion for the national history of Nicaragua. In 1969, thirty-five years and most of a dictatorship later, the young Marxist intellectual Carlos Fonseca used the same word to describe the same process. Today, another twenty-four years and a Revolution having gone by, no word seems more apt. For Aristotle, of course, tragedy did not simply mean an unhappy or calamitous ending but an outward defeat combined with an inner triumph. In this light few national histories are, or have the potential to remain, so eminently tragic.

APPENDIX A

THE SEGOVIAS IN MAPS

Note: These maps were produced by enlarging and tracing the gridded sections of a 1934 US Army map (Geographic Branch, Military Intelligence Division G-2, General Staff, United States Army, 1934). Copies of this 1934 map can be found in the Map Division of Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
EL JÍCARO - SAN JUAN DE TELPANECA
SOMOTO DISTRICT
YALI - DABALI - RÍO COCO
LIMAY
EL JÍCARAL - LA TRINIDAD
APPENDIX B

SANDINO'S FIRST THREE MANIFESTOS, JULY 1927

MANIFESTO, JULY 1, 1927:

To the Nicaraguans, to the Central Americans, to the Indo-Hispanic Race:

The man who does not ask his country for even a handful of earth for his grave deserves to be heard, and not only to be heard, but also to be believed. I am a Nicaraguan, and I am proud because in my veins flows above all the blood of the Indian race, which by some atavism encompasses the mystery of being patriotic, loyal, and sincere.

The bond of nationality gives me the right to assume responsibility for my acts, without being concerned that pessimists and cowards may brand me with a name that, in their own condition as eunuchs, would be more appropriately applied to them.

I am a mechanic, but my idealism is based upon a broad horizon of internationalism, which represents the right to be free, and to establish justice, even though to achieve this it may be necessary to establish it upon a foundation of blood. The oligarchs, or rather, the swamp geese, will say that I am a plebian, but it doesn't matter. My greatest honor is that I come from the lap of the oppressed, the soul and spirit of our race, those who have lived ignored and forgotten, at the mercy of the shameless hired assassins who have committed the crime of high treason, forgetful of the pain and misery of the Liberal cause that they pitilessly persecuted, as if we did not belong to the same nation.

Sixteen years ago Adolfo Díaz and Emiliano Chamorro ceased to be Nicaraguans. Ambition killed their right to their nationality because they ripped from its staff our country's flag, the symbol that envelops all Nicaraguans. Today that flag flies limply and in shame because of the ingratitude and indifference of its sons, who do not make a superhuman effort to free it at once from the claws of the enormous eagle with its curved beak bloody with the blood of Nicaraguans. Meanwhile in the Campo de Marte military base that flag that murders weak nations now waves, the enemy of our race and our language.

Who bound our Homeland to this pillar of infamy? Díaz and Chamorro. And those mercenaries still demand the right to rule over us as oligarchs, supported by the invader's Springfields.

No. A thousand times no.

For myself and for my companions in arms who have not betrayed the Liberal revolution, who have not faltered and who have not sold our weapons to satisfy our own ambition, the revolution continues, and today more than ever before it is powerful because only whose who have displayed the valor and self-denial that every Liberal should possess remain involved in it.

If, sadly, Moncada failed in his duties as a soldier and patriot, it was not because most of the Liberal army leaders were illiterate and because of this he could impose his boundless ambition like some emperor.

In the Liberal ranks there are men of conscience who understand the duties that a soldier's rectitude imposes upon him, such as the nation's honor, it being understood that the Army is the foundation upon which the nation rests, for which reason it cannot personalize its acts without violating its basic responsibilities. I judge Moncada before history and before the Homeland as a deserter from our ranks, with the added aggravation of having gone over to the enemy.

Nobody gave him the authority to abandon the ranks of the revolution to make secret agreements with the enemy, and this is especially true of the invaders of the Homeland.

10. Trans. from Conrad, pp. 74-84, though here "patria" is translated as "homeland" rather than "fatherland."
His high position obliged him to die like a man before accepting his country's humiliation, the humiliation of his party, and of his coreligionists.

An unpardonable crime demanding revenge!
Pessimists will say that we are very small to undertake a task of this magnitude, but I am convinced that, however insignificant we may be, our pride and patriotism are very great. For that very reason, before the Homeland and before history, I swear that my sword will defend the national honor and redeem the oppressed.

I accept the challenge of the dastardly invader and the nation's traitors. Our breasts will be ramparts against which their hordes will shatter themselves, because I am firmly convinced that when they have killed the last of my soldiers, more than a battalion of their own men will have died in my wild mountains. I will not be like Mary Magdalene, who implored her enemies' pardon on her knees, because I believe that no one in this land has the right to be a human demigod.

I hope to convince my compatriots, the Central Americans, and the Indo-Hispanic race that in the mountains of the Andean Cordillera there exists a group of patriots who will know how to die like men, in open battle, in defense of their national honor.

Come, morphine addicts, come and kill us in our own land. I await you before my patriotic soldiers, feet firmly set, not worried about how many of you there may be. But keep in mind that when this happens the Capitol Building in Washington will shake with the destruction of your greatness, and our blood will redden the white dome of your famous White House, the cavern where you concoct your crimes.

I wish to assure the governments of Central America, especially that of Honduras, that my attitude should not cause them concern. They should not think that, because my forces possess more than enough strength to invade their territory, I would do so with the intention of overthrowing them. No. I am not a mercenary, but rather a patriot who does not allow outrageous assaults upon our sovereignty.

Since nature has granted our country enviable riches and has placed us at the crossroads of the world, and since it is that same natural advantage that has made our land coveted to the point that our enemies would even enslave us, I would like to sever the ties to which the sinister Chamorro movement has bound us.

Our young country, this dark beauty of the tropics, should wear on her head the Phrygian cap of liberty bearing the magnificent slogan symbolized by our red and black flag. She should not be a victim violated by the Yankee adventurers who were invited here by the four horrid individuals who still claim to have been born in this land.

The world would be an unbalanced place if it allowed the United States of America to rule alone over our canal, because this would mean placing us at the mercy of the Colossus of the North, forcing us into a dependent and tributary role to persons of bad faith who would be our masters without justifying such pretensions in any way.

Civilization requires that a Nicaraguan canal be built, but that it be done with capital from the whole world, and not exclusively from the United States. At least half of the cost of construction should be financed with capital from Latin America, and the other half from other countries of the world that may want to hold stock in this enterprise, but the share of the United States should be limited to the three million dollars that they paid to the traitors Chamorro, Díaz, and Cuadra Pasos. And Nicaragua, my Homeland, will then receive the taxes that by right and by law belong to it, and we will then have income enough to crisscross our whole territory with railroads and to educate our people in a true environment of effective democracy. Thus we will be respected and not looked upon with the bloody scorn we suffer today.

Fellow citizens:

having expressed my ardent desire to defend my country, I welcome you to my ranks without regard to your political tendencies, with the one condition that you come with good intentions to defend our nation's honor. Because keep in mind that you can fool all of the people some of the time, but not all of the people all of the time.

San Albino Mine, Nueva Segovia, Nicaragua, Central America, July 1, 1927
Patria y Libertad. Augusto César Sandino

MANIFESTO TO NICARAGUAN COMPATRIOTS, CA. JULY 14, 1927:

To my Nicaraguan compatriots:

It is not necessary to justify my acts to those persons who could never understand my views, or who in any event have refused to do so, unable to submit to that which honor and patriotism demand. I make no attempt to excuse myself to those who are unqualified to judge my actions, the countless adulators, for example, who live from the scraps their master throws them, and who have assumed the task of censuring my acts, reviling them and making me appear irresponsible and lacking in judgement in regard to the positions I have taken in defense of the national honor and our country's sovereignty, or in regard to the rights of the people, so terribly cheated by those who have come here to our land to make excessive profits, dealing with other people not as honorable businessmen of one kind or another, but like slave traders or dealers in human flesh. Such critics cannot judge or censure because they do not look at the causes that justify the drastic measure that has been taken to make amends or to stop an abuse, no matter who may have committed that abuse or thought he had a right to do so, merely because he is a citizen of the United States.

According to information I have received, Moncada, taking advantage of the distance that separates us, wants to make me look like the enemy of the people, and not like the defender of the rights of my fellow citizens.

I am going to make a statement about the causes that led to the measure I took in the name of my country and my fellow citizens:

The American Alexander, who lives in Murra, department of Nueva Segovia, has been a gold smuggler for several years, producing great profits for himself and the luxurious life-style of a nabob, cheating the mine workers who live at the mercy of the dangers peculiar to that kind of work. The American Alexander pays his miners not with cash, but rather with vouchers, worth from one cent to five pesos, which are valid only in Charles Butters's commissary in exchange for merchandise at exorbitant prices that the workers must accept.

Alexander is a habitual drunkard and, as such, is harmful to the society in which he lives, and his punishable acts should cease and be corrected, because it is to them that his owes his cynicism.

Charles Butters, American, who for a number of years has called himself the owner of San Albino mine, who cheats my fellow countrymen out of their salaries, forcing them to work twelve hours a day, paying them with vouchers worth from one cent to five pesos, which are acceptable only in his commissary in exchange for merchandise at twice the normal price, thinks himself authorized by his nationality to commit such abuses, and thinks that they should not be stopped by those who have a duty to do so. But being an American does not mean being invulnerable; the real people of my country also have their law and their justice, intended to prevent such abuses carried out with the support of our traitors.

General Moncada does not know about and disregards the needs and suffering of the working class because he does not belong to that community of people who are forced to earn their living by their physical labor, with their bare hands, in order to eat and dress themselves badly. Moncada is not qualified to speak in defense of ideals unknown to his experience. Moncada disregards these things because his myopia does not allow him to see the hard social problems of his fellow citizens who, cheated and offended, have demanded the justice heretofore denied to them. You should understand, Señor

11. Here Sandino refers to the seizure of San Albino Mine; see ch. 6.
Moncada, that any foreigner of whatever nationality who transgresses or commits reprehensible acts in the country where he lives falls under the sanction of the laws and must suffer the consequences, especially if that country is in a state of war. The gold produced in the bowels of the Nicaraguan earth belongs to Nicaragua, and it is extracted by the hands of Nicaraguan workers. Where, then, is the guarantee behind the enormous debt of 45,000 dollars that is owed to the holders of the vouchers with which they pay the worker's labor, the worker who lives from day to day and who at any time and without any cause can be fired, having in his pocket as his pay some bits of paper, which, though they have the number five stamped on them, are not worth a cent beyond the district of the mine? How will Charles Butters convert the sacred debt that he owes to his worker who, miserable, half-naked and sick with malaria, has nothing with which to return to the refuge of his home because everything he has saved is represented by bits of paper that are not worth a penny outside the place where he has worked?

Moncada, the people know what justice is, and when it is denied them they seize it! And since I am of the people and know what law and justice are, I have seized it myself in Butter's name, taking those assets that belong to my country in order to convert that longstanding debt into real value, paying it with that same gold which the enterprise produces.

With this done, the property will be returned to the swindling company, if it is able to prove to the people that it is in fact the legitimate owner.

I want nothing for myself; I am a mechanic, the sound of my hammer on its anvil echoes at a great distance, and it speaks every language in matters of labor. I aspire to nothing. I desire only the redemption of the working class.

Aside from this, I defy Moncada himself to respond to other charges. I do not take orders from any foreign leader, and much less do persons of foreign nationality serve with me. You, Moncada, cannot say the same, and, in regard to your aspirations, I remember your words written in a letter that you sent me, which I have in my possession: 'There is no reason to sacrifice yourself for your country. Life comes to an end, but the country remains.' This made me lose confidence in you and made me understand the dimensions of your moral personality.

I take this opportunity to respond to the conduct of the adventuring invader whose name is G.D. Hatfield.

'Who are you, miserable servant of Wall Street, to threaten the genuine sons of my country and myself with such impudence? Do you perhaps think that you are in the heart of Africa to come here to impose your will merely because you are Coolidge's paid assassin? No, degenerate pirate, you do not even know your father or your real language. I do not fear you. If you would like to avoid your countrymen's loss of blood, they having no interest in political affairs, make up your mind like a man. Come to me personally, choose the terrain you prefer outside your control, and I will do the same, so that we may measure the power of our weapons in the following way. Either you will fill yourself with glory killing a patriot, or I will make you eat the dust in the manner demonstrated by the official seal of my army.'

*Patria y libertad,* A.C. Sandino

**STATEMENT BY SANDINO TO HIS RACIAL BROTHERS, C. JULY 15, 1927**

The Yankee cowards and criminals protect themselves with the mask of hypocrisy, raising a white flag in order to murder my fellow countrymen without risk to themselves. All Central Americans are now aware of our position of sacred protest against the punishable Yankee invasion and against the Nicaraguan traitors, who march like boy

12. A reproduction of this seal appears in ch. 6.
scouts in the invaders' vanguard. For this reason, I believe it will now be useful to inform my racial brothers of the most recent developments in the area outside the control of the cynical traitor Adolfo Díaz, which is made up of the following towns in the Department of Nueva Segovia: San Fernando, Ciudad Antigua, Telpaneca, San Juan de Segovia, Quilalí, Murra, Jalapa, and Ciudad Sandino, which was formerly called El Jicaro.

In each of these towns we have a small security force for the maintenance of public order as well as the functioning of our administration, which is based on the purest democracy, since we grant even our enemies every kind of guarantee to their persons and interests. In addition to these security forces, we have six cavalry units composed of fifty soldiers each, who patrol the zone we control, and our war arsenal is located in a place called El Rempujón, which has only one entrance, that from the hill called El Chipote.

On July 11, I received from the man who calls himself the leader of the punishable Yankee expedition, now based in Ocotal, the note that I here reproduce, which was sent by telegraph from Ocotal to San Fernando at 11 a.m. on July 11, 1927, and received at noon on the same day:

[Hatfield's telegram calling for Sandino's surrender.]

The mere reading of that letter caused my blood to boil as a legitimate son of my beloved country, and yet I restrained the hatred aroused in me by the leader of the adventurous Yankees, who are trampling Nicaragua's sovereignty under foot, responding in the following terms:

El Rempujón, July 12, 1927

Mr. G.D. Hatfield:

I have in my possession your telegram dated the 11th of this month, which I am now answering.

When I joined the Constitutionalist movement I did so with the firm idea of either having a free country or death. And since we have not succeeded in gaining an effective freedom, and since I have not died, I will maintain my firm resolve to struggle against you. Our arms shall not be given up because they represent the energetic protest of my country, and for that reason your threats seen very palpitid to me, and I care very little for what you represent. The first to pass the boundary that we have marked out will have to leave several tons of bodies on the battlefields. If you are determined to do this you may come soon, and we will have the honor of sprinkling the soil of our country with the blood of traitors and invaders.

I must also inform you that if the United States wants peace in Nicaragua, they will have to turn the presidency over to a legitimate Nicaraguan. At that time I will give up my weapons peacefully without the need for anyone to force this upon me.

A.C. Sandino

The adventurous leader had laid down his challenge, and as a legitimate son of my race I accepted it with honor, since any commentary on his insolent telegram would be excessive. Once more I wished to prove to Coolidge's hired assassin and servant of Wall Street that to be humble does not mean to be a coward.

Immediately afterward, after having read the threatening letter before the Army in Defense of the National Honor, I saw palpably reflected in the unsettled faces of the leaders, officers, and soldiers an impressive grimace of hatred for the traitors and cowardly invaders.

"Death to the Yankees!" roared my soldiers with all the power of their lungs, and "Death to the Yankees!" responded the wild mountains of Nueva Segovia like an echo.

"To Ocotal, to Ocotal. We swear to die in defense of our national honor!" cried my soldier patriots. "We will not allow an outrage against our sovereignty!"

"At the proper time, my companions," I replied. "If our country needs our blood, we will offer it with pleasure."
The challenge that the adventurer G.D. Hatfield had laid down to us had to be answered with deeds. I ordered a review of my cavalry, and only sixty soldiers were in a condition to fight, since just two days before I had sent the other columns on expeditions in various directions and as far as the outskirts of Jinotega; thus, not able to contain the warlike enthusiasm of my soldiers, I decided to attack the invaders in their magnificent positions in Ocotal, where there were no less than two hundred armed men, exalted with their greatness.
APPENDIX C
THE ANASTACIO HERNANDEZ FILE:
DEPOSITIONS IN THE CASE OF ANASTACIO HERNANDEZ AND JOSE
EULALIO TORRES

DECLARATION OF ANASTACIO HERNANDEZ:

"Yo me llamo Anastacio Hernández, tengo 49 años, nací en Mosonte, hace dos años que me fui de Mosonte, nací en 85 o 84, soy casado, fui subdirector de policía en Ocotal, hace un año me fui para Honduras, los hondureños me capturaron, porque era sandinista decían ellos, yo dije que era soldado de Chamorro y soy realmente, en este año he estado trabajando sembrando tabaco, frijoles, yo conozco a Fernando Lozano y vive en Las Manos, no sé lo que hace, yo me fui a Honduras huyendo de Sandino, a Pichinga no lo conozco pero lo he olvido mentar, yo no he tenido combate con Pichinga, sino con José León Díaz, eran 400 hombres, él que ganó la batalla fue Díaz, y me mataron 25 hombres, yo no sé los muertos de ellos, y yo fui herido en el pie, donde fue el combate fue La Manzana, yo no era jefe sino soldado, yo era jefe, Torres anda conmigo desde en agosto, muchos amigos tengo en Ocotal, conozco Francisco Moncada pero no es amigo, conozco a Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, fui secretario de él en 1920, hace 4 años que estuve preso en Ocotal, me sacó Abraham Gutiérrez de la carcel, el Director de Policía que me condujo a la carcel era Baonon Rivera, yo lo que hacía con más soldados era defenderme de Sandino, yo no me molestado a nadie, yo no he firmado ni una garantía, los conservadores necesitaban garantías para que más tropas no los molestaran y yo las daba en este distrito, todos los conservadores eran soldados míos, Anastacio Zamora es correo de Sandino, Anastacio Zamora llegó a mi campamento a inspeccionar como me encontraba llegó él en agosto, Torres fue primer jefe, Torres andaba a un lado, y yo al otro, la última vez que yo anduve con gente fue en agosto, el último de septiembre me fui y ya no volví, el último de octubre nos fuimos, más soldados me los mató José León Díaz, Torres andaba con gente de El Jicaro, de Mosonte cuando fue capturado Torres no tenía ni un soldado, a Torres le quitaron su pistola, y yo no he tenido pistola nunca, las instrucciones que y lo daba a Torres era proteger a los conservadores, Anastacio Zamora vive en Los Planes, Zamora se fue para donde José León Díaz, y nosotros sabemos que Zamora era sandinista, y llevaba los mensajes, Torres sabe que Zamora es buen hombre, Zamora es sandinista porque nos atacó con ellos, Valentín González lo conozco y no le he visto, pero es buen hombre, Valentín es carpintero, fue soldado mío el dos de febrero, las instrucciones que tenía de Gutiérrez Lobo eran que no desmadrara nunca, Torres fue confidente mío, Ines Hernández fue el que mató a ----- [blank], Lonzano nunca anduvo conmigo, Braulio Gómez muy buen amigo mío, después de combate en Ocotal yo tenía 30 hombres, debo decir que los Paguagas y Gutiérrez son amigos míos y me conocen bien, lo mismo que Pedro Lovo, yo tenía deseos de volver a Ocotal pero por miedo no he vuelto, andan los sandinistas en la montaña y por eso ando huyendo, los bandidos que andan ahí cojieran para Santa María, Medardo Vallejos no lo conozco, pero lo he olvido mentar, a Cornelio Sandoval lo conozco, pero nunca ha andado conmigo, pero dijo que tenía 7 rifles, Cornelio vive al lado de Las Manos, nosotros teníamos instrucciones de don Abram Gutiérrez Lobo que no nos dejáramos de los Liberales, y que siempre los atacaríamos, conste que nunca nos comimos una res de nadie, en Dipilto ningún cafetalero forma parte de pactos, Anastacio Zamora tenía garantías de los Liberales, y la enseñaba

13. Dictated from prison to a Guardia-appointed recorder sometime after his incarceration on 30 April 1928; commas added.
firmada por José León Díaz, yo nunca di garantía para Zamora, Zamora es sandinista declarado, Gutiérrez Abram creo que sabe que Zamora es sandinista, yo no he tenido armas en octubre, Torres es íntimo amigo mío, yo provaré con Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, Pedro Lovo, y todos los Paguagás que soy buen hombre."

FRAGMENT OF ANOTHER DECLARATION BY ANASTACIO HERNANDEZ:


DECLARATION OF JOSE EULALIO TORRES:14

"Yo me llamo José Eulalio Torres, tengo 30 años, nací en El Jicaro, mi papá se llama Salvador Salamanca, siendo hijo natural, tengo 3 hermanos después de mí, mis hermanos están en Honduras, tengo 4 meses de estar en Honduras, yo me fui a Honduras porque estuve de baja en Ocotal siendo inspector de hacienda, yo trabajaba en Honduras, y compré una finca ahí en Honduras, conozco a Fernando Lozano, y está en Honduras, pero no lo he visto, conozco a personas en Ocotal, entre ellos Abram Gutiérrez Lobo, Pedro Lovo, Braulio Gómez me señaló para ser juez local, yo fui señalado para juez en El Jicaro en diciembre, yo estuve en Ocotal el 15 de enero, yo estaba en Ocotal el 15 de enero, cuando fui señalado para juez local, estuve en Dipilto el 10 de enero, y estuve en Honduras hace 4 meses, y como he estado pasando del Ocotal a Honduras estuve en casa de Luis Peña, la última vez que estuve en Ocotal yo recibí nombramiento de manos de Gómez para ser juez local, fue mandado mi nombramiento de la corte y Gómez me lo dio a mí, estuve en El Jicaro varias veces, 2 veces solamente, conozco a Anastacio Zamora, cuando estuve en Dipilto estuve con cuatro mujeres, yo recuerdo de una carta que le envié a Anastacio Zamora, diciéndole que no tenía garantía, yo le dije a Anastacio Zamora en la carta que le envié que si no cumplía, no recuerdo muy bien, nosotros andábamos con un jefe hondureño, persiguiendo a los sandinistas, se llama Medardo Vallejos, yo amenazaba a Anastacio porque andaba apoyado por la fuerza de Vallejos, para dar garantía, las firmaba Vallejos, y para personas convenidas yo las firmaba, para darles garantía era para que no las molestaran fuerzas de nosotros, y el individuo que no tuvieron la garantía, yo le quitaría piso, o algo de su propiedad, matamos en La Manzana, matamos como 50 hombres, peleamos con Pichingo y José [León Díaz?] y Zelaya, nosotros estábamos ahí peleando, de nosotros murieron un hombre, y del enemigo 10, cuando nosotros fuimos atacados por Pichingo, nosotros teníamos 25 hombres, y Pichingo 225 hombres, todos mis hombres bien armados, cuando el combate llegaron 3 aeroplanos, y Anastacio Hernández estaba ahí conmigo, y de ahí cogí yo para San Marcos de Colón Honduras, conozco a Juan B. Mendoza, y no conozco si fue muerto José León Díaz, esta en el cerro de Los Robles, El Ballemas, cerca es el Coco, yo firmé"

14. Same circumstances, same recorder.
solamente una garantía, firmé para Anastacio Zamora, y como el andaba con nosotros se le di, Lovo me dijo que me fuera para Honduras, y que no siguiera molestando con Vallejos. Medardo Vallejos era jefe de la gente que andaba con la gente, jefe de los chamorristas, y Anastacio Hernández jefe chamorrista, y pertenecíamos al partido chamorrista, recibíamos órdenes de Cornelio Sandoval que vive en San Marcos de Colón, tiene hacienda en Dipilto, y conseguía armas y nos las enviaba, primer jefe Vallejos, segundo jefe Hernández, Vallejos esta en El Espino, yo no sé las instrucciones que le daba Lovo Gutiérrez a Hernández, Lovo me suplicó que no siguiera con Vallejos, en Dipilto no hay persona que tenga garantías firmadas por mí, Antonio Prado, Agustín Ferrafino, y Eulogio Pastrana son los pactados cafetaleros que tenían garantías, Vicente Paguaga, José María Paguaga, Celso Paguaga, y Jesús Paguaga estaban garantizados, para cortar su cañé Agustín Flores anduvo conmigo, o con Anastacio, y Francisco Martínez anduvo conmigo, Valentin González anduvo conmigo también, nosotros quitábamos animales para comer, Bacilio Salcedo, Alejandro Rodríguez, yo les devolví sus animales, teníamos animales cuando fui capturado, pero eran míos, Valentín Rodríguez lo conozco pero no lo he visto en San Fabian, no he estado en ningún tiempo, supo que les habían matado una comisión de Vallejos, cuando recibí la carta de Lovo la rompi, y en la carta me decía que no sigas molestando a nadie, los cafetaleros no recogieron su cafés, se ha perdido, Alfonso Rivas le corta el cafés a Cornelio Sandoval, y Cornelio estaba en El Paraíso con Hernández, yo siendo el segundo jefe de Hernández, no recibía ni un centavo, yo no he recibido ni una carta de Gómez, solamente el nombramiento de juez, y soy buen amigo de Gómez, soy amigo de Abraham Gutiérrez también, yo no he estado preso nunca, y me fui para Honduras, yo fui descharchado de mi puesto para ir de vaquero de una columna de marinos, a mí me capturaron los hondureños y a mí me capturaron porque me piqué y disparé mi pistola, yo tengo cuatro meses de estar en Honduras, soy dueño de una propiedad, y no sé porque se me calumnia, conste yo nunca he molestado a nadie, Fernando Lozano es el que se robaba los animales. José E. Torres."
carrier/courier, Anastacio Zamora arrived at my camp to inspect and see how he would find things, he arrived in August, Torres was the first chief, Torres was over here and I was over there, the last time I was with people was in August, the last of September I left and did not return, the last of October we left, José León Díaz killed my soldiers, Torres was with people from El Jicaro, from Mosonte, when Torres was captured he did not have single soldier, they took Torres's pistol, I have never had a pistol, the instructions I gave to Torres were to protect the Conservatives, Anastacio Zamora lives in Los Planes, Zamora left to go to where José León Díaz is, and we knew that Zamora was a Sandinista, and carried messages, Torres knows that Zamora is a good man, Zamora is a Sandinista because he was with them when they attacked, I know Valentín González but I have not seen him, but he is a good man, Valentín is a carpenter, he was my soldier on the second of February, the instructions that I had from Gutiérrez Lobo were to never [desmadlara --?? to cut and destroy a coat of mail??], Torres was my confidant, Inés Hernández was the one who killed ------- [blank], Lozano was never with me, Braulio Gómez is a very good friend of mine, I should say that the Paguagas and Gutiérrez are friends of mine and know me well, the same as Pedro Lovo, I wanted to return to Ocotal but I did not because I was afraid, the Sandinistas were in the mountains and so I was fleeing, the bandits who were there took off for Santa María, I do not know Medardo Vallejos but I have heard mention of him, I know Cornelio Sandoval, but he has never been with me, but it was said that he had seven rifles, Cornelio lives over by Las Manos, we had instructions from Don Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo that we should not let the Liberals alone, that we should always attack them, I say that we never ate anyone's cow, in Dipilto no coffee growers participated in any pact, Anastacio Zamora had guarantees from the Liberals, and he showed them signed by José León Díaz, I never gave a guarantee to Zamora, Zamora is a declared Sandinista, I believe Abram Gutiérrez knows that Zamora is a Sandinista, I did not have any arms in October, Torres is an intimate friend of mine, I will prove by Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, Pedro Lovo, and all the Paguagas that I am a good man."

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF FRAGMENT OF ANASTACIO HERNANDEZ DECLARATION:


Zamora, widow of Anastacio Zamora, stated that on Tuesday 9 April 1929, she was at her house at Los Planes [near Dipilto]. She heard some shots and went out the door to see what was going on, and arriving at the doorway she saw her husband fall on the ground with a bullet in his head, then someone armed with a rifle grabbed her by the wrist and dragged her to the back of the house, saying that she was a bandit and an informant, and that they were going to shoot her. While in the back of the house she heard a commotion inside of the house and some shooting in front of the house, then she heard somebody give an order to finish the wounded with a cutacha [long knife]... A little later her two daughters were also dragged at the same place where they were lined up against a wall. Juan Pablo Umanzor demanded a contribution of $100 or else he would shoot them all. After being told that they had no money one of the bandits shot at the ground near her feet and frightened her. While all this was going on she recognized the following men: Juan Pablo Umanzor, Pablo García... The two girls verified the story in detail given by their mother and stated that they were taken down the road to the stream and there they were raped by four men each, after that they were turned loose and the bandits continued south saying that they were going to attack Dipilto." B-2 Report, 13 May 1929, pp. 5-6, NA127/209/1.
Marcos de Colon. Friend of A.G.L. In January 1926, A.G.L. told him not to threaten any Conservatives, only the Liberals. Is friend of Gómez. He knows the López family, he knows Samuel Melgara, is a very good friend of Santelices. Pedro Osorio was chief in January - in July, Marco Antonio Ojeda, Jefe Político Salvador Moncada. Has a farm in Los Arados, it was burned. He worked at Paraíso for Manuel Pauaga, José Calazan, A.G.L. Did he threaten anyone before being told by Don Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo not to threaten Conservatives, only Liberals? 'No.' What are the names of the individuals Lobo ordered to be threatened? 'All those in the revolution and the Liberals. I prove with Braulio Gómez, A.G. Lobo, Gustavo Pauaga, Salvador Pauaga, P. and M. that I am honorable.' Anastacio Persona."

ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF JOSE EULALIO TORRES DECLARATION:

"My name is José Eulalio Torres, I am thirty years old, I was born in El Jícaro, my father's name is Salvador Salamanca, I am his natural son, I have three brothers after me, my brothers are in Honduras, I was in Honduras four months, I went to Honduras because I was discharged as tax inspector in Ocotal, I was working in Honduras, and I bought a farm there in Honduras, I know Fernando Lozano, and he is in Honduras, but I have not seen him, I know people in Ocotal, among them Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, Pedro Lobo, Braulio Gómez appointed me as local judge, I was appointed judge in El Jícaro in December, I was in Ocotal on 15 January, I was in Ocotal on 15 January, when I was appointed local judge, I was in Dipilto on 10 January, and I was in Honduras four months ago, and since I was going from Ocotal to Honduras I was in the house of Luis Peña, the last time I was in Ocotal I was named local judge by Gómez, my appointment was sent to the court and Gómez gave it to me, I was in El Jícaro various times, only twice, I know Anastacio Zamora, when I was in Dipilto I was with four women, I remember a letter I sent to Anastacio Zamora, telling him that he had no guarantee, I told Anastacio Zamora in the letter I sent that if he did not do it, I do not remember very well, we were with a Honduran chief, pursuing the Sandinistas, his name is Medardo Vallesos, I threatened Anastacio because he was backed by the forces of Vallesos, Vallesos signed the guarantees, and I signed for those in the agreement, they were given guarantees so that our forces would not molest them, and the individual who did not have a guarantee, we would take a bit of something, or some of his property, in La Manzana we killed some 50 men, we fought with Pichingo and José [León Díaz?] and Zelaya, we were there fighting, one of our men died, and fifteen of the enemy, when we were attacked by Pichingo we had 25 men, and Pichingo 225 men, all my men well armed, during the combat three airplanes arrived, and Anastacio Hernández was with me, and from there I fled for San Marcos de Colón, Honduras, I know Juan B. Mendoza, and I do not know if José León Díaz was killed, he is in Los Robles Mountain, El Ballemas, near the Coco River, I signed only one guarantee, I signed for Anastacio Zamora, and since he was with us I gave it to him, Lovo told me to go to Honduras, and that I should stop bothering the people with Vallesos, Medardo Vallesos was the chief of the people who were with the people, chief of the Chamorristas, and Anastacio Hernández was a Chamorrista chief, and we belonged to the Chamorrista party, we were receiving orders from Cornelio Sandoval who lives in San Marcos de Colón, he has a hacienda in Dipilto, and he would get arms and send them to us, the first chief was Vallesos, the second chief Hernández, Vallesos was in El Espino, I do not know what instructions Lobo Gutiérrez gave to Hernández, Lovo asked me to stop going around with Vallesos, there is no one in Dipilto with guarantees signed by me, Antonio Prado, Agustín Ferrafino, and Eulogio Pastrana are the coffee growers in the pact who have guarantees, Vicente Pauaga, José María Pauaga, Celso Pauaga, and Jesus Pauaga used to be guaranteed to pick their coffee, Agustín Flores was with me, or with Anastacio, and Francisco Martínez was with me, Valentín González was also with me, we took some animals to eat, I returned the animals of Bacilio Salcedo and Alejandro Rodríguez, I had seven animals when I was captured.
but they were mine, I know Valentín Rodríguez but I have not seen him in San Fabian, I was never there, I knew that a commission from Vallejos killed him, when I received the letter from Lobo I tore it up, in the letter he told to stop bothering people, the coffee growers did not harvest their coffee, it was lost, Alfonso Rivas picked the coffee of Cornelio Sandoval, and Cornelio was in El Paraíso with Hernández, I being the second chief of Hernández, I did not receive a single cent, I have not received a single letter from Gómez, I am also a friend of Abraham Gutiérrez, I was never a prisoner, I went to Honduras, I was discharged from my post for being a guide for a column of Marines, the Hondurans captured me because I got drunk and shot off my pistol, I was in Honduras for four months, I am the owner of a property, I do not know why I am slandered, let it be known that I have never bothered anyone, the one who robbed the animals was Fernando Lozano. José E. Torres."

DEPOSITIONS OF WITNESSES16:

Murders of May 24, 1927:

"I, Paula López, widow, resident of Mosonte, declare that on 24 May 1927, at around 2:00 a.m., Anastacio Hernández and his gang of bandits arrived in the village, and when they began to head toward my house I escaped with my family. One hour later we returned to find that Anastacio had burned all our clothes and religious images (las imágenes). Afterward, Emilio Ruiz arrived at my house and took my son Ines Pastrana, and Anastacio personally cut his head off, and his men macheted and shot him when he was already a cadaver. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Occotal, 22 Feb. 1928.)

"I, Cayetana López, 45 years old, a widow, resident of the valley of Las Huertas in Mosonte declare that on May 24, 1927 at between 3:00 to 4:00 a.m., Anastacio Hernández and his bandits arrived, they captured my husband Eligio Ruiz and my nephew Ines Pastrana, who was 16 years old, they robbed us of all we had, shovels, machetes, clothes, etc. They took my husband and nephew away, they let my husband go after beating and injuring him, they killed my nephew in the first houses of the valley of Los Arados, with machete blows and bullets, cutting his head off. Those who accompanied Anastacio were Miguel López, Santiago Gómez, Terencio Gómez, and others more whom I do not remember, but whom I recognized. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Occotal, Feb. 21, 1928.)

(Deposition of Cupertino Amaya quoted in full at the beginning of ch. 5.)

"I, Maria Estebana Gómez, widow, 33 years old, resident of Mosonte, declare that I know Anastacio Hernández and that on 24 May 1927 he arrived at my house in the valley of Los Arados at around 6:00 a.m., breaking down the doors, taking my husband Domingo Gómez prisoner, who was in the kitchen, they tied him up, and Francisco López shot him in the abdomen. After this Terencio Gómez, Santiago Gómez, Juan F. Gómez, and Erasmo Gómez took him about fifty yards away from the house, where Hernández ordered that they cut my husband's head off, the order being executed by Santiago Gómez, and Anastacio also gave him various machete cuts in his back. Those who were with Anastacio outraged me (me ultrajaron), the same as with my little niece. Julian Sevilla along with Anastacio gave orders to rape me (para que me tiraran). The bandits

16. Presented here in English translation only; all but three of these depositions were taken by Marine-Guardia investigators in February and March 1928 in Occotal, as indicated; the other three were deposed to Nicanor Espinosa, Liberal attorney of Telpaneca later killed by the Sandinistas (see ch. 9).
were Ismael Gómez, Elisio Gómez, Blas López, Ramon Guillermo Gómez, Narciso Hernández, Rogelio Amaya son-in-law of Anastacio, Felipe Marin, Marcelino Sierras, Purificación Gómez, Jose María López, José Miguel Aguilar, Sebastian Aguilar, Timoteo Blanco, Geruino Pantrana, and others more whom I do not remember. This is all I know, and I sign, María Estebana Gómez." (Ocotal, 20 Feb. 1928).

"I, Lorenza Gómez, single, of age, resident of Mosonte, declare that on 24 May at around 6:00 a.m., three individuals arrived at my house: Erasmo Gómez and two others whom I did not know, at the orders of Anastacio Hernández, who stayed outside the house, they seized my son-in-law Vicente Gómez, they took him tied up and they killed him about half a league from my house, Anastacio had about thirty men with him. Anastacio was dressed in khaki. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, Feb. 22, 1928.)

"I, Placida Osegueda, 49 years old, widow, resident of Mosonte in the valley of Los Arados, declare that on 24 May 1927 at around 8:00 a.m. I was coming from Naranjito with my husband Francisco Hernández, brother of Anastacio Hernández, when we encountered Anastacio and his bandits in the place called El Portillo de Amatillo, when Anastacio ordered that they kill his brother, my husband. Those executing the order were Santiago Gómez and Terencio Gómez, the political nephews (sobrinos políticos) of Anastacio, shooting my husband once in the forehead. Those accompanying Anastacio were his son Narciso Hernández, Rogelio Amaya, Feliciano López, Marcelino Sierra, and others more whom I do not remember. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, Feb. 22, 1928.)

"I, Miguel Hernández, married, resident of Mosonte, declare that my son Anastacio Hernández has always tried to kill me and my wife, I do not remember the date but not long ago my son shot at me twice, one hit the sleeve of my shirt and the other by my belt, accompanying him were Narciso Hernández, my grandson and his son, and Luis Guerrero, Anastacio's son-in-law. He said that he would not leave the place until he had the head of his father and the tongue of his mother in his saddlebags. All my life he has persecuted me, burning my pastures, destroying my fences so the animals could get into my fields and destroy my property, because of his persecution I had to sell my farm and flee with my wife. On 24 May, he arrived in the village of Mosonte and robbed all he found, clothes and working implements, and fifty pesos in silver. Those who have helped him with money, arms, ammunition and in other ways have been Don Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo, Gustavo Paguaga, and Pedro Lobo. Especially, Don Gustavo Paguaga helped him get arms, because in earlier times when he was jefe politico he hid many arms and later gave them to Anastacio for him to kill his enemies and all the Liberals he could find. Always when Anastacio committed some murder he would send them notice or come in person to tell these men what had happened. Miguel López, Anastacio Zamora, Jorge Pastrana, and Luis A. Gómez used to be his messengers when he was in Dipilto. Those who accompanied Anastacio on 24 May in Mosonte killed the following six persons: Inez Pastrana López, Vital López Osegueda, Catalino Amaya Lobo, Domingo Gómez López, Vicente Gómez, Francisco Hernández, my son and his brother. Those accompanying him were Cayetano Gómez with four sons: Aquileo, Felipe, Ismael, and Elisio Gómez, Isaac Gómez, Erasmo Gómez, Pedro Gómez, Santiago, Terencio, Juan, and Purificación Gómez, Pablo Florian, Malaquias Florian, Lilialde Florian, Manuel Florian, Miguel López, Sebastian Aguilar, Miguel Aguilar, Jose Miguel Aguilar, Rogelio Amaya, Timoteo Blanco, these were the men I recognized in the group that arrived at my house, the others I could not see because it was around 1:00 a.m., but these I did see because they came into my house and when I saw them I ran. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X his mark." (Ocotal, Feb. 22, 1928.)
Murders of September 9, 1927:

"I, Benita López, 19 years old, single, resident of Mosonte in the valley of Zazaló, declare that on 9 September 1927 Anastacio Hernández and his gang came to my house at about noon, killing my brothers Norberto and Celso López, and taking away as prisoner my brother Tomás López. Anastacio personally killed my brother Celso, cutting his head off, while David and Antonio Cárdenas killed Norberto López with machetes and rifles. Tomás was hanged by his hands, this being executed by Cárdenas and Timoteo Blanco. After this they took him out and killed him at El Zapote, where they killed four others, including Eulogio Mejía and Francisco Zamora, I do not know the names of the other two. Those accompanying Hernández were Jose Torres, Samuel Melgara, José María López, Tiburcio Landero, Ventura López, Ventura Landero, Nazario Vásquez, Lucas Vásquez, Anselmo Blandino, Raimundo Torres, Martin López, Brigido López, Miguel López, Maximiliano López, Julio López, Pedro López, Tito Ruiz, Fernando Zamora, Calixto Zamora, Zacarias López, Basilio Florian, Juan Ramón López, and others more whose names I do not recall. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 22 Feb. 1928).

"I, Crescencia García, married, of age, resident of Mosonte, declare that on 9 September 1927 at around noon, Anastacio Hernández and his bandits arrived at my house, among them David Cardenás, Antonio Cardenás, Timoteo Blanco, Zeledón Díaz, José Torres, Nazario Vásquez, Lucas Vásquez, Anselmo Blandino, Calixto Zamora, Fernando Zamora, Santos Zamora, Rosendo Tercero, and others whom I did not recognize. As they arrived they shot off their guns many times, and when Anastacio entered in person he cut off the head and macheted my son Selso López, another named Norberto López they shot and killed in the house, my other son Tomas López was taken away tied up and they killed him in El Zapote. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 21 Feb. 1928).

"I, Eugenia Landero, resident of Mosonte, declare: that on 9 September 1927 at about noon, Anastacio Hernández with his band arrived at my house in the valley of Zazaló. They fired their guns off in front of the house, then they came in and Anastacio personally cut my husband's head off, after he and Timoteo Blanco had shot him. Norberto López, my brother-in-law, was murdered in the same way by order of Anastacio, the order being executed by David and Antonio Cárdenas. They took my brother-in-law Tómas López out and near the house, there they hanged him with his hands tied behind his back for a long while, after which they took him along and he never did show up again. They say that they killed him in El Zapote. Those in the company of Anastacio were Nazario Vásquez, Anselmo Blandino, Eusebio Ruiz, Secundino Ruiz, Lucas Vásquez, Fernando and Calixto Zamora, Tiburcio Landero, José Torres, Eligio Ruiz, Casimiro Ruiz, Ventura Caceres, Agustín Flores, Samuel Melgara, Rosendo Tercero, and others more whom I did not recognize. I bring also the hat of my dead husband which shows the machete blows. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 22 Feb. 1928.)

"I, Antonio López, married, 56 years old, resident of Mosonte in the valley of Zazaló, declare that on 9 September 1927, I was here in Ocotal when I received the news that Anastacio Hernández had killed my sons, so I went to the chief of the Guardia to ask for help to go and remove the cadavers. Pedro Lobo acted as interpreter and told me that the Captain said that they were going to send a telegram to Managua asking permission to sent a patrol, and until it was answered they could not help me, this was around 2:00 p.m. The next day, I went again to look for Don Pedro Lobo and he sent me to the Guardia, there the chief told me that they would follow me with a patrol. When I arrived at my house I found my two sons Selso and Norberto López, the one married and the other
single, dead from bullets and machete blows. My other son Tomás, 20 years old, was taken away, tied up by Anastacio, and he never did show up again, people say he was killed in the place called El Zapote. My wife, my two daughters, my mother-in-law, and my daughter-in-law told me that Anastacio Hernández had arrived with his gang, and killed my two sons and took the other prisoner. This is all I know, and I sign, Gregorio A. López." (Ocotal, 20 Feb. 1928.)

(Deposition of Eugenia Ladero reproduced in ch. 5).

Murders of September 10, 1927:

"I, Geronima López, resident of Mosonte in the valley of El Zapote, declare that on 10 September 1927, at around 2:00 in the afternoon, Anastacio Hernández arrived at my home, along with Nicolas Ruiz and others more whom I did not know. My husband Eulogio Mejía was out working, when Anastacio personally bound him and his companions with rope, they already had other prisoners, there were about five of them, together with my husband. They took them about half a league distance and killed them, my husband was killed with machete blows and the others, Francisco Zamora, Eugenio Muñoz, Adolfo Muñoz, and others more whom I did not know, it was impossible to pick up their corpses, as they were cut up into pieces. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 2 March 1928.)

"I, Manuel Zamora, resident of Mosonte in the valley of El Zapote, declare that on 10 December 1927, Anastacio Hernández arrived at my house, along with Luis Guerrero, Nicolas Ruiz, Teofilo López, Nicomedes Ruiz, Roman Ruiz, Antonio Medina, Teodoro Medina, Torcuato Medina, Balvino Muñoz, Jose Amado Muñoz, Jose Ezequiel Pastrana, Francisco Pastrana, Pascual Pastrana, Norberto Pastrana, father and son, and others more whom I did not recognize. They took my father Francisco Zamora, and my brothers Eugenio Muñoz Zamora and Adolfo Muñoz Zamora prisoner. They killed Eugenio in the house with machete blows, he was unable to run because he had a bad foot. They tied my father up and shot him in the abdomen, afterward they macheted him. They hit my brother Adolfo, who was sick in bed, with the blunt edge of the machete, forcing him to get up and walk around, they dragged him to the place called Quebrada Seca, about half a league from my house. They did not capture me because I was outside of the house, less than one hundred yards away, I got close enough to see everything that happened and was able to recognize all the above-mentioned individuals, afterward I hid in a corn crib and I saw them and they could not see me. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X his mark." (Ocotal, 2 March 1928.)

Murders of September 16, 1927:

"I, Catalina Mejía, resident of Mosonte in the valley of El Zapote declare that on 10 September 1927, Anastacio Hernández, Nicolas Ruiz, and others whom I did not recognize arrived at my home at around mid-day, and Anastacio ordered that they tie up my father and they took him prisoner, Hernández had other men with him as prisoners, all of whom were killed by machete blows about half a league from my house, my father Eulogio Mejía received about ten machete cuts, and the others were hacked to pieces. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 2 March 1928.)

"I, María Apolonia Muñoz, of the valley of Cuje, declare that on Friday, 16 September 1927, at around 5:00 in the afternoon Anastacio Hernández and Jose Torres arrived at my house at the head of a group of bandits, of these I recognized David Cardénas, Antonio Cardénas, Toribio Martínez, Pascual López, Benito Paz, Teodoro Martínez, Remigio
González, and Antonio Landero, the others I did not recognize. They arrived and assassinated my father Tomás González and three workers he had hired to help him, they were Genaro García, Marcos Antonio López, and Claudio Gómez. Hernández and Torres killed my father with machete blows and Anastacio cut his head off, the workers were killed by machete blows by the bandits who accompanied Hernández and Torres. They took me prisoner and threatened my life. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X her mark." (Ocotal, 2 March 1928.)

**Murders of October 12, 1927:**

"In Telpanca at 11:00 a.m., on 23 February 1928, before me is señora Candida González, single, 40 years of age, of domestic offices, living in this town, in order to declare what she knows about the murders committed in the valley of Amucayán by Anastacio Hernández, the Cardénás brothers, and Tiburcio Polanco, and advised of the criminal penalties for false testimony promises to tell the truth and declares: that on 12 October 1927, she was in the house of her father Cristino González when Anastacio Hernández, David, Antonio, and Martín Cardénás and Tiburcio Polanco, with a group of about fourteen appeared at around noon, and they captured her father Cristino González and her son Gregorio González; that her father Cristino González, being old man of sixty years, was killed him with a machete in the yard of the house as he was going out the door, his head was cut off by David Cardénás; that the others left, leaving the cadaver in the yard and they carried his son Gregorio, who they took and killed in Buena Vista; and on this same day the same bandits murdered various other persons and robbed the whole Valley of Amucayán. That before these murders Martín Cardénás with various others, among them Celedonio Díaz, killed Don Romualdo Melgara in the valley of Carbonal of this jurisdiction, they killed him in the house of señor Gregorio Martínez, and the same with a son of señor Melgara. That she does not know any more than what she has stated here with respect to the death of her father Cristino González and her son Gregorio González, declaring that she has told the truth, and reading what is written the declarer accepts it and does not sign for not knowing how to write. /n/ Nicanor Espinosa."

"In Telpanca, at 11:00 a.m., on 25 February 1928, here before me is señora Cleofa Bacilio, 32 years old, widow, of domestic offices, living in this town, being called in order to declare what she knows regarding the murders committed in the valley of Amucayán in this district by bandits, declares that her name is as indicated, and warned of the penalties for false testimony offers to tell the truth and declares that on 12 October 1927, being in her house in the valley of Amucayán, Anastacio Hernández, David Cardénás, Antonio Cardénás, Abraham Bacilio, and a group of around twenty men whose names she does not recall, came into her house and seized her husband Gregorio González, tying him, and taking him over to Buena Vista, where they killed him. Minutes before they seized her husband they killed her father-in-law Cristino González, this personally being done by David Cardénás, who afterward cut his head off with a machete. This happened in the entryway of the house. Martín Cardénás was also with them. This is all she remembers, the declaration has been read to her and she agrees with its contents, and she does not sign for not knowing how to write. /s/ Nicanor Espinosa."

**Murders of 17 October, 1927:**

"I, Juan Amaya, resident of Mosonte in the valley of Rodeo, declare that on Monday, 17 October 1927, at around 4:00 p.m., Anastacio Hernández and his gang arrived at my home, and they captured by nephew Jose Esperación Amaya, 16 years of age, they killed him with bullets and machetes, I was able to escape running away from gunshots, one of which hit me in the right arm, I show the wound which is recent. José Angel
Amaya is another nephew of mine who was macheted to death by the bandits. This is all I know, and I sign, Juan Amaya." (Ocotal, 25 Feb. 1928.)

_Murders of August 1927, and October 12 and 13, 1927:_

"In Telpaneca, at nine o'clock in the morning on 23 February 1928, here before me is señor Celedonio Martínez, sixty-two years of age, married, farmer, and of this town, being called to declare what he knows about the murders committed in the Valle de Amucayan by Anastacio Hernández, David Cardenás, Martin Cardenás, Antonio Cardenás, Tiburcio Polanco, and many others he claims not to know, declares: that he is neutral and offered to tell the truth: Early in the morning on 13 October 1927, the above mentioned men came into his house and captured his son Abraham Martínez, who they tied up and led away to the place called La Montañita in the Valle de Amucayan, where they killed him, and after this they cut his body into pieces, and it was impossible to bury his remains because of the presence of the murderers, the remains are still there in the brush. And on the same day the same men, Anastacio Hernández, Martin, David, and Antonio Cardenás, and Tiburcio Polanco, killed Pedro Gutiérrez and Lino Castellón. On 12 October 1927 the same murderers captured señor Cristino González in his home, and after they robbed everything in his house and there they all killed him with machete blows. On the same day at the same time they killed Apolonio Melgara and Ricardo Melgara, in El Divisadero del Ocotal. He knows this for having spoken to some of the murderers who have returned. In the month of August the same murderers killed Mateo Hernández, Francisco Hernández, Seferino Cardenás, Abraham Cardenás, Adrian Pérez, and Toribio Martínez. This is all he knows, and he has declared the truth, and the contents of this declaration being read to the declarer, he states he accepts and ratifies it, and does not sign for not knowing how to write. /s/ Nicanor Espinosa."

_Murders of November 1927:_

"I, Julio Maradiaga Gadea, 21 years old, resident of Ocotal, declare that in November 1927, I do not know the exact date, I was captured by Anastacio Hernández and Jose Torres in El Zapote. They had already captured Moises Vilchez, Concepcion Vilchez, Porfiria Vilchez and a little girl of 10 years, and Santiago Bellorin. Hernández and Torres had two detachments, one with Torres and one with Hernández. Torres killed Santiago Bellorin, shooting him seven times and hitting him six times with a machete, and the child was also shot. Torres captured me, and my other companions were captured by Anastacio in El Guanapate, and they wanted to kill me by shooting me, but they did not wound me, they were taking me as a prisoner when I was taken before Vilchez and let free, they told me that I had guarantees given by Abellino Herrera of El Jicaro, Hernández let the others go free also, they stripped us of all our clothes and money and left us almost naked, I did not know those with Torres, but only recognized their faces. This is all I know and I sign, Julio Maradiaga." (Ocotal, 21 Feb. 1928.)

_Event of September or October 1927:_

"I, Francisco López, resident of Ocotal, declare that in the month of October 1927, on my farm a league from this town in the direction of Dipilto on the road to Honduras, I saw Dr. Abraham Gutiérrez Lobo and Anastacio Hernández talking alone, they were talking for a long time, I could not hear what they were saying, and afterward they went in different directions, Don Abraham for Ocotal and Anastacio toward Dipilto. Both were mounted and it was around 4:00 p.m. The month might not have been October, but the month before. This is all I know, I do not sign for not knowing how to write. X his mark." (Ocotal, Feb. 25, 1928.)
APPENDIX D

THE SANDINISTA REBEL REPUBLIC:
EXEMPLARY APPOINTMENTS TO OFFICE AND TAX/EXTORTION NOTES

Part I: Some representative appointments to civil and military posts in the Defending Army

A). Appointment of Calazán Contreras to rank of Captain, by Ferdinando Quintero, 11 March 1930:

"I hereby state that Sr. Calazán Contreras is appointed Captain under Altamirano, who appointed him Commander of this Area for military duty and everything pertaining to same. He is also authorized to get all kinds of provisions for the maintenance of the Liberating Army of the Autonomy of Nicaragua, as he is a man competent to perform said duty in the military service, therefore I request to the Chiefs of the said Army not to impede him but to help him out in every way. Las Segovias, Nicaragua, Central America, 11 March 1930, 18th year of the Struggle against Imperialism in Nicaragua. Homeland and Liberty /s/ F. Quintero, Major."17

B). Appointment of Gustavo Möller Díaz as Chief of Police, San Rafael del Norte, by Sandino, c. July 1930:

"The undersigned General and Supreme Chief of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, by the authority conferred by the same Army, makes the present appointment of Commandant of Police of the town of San Rafael del North to Sr. Captain Gustavo Möller Díaz, who is authorized to issue orders of his own to the residents of said town and districts. Respect and comply with the orders of Commandant Díaz in his capacity as Commandant of Police. Homeland and Liberty /s/ Augusto C. Sandino [stamp]"18

C). Appointment of Blas González Juez de la Mesta, Cuje Valley, by Sandino, 23 July 1930:

"NOMBRA MIENTO DE JUEZ DE LA MESTA DEL VALLE DE CUJE A FAVOR DE SEÑOR CAPITAN BLAS GONZALEZ

El suscrito General y Jefe Supremo del Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua, en uso de las facultades conferidas por el mismo Ejército, extiende el presente Nombramiento de Juez de la Mesta del Valle de Cuje al Señor Capitan Blas González, quien queda facultado para expedir órdenes de su incuenciación a los vecinos del mencionado Valle y sus jurisdicciones. Respetense y cumplanse las órdenes que emanen del Juez de la Mesta González, en su Caracter de autoridad. Dado en el Cuartel General del Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua, a los viernes días del mes de julio del Mil novecientos treinta. Patria y Libertad /s/ César Augusto Sandino [sello]"19

17. English trans. only, NA127/209/2; Ferdinando Quintero was one of the "twenty-nine" from San Rafael; see ch. 7, below.
D). Appointment of Lieutenant Calixto Hernández as Agent of Communications, "El Comfote," by Sandino, 3 September 1930:

"The undersigned General and Supreme Chief of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, in use of the powers conferred by said Army, extends the present appointment to Lieutenant Calixto Hernández as Agent of Communications of our Army. All civil and military authorities belonging to our Army are hereby ordered to give to the above mentioned Lieutenant Hernández their best cooperation, in order to facilitate the completion of the missions which have been assigned to him. Given in the Headquarters of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, 3 September 1930, Homeland and Liberty /s/ A.C. Sandino [official seal]"

E). Appointment of Silvestre Herrera as Substitute Juez de la Mesta in the Valley of Vueltad el Roble, by Acting Juez de la Mesta Rosalio Chavarría, 25 March 1932:

[Handwritten original following the same formula as Sandino's, above.]

Part II: Some representative Defending Army tax notices / extortion notes

A). Sandino to Carlos Potter, Matagalpa, 20 July 1930:

"The Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty
Notification to Mr. Carlos Potter in Matagalpa

The undersigned General and Supreme Leader of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, by virtue of the authority conferred by the same Army and founded upon the decree number twenty-six of our military institution, RESOLVES:

To order, at Matagalpa, the proprietor Mr. Carlos Potter to deposit at the Chief Treasurer's Office of our Army, as an obligatory contribution, the sum of five thousand cordobases, for the maintenance of the war which the same Army has initiated against the pack of North American bandits, who with the impudence of bigness are trampling underfoot our National Territory.

The proprietor Carlos Potter is to deliver the aforesaid contribution to any of the Expeditionary Chiefs of our Army [the Expeditionary Chiefs are named].

The money and property of natives and foreigners who live in Nicaraguan territory are to be utilized for the National Defense of Nicaragua.

Such foreigners as do not agree with this disposition will have the option to evacuate at a good distance our national territory.

Natives or foreigners who do not respect this order are liable to be proceeded against in conformity with the laws of our military institution, the day on which our Army takes control of the Republic, or when any of the places where those who do not obey are settled, will fall under our dominion.

Headquarters of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, Las Segovias, Nicaragua, C.A., July the twentieth, nineteen hundred and thirty. Homeland and Liberty /s/ Augusto César Sandino [official seal]"

20. English only; NA127/198/1.
21. From the original, taken from the body of Silvestre Herrera, killed by the Marines-GN at Vuelta de Robles, 10 July 1932, in NA127/209/5.
22. NA127/205/2/19.1-Sandino (English trans. only); a nearly identical notice dated 20 July 1930, Sandino to Guillermo Hüper, Matagalpa, is in J.C. Smith, et al., p. 248, English trans. only.
B). General Pedro Blandón to Francisco Somarriba, 7 September 1930:

"Cacao, 7th of September, 1930

Mr. Francisco Somarriba.

I give you orders to be so kind and contribute a thousand cordobas in cash as soon as you receive this present notification to cover the expenses and pay for the services of the Liberating Army of Nicaraguan Sovereignty. If you comply with this order you will enjoy all guarantees in your haciendas including guarantees for your laborers. On the contrary, if you do not comply you will not be permitted to have a single laborer.

The General and Expeditionary Chief
Pedro Blandón"23

C). General Pedro Altamirano to William Hawkins, November 1930:

"It will not be strange that at any day we arrive at your hacienda. Make ready for me two thousand córdobas. Do not propose to turn over the money without the penalty of your life. I know that you have the Marines and the Guardia, but to me it is of no importance. I understand this with indifference because now I go seeking vengeance for the blood of my children.

This much I tell you.

/s/ Pedro Altamirano"24

D). Rosalio Chavarría to Roque Ubeda, 19 May 1932:

"Mayo 19 de 1932
Señor Don Roque Ubeda, su casa
Notifico a ud. 3 bestidos para de baron y 3 pares de sapatos y esto lo pone en poder de Francisco Rifera los sapatos que sean numero 39 Esto es para serficio del Ejercito defensor de la soveranía Nacional de Nicaragua Patria y Libertad El Juez de la Mesta Rosalio Chavarría."25

(English trans.: "May 19, 1932. Sr. Don Roque Ubeda, his house. You are hereby notified to deliver three suits of clothing, male, and three pairs of shoes, to Francisco Rivera, the shoes should be size 39, this is in the service of the Defending Army of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty, Homeland and Liberty, Juez de la Mesta Rosalio Chavarría.")

23. NA127/192/1 (English trans. only).
24. Pedro Altamirano's son Encarnación and two other family members were killed on 20 August 1930 by a patrol led by Lt. G.F. Good (Report, Quilali, Good, 26 August 1930, NA127/202/13/56), one of the few times Prdrón's forces were discovered by the Marines-GN. Sandino reported the same incident; see Ramírez, vol. II, p. 142. Letter to Hawkins, "a translation of a letter received by Mr. William Hawkins of Matagalpa on November 11, 1930. Mr. Hawkins has the original letter, written in Spanish, in his possession. /s/ D.A. Stafford, Capt. G.N." NA127/192/1.
25. Original taken from the body of Silvestre Herrera, op. cit.
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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations and citations are used in the notes:

HERNANDEZ FILE: Documents pertaining to the case of Anastacio Hernández, most of which are reproduced in Appendix C.

IES: Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo, Managua, Nicaragua. Cited as IES, followed by the number of the cassette tape from which the interview was transcribed, followed by a colon and the page number of the transcription ("IES 046: 5" refers to interview no. 046, p. 5).

MCHC-PPC: Marine Corps Historical Center, Personal Papers Collection; cited as PPC/individual name/box number.

NA127/-/-/-: National Archives, Washington D.C., Record Group 127. Cited as record group/entry number/box number/file number (when applicable).

USDS: United States Department of State.

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