

SANDINISTA PROPAGANDA
IN VISUAL TERMS

THESIS

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Nicaragua's newly established Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government began in 1979 a broad, sophisticated propaganda campaign directed mainly at the urban and rural working class. Examples from propaganda from this campaign, which last just over a decade, have a common revolutionary theme described as *sandinismo*.¹ The repetitive and urgent tone of the messages attempted to persuade readers to show patriotism by supporting FSLN policies. Citizens involved themselves by creating revolutionary literature, art, and music mirroring the same themes of revolution. With such broad participation, a sizeable collection of Sandinista propaganda still exists today.

Despite the wealth of primary sources, historians have focused less on propaganda and more on topics like the decade's failed economic measures, semi-successful social programs, or controversial nationalization of properties. As of yet, propaganda as a whole has not been the focus of a singular study.

¹ Steven Palmer, "Carlos Fonseca and the Construction of Sandinismo in Nicaragua," *Latin American Research Review*, Volume 23, Issue 1, (1998), 92. Sandinismo is defined by Palmer as "an ideology that attempts to provide leadership, meaning, and motivation for a nation undergoing a revolutionary process."

housed in special collections such as the U.S. National Archives and the Nellie Benson Latin American Collection of Austin, Texas. Through the library and interlibrary loan system of Texas State University at San Marcos, there is a large amount of accessible primary and secondary sources. As a whole, these sources offer a variety of view points that indicate a general pattern in thoughts and ideas related to propaganda. Therefore, this project will focus on using these sources to show the significance of such materials and place these findings in context within Nicaraguan History.

This study proposes to shed new light on the topic of Sandinista propaganda through an analysis of the motivation of its creators. The central question is: What motivated the producers of such an immense, yet strangely uniform, collection of propagandistic works? The usual take on this query is that the Sandinista government transformed the party symbols of The Sandinist National Liberation Front (FSLN) into national symbols in an effort to promote itself as a legitimate ruling body. The Sandinista government, thriving on its popularity and military success, appointed its own nine-man committee, or *junta*, as the new executive branch of the government and simultaneously brought national recognition to its own songs, slogans, and heroes. Propaganda, time and time again, celebrated this change in power. However, sources on this topic reveal that the government's motivation to produce such materials was not limited to self-promotion.

Besides an attempt to establish legitimacy and sovereignty, the administration also used propaganda to explain its ideology. Starting points to this topic are any of the Sandinista government's prolific writings, which provide insight into the motivation behind the production and distribution. For example, the new government's initial reforms were listed in a brief, but telling document named *The 72 Hour Document* called so because of it was hastily composed in a short time. Within this essay, the government hastily laid out its goals for the nation, including the creation of a Department of Propaganda and Agitation,² which would coordinate propaganda efforts. Subsequent publications detailed these plans. Also on a regular basis, the leaders of the Sandinista government gave speeches and interviews that announced their ideals and expectations. Transcripts of some of these orations have been collected and published by Bruce Marcus in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders* (1985).³ Textbooks, too, promoted the Sandinista government and its programs. Found only in hands of collectors today, issues of the national school system's *Los Carlitos* show a pro-Sandinista curriculum. Similarly, Sandinista doctrine is a prevalent theme in materials of the National Literacy Crusade, a 1980 movement with broad participation.

² In Spanish, *propaganda* means *advertising* and *agitation* means *excitement*. *The American Heritage Spanish Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

³Bruce Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985).

Lastly, the Sandinista government created propaganda announcing the need to develop a loyal and cooperative citizenry. For example, materials show the government's description of *new man* which include adjectives like "creative and cooperative," and "honest, selfless." These *new man* ideals, like other central parts of Sandinista ideology, appeared almost daily in government publications.⁴

In other instances, the government used propaganda to call international and domestic attention to events that were important to the government's survival. Accounts of terrorism within Nicaragua's borders, for example, were published in newspapers and portrayed in billboards across the country throughout the 1980s. Also used for positive publicity by the government, propaganda showed successes to the country's benefactors. Foreign aid became invaluable to operate programs like immunization and literacy. Sources show that the Sandinista government frequently congratulated itself and acknowledged international donations for improvements in health care and education within all forms of media. Propaganda let the world know that the Sandinista government achieved implementation of new social programs, as well as its need to defend its inhabitants from terrorist attacks.

Publishing pro-Sandinista newspapers and newsletters served the government in many ways. First of all, the newspaper

⁴ Ibid., 78.

Barricada, which called itself an “organ” of the FSLN government allowed the administration to communicate daily messages directly to the public. These messages tried to encourage, persuade, or appease citizens. The actual production of propaganda significantly increased revenue for the government. Selling contracts for the design and printing of literature to its own offices was a lucrative means of income. Keeping percentages of sales of newspapers also boosted the general budget.⁵ Moreover, in producing its own daily newspaper, the government had the advantage of a widely read publication that never criticized the acts of the Sandinista administration. Throughout the 1980s, newspapers such as *Barricada* were invaluable to the Sandinista government.⁶

For the purposes of this study, propaganda created by private citizens will also be included. This inclusion is due to the fact that many of the popular creations in song, poetry, and art were solicited by the government through contests and awards or by payment. Songs of revolutionary themes received airtime on government radio and television programs. Selected artists of the Revolution attended national mural schools and benefited from press releases in *Barricada*. For these reasons, this study encompasses both types of propaganda: governmental and popular.

⁵David Kunzle, *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1979-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

⁶*Barricada* was published from 1979 to 1994; In this study I identify the origin of all examples.

This is not to suggest that private citizens were inspired to produce propaganda in sheer appreciation of the new government. Clearly, works from this time are a sincere expression of emotions after decades of violence. At first glance, the materials reveal the same nationalistic feel as those created by the government, but a closer examination shows that citizens expressed deep emotions as well as support for the new government. Popular art and literature show grief, joy, abuses of the past, and hopes for the future. New murals abounded in 1980s Nicaragua, which today can be viewed in photographs preserved in books like David Kunzle's *Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1979-1992* (1995), and *Sandino in the Streets* (1991) by Joel Sheesly.⁷ Kunzle and Sheesly offer photos of the colorful artwork and brief critiques punctuated with political commentary. Accessible online is the excellent Stanford University Libraries⁸ website with hundreds of murals and posters with content relating to the Nicaraguan Revolution.⁹ Murals and posters supporting Sandinista Revolution were not exclusive to Nicaragua. East German and Cuban organizations created works which are currently accessible on websites maintained by Stanford

⁷Joel C. Sheesley, *Sandino in the Streets* (Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁸East German Poster Art--Nicaraguan Murals: 1930-2000, <<http://www.stanford.edu/group/arts/nicaragua/murals/>>(February, 18, 2003)

⁹Cuba's Tri-Continental Poster Propaganda Program OSPAAAL, <http://cuban-exile.com/doc_201-225/doc0225.htm>

University and Cuba's Tri-Continental Poster Propaganda Program.¹⁰

During the 1980s, the Nicaraguan community produced powerful images that deserve to be studied today.

Literature, like the arts, enjoyed an appreciative audience in 1980 Nicaragua. Revolutionary poetry and song from this decade abound, still played today in a nostalgic way. Lyrics to these spirited war songs with names like *The Soldiers Tomb* have been compiled in *Cantos de la Lucha Sandinista*, (Songs of the Sandinista Struggle) (1989).¹¹ Many publications of revolutionary poetry exist such as *Nicaragua in Reconstruction and at War: The People Speak* (1985), and *Aesthetics and Revolution: Nicaraguan Poetry, 1979–1990*, by Greg Dawes (1993). A careful examination of Sandinista propaganda created in the 1980s will offer a new and more complete impression of the subject. Primary sources such as these fit the topic in that they allow the researcher to view the expressed ideas of the public.

Only one study to date focuses on the specific subject of propaganda. This is "Popularizing Media: The Politics of Video in the Nicaraguan Revolution," a dissertation by Susan Ryan.¹² Her study,

¹⁰<http://www.sul.stanford.edu/depts/hasrg/german/exhibit/GDRposters/nicaragua.html> (January 16, 2003)

¹¹*Cantos de la Lucha Sandinista* (Songs of the Sandinista Struggle), (Managua: Nicaraguan Cultural Records, 1989).

¹²Susan Ryan, "Popularizing Media: The Politics of Video in the Nicaraguan Revolution," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1996).

although important, is limited to the trends in video during 1980s Nicaragua.

Other studies have included facets of propaganda in their narratives. For example, the topic of Sandinista propaganda and its inclusion within educational and religious materials are two subtopics that have received some scholarly attention. Deborah Barndt, in *To Change This House: Popular Education Under the Sandinistas*,¹³ (1990) and the Literacy Exchange,¹⁴ present case studies of Nicaragua's literacy campaign. Although these writings display examples of partisan statements in workbooks used during the campaign, they focus on academic strategies. More attentive to the political scene is Robert Arnove's study, *Education as Contested Terrain in Nicaragua*, (1993) which compares education under the Sandinistas to that of the following administration. Arnove maintains that the Sandinista government attempted to use education to "create a new social order," and describes the curriculum of the day as "imbued with Sandinista symbols."¹⁵ Like Arnove, author Phil Ryan, within his apt analysis of Sandinista economics, maintains in *The Fall and Rise of the Market in the Sandinista*

¹³Deborah Barndt, *To Change This House: Popular Education Under the Sandinistas* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999).

¹⁴Literacy Exchange: World Resources on Literacy, <<http://www.literacyexchange.net/nicaragua/nicaraguadata.htm>>, (April 30, 2003).

¹⁵Robert F Arnove, "Education as Contested Terrain in Nicaragua" (*Comparative Education Review* 39, no. 1, 1993): 197-213.

*Nicaragua*¹⁶ (1995) that the literacy program goal was to promote revolutionary ideas. Education under the Sandinistas proved to be quite a controversial issue.

As propaganda changed the face of education, it transformed religion as well. *Conflict and Contradiction*¹⁷ (1997) by Debra Sabia, attempts to gauge the diverse intentions and spiritual natures of the members of the Catholic Church before, during, and after the revolution. Sabia maintains that for many Church members, revolution and religion became one in the same. A community of religious, prorevolutionary citizens also used propaganda to recognize the new administration. This mix of rebellion and faith carried over into art, literature, and came to represent a break with the bourgeois hierarchy of the Church. It is exactly this mixing of icons that author Humberto Belli criticizes in his book, *Breaking Faith*¹⁸ (1984). He asserts that the FSLN used religious imagery, including Christmas, to lend importance to its own ideals. Although each of these works does examine a different aspect of Sandinista propaganda, missing from each is a discussion of its nature, intent, and more importantly, its value to studies in revolution, and society.

¹⁶Phil Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market in the Sandinista Nicaragua* (Montreal: Mc Gill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

¹⁷Debra Sabia, *Contradiction and Conflict: The Popular Church in Nicaragua* (University of Alabama Press, 1997).

¹⁸Humberto Belli, *Breaking Faith*, (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1985).

Without tackling the specific subject of Sandinista propaganda, some researchers have offered explanations of how the Sandinista government developed and used *sandinismo*. Honing in on a narrower description of *sandinismo*, Steven Palmer's 1988 article, "Carlos Fonseca and the Construction of *Sandinismo* in Nicaragua" outlines the intriguing story of how Sandinista Founder Carlos Fonseca, who used the legend of Augustino C. Sandino in party doctrine. Sandino, an anti-establishment rebel of the 1930s, was to Nicaraguan Revolution as José Martí was to the Cuban Revolution.¹⁹ In another important article, "Sandinista Revolutionary Morale," author Fred Judson explores the *mística* and religious fervor of the revolutionists through examination of materials in the Museum of Revolution in Managua.²⁰ Within Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost's positive account of Nicaragua during the 1980s in *Democracy and Socialism in Sandinista Nicaragua*²¹ (1993) are discussions of the government's propaganda. This work delves into the origins of *sandinismo*, Sandinista ideology, the creation of the Department of Propaganda and its role in programming television and radio. More recently, in *Beyond the Barricades: Nicaragua and the*

¹⁹Palmer, "Carlos Fonseca and the Construction of Sandinismo", 99.

²⁰Fred Judson, "Sandinista Revolutionary Morale," *Latin American Perspectives* 14, no. 1 (1987): 19-42.

²¹Harry E. Vanden and Gary Prevost, eds., *Democracy and Socialism in Sandinista Nicaragua* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993).

*Struggle for the Sandinista Press, 1979-1998*²² (2002) Adam Jones develops this idea further as he explains how the purpose of government newspapers was to maintain the military's morale and power. Much has been written on the topic of *sandinismo*, but this is only one facet of Sandinista propaganda.

Limiting the interest in Sandinista propaganda are the more studied aspects to Revolutionary Nicaragua. Deeds of a dictator, the relationship between Nicaragua and the Soviet Bloc, and decisions of the Reagan administration have compelled media attention and scholarly research for over thirty years. As has been demonstrated, only recently have a few authors offered their analyses of the subject of Sandinista propaganda, and what this means in relation to the history of revolution, society, and civilization. In examining Sandinista documents, books, speeches, policies, literature, and music, the propaganda for this thesis will hopefully fill gaps in the historiography and be a worthy contribution to this area of knowledge.

Chapter One discusses how the Sandinista propaganda campaign seized opportunities to name themselves as the rightful leaders of the revolution. Using primary source materials as example, I examine how the campaign tried to achieve legitimacy through a mix of

²²Adam Jones, *Beyond the Barricades: Nicaragua and the Struggle for the Sandinista Press, 1979-1998* (Ohio Center for International Studies, 2002).

symbols and the images of select individuals. I discuss the way national celebrity Rubén Darío became a part of *sandinismo*.

Chapter Two investigates other ways that propaganda benefited the government. Findings here include an explanation of which stories were considered *taboo* within Sandinista media, and how propaganda helped the public relations of the FSLN administration. I also discuss what specific messages in Sandinista propaganda were distributed internationally. Finally, I examine how public art served as a way for artists and government to show mutual support.

Chapter Three examines which groups of the population were targeted by propaganda, and what specific messages were directed at children, teenagers, women, laborers, and farmers. I also include a discussion of how literacy teachers and non-readers were involved in the spread of propaganda.

Chapter four discusses the mix of religion and propaganda. I explain why Sandinista propaganda consistently promoted good images for priests in the government. Finally, I explain what type of propaganda was created for the pope's visit and how propaganda made use of Biblical allusions.

CHAPTER ONE SEARCH FOR LEGITIMACY

In the Nicaragua of the 1980s, Carlos Fonseca's image was everywhere on mural and posters. He looked a little ethereal, even snooty—half aristocrat and half Jesus Christ.¹

Sandinistas...enjoy a virtual monopoly on the symbolism of Nicaraguan nationalism, which forms an integral part of Sandinismo and is to the great ideological disadvantage of the counterrevolution and its ally the U.S. Government.²

A government born of revolution must obtain legitimacy to survive. Before a public will accept the decrees of a new government, people must recognize it as a trustworthy and capable group of leaders. The Sandinista government, at its advent in 1979, had many obstacles to overcome. Achieving legitimacy was one of the most important tasks. The Sandinista government needed recognition from Nicaragua's citizenry to obtain its cooperation and obedience. To hasten this achievement, the Sandinista Department of Propaganda began a broad campaign.

¹Matilde Zimmerman, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 10.

²Judson, "Sandinista Morale," 24.

More than a marketing strategy, propaganda published in the 1980s was an emotional mix of old and new symbols. Nicaraguan and FSLN symbols appeared together on most government institutions. Also, propaganda juxtaposed people from the new government with more recognizable individuals. These hand-chosen figures met the Sandinista criteria of heroes or martyrs, and through efforts of the Department of Propaganda they became popular enough to obtain posthumous, national, and sustained attention.

Sandinistas employed the use of what author Fred Judson terms “martyrology”, or the tendency to promote as heroes “those who died in direct [military] confrontation” in order to boost revolutionary morale. This was done, he says, by reserving the highest of honors for those who died in direct confrontation with Somoza’s [National Guard]. Sandinista propaganda named their qualities as the ideal. With enough attention, these individuals were transformed into symbols. Judson maintains that the attention and studies of these individuals also contributed to their transformation into symbols. Martyrology allowed the FSLN to develop a group of respected forefathers. As the Sandinista government started to organize society, their names were added to the titles of schools, hospitals, parks, streets, currency, (Figure 1) newspapers, textbooks, and murals.¹

¹Ibid., 29-30.

Some of the actions of these forefathers, however, were questionable in nature. Their respective fights against the dictatorship led to their involvement in armed robbery, kidnapping, ambushing the National Guard, assassination, and other forms of subversive leadership. Sandinista propaganda presented them in a new light that diverted attention from criminal behavior. Propaganda emphasized their individual contributions to the revolution and also showed the martyrs' finest attributes. Sandinista propaganda overlooked martyr's personal flaws and emphasized only their personal contributions to *sandinismo*.

Augustino Sandino was clearly the most popular martyr of the revolution, despite his death 46 years prior. A staunch anti-imperialist who led rebellions in Nicaragua from 1927 to 1933, Sandino upset the commerce of Nicaraguan and U.S. business associates.²

Of all the martyrs, Sandino's story was especially brutal. After years of eluding the National Guard, Sandino received a dinner invitation from Anastasio Somoza Garcia on February 16, 1934, to the National Palace in Managua. After an amiable meal, however, members of the dictator's army overtook Sandino's vehicle and killed him, his friends, and some of his family members.³

Despite an unsuccessful attempt at ending Nicaragua's dictatorship, Sandino's popularity lingered after his death. His

²Neill Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 74-75.

³Ibid.

Figure 1. 1988 Nicaraguan 1000 Cordoba bill. Front: *Central Bank of Nicaragua. Augustino C. Sandino*. Reverse: *July 19, 1979: Plaza of the Revolution*. Bills like this one were stamped to increase with value during times of high inflation.

In his six years of rebellion, Sandino wrote scores of letters to Nicaraguan and United States government officials denouncing the occupation of U.S. Marines and the exportation of its resources like gold.⁵ Sandino, who lived for a time in post-revolutionary Mexico, wrote with an air of confidence and defiance. These letters later became fodder for Sandinista revolutionary slogans such as “free homeland or death.”

Propaganda enhanced Sandino’s image by likening him to significant characters of the Bible. Member of the Sandinista Directorate, Moises Hassan, sometimes referred to the mystic “spirit of Sandino” that gave them a “force” to overcome obstacles.⁶ The *Sandinista Creed*, an oath taken by Sandinistas, devotes three of its seven paragraphs to Sandino. In this pledge, Sandinistas swore to believe in:

Sandino, the Father of our people’s anti-imperialist revolution, who was born of a proletarian *campesino*⁷ mother.... He was a proletarian with a strong conscience, self-educated, a patriot and a

⁵Macauley, *Sandino Affair*, 107.

⁶*Barricada*, 5-19-1980.

⁷A *campesino* is a person from a rural area.

nationalist, anti-imperialist, and internationalist warrior, like David who slew Goliath.⁸

Likening him to a biblical figure, Sandinista propaganda reinvented Sandino as someone to worship and emulate.

The government publicly commemorated Sandino's birthday with special publications. In 1980, the National Secretary of Propaganda and Political Education released *Sandino: General of Free Men: Father of the People's Anti-imperialist Revolution*. The booklet describes his main qualities as having a pure and unconditional love for the homeland, confidence in the humble town to defend the nation, hate toward invaders, belief in armed struggle to defeat invaders, and national unity against anti-imperialism. Consistently, propaganda portrayed the anti-imperialistic Sandino as the model Sandinista.⁹

The daily newspaper, however, is where Sandino was most celebrated. *Barricada* paid daily homage to Sandino, placing a sketch of him on the top of every page. Headlines such as "The Best Homage to Sandino: Continue the Anti-imperialistic Struggle," frequently appeared in the *Barricada*.¹⁰ The newspaper treated any living relative of Sandino as a celebrity. His biographer, Argentine Gregorio Selser, received a

⁸ *White House Digest*, (Washington D.C.: House office of Media Relations and Planning, 1984), 8.

⁹ Secretary of National Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN, eds. *Sandino: General of Free Men: Father of the People's Anti-imperialist Revolution* (Managua: Department of Political Education: 1980).

¹⁰ *Barricada*, 5-19-1980.

formal reception by the government when he visited Nicaragua in 1980. Daily inferences like these in the *Barricada* and other publications helped turn Sandino into an icon.¹¹

The second most popular martyr, Carlos Fonseca, personally fought imperialism, eluded the National Guard for an extended time, and was eventually killed by members of the dictator's army. Part of what made Fonseca a popular role model or hero was his reputation as a strategist who had devoted his life to changing the social structure of Nicaragua. Writings about Fonseca describe him as intelligent and well-read, frugal, and faithful in marriage. He apparently never consumed alcohol or tobacco. Fonseca's reputation allowed him to be used in a variety of ways.¹²

First, Fonseca's reputation as an avid reader and literacy teacher gave incredible weight to the national literacy drive and the school system. Textbooks designed especially for Nicaraguan school children (discussed further in Chapter Three) called *Los Carlitos*, or "Little Carloses."¹³

Second, perhaps because his pranks and protests against the dictatorship began at such a young age, Fonseca was especially prevalent in propaganda published for young people. His birthday was

¹¹*Barricada*, 5-19-1980.

¹²Zimmerman, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca*, 10 .

¹³Arnove, "Education as Contested Terrain," 200.

commemorated with special publications. For example, an article entitled *Carlos and his Message to the Youth* (1980), told of Fonseca's contribution and suffering on behalf of the revolution. A caption of the article called him a "guide for the young revolutionary."

Third, he was highly prevalent in military propaganda. Reputed to have been an outstanding soldier despite his slight stature and poor vision, he served as an ideal role model. Fonseca was involved in the earliest guerilla warfare, which were often fiascos.¹⁴ He was shot on two different occasions.¹⁵ As a result, he was a staple of military materials and ceremonies.

Lastly, his legendary work ethic made Fonseca a beneficial addition to propaganda for laborers. Fellow Sandinista Tomas Borge recounts stories of Fonseca making sacrifices for the FSLN. In his prison journals he tells of how Fonseca saved money for the organization by walking long distances instead of taking the bus. Zimmerman tells of how Fonseca recruited members for the FSLN in the countryside by disguising himself as a traveling salesman.¹⁶ Frequently, the pages of the *Barricada* lauded the popular hero in various ways. Sometimes a single line like "In each worker: Carlos Fonseca!" appeared among the

¹⁴Tomas Borge. *Carlos, The Dawn is No Longer Beyond Our Reach*, (Vancouver: Left Bank Distribution, 1982), 91-93.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Zimmerman. *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca*, 96.

classified ads.¹⁷ Fonseca had dedicated himself to finding a means to end the dictatorship. Loyalty made him a great role model for laborers.

His popularity among the citizenry could not have escaped the government. Fonseca's name appeared in the newspaper more than any living person in Managua. The *junta* sometimes appeared with Fonseca's photograph as if he were the 10th member.¹⁸ About 100,000 people attended the November 7, 1979, commemorative ceremony of his reburial in Managua. This event was only the first of hundreds of tributes to the FSLN founder. Sandinista propaganda capitalized on Fonseca's popularity and versatility.¹⁹

Rigoberto Lopez Perez was a more unlikely hero. He was only twenty-seven in 1956 when he shot and killed Nicaragua's president, Somoza Garcia. Dressed as a waiter, he slipped into a party unnoticed and shot Somoza at a close range multiple times with a snubnose Smith & Wesson .38 revolver. Instead of focusing on the killing itself, Sandinista propaganda presented Lopez as a pioneer in the revolution against the Somoza dictatorship lasting from 1933 to 1979. An action that might have endeared him to some was played up to the fullest extent in Sandinista propaganda. In a letter written to his "dear

¹⁷*Barricada*, 9-12-80.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 7-17-1980.

¹⁹Zimmerman. *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca*, 2.

mother”, Lopez speaks of wanting to have a free homeland and that killing Somoza was something that should have already been done. He spoke of the killing as something that would “fulfill” him.²⁰

Founders of the FSLN tried to improve popular regard for Lopez by turning the letter into a poem. High schools, factories, and conferences were named after Lopez. Sandinista propaganda transformed Lopez’s image as a vigilant revolutionist and assassin to that of a selfless martyr.²¹

The Sandinista propaganda campaign also acquired an existing national icon, poet Ruben Dario, by emphasizing his works with anti-U.S. sentiment. Dario, who lived from 1867 to 1916, achieved international fame and prestige within his lifetime despite severe alcoholism and is known for romantic poems such as *Margarita*, and *La Flor*. His reputation was not that of an insurgent. Dario’s image is more of an internationally famous poet who is Nicaragua’s most popular citizen. The FSLN succeeded in connecting itself to Dario by citing lines from his few political poems such as *Ode to Roosevelt* (1904).

The theme of *Roosevelt* is U.S. aggression, strength, and godlessness. Dario describes the United States as a powerful, but godless, nation of men with “Saxon eyes and barbarous souls.” He

²⁰Bernard Diederich. *Somoza*. (New York: Elsevier-Dutton Publishing, 1981), 47-48.

²¹Zimmerman, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca*, 43.

writes of the “iron claws” of the United States, an image often used in Sandinista art (see chapter four). He asserts that Latin America has noble ancient beginnings and its own distinct culture. Ending the poem is a warning to the United States that although it has “everything,” it cannot subdue the Latin Americas without a fight.

ODE TO ROOSEVELT

The voice that would reach you, Hunter, must speak in Biblical tones, or in the poetry of Walt Whitman.

You are primitive and modern, simple and complex;

You are one part George Washington and one part Nimrod.

You are the United States, future invader of our naive America with its Indian blood, an America that still prays to Christ and still speaks Spanish.

The United States is grand and powerful.

Whenever it trembles, a profound shudder runs down the enormous backbone of the Andes.

If it shouts, the sound is like the roar of a lion. And Hugo said to Grant: "The stars are yours."

(The dawning sun of the Argentine barely shines; the star of Chile is rising...)

A wealthy country, joining the cult of Mammon to the cult of Hercules; while Liberty, lighting the path to easy conquest, raises her torch in New York.

But our own America, which has had poets since the ancient times of Nezahualcóyotl; which preserved the footprint of great Bacchus, and learned the Panic alphabet once, and consulted the stars; which also knew Atlantic (whose name comes ringing down to us in Plato) and has lived, since the earliest moments of its life, in light, in fire, in fragrance, and in love

The America of Moctezuma and Atahualpa, the aromatic America of Columbus, Catholic America, Spanish America, the America where noble Cuauthémoc said: "I am not in a bed of roses"--our America, trembling with hurricanes, trembling with Love:

O men with Saxon eyes and barbarous souls, our America lives. And dreams. And loves. And it is the daughter of the Sun. Be careful.

Long live Spanish America!

A thousand cubs of the Spanish lion are roaming free.

Roosevelt, you must become, by God's own will, the deadly Rifleman and the dreadful Hunter before you can clutch us in your iron claws. And though you have everything, you are lacking one thing: God.

translated by Salomon de la Selva²⁴

In Dario, the Sandinistas had a strong historical example of intellectual resistance to U.S. interference in Nicaraguan affairs.

Suggesting that Dario's beliefs aligned with those of the FSLN, members of government frequently claimed to embrace the same ideals as had the poet. In a 1984 speech, Sandinista presidential candidate Daniel Ortega asserted that "The Sandinista Front is the anti-imperialist stance and social advocacy of Ruben Dario."²⁵

The government linked Dario to its cultural events. In 1980, the government declared the poet's birthday as Cultural Independence Day. Part of the celebration included the presentation of the Ruben Dario Latin American Poetry Prize, given to one outstanding poet by members of the *junta* and minister of culture. Also in 1980, the daily printed headlines such as "Ruben and his Poetry in One Day," "Ruben for Now and Forever". In this manner, Dario's became a symbol of Sandinista, as well as Nicaraguan, culture.

²⁴"Rubén Darío: Nicaragua's Bohemian Poet, " <<http://www.nicapoets.org/cyber-anthology/dario.html#Anchor-TO-7638>> (accessed 13 July, 2003); Salomon de la Selva, born in 1893 in Leon, is one of Nicaragua's best known poets.

²⁵Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 309.

To achieve the legitimacy that it wanted, the Sandinista government chose revolutionary characters and portrayed them in an almost holy light. When their personal lives are examined, it is questionable that these esteemed martyrs and heroes were any more worthy of praise than any nation's forefathers. Propaganda, however, elevated them to higher levels of recognition and respect.

The specific contribution of each character is recognizable upon closer examination of propagandistic materials. Sandino's contribution to Sandinista propaganda was his defiant attitude towards the dictatorship in his action and words. Fonseca's intricate connection to the FSLN combined with a noble character made him a hero. Lopez' letter to his mother seemed to bring enough understanding to the assassin to make him beneficial to the FSLN. In Sandinista propaganda, Lopez represents self-sacrifice. Dario unknowingly contributed to Sandinista propaganda his celebrity image and poems of anti-U.S. sentiment.

These icons were used to advertise, persuade, to appease, to inspire, and comfort. The FSLN took advantage of their images in that only one of these four men actually affiliated with the FSLN. By careful presentation and a mix of symbols, however, these dead men were reinvented as model Sandinistas.

CHAPTER TWO

VISUAL REACH OF PROPAGANDA

*"We do not limit freedom of the press; it still exists. What we limit is the ability to destabilize"*¹

*"The Sandinista Revolution has enjoyed the overwhelming support of journalists, who are working today to communicate revolutionary truth. The Sandinista front likewise commits itself to go on guaranteeing the freedom of cultural creation..."*²

The benefits of Sandinista propaganda to the FSLN government were immeasurable. Primarily, it gave the government positive attention in the local and international media, which were highly critical of the administration. The most representative of Sandinista propaganda is the *Barricada* newspaper. Also important to a premiere government, posters displayed internationally promoted the "new" Nicaragua abroad and brought financial support to the FSLN administration. Third, the government enjoyed an abundance of popular murals presenting *sandinismo* in a very positive light. These three elements created a broad visual reach of propaganda.

Why was there such a need for a barrage of propaganda? The Sandinista government faced a local and international battle in the press throughout the 1980s. Domestically, opposition newspapers were generally free to operate with relatively minimal censure throughout the

¹Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 142.

²*Ibid.*, 323.

1980s. Internationally, an unmatched propaganda campaign was launched by U.S. President Ronald Reagan's administration after his election in 1981. His speeches referred to the Sandinista government as a "regime", a

"cancer", and a "second Cuba."¹ According to author Howard Frederick, his administration organized camps along the borders of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, Honduras, and El Salvador. An "electronic" anti-Revolutionary propaganda campaign using television and radio ensued against the Sandinista government. The Sandinista government was forced to defend its actions in its own media to maintain its image. Sandinista propaganda proved to be one of the FSLN government's most efficient means to do so.²

Barricada

One of the main vehicles for regular, sustained Sandinista propaganda was the pro-government newspaper *Barricada*. Former editor of the newspaper, Carlos Chamorro, has commented that despite the "rhetorical" tone, *Barricada* succeeded during the 1980s because of its four unique advantages.³ First, *Barricada* had the full support of the government. As long as issues included articles that commended the FSLN

¹Thomas W. Walker, *Reagan versus the Sandinistas: The Undeclared War on Nicaragua*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 185.

²Ibid., 124-125.

³Jones. *Beyond the Barricades*, 21-26.

and its policies, journalists received substantial autonomy. Next, the administration purchased large quantities of the newspapers and delivered them to Nicaragua's barracks and embassies abroad. In addition, the government directed any donations of modern printing presses and newsprint towards the paper. Finally, *Barricada* was free to readers at certain times. The advantages allowed *Barricada* became a competitive newspaper.



Figure 2. Front Page Heading of *Barricada* newspaper: Without Commercial Value Year One, Saturday, August 18, 1979. Official Organ of the FSLN. Telephone, 6 Pages, Number 24.

Privately owned media outlets like the newspaper, *La Prensa*, competed with *Barricada* for Nicaragua's readership for the majority of the 1980s. *La Prensa*, the antithesis of *Barricada*, shared the position of most popular newspaper at various times in the decade. Although *La Prensa* was subjected to government censors, staff members have referred to a healthy competition with the opposition paper.⁴

To compete with the opposition press, stories focusing on national improvements or achievements made up the bulk of *Barricada* features

⁴Ibid., 27. Only occasional "counterrevolutionary" stories were censored.

during the 1980s. Achievements in literacy, health care, and education became staples of *Barricada*. Routinely, its pages made the government look like a shining success. When Nicaragua won the UNESCO award for literacy in 1980, for example, a flood of publicity resulted.⁵ By showcasing social improvements in propaganda, the administration generated positive coverage for the FSLN.

Diplomatic visits to Nicaragua were also celebrated and magnified in the pages of *Barricada*. When General Omar Torrijos Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard of Panama visited Managua in September of 1979, the newspaper captured Torrijos' visit in headlines. The article proclaimed that a "revolutionary fraternity" existed between FSLN leaders and General Torrijos. Months later, President of Mexico Jose Lopez Portillo arrived in Nicaragua. His meeting between with the Sandinista Government brought the *Barricada* headlines: *Mexico and Nicaragua: Two Pueblos United*. (Figure 3) Intense publicity improved the image of the FSLN in the national newspaper.⁶

⁵*Barricada*, 7-19 -1980.

⁶*Barricada*, 8-18-1979.; Ibid., 1-25-1980.



Figure 3. Images are from *Barricada*, 8-25-1980. Top photo: *The Sandinista public crowd around in the Plaza of the Revolution to present its show of recognition to the president of Mexico, José López Portillo.* Bottom photo: *Members of the National Directorate of our organization during the political acts of the President of Mexico.* Images of Sandino and Fonseca are displayed outside of the National Palace.

Likewise, subjects that brought controversy to the administration were completely omitted from *Barricada*. The scandal of the *piñata*, for example, that involved Sandinista leaders, was never discussed in the newspaper. In the scandal, Daniel Ortega and brother Humberto were accused of keeping expropriated land and businesses for their own use.

Although widely covered by the opposition media, *Barricada* could not cover the story and still maintain its role as a pro-Sandinista paper. As one staff member comments: “[the administration] didn’t want us to publish news that affected the [FSLN] party...”⁷ Sensitive topics were simply left out of *Barricada*’s coverage.

Barricada served to relay Sandinista initiatives to the local and foreign communities, laud Revolutionary achievements, and contribute to the overall legitimacy of the government.

Posters

To promote Sandinista goals outside of the country, simple, but expressive posters were displayed in countries that were accepting of the FSLN government. Consistently supporting the Sandinistas through material and financial support, the governments of East Germany and Cuba also conducted a visual display of posters that seek at least one of three actions: inform people about the new programs of the FSLN, stimulate donations to the Sandinista government, and a call for an end to imperialism.

One East German poster that attempted to inform readers about accomplishments of the FSLN government was *Helft Nikaragua! (Help*

⁷ Claudine LoMonaco, (www.ist-socrates.berkeley.edu:7001/Events/spring2002/05-08-chamorro/)> (accessed 1-20-2003), 3; Jones, *Beyond the Barricades*, 264.

Nicaragua) (1985).⁸ Branches of the tree bear the actual achievements of the Sandinista government such as eradicating polio and diphtheria, reducing illiteracy, and modest economic growth. Progresses like these made in the early part of the Sandinista government's eleven years of power attracted worldwide attention.

East Germany also asked its citizens for cash donations for Nicaragua, and designed posters to relay this request quickly and easily. To donate money, citizens of East Germany made deposits into Account 444, a special national fund for the country: Account 444. At least two posters, *Solidarity Account 444: 1+2+10+5+20...* (1988) and *Life support for Nicaragua, from Sick Tent to Hospital!* (1988) publicized Account 444. In simple cartoon illustrations, each emphasizes Nicaragua's need for more hospitals and asks for a contribution.

Rather than financial assistance, Cuba's posters more often showed signs of political support for Nicaragua. They usually included a show of Sandinista power in the party's colors of red and black. Both posters *Sandino Lives* (1984) and *Present* (1989), feature portraits of Augustino Sandino in his usual cowboy hat and riding boots. More radical posters named the United States as the instigator of contra-violence. Some

⁸All East German posters included in this chapter are found at East German Poster Art and Nicaragua <<http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/hasrg/german/exhibit/GDRposters/nicaragua.html>> (January 16, 2003).

called for an end to “yankee aggression.”⁹

To display this anti-U.S. sentiment visually, posters employed the use of symbolism to represent portrayed the United States in several ways: Uncle Sam, the Statue of Liberty, U.S. currency, a bald eagle, flexed talons, a spike-heeled boot, a skeleton draped in the U.S. flag. (Figure 4) In *Literacy* (1984), for example, we see the combat boots and guns of a platoon of U.S. soldiers taking aim at a young boy learning to read and write. Scenes like this one named Nicaraguans as the victims, and the United States as the aggressor.

Posters like these benefited the Sandinista government by spreading news of accomplishments, soliciting donations, and by calling for an end to U.S. hostilities toward Nicaragua.

⁹ All Cuban posters included in this chapter are found at Cuba’s Tri-Continental Poster Propaganda Program OSPAAAL, <http://cuban-exile.com/doc_201-225/doc0225.html>, (Accessed February, 18, 2003).

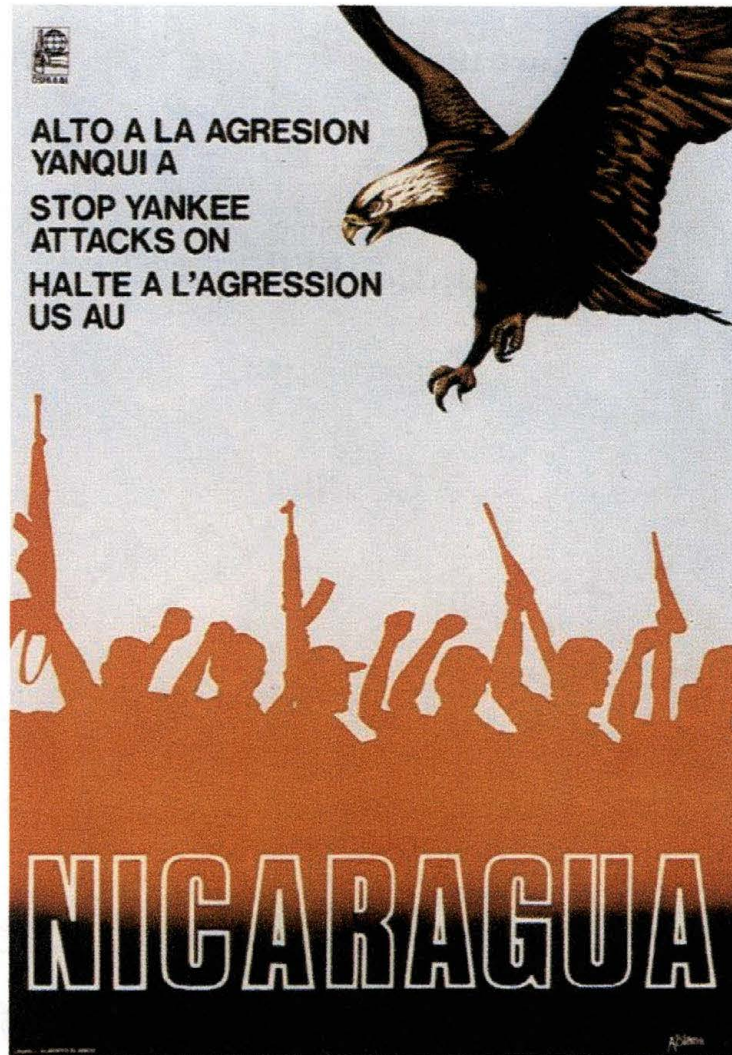


Figure 4. Poster: *Stop Yankee Attacks on Nicaragua* (1985). Reprinted, by permission from Gordon Winslow, Cuba's Tri-Continental Poster Propaganda Program OSPAAAL, <http://cuban-exile.com/doc_201-225/doc0225.html>.

Murals

The Minister of Culture, Ernesto Cardenal, began a propaganda movement of his own in 1979. This is, in part, why the 1980s of Nicaragua are remembered as a time of acceleration of the production of literature, song, and art. The political and cultural environment generated by the revolution provided the ideal conditions for the development of an authentic

popular artistic movement. In addition, the artists received occasional funding for projects.

Citizens had the blessing of the new government to immortalize the misdeeds of the Somoza family in paintings on canvas or in large murals placed strategically around the country. Even amateur neighborhood murals, monuments, or graffiti were encouraged. In creating works that named Sandinistas as victors and vanguard, artists became a sort of favored group of the FSLN, which encouraged both amateur and professional muralists.¹⁰

The Minister of Culture stated in a *Barricada* press release that he wanted artists to “capture” the revolution by using themes such “war, liberation, spread of literacy, reconstruction, and a triumphant public.” In this way, a symbiotic relationship between professional artists and the government began in 1979; artists created works of Sandinista themes, and the government tried to publicize their work as well as direct periodic funds towards art programs.¹¹

To allow artists to organize as a group and develop talent, the Minister of Culture created the Nicaraguan Union of Plastic Artists (UNAP), the National School of Plastic Arts (ENAP) and the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers (ASTC). Members of these organizations received excellent publicity in the national media. One 1980 press release, entitled

¹⁰*Barricada*, 8-19-1979.

¹¹*Ibid.*

The Painter in New Nicaragua, urged readers to visit a local gallery featuring works of the members of UNAP. The reporter described the “need” of the artists to “express a new reality” in “more vivid colors” [than of pre-Revolutionary works].¹² National publicity like this helped promote art as a trade.

With the help of government contributions and foreign donations, a mural school, The David Alfaro Siqueiros National School of Monumental and Public Art (ENAPUM-DAS) operated from 1985 to 1988. The administration contributed funds and facilities for ENAPUM-DAS. Projects of the school included murals which became the centerpieces of primary schools, parks, military bases and barracks, churches, factories, union halls, youth and community centers, and prisons.

All of the murals produced by ENAPUM-DAS show diverse content, but each reflect on Revolution, persecution and change. The theme of the mural often depended on its location. For example, murals in hospitals showed advances in healthcare; paintings on the walls of military bases showed war heroes and martyrs.

One of the most famous and beautiful series to come out of ENAPUM-DAS was more political than religious, though it covered the walls and ceilings of a church. Italian artist Sergio Michilini and students of ENAPUM-DAS created the series of sixteen murals in the Church of Santa María of the Angels. These paintings can be seen in David Kunzle’s *The*

¹²*Barricada*, 9-4-1980.

Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua 1979-1992, which provides excellent photographs of the murals. At nine square meters, the dark colors of the paintings take on a stained-glass effect.

Among the collection we see child-martyr Luis Alfonso Velásquez, a ten-year old boy killed in a skirmish with the National Guard during the Revolution. In the mural *David and Goliath*, Alfonso is challenging members of the National Guard, represented by pale skinned, tailed creatures. They point shiny guns and knives at the boy. Alfonso, a common subject of murals, stands in a defiant pose. Backing him are women, farmers, and musicians. Above the crowd of Sandinistas, a red banner unfurls to reveal a popular Sandinista slogan: *Patria Libre o Morir*, or “Free Homeland or Death.”¹³

A park named after Luis Alfonso Velasquez served as a showcase for about ten murals done by various painters. These murals featured scenes of happy family life, with subdued political statements. For example, one mural shows Augustino Sandino holding a baby. Another shows a normal family scene with the exception that the mother figure is wearing fatigues and a machine gun. For the most part, however, murals in the park promoted leisurely play and reading.¹⁴

In contrast, murals elsewhere showed the garish side of the

¹³Kunzle. *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua*, 56.

¹⁴Ibid., 93-95.

Revolution. Some of these showed abuses of the indigenous Nicaraguans. One of these is *Diriangen and Gil González*, which shows the conquistador Gil González attacking indigenous leader Diriangén. The more defensive *Insurrection*, located in a Managuan community center, shows angry mobs of men and women taking up arms against the National Guard. These graphic murals signified a break with bourgeoisie dominance of Nicaragua.¹⁵

Was the subject matter of these murals mandated by government? Artist Julie Aguirre, whose mural *Village Life* shows a clear support for the FSLN, comments that “This was neither a political or a commercial venture. It was an act of love for the Nicaraguan people, to educate them about Nicaraguan art.”¹⁶(sic) Researcher David Kunzle has also commented that artists operated without “interference from above,” indicating that muralists did have a degree of autonomy in their subjects.¹⁷ These statements indicate that the artists created Revolutionary works out of a sincere need to express current and recent events.

Murals like these examples served as constant reminders to citizens of the war and its aftermath. At the same time, they showed strong support for the government and its policies and directives.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Interview with Julie Aguirre from July 7, 2000., http://www.stanford.edu/group/arts/nicaragua/discovery_eng/artists/aguirre/aguirre.html, (accessed 8 August 2003).

¹⁷Kunzle, *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua*, 59.



Figure 5. Details from the mural *El Encuentro* (*The Meeting*) by Leonel Cerrato (1980). Found in Luis Alfonso Park in Managua, this mural measured 38 meters wide and 3 meters high. Reprinted, by permission, from David Kunzle, *Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1979-1992* (University of California Press), 92-93.

To represent, promote, and defend itself in the local and international environment, the FSLN government needed a positive display of visual propaganda, which it created with help from the citizenry.

The *Barricada* provided the administration a way to defend itself in the media and plug FSLN programs on a daily basis. The offices of this newspaper publicized political achievements while receiving lucrative government contracts and avoiding topics unflattering to the Sandinista government.

Posters gave the FSLN government an easy way to show the world its achievements in health care and education. The announcement of progresses like the eradication of curable diseases and reduction of illiteracy helped Nicaragua solicit millions in donations. Posters also named the United States as an impediment to progress.

Murals served various purposes in the 1980s. They provided an outlet for artists who desired to express opinions about events of the Revolution. Moreover, they allowed Revolutionary symbols to become part of everyday life.

In sum, publications, posters, and murals were used by the FSLN government to enhance the visual reach of propaganda.

CHAPTER THREE MESSAGE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

*"Sandinista Revolution...It's Healthy!"*¹

Sandinista propaganda was a broad campaign that also approached the population in segments. Special messages were directed at distinct groups such as children, teenagers, women, laborers, and rural farmers. Despite severe isolation of some populations, almost all were reached by some type of strategic written, pictorial, or verbal communication from the Sandinista government.

Examples of propaganda from the period show patriotism, respect for armed forces, and total support for FSLN government. A typical message might encourage citizens to become more "revolutionary" through numerous activities: mass organizations, rations, literacy programs, neighborhood watch programs, and political education classes. In most cases, the message was tailored to fit the individual's sex, age, and occupation.

One type of special propaganda marketed government reforms in industry, agriculture, and construction to the workforce. Some of these

¹*Barricada*, 1-5-1980. Slogan used by the Minister of Health.

changes were based on the administration's vision of a better, modern, and more organized society using the *new man* approach. The *new man*

philosophy stated that all male and female laborers, women, artisans, athletes, and farmers should perform at a higher level, as a result of having experienced the Revolution.¹ Moreover, the *new man* would be a harder worker, a more loyal citizen, more creative, and of a higher moral standard than laborers of pre-Revolutionary times. In addition, he would not complain about long hours and little pay, nor strike against his employer. As one Sandinista speaker phrased it, "The Sandinista has to be the best at everything."²

Children

The Sandinista government's plan for its children was simply for them to be "aware" of events of Nicaragua's history. Minister of Education, Fernando Cardenal, announced that no longer would unpleasant realities be covered up by use of imported or generic textbooks. Instead, "real life" examples would play a large part of the new curriculum drafted in August of 1979.

This initial plan for new textbooks resulted in a special textbook series for children of all grades and ages. Unlike books previously used by school systems, the books were not imported; they were written especially

¹Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 80.

²*Ibid.*, 180.

for Nicaraguan children. The series, *Los Carlitos*, was implemented in all grades and covered basic subjects.³

A 1979 *Barricada* article discussed the planning stages of the new books. Potential issues to be discussed in the first grade social studies curriculum, for example, included past exploitation of Nicaragua's mines, health problems suffered by miners, the benefits of collective farming and the problem of child labor." The final product, *Los Carlitos*, became a regular promotional tool for the FSLN government.⁴

A study of the series in 1993 found that twenty-seven to eighty-seven percent of passages of randomly checked passages in the series contained partisan content. Spanish and social science books contained the most references to the FSLN, but even math books referenced FSLN organizations through word problems like this one found in a third-grade mathematics text:

The ANS (the Sandinista youth organization for primary school children) honored the children of a school with 300 mascot scarves and 97 [copies of] *Carlitos*. How many scarves did the school distribute?⁵

Los Carlitos included pro-Sandinista language aimed at building a rapport between the government and the schoolchildren. Opposition groups

³*Barricada*, 6-21-1980; Although not all children were included in the national school system, non-students probably saw the same type of realistic Revolutionary images in park murals and on billboards discussed in Chapter Two.

⁴*Barricada*, 8-20-1979.

⁵Robert F. Arnove, *Education and Revolution in Nicaragua*, (New York: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1986), 200.

criticized the books for its partisan and militant language. The introductory reader of *Los Carlitos*, for example, taught the letters *b*, *g*, and *j* using pictures of the items [military] *boot*, *cap*, and *army* (*bota*, *gorra*, *ejército*). The lives of Sandinista heroes supplied history topics. *Los Carlitos* featured the story of “General Sandino” and the FSLN’s founding as highlights in Nicaragua’s history.⁶

Arnove, who has contributed the most comprehensive study to date concerning Nicaragua’s educational system in the 1970s and 1980s, is of the opinion that all nations indoctrinate through the education system. *Los Carlitos*’ blatant references to warfare, however, angered and alarmed a society divided already. Arnove defends the content to a degree, stating that the government sought a “radically different ideology” to avoid the “passivity and fatalism” of past leaderships. The success of the attempted indoctrination of Nicaraguans, says Arnove, is still a matter of debate.⁷

Teenagers

The Sandinista government had very specific goals for teenagers, and created organizations and curriculum to foster these objectives. FSLN junta members named suitable events for young people as defense of the country, volunteerism, cultural events, and sports.⁸

⁶Joseph Mulligan, *The Nicaraguan Church and the Revolution*, (Kansas City: Missouri, Sheed, and Ward, 1991), 283.

⁷Arnove, *Education and Revolution in Nicaragua*, 24.

⁸Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 30.

To encourage these activities, the administration created a special political organization for older students called the Sandinista Youth (JS), whose members performed unpaid acts of labor in the spirit of the Revolution. JS members distributed food to the poor and cleaned up neighborhoods that were destroyed during the Revolution and during harvest time worked coffee and cotton crops. This teen organization was 30,000 members strong in 1984.⁹

An even broader movement was the 1980 Nicaragua's National Literacy Campaign, a broad and highly organized program. Teens made up the bulk of the 55,000 *brigadistas*, or literacy teachers, who mobilized to serve in urban and rural areas. Some teen teachers were required to travel to remote areas and stay for months at a time teaching rural families literacy.

To be a volunteer, teachers trained for months to prepare lessons and also followed careful guidelines described in teacher's manual. (Figure 6). Each teacher took an oath to "[have] loyalty to the Sandinista People's Revolution...to show respect and perform the postulates of Sandino, Carlos Fonseca...to be disciplined...to honor the memory of martyrs,".¹⁰ Thus,

⁹Thomas Walker, *Nicaragua: The First Five Years* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), 74.

¹⁰Literacy Exchange: World Resources on Literacy, <<http://www.literacyexchange.net/nicaragua/nicaraguadata.htm>>, (accessed April 30, 2003).

brigadistas took directives from and also taught lessons about Sandinista principles.



Figure 6. Illustration from the National Literacy Teacher's Manual (1980).

The overall program was a success, and some volunteers claimed the experience changed them for the better, but others encountered violent *contras* during their tour. In addition, to respond to the *contra* offensive, the government called for students to mobilize for defense by requiring military service as part of educational degree requirements. Males were expected to serve in the military at a time when many families were still grieving for members lost in the Revolution. Despite danger and hardship, Sandinista propaganda pushed teens to participate in the broad social movement.¹¹

Women

¹¹Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 325; Walker, ed. *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, 68.

Women were expected by the Sandinista government to be as politically informed and active as men. Government directed the *new man* concept at women in special articles. A *Barricada* article entitled *Constructing the Homeland, We Create the New Woman*, for example, illustrated the Sandinista government's expectations for the female population. In short, they were to be professionals, active in the workforce, patriotic, and revolutionary.¹²

During shortages of basic goods that occurred due to lack of production or trade embargos, the Minister of Commerce created special propaganda directed at the heads of households. In eight-three percent of homes, a woman was the sole provider, so they were targets of ads (Figure 7) discouraging the "anti-Revolutionary" stockpiling of goods like basic medicines or products like "soap, deodorant, shampoo, corn, beans, and rice." Large ads in the *Barricada* urged citizens to conserve sugar, a valuable export crop.¹³

FSLN proposed a move toward socialism as a way to ease the workload of women. In a speech given in September of 1982, Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge exclaimed that the only way for a woman to "fulfill all tasks the Revolution demands of her" while remaining a "self-sacrificing, capable, and loving mother" was for socialization of the individual tasks of

¹²*Barricada*, 1-5-1980.

¹³*Barricada*, 9-1-1980; Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*,

women. In other words, to free a woman of some of her daily chores the [socialist] government would provide “day-care centers, laundries...and other services.”¹⁴

The benefits of socialism were presented to citizens in propaganda like *Social Welfare*, a Managua billboard of 1981 that showed the eradication of social ills like prostitution, alcoholism, child labor, with the caption: *Communal Solutions to Social Problems. Satisfy Basic Needs through Productive and Organized Work, Sharing Social Achievements*. The illustrations show society leaving its vices behind through socialism.¹⁵

In sum, women faced unrelenting economic hardship. The government recognized their predicament, and recommended that all women participate in mass organizations created for women them as the Association of Nicaraguan Women Luisa Amanda Espinosa (AMLAE), named after the first woman killed in the Revolution. AMLAE was pushed as a sort of lobbyist group for women’s issues.

Although AMLAE did have strong participation from 1979 to 1987 and petitioned new laws about maternity leave, equal pay, and divorce, it was not able to achieve all of its initial goals. A cited lack of funds

¹⁴Ibid., 56.

¹⁵Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 54.

prevented broad socialistic programs like community kitchens and day care from materializing.¹⁶

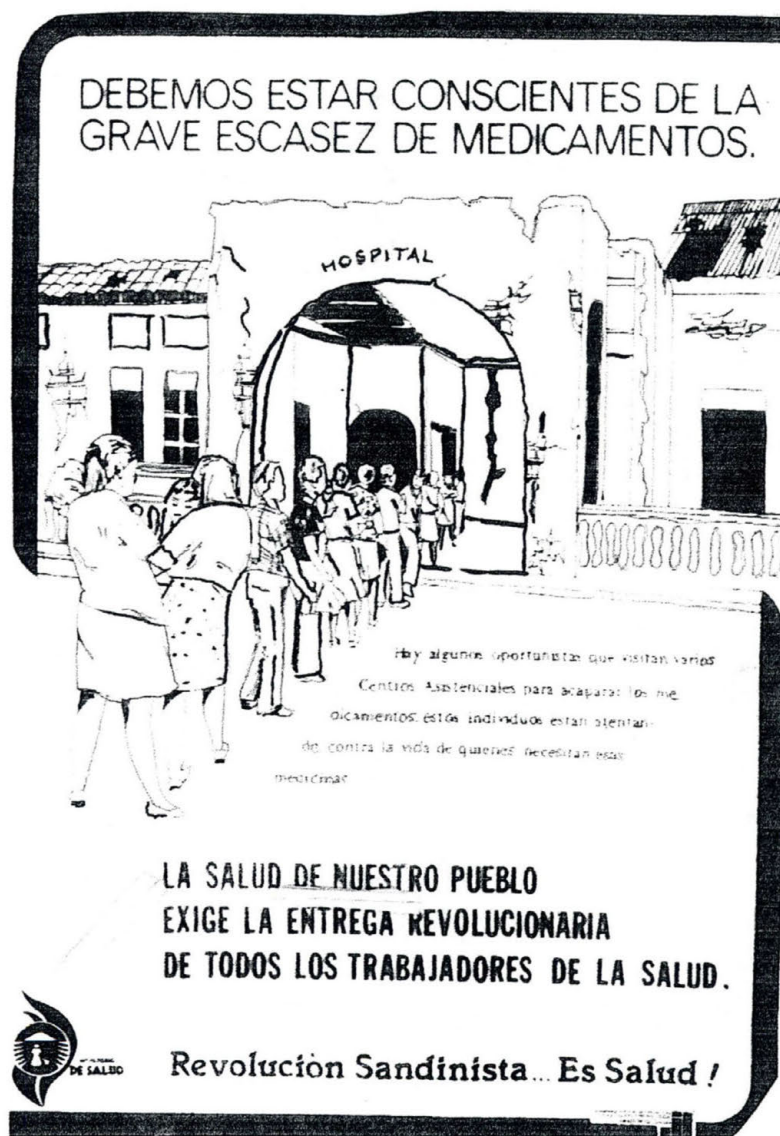


Figure 7. *Barricada* ad from 1-5-1980. We should be conscientious of the grave scarcity of medicine. There are some opportunists that visit various Assistance Centers to hoard medicines. These individuals are attempting to take the life of those who need these medicines. The health of our public requires the revolutionary delivery of all the workers of the health. Sandinista Revolution...It's Healthy!"

¹⁶Ibid., 54; Harry E. Vanden and Gary Prevost. *Democracy and Socialism*, (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1993), 59.

Laborers

Author Phil Ryan notes the enormous confidence had by the FSLN directorate in the abilities workforce. As part of fulfilling the new man experiment, members of the *junta* called on the workforce to show a true spirit of social Revolution. In other words, ideally the goal of helping the country succeed economically should always supercede the salary in importance.¹⁷

To “establish closer contact” with laborers, a newsletter (Figure 8) called *El Trabajador*, (*The Worker*) was created by the Department of Propaganda in 1980. An announcement in *Barricada* described the aim of the newsletter. Directing propaganda especially towards laborers, the publication attempted to appeal to the workers’ sense of patriotic duty. *El Trabajador* presented the workplace or factory as the new battlefield, and the laborers as the new soldiers. Also important, the publication encouraged workers to join unions.¹⁸

¹⁷Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Sandinista Market*, 180.

¹⁸*Barricada*, 9-4-1980.



Figure 8. *Barricada* ad: *We Must Produce the Most we Can! The agriculture, the industry, and the construction serve as the new battlefields. Heroes in Combat! Heroes in Work!* (1-17-1980)

Propaganda stressed to the proletariat the importance of joining mass organizations like the Sandinista Workers' Central (CST) and the Rural Workers' Association (ATC), in order to "transmit specific demands" to top management. The government hoped that through an informal style of voting through raised hands would allow workers to make key decisions themselves.¹⁹

Abysmal economic conditions starting in 1987, however, led to decreased participation in labor unions. Salaries, controlled by the government, did not usually compensate for the rampant inflation in the

¹⁹Vanden and Prevost, *Democracy and Socialism*, 64-65.

1980s. Meager and periodic raises were almost always followed immediately by jumps in the prices of basic goods.²⁰ During times of high inflation, however, the government asked laborers to make any sacrifice necessary to keep working.²¹ In fact, members of the government urged workers to “think of the soldiers off fighting the *contras* before they lamented their own situation.”²² Ryan, however, asserts that the government was “whistling in the dark” by trying to convince citizens to “transcend mere economic concerns.”²³

Farmers

The farming community experienced many changes due to the reforms implemented by Minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock. Through planning and price control, he believed large nationalized and industrialized farms would solve production problems in two ways. First, collective efforts on farms would result in a boost its exports of coffee and sugar. Secondly, the new technology would expose the peasant to the more modern way of farming. Leaving primitive methods of farming behind, he argued, was the key to the farmer to becoming a *new man*. In trying to promote these

²⁰Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market in Sandinista Nicaragua*, 148.

²¹Zimmerman, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca*, 225.

²²Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market in Sandinista Nicaragua*, 180. *Contras* refers to the armed insurgents who fought against the Sandinistas and their achievements during the 1980s.

²³*Ibid.*

reforms, propaganda attempted to persuade farmers to leave their homes to live and work on state-owned farms.²⁴

Although the majority of rural farmers were non-readers, special propaganda was created just for them within the national literacy campaign. According to the FSLN's stated two-fold plan the literacy was not only to teach reading and writing skills but to "educate peasants about the goals of the Revolution."²⁵ As seen in Table 1, lesson ten assures the people they will receive the "harvest."

²⁴Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market*, 93.

²⁵Arnove, *Education as Contested Terrain*, 19.

1. Sandino, leader of the revolution
2. Carlos Fonseca said, "Sandino Lives."
3. The FSLN led the people to liberation.
4. The guerillas overcame the genocidal National Guard.
5. The Masses rose up in an insurrection made by the people.
6. The Sandinista defense committees defend the revolution.
7. To spend little, save much, and produce a lot—that is making the revolution.
8. The revolutionary workers' associations propel production forward and keep vigil over the process.
9. People, army, unity: They are the guarantee of the victory.
10. The agrarian reform guarantees that the harvest goes to the people.
11. With organization, work, and discipline, we will be able to rebuild the land of Sandino.
12. 1980, the year of the war against illiteracy.
13. The pillage of imperialism is over: Nicaragua's natural resources are ours.
14. The nationalization of Somoza's businesses helps us recover our wealth and strengthen our economy.
15. Work is a right and a responsibility of every person in the land.
16. The revolutionary government expands and creates health centers for the people.
17. With the participation of everyone, we will have healthy recreation for our children.
18. We are forming work brigades to construct and improve our housing.
19. Women have always been exploited. The revolution makes possible their liberation.
20. The revolution opens up a road system to the Atlantic Coast. The Kurinwas is a navigable river.
21. Our democracy is the power of people belonging to organizations and participating.
22. There is freedom of religion for all those churches that support and defend the interests of the people.
23. The Sandinista revolution extends the bond of friendship to all peoples.

Table 1. Literacy Lesson Topics. Valerie Miller, *Between Struggle and Hope: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 76-77.

This claim, however, might have been misinterpreted by farmers who assumed that upon expropriation of Somoza's properties each man would immediately be given a plot of land. Although this did happen to some, most of land that was deeded to private farmers came years after the Revolution as a way to appease the peasant population and in response to outside criticism of the Sandinista agricultural reforms.²⁶

Changes in the agricultural program, however, were not widely accepted by farmers. Some farmers were reluctant to move to these farms, not wanting to leave their hometowns or fearful of the farms because of the high incidence of counter-revolutionary violence they sustained. In late 1983, the government attributed 400 deaths of state-owned inhabitants to the *contras*.²⁷

Moreover, the administration pressured farmers to sell their produce to government agencies at set prices of produce, which was then sold to consumers in urban areas or exported. Farmers generally lacked the autonomy to sell directly to consumers at a negotiated price. As a result the buying power of these farmers did not surpass that of pre-revolutionary years when workers farmed the lands of the wealthy.²⁸

²⁶Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market*, 156.

²⁷Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 123.

²⁸Ryan, *The Fall and Rise of the Market*, 106.

Author Luis Serra posits that “product confiscation” “caus[ed] the disaffected groups to desert to the enemy.”²⁹ Resentful of government influence or disappointed in the outcome of the Revolution, some price farmers joined the *contras*. In doing so, they sabotaged social progresses and killed thousands of countrymen.

The fact that some farm workers became *contras* was a situation regretted deeply by the FSLN after they lost power in 1990.³⁰ Members of government have openly claimed to regret the slighting of the rural farmer during the 1980s.



Figure 9. *Barricada* Article On the Road to Reactivation, We Consolidate our Revolution (5-15-1980). *The workers and peasants should organize themselves and strengthen their class organizations: the ATC, the CST, to participate more actively in the Revolution.*

Propaganda used a variety of means to attempt to persuade citizens to follow government directives including an appeal to patriotism and the

²⁹Luis Serra, “Democracy in Times of War and Socialist Crisis: Reflections Stemming from the Sandinista Revolution,” *Latin American Perspectives* (spring 1993): 21-44.

³⁰Ryan. *The Fall and Rise of the Market*, 252.

use of peer pressure to elicit participation in mass organizations and programs like the literacy campaign. Another strategic move was to segment the population and tailor messages to each group.

For children, the Sandinista government carefully prepared curriculum of pro-Revolutionary message. Textbooks showed war was reality, and the FSLN as defender of the people. To acquire the volunteerism it needed from teenagers, the government designed special propaganda that urged teens to do their part in the rebuilding of the country. Propaganda called for women were to serve diligently in the work force, show patriotism, see to the education of children, and participate in the political sphere. This might have been too much to expect of females, who commanded lower salaries than men.

Propaganda directed at workers demanded that workers be loyal to their country by improving their personal work ethic. Farmers were asked by propaganda to commit to a change of lifestyle involving community living and shared profits.

In sum, to achieve the high levels of cooperation needed from the Nicaraguan citizenry, the government expressed clear, specific goals in Sandinista propaganda.

CHAPTER FOUR RELIGIOUS CONNECTIONS

Sandinista propaganda played an important part in the major changes in religion in 1970 and 1980s Nicaragua. Already divided in 1979, the Catholic Church seemed to further polarize after the Revolution. During the next decade, the conservative and the liberal religious workers' disagreements about the role of the Church in society divided the institution. One of many reasons for the split in the Church was Sandinista propaganda mixed with religious imagery. The use of or alteration of Christian icons combined with Sandinista symbols in art or language alarmed conservative pundits, who wrote scathing commentaries denouncing this type of imagery. Liberals, on the other hand, wrote volumes of literature on "liberation theology," in an attempt to align Christianity and *sandinismo*.

Fred Judson is one researcher who has commented on the fine distinction between religious faith and *sandinismo*. He suggests that for some Sandinistas, there was really no difference in religious and revolutionary thought and action; Sandinistas equated religion to an act such as delivering the people from the National Guardsmen. To free the people from the oppressive dictatorship, in essence, was Jesus' act of

“scourging the temple of the moneylenders.”¹ Members of the Community-based Church, therefore, shared a history of having achieved the common goal of ousting the dictator.

Continuing to capitalize on this relationship, the FSLN government combined religious imagery within Sandinista propaganda to benefit itself in at least three ways. First, Sandinista propaganda built up and maintained a positive reputation for priests who held government posts. Next, visual materials provided an efficient way communicate to the Pope and the accompanying entourage during his visit in 1983. Third, propaganda used Biblical allusion in pictorial and written messages to promote its own ideals.

The Revolutionary Clergy

Over 200 nuns, priests, and other clergy held positions in the Sandinista government. This is understandable since the Revolutionary Clergy had a long history of support for the revolution. During pre-Revolutionary time, for example, “progressive” priests had participated in hunger strikes to protest the dictatorship. Churchgoers had provided “safe-houses” for FSLN members in hiding. Women of the Community-based Churches risked jail time or death by sewing Sandinista flags and by distributing Sandinista literature, concealed inside religious tracts.

¹Judson, “Sandinista Morale,” 35.

After the Revolution, the FSLN government rewarded some of these devoted insurgents government jobs.²

One of these individuals was Ernesto Cardenal, the Minister of Culture under the Sandinista government, a Jesuit priest who had a long history of working with the indigenous of isolated regions of Nicaragua. Cardenal's views about Nicaragua's culture mirrored Sandinista principles concerning a culturally aware populace and an emphasis on the arts. In 1979, he set out to refine and improve the Nicaraguan culture through a "Cultural Revolution."

Barricada lent strong support to the Ministry of Culture by commending Cardenal's plans to readers. Just a few days after the FSLN government began operations, a press release entitled *Compañero Cardenal Announces a Cultural Revolution*. The aim of the article was to let readers know about Cardenal's plan to promote Nicaraguan culture through a new television show.

According to the press release, Cardenal hoped to assist actors, dancers, poets, painters, musicians, architects, and young people. Besides details of the plan, the article refers to the minister as "Father", and shows a photograph of Cardenal in prayer. Through positive articles like this one, propaganda helped establish a good image for the priests.³

²David Close, *Nicaragua: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Pinter 1988), 67.

³*Barricada*, 1-17-1985; *Ibid.*, 8-7-1979.

Meanwhile, groups that opposed the priests' involvement in government formed at higher levels of the Church. A movement to call for their resignations as priests began in May of 1980. At that time, four priests who held high government posts were officially asked to leave their government position by the Episcopal conference in May of 1980,⁴ the conference was temporary willing to allow the men to remain priests as long as they did not "administer sacraments."

Amidst the opposition press, Sandinista propaganda was quick to defend clergy in government. For example, when the Episcopal conference called for Minister of Education Fernando Cardenal's resignation from priesthood, the *Barricada International* defended the priest by emphasizing his spiritual accomplishments like conducting peace vigils, fomenting the *new man* philosophy, and his contributions towards "contributing to the construction of the reign of heaven on earth."⁵

Even with a personal request by the Pope in 1983 for the four men to give up their roles as priests, the men refused. Despite the positive publicity in Sandinista propaganda, in 1984, each of the priests were officially suspended of all official Church-related duties.⁶

⁴Deborah Sabia, *Contradiction and Conflict: The Popular Church in Nicaragua* (Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press 1997), 91.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Close, *Nicaragua: Politics, Economics, and Society*, 68.

The Conservative Clergy

Another way in which Sandinista propaganda proved to be important was in the design of the materials produced specially for the Pope's 1983 visit to Nicaragua.

As the Pope represented the pinnacle of the Catholic Church, the Sandinista government put into effect a plan to establish a stronger relationship with the Vatican. As part of this strategy, delegates were sent to visit with the Pope however, showed more support for the Traditional Church.

This more conservative side of the Church, according to Father Joseph Miller, who studied the Revolution firsthand, resisted change during the Revolution for at least four reasons. First of all, the bishops moved in the circle of the middle and upper class more easily than the working class. Rather than grassroots workshops in Bible studies or employment skills, the Traditional Church preferred to focus on the clerical and bureaucratic needs of citizens like birth, marriage, and death. Also, the fear of losing power and privilege in society might have also been a factor. In addition, higher-ups in the Church might have equated Marxism to atheism, and thus been afraid to link up with a reportedly Marxist-socialist leadership. Last, they might have felt that without a strong opposition stance, some autonomy of the Church might be limited. In other words, the hierarchy was adamant in its desire to plan masses when and where they wanted without need of government

consent. All of these issues combined to break the link between the Traditional Church and the Sandinista government.⁷

The administration, however, sought to overcome division and improve its image with the Vatican by calling attention to successes and achievements of the Revolutionary government. It did so by displaying colorful, easy to read signs and banners that directed messages towards the Pope and the thousands of journalists who reported his visit.

For example, one banner designed for the occasion by Father Maximino Cerezo Barreda shows cartoon people holding signs with Revolutionary messages as well as statues of the Virgin Mary and of Jesus. (Figure 10) The smiling crowd members include *brigadistas*, farmers, religious teachers, and a show of raised hands to symbolize a popular participation in government.



Figure 10. Banner by Father Maximino Cerezo Barreda: *Juan Pablo: Welcome to Free Nicaragua: Thanks to God to the Revolution.* (1983) Reprinted, by permission, from David Kunzle, *Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua: 1979-1992*, 50.

Messages like the banner described above did not bring a positive reaction from the Pope. His visit is generally seen as a failure for the

⁷Mulligan, 230.

Sandinista government. During his brief stay, he personally scolded the Cardenal brothers and others for involving themselves in the government. He also refused to pray for the souls of those killed during the Revolution, and he denounced the popular church. Moreover, the Pope advised people to follow directives of the bishops of the Traditional Church.⁸

Biblical Allusion

Third, Sandinista propaganda incorporated religious elements and Biblical language to show support for FSLN philosophies. Propaganda conveyed ideas like the *new man*, the Sandinista idea of a personal “rebirth” through Revolution. Written and visual propaganda often used events from the Bible and from the life of Jesus Christ to illustrate its point.

For example, some works used the birth of Christ to symbolize the “birth” of the *new man*. One such poster, created by the Ministry of Social Welfare in July of 1980, *Christmas in the Revolution: United in the Birth of the New Man*, shows a manger scene.⁹ Kneeling in front of the infant are a woman, a laborer, a farmer, a soldier. In a similar vein, *The Birth of the New Man*, a mural in a Managua Community center, shows a circle of angels, and villagers, including Che Guevara, Carlos Fonseca,

⁸Walker, ed. *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, 118.

⁹Kunzle, *The Murals of Revolutionary Nicaragua*, 47.

and Augustino Sandino give gifts to the infant. Religious elements combined with *new man* ideas was a common motif in 1980s Nicaragua.

In a more radical tone and inciting criticism from the opposition, poster and cover of the book entitled *Christian Faith and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua*¹⁰ show a machine-gun wielding soldier emerging out of the body of Christ. Despite inciting accusations of revolutionizing religion, Christ-like imagery in propaganda like this connected the religious and political movements that were transpiring at the time.

Biblical language was also prevalent in music written in the time of the Revolution. As part of the Minister of Culture's plan for musicians, government and religion combined efforts to create a special workshop in music called, *The Popular Sound Shop*. A special movement in song resulted in a new genre of music exemplified in the book *Cantos de la Lucha Sandinista* (Songs of the Sandinista Struggle).¹¹

One musical artist, who promoted this endeavor and is still known to perform songs from the Revolution, is Carlos Mejía Godoy. His lyrics seemed an attempt to bring religious experiences down to the grassroots level. One of his songs, *Christ was Born in Palacaguina*, describes a Christ who was born in a small jungle town to "Chepe" and

¹⁰ *White House Digest*, (Washington D.C.: House Office of Media Relations and Planning, 1984), 8.

¹¹ *Cantos de la Lucha Sandinista (Songs of the Sandinista Struggle)*, Managua: Empresa Nicaraguense de Grabaciones Culturales, 1989.

“Maria” where villagers brought him “gold, incense, and myrh, and quesillo.”¹² Lyrics from Mejía’s *Song of Introduction to The Missing Farm Girl*, described God’s face as the humble and simple faces seen in the street and of the “Christ-laborer.” Mejía’s work is a strong example of the common mixing of imagery of religion and Revolution.

FSLN government speeches and documents were also heavy with references to the Bible. *The Sandinista Hymn* refers to the final resting place of Revolutionary martyrs as a land of “milk and honey,” imagery borrowed from the Bible’s Book of Deuteronomy.¹³ *The Sandinista Creed* likens the betrayal of Augustino Sandino to that of Jesus Christ’s. The document names President Somoza a “Judas” and likens his dictatorship to a “Goliath.”¹⁴

The following transcript of a speech given to thirty-thousand laborers in 1984 includes a popular Sandinista slogan, *Between Christianity and revolution, there is no contradiction*, and illustrates how the speaker was able to use familiar Biblical allusions to promote the FSLN government as a prudent vanguard.

...what contradictions are there between the principles of religion and everything we have been doing all these years? [*Shouts of “Between*

¹²Nicaraguan specialty cheese.

¹³*Cantos de la Lucha Sandinista*, 36-37.

¹⁴*White House Digest*, (Washington D.C.: House Office of Media Relations and Planning, 1984), 8.

Christianity and revolution, there is no contradiction!”] But why is there no contradiction? Do you know why? For a few simple reasons. Is this a government of the rich or of the poor? *[The poor!]* Who were those who could not enter the kingdom of heaven? *[the rich!]* In fact, it seems that first a camel had to pass through the eye of a needle. So who does this revolution defend? The poor. Whatever the right wing says, is it true or false that we defend the poor? *[True!]* Who said, “Blessed be the poor for they shall inherit the earth”? *[Jesus Christ!]* And who is giving land to the poor here? Who took land away from the *somocistas* and the rich to give it to the poor? *[Applause and shouts of “the revolution!”]*¹⁵

The mixing religious symbols and Sandinista icons served to benefit the FSLN government in several ways.

Religious workers, including priests, were shown in Sandinista propaganda as capable and wise leaders. This added legitimacy and prestige to the particular ministries handled by priests such as education and culture.

Also, during an important 1983 Vatican visit, propaganda attempted to show the pope and his entourage the accomplishments of the Sandinista government.

¹⁵Marcus, *Nicaragua: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, 286. The speech was also broadcast over television and radio and printed the next day in *Barricada*.

Finally, religious elements and Biblical allusions provided the government a way to promote *sandinismo* as a meaningful experience and way of life.

CONCLUSION

The FSLN government and populace of Nicaragua in 1980 possessed motivation to support the broad propaganda campaign that focused on Sandinista principals and themes. The production of Sandinista propaganda was sophisticated and unique in many ways, but also had its shortcomings.

Sandinista propaganda was successful in transforming the images of its martyrs and heroes into Nicaraguan cultural icons by emphasizing their remarkable qualities. Using a carefully presented image of selected insurgents and other noteworthy characters, Sandinista propaganda incorporated their images into present-day affairs of the country by making them everyday sights.

Visual reach of Sandinista propaganda succeeded in reaching remote areas, military posts, the international scene, non-readers and neo-literates. The production process of the propaganda also afforded artists an opportunity to organize and express views about current and recent events. In the interest of FSLN government, expressive artworks consistently portrayed it as the rightful and capable leadership of the country.

Also to its benefit, the propaganda campaign was a sophisticated process in that it approached the Nicaraguan population in groups. According to statistics like generation, sex, and occupation the propaganda delivered a tailored message. Communications usually promoted cooperation in any number of activities related to FSLN institutions or popular culture.

In addition, propaganda capitalized on the flexibility of the ideology, and blended it with religious symbolism and Biblical language. Using established theology in propaganda widened participation in government programs, and added a measure of legitimacy or purpose to FSLN government's image. Mixing religious and revolutionary symbols also helped promote Sandinista ideals: *new man* and an empowered people.

Propaganda, however, for all its advantages, did not reflect the true reality of 1980s Nicaragua. Rather, its content focused on the modest improvements within society, such as improved education and health care. Sandinista propaganda asked citizens to increase their amount of political participation, but it rarely addressed the inflation, rations, and prolonged warfare.

Looking at the Sandinista propaganda produced in the 1980s as a whole shows us that it was a broad, sophisticated attempt by government to directly connect with the working class. Messages were repetitive and urgent, and often appealed to a citizen's sense of duty or

patriotism. Rural and urban Nicaraguans were asked by propagandistic materials to comply and cooperate with government policies, and to participate in FSLN organizations. The propaganda program was an ambitious and creative program that aimed to compete for the loyalties of the citizenry.

This work has contributed to historiography of the subject matter by examination of Sandinista documents, books, speeches, policies, literature, and music. Looking at the project as a whole provides a clearer picture of the subject. This study has contributed to the area of knowledge and laid the groundwork for further studies.

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