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NICARAGUA



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to the reader

Tricontinental dedicates this edition of its Bulletin to the Nicaraguan people and their glorious Revolution.

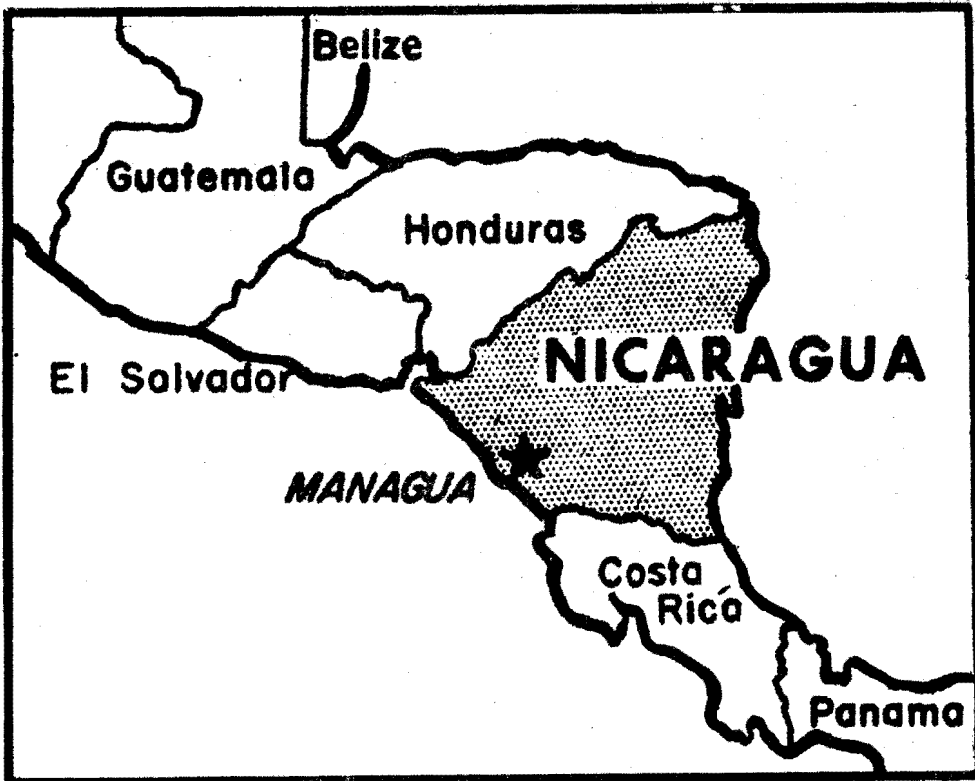
An OSPAAAL delegation visited Sandino's heroic land and interviewed some of the leaders of the Sandinista National Liberation Front and the mass organizations. Their views are presented in the following pages.

OSPAAAL once again expresses its solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolutionary process, which has shaken the central area of our long-suffering American continent.

The economy: reality and perspectives

Samuel Santos





No Nicaraguan can let slip an opportunity to express the thanks of all Nicaraguans for the cooperation, support and moral and material backing that we are receiving from our true brothers in other parts of the world. We are confident that this will continue in the future, especially during the process of rebuilding our country; in fact, we can already see this aid materialize.

BASIC DATA ON NICARAGUA

Nicaragua has an area of 139 000 square kilometers, approximately a third of Central America. Our country contains Lake Nicaragua, with an area of 8000 square kilometers, and Lake Managua, covering 1000 square kilometers.

Administratively — and, to a certain extent, politically — the country is divided into 16 departments, 134 municipalities and 5303 towns. This division is subject to change and revision.



In 1978, we had a population of 2.4 million and a 3.3-percent rate of growth. About 25 percent of the total population lives in the Managua metropolitan area. This percentage is very high and is due to the fact that the rural workers were forced to come to the capital to earn a living. Another 25 percent of the population lives in other urban areas, and the remaining 50 percent lives in the countryside.

As in the rest of Latin America, the agricultural sector is Nicaragua's productive base. In the last two decades, agricultural modernization has proceeded and has even been consolidated, especially in the agro-export sector, in response to imperialism's needs. Now we can use a part of this structure for export and a part to meet our own needs.

Our basic export products are coffee and cotton, which together constitute almost half of our country's total exports.

In terms of traditional production for basic consumption, the peasants raise beans, rice and some other vegetables, growing these crops on farms of under 25 acres, which account for 3.5 percent of the arable land. The rest of the land is a technologically advanced subsector in which investments have been made for export crops. Such farms average around 1200 acres each and are devoted to coffee, cotton, sugarcane and cattle raising.

WHAT BLOCKS DEVELOPMENT

I will now outline some of the chief obstacles that have blocked dynamic development thus far.

1. Our overwhelming dependency on four basic export products: cotton, coffee, sugar and meat.

2. The failure to exploit a large part of our agricultural, forestry and mining potential. Almost half of our territory — what we call the Atlantic coast — has traditionally been abandoned. Part of this zone has fine forests, and it is large enough so it can be used for agriculture, cattle raising and even agro-industrial development.

Mining has always been handled by foreign (mainly US and Canadian) companies, but they have now been nationalized. For decades, these enterprises systematically stole our gold and other minerals by declaring only a minimum amount for export — we're now trying to establish the exact figures — and, in cahoots with Somoza, shipping the rest to their refineries, using the Atlantic port of Isabel, which they controlled.

The fact that, in the first few months following the triumph of the Revolution, we mined more gold than had been reported as average exports for entire years will give you an idea of how much of our mineral wealth was stolen. Another factor is that, if the price was \$200, it was reported as sold at \$70, and duty was paid only on that amount, while the difference went into Somoza's coffers.

3. The concentration of land ownership.

4. The lack of integration between agriculture and industry. For instance, we are big cotton producers — we plant an average of 400 000 acres to cotton every year — but we process a very small amount of it. The rest is exported to the United States, Japan and other countries for processing. Even the small amount that we do process — some 17 000 acres' worth — is sent abroad after we have ginned and packed it and is turned into fibers there before being returned for further processing. Our industrial process is not complete, and we have a great deal to do in this sector. This is an example of what goes on in almost all agricultural areas.

5. The excessive concentration of economic activities in the Pacific region and in Managua. Following the 1972 earthquake, this became even more pronounced, and the development of the rest of the country was totally abandoned. This was largely due to Somoza's and the bourgeoisie's need to increase their control in order to corner everything and rob the country even more.

6. The economy's inability to absorb the work force. This has always caused a high level of unemployment, and, of course, it's much worse now.

7. Unequal income distribution, similar to that in the rest of Latin America.

8. The lack of high school graduates trained for various branches of the economy. Our level of training is very low, and 70 percent of our population is illiterate.



WHAT SOMOZA-ISM LEFT

Near the end of 1972, Managua was seriously damaged by an earthquake that took the lives of nearly 10 000 people and wreaked havoc on our economy. The country still hasn't recovered from this blow. Instead of being used to rebuild the country and create the necessary infrastructure to produce consumer goods and capital, the resources sent to the country for reconstruction purposes were squandered on luxury goods or were simply stolen. There were no priority building programs, and these resources were used for land speculation that led to disputes among the various corporate groups. Then Somoza began to create his own corporation, that entered into direct competition with the traditional private firms. He even set up a bank to channel all the resources, thus extending his control to the country's financial and productive resources. To some extent, this also defined the contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the tyranny.

The drought that hit agriculture during this period only added to this negative picture.

In addition, there was the damage done during the liberation war — not really because of the war but rather because of the mentality of Somoza and his National Guard, which behaved like a veritable army of occupation. All the territories that we liberated had been totally destroyed. Some 40 000 people were killed during this period. Throughout the 19 years of war since the founding of the Sandinista Front, a total of 100 000 people were wounded — I don't have the exact figures — and 4000 houses were destroyed, because, as I said, Somoza's forces acted like an army of occupation. We also lost 500 buses and other vehicles — a tremendously high figure for a country with a population of 2.4 million.

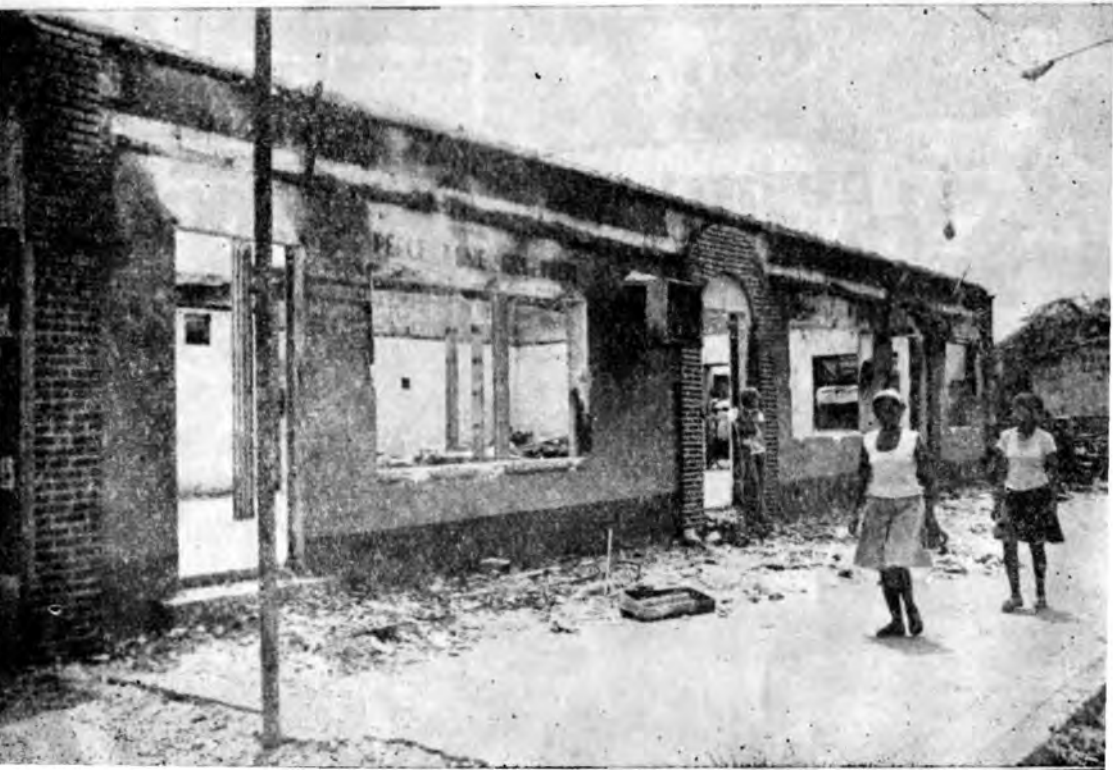
Agricultural losses amounted to something like \$200 million as a result of problems in planting — especially cotton, because the sowing season begins in May, and the land has to be prepared in March and April, the period when the liberation war was at its peak. After our triumph on July 19, we quickly began to get the land ready, but we were able to plant only a little over 110 000 acres.

Industrial losses — industrialization was generally incipient, as I said earlier — amounted to 25-30 percent. Industrial raw materials and finished products showed a loss of 45 percent, and capital assets, a 15-20 percent loss.

Unemployment in the building sector in the Managua metropolitan area alone has risen to 20 000 workers, which affects some 110 000 people in all. Managua's population is approximately 500 000, so this represents an unemployment rate of slightly over 20 percent in the building sector, alone.

Somoza's henchmen and the local bourgeoisie, especially the financial bourgeoisie, took \$275 million out of the country in 1978 and \$300 million in the first half of 1979, or \$575 million in all.

In April 1979, Somoza devaluated the cordoba from seven to ten to the dollar in order to finance arms and other military expenditures, but exporters were paid eight or nine to the dollar, creating a differential that the tyrant used to pay military costs.



As far as public finances are concerned, 1978 income amounted to 1.5 billion cordobas. This year we will take in 1 billion cordobas, but our outlay will be 2 billion.

In August 1979, requirements in the public sector rose to \$1.03 billion. Reflecting their greed. Somoza and his clique had made deals with private creditors at a very high interest rate for \$550 million and with other agencies and governments for another \$480 million. The foreign debt in the private sector stands at \$400 million, so our total debt stands at \$1.43 billion, and we pay \$150 million a year for debt servicing. This is very high, especially considering that so much of it involved Somoza's contracts with international commercial banks for arms and cash that he could steal from the country.

Our deficit this year is \$670 million, the difference between the \$850 million we owe and the \$180 million we are able to pay.



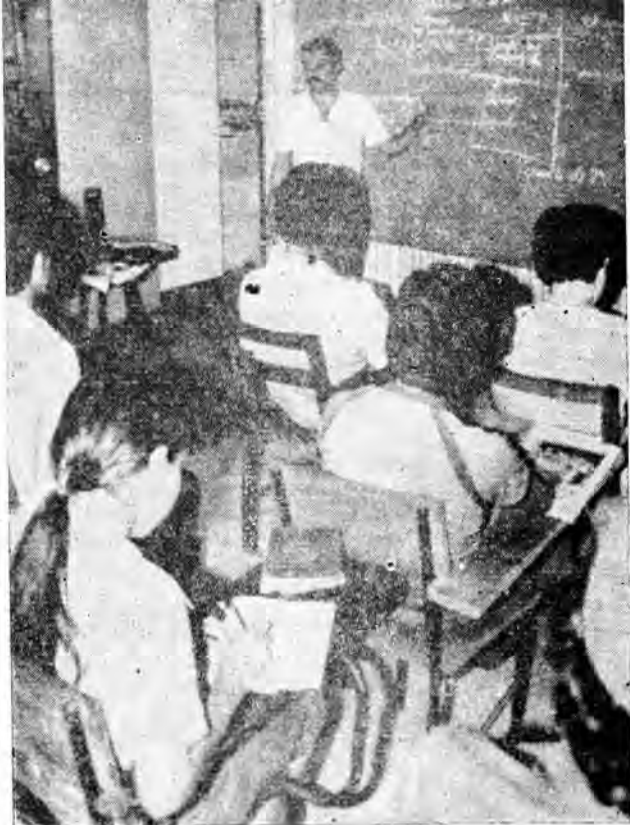
IMMEDIATE TASK

As you can see, the task ahead is a tough one. We are going to face a serious crisis, especially in the first quarter of 1980, when unemployment will triple what it is now. Because of the situation I've just described, people will be hungry. So, the first quarter of 1980 will be a great challenge to us. In order to confront this situation, we have drawn up an annual economic recovery program that will be based on austerity in the state's financial policy. Productive measures will be taken to reactivate the economy, especially agriculture, using loans we have acquired abroad. It is an ambitious annual project, but we are going to try to implement it with the same dynamism that we showed in our military offensive. At least we have the morale to try to achieve it.

Our government has indicated certain basic areas for reconstruction, including the entire Atlantic coast and other areas in the northern part of the country that had been traditionally abandoned. We are building a canal from Managua through Matagalpa to Puerto Cabezas that will link that completely isolated northern region and the Atlantic coast with the rest of the country.

The Somozas got their first loan to build a highway from Managua to the Atlantic coast in the late '40s, but they never finished it. For 30 years they renewed the loan





annually; as a result, the highway can now be considered the most expensive one in the world.

We've already begun work on this highway, using our own resources while seeking additional funds, and we hope to finish it in three years.

Since we don't yet have the communication means to connect the Atlantic coast and the north with the rest of the country, we have started helping these areas financially with credit, technical assistance, medical brigades and education, through a program we call the airlift in which various institutes and ministries are participating. The airlift is now in full swing, and we have reached 11 localities in the area by plane — helicopters would be ideal for serving these areas, but we don't have the resources. Volunteers have offered to work in this rough region, including a medical brigade that is moving through the area with considerable difficulty. We're already working in 11 places and helping several others.

This is the perspective on the agricultural front: social improvement by bringing water, light, sewage systems and intensive public health programs to various cities and communities. Five or six different institutes used to be in charge of public health, which made it easier to embezzle their funds. Now we've unified them, but, as you can understand, this has created many institutional problems, and we are working night and day to straighten them out.



As I said earlier, in the field of education, we are dealing with 70-percent illiteracy. We have already made a survey, and we hope to launch a massive literacy campaign in February or March 1980. We should emphasize the great efforts the Cuban comrades have made to help by sending us 1200 teachers and several medical brigades that are working in the rural areas, since we have practically no doctors or teachers.

We also foresee a social improvement in housing — both rural and urban. A volunteer brigade has gone to the Atlantic coast to study the type of housing that should be built there and the best way to improve the communities that already exist.

Another task that has high priority is the infrastructure: highways, energy, communications, telecommunications, etc. The crops are ripe in some areas, and we have no way to harvest them.

URGENT NEEDS

Due to our inability to plant crops and because of the other reasons I have already mentioned, we need 300 tons of food a day.

Heavy rainstorms have flooded out a large part of the bean harvest we managed to plant in pasture lands. We also need 2160 tons of milk.



Our health needs are many and urgent. The clinics and hospitals in Managua face a tremendous shortage of doctors, surgical equipment, medicine and beds, and the rest of the country has no clinics or hospitals to speak of. The incidence of mortality from curable diseases is very high. For example, many deaths in childbirth in the outlying areas could be avoided some place else where there is adequate medical attention.

We also need vaccines of all kinds. The workers in this sector are bending all efforts to carry out a vaccination campaign and have managed to assemble 60 000 doses. We also need transportation for this kind of work.

Meanwhile, because of long-standing food deficiencies, there is a high level of malnutrition, and we need many establishments where these cases can be treated.

We also need instruments and equipment. We even need machetes — the basic work tool in the north — because the machete factory located on the northern highway in the industrial sector was completely destroyed when it was hit by two or three 500-pound bombs.

It must be remembered that the National Guard engaged in the kind of totally inhuman wanton destruction that is typical of an army of occupation, wiping out everything that might be useful. For example, all the industrial sectors located on the highway north of Managua were razed. In education, we have to train our own teachers, which is why we say that the Cuban comrades' efforts have been tremendous. We have no classrooms, no desks, no educational materials — the list is endless.

In housing, we have a deficit of 200 000 dwellings, 4000 of which were destroyed during the war — remember that our total population is only 2.4 million. In slum areas, the comrades have made houses out of plastic bags; sometimes they don't even have cardboard.

It is probable that coffee will be our only export crop this year. Cultivation had to be postponed because of the liberation war, and we estimate that some 20 or 25 percent of the harvest will be lost.

We also have a tremendous meat shortage, because, as the liberation war continued and the oligarchy and the Somoza clique realized we were going to win, they took herds of cattle out of the country.

Perhaps this explanation will give you an understanding of the situation that exists in our country. Sometimes we feel that not much is getting out about our plight.

A dream becomes REALITY

Tomás Borge



What are the opposition forces in Nicaragua doing?

Of course there can be no true revolution without a counterrevolution that is revealed on all levels: ideological, political and probably military. To put it another way, the counterrevolution is almost certain to show itself militarily at some point.

Ideologically, the struggle has been expressed in various ways, which are reflected in the country's newspapers. These include subtly-phrased right-wing positions whose form differs from those of the past — now the right must use language that is supposedly or seemingly revolutionary — and ultraleftist ideological positions which seek to deform the process by engaging in irrational, dogmatic demonstrations yet strike a revolutionary pose — which has nothing to do with the reality in which we are living. Many of these people are honest but confused. Others are not so honest, and it is probable that the ultraleft — which has never before made much of a ripple in Nicaragua — is being stimulated from abroad; that is, that CIA agents or agents from ultraleft organizations outside our country have been infiltrated. For example, Trotskyism was never a factor in Nicaragua until just recently, when a number of Trotskyite demonstrations were held; Maoism is still another aberration. There has also been an attempt to form a Sandinista Social Democratic Party in Nicaragua — that was the name it went by

until we protested and the government issued a law prohibiting any political organization except the Sandinista Front and its fighting and mass branches from using the Sandinista name. Now it's been forced to call itself the Social Democratic Party. I once said it was neither Social Democratic nor Sandinista and this was confirmed when the Socialist International disclaimed it. Actually, its members came from the old traditional parties that no longer dare to use their former names. Instead, they hide behind new ones — without changing their old political and ideological line.

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of the reaction, the counterrevolution, is the so-called Social Christian Party and one of its wings, led by a certain González, who is also Chairman of a so-called Human Rights Commission. González has tried to use his office as Chairman of the Human Rights Commission for counterrevolutionary propaganda purposes, to try to discredit our Revolution abroad — which efforts have been met with approval and joy by Latin America's reactionary sectors.

On the military level, the enemy hasn't been able to muster the strength to do anything more than harass us.

At the same time, we know that members of Somoza's National Guard who have links with Honduran military men — not the government officially, but certain counterrevolutionary individuals in the Honduran Army — are now in Honduras. Still, most of the National Guardsmen there and in other countries are completely demoralized. The National Guard's military machine was thoroughly broken



up and dismantled. Thousands of its members are in jail, and others are in exile in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Miami, where they have organized small counterrevolutionary groups that send us letters threatening to kill us.

I don't think the armed counterrevolution can make a serious thrust at the moment; and, by the time they get themselves together, we'll be able to thwart them. Of course we're ready to do that now, too, though perhaps with certain limitations. Probably, by the time they're able to make a counterrevolutionary move, we'll be able to crush them completely. This is the status of the counterrevolution right now.

Major, a Managua newspaper reported that a Somoza henchman who was living in Honduras was killed by Honduran agents — who robbed him of \$60 000 — and that a Honduran Catholic priest who witnessed the murder has written a letter saying that exiled Cuban priests, including a certain Monsignor Boza Masvidal, had provided some of the money. Do you have any evidence of this kind of collusion between Cuban counterrevolutionaries in the United States and Somoza's henchmen in these neighboring countries?

Of course, we have lots of information on collaboration by Cuban counterrevolutionaries and also by capitalists, corporations, Senators and other equally despicable financial supporters of the counterrevolution in Nicaragua. Quite a bit of money was collected in the United States, and it may be, as the Honduran priest said, that Mr. Bravo had some of it on him when he was killed under mysterious circumstances in Honduras. I can't prove it, because the truth about this symbol of the Somoza counterrevolution isn't known as yet.

In any case, the counterrevolutionaries have collected, a lot of money in the United States. We also know that most of the money goes to provide them with a soft life, and the embezzlement — if that's the right word for it — doesn't worry us very much in terms of the effect this money might have, because we know from experience how corrupt Somoza and his

followers are. Most of that money will be spent on themselves, to enable them to maintain the corrupt way of life to which they have become accustomed.

This leads me to ask you about direct CIA actions against the Sandinista Revolution.

To be perfectly honest, we have no proof of specific CIA actions. We know from experience that it is very clever. Our

security service is still very limited. We are improving it, of course, but so far we have no specific proof of CIA activity, although we assume — just as we assume that the sun will rise every day — that the CIA has counterrevolutionary sources in our country. We have no proof that the sun will rise tomorrow; it's simply a scientifically-based intuition. I make the comparison in order to express my subjective certainty — based on objective historic observations that cover the struggles of all our peoples of Latin America — that the CIA is active in our country's internal affairs.



The United States has always considered Latin America to be its own backyard. What is the Sandinista Revolution's policy toward the government of the United States?

We have followed a prudent, mature policy that is, at the same time, an honorable one. When the Yankee Ambassador came to Nicaragua, we met him — I myself went — at the airport. I told him it was the first time a US Ambassador arriving in Nicaragua had been met by a Nicaraguan official who received him standing up instead of on his knees. I also told him he was always welcome in our country as long as he respected our dignity and our sovereignty. That has been our policy toward the United States: cordial relations based on mutual respect, the demand that it respect us. We respect it to the extent that it respects us. It has given us some help with foodstuffs, and we appreciate that aid. Some loans are now being negotiated, and they might also be considered aid. We accept this aid as long as it does not impinge on our sovereignty, our dignity and our independence; they are quite aware of that.

I get the impression that there is a sector in the United States — and here I mean not imperialism but the United States, where contradictions exist — that wants to avoid further problems, so as not to create another Vietnam or another Cuba in our country. There are other sectors that lean toward a repetition of the Cuban situation, of the aggression

against Cuba; they are even ready to repeat what happened in Vietnam. These are very aggressive sectors that, at the moment, do not represent a majority. Of course, imperialism's essential nature has to be kept in mind, but so do the internal contradictions that exist within the United States.

We have been very inflexible in some cases and flexible in others, because what we are interested in is having the Revolution survive, thinking not only of ourselves but also of the other peoples of Latin America. In other words, the Revolution must be sustained, and we have to be clever in the field of international politics and diplomacy. It's another phase of the war, in which we have to win the skirmishes in order to win the battles; sometimes it's wise to pull back, to be flexible in the diplomatic war, just as it's sometimes necessary to be flexible and pull back in a military war. We never lose sight of our final goal, so our relations with the United States will be as cordial and harmonious as the United States wishes them to be — while, I repeat, this is always very closely linked to the respect that country has for our dignity, our sovereignty and our independence.

At the same time, we have outlined a policy of national independence, relations with all the countries in the world and friendship with all the countries in the world that wish to have friendly relations with us. We have established relations with the Soviet Union, and we have exercised our sovereignty in telling the Soviets that we respect their great, powerful and friendly country. Moreover, as I have said scores of times, we have also expressed the great love we feel for the Cuban people, because of their infinite generosity and unconditional solidarity. We will maintain an independent foreign policy.



What about the plan to establish a Council of State?

As a founder of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, you predicted the Sandinista victory. What do you envision for your country now, following that victory?

Ah, for my homeland I see new victories, really; but I'm not thinking about just my homeland now — I'm thinking about all of Latin America. Of course, my dreams, the dreams of every revolutionary, are of people filled with joy, a wide reach of gardens and smiles for the future. I'm thinking of Latin America and of this dream that is now moving toward reality, because from now on the problem in Nicaragua is simply administrative, organizational, developmental. The doors to paradise have been opened in Nicaragua, and all we have to do is walk through. Now our dream is to open more doors, to more new paradises, in Latin America.

I don't think the Council of State will essentially change the rules of the game, because the course a revolution takes is determined by something else, by real power. The state coercive bodies — the Army, the Police and the state security bodies — are in the hands of the Sandinistas, who also have the support of the masses, the mass organizations. Moreover, a revolutionary organization exists. We could be very flexible — and I don't think we've been flexible enough; I think we have been too radical. In Chile, for example, real power was in the hands of the reaction, and the reaction determined Chile's future for some time. We can do whatever we want with the power we have. We can remove the government and replace it with another if we like. We are astute enough to have a good government, composed of steady people, many of whom hold positions close to or identical with those of the Sandinistas. We



could remove and replace Ministers, but we are astute, mature, and we are doing what is demanded of us at each step of the way.

The Council of State won't change basic power in Nicaragua at all.

It may be that the Council of State will be composed of people with good proposals, who want to help. At first, I wasn't in favor of it — but for other reasons, because I thought it was a waste of time, that it would involve too much talking. Revolutions have to be made, not discussed. That was my reason — not because it would change the essence of power or because it might cause a serious problem that would completely change the rules of the game. So, in order to apply the concept of giving an opportunity to all the forces that, to one degree or another, took part in the struggle against Somoza, the Council of State will be set up when conditions are more favorable for it, when too much talking won't imply losing too much time.

What are the basic values, the basic experiences that led to the Nicaraguan victory, that can be passed on to the rest of Latin America and to all the forces that are fighting in Africa and Asia?

You said it first, and we repeated it: Without unity, there is no victory. Our Revolution made a modest contribution by reasserting the correctness of armed struggle. Armed struggle is one of the historically necessary ways of defeating the ruling classes in Latin America. I might say that this fairly obvious truth evoked smiles of skepticism among certain supposedly revolutionary sectors in Latin America. It was a classic truth; the famous midwife of history is a classic historic truth. Yet, in Latin America, the need for unity of the revolutionary move-

ment was not very clear. Some believed it was possible to hegemonize the process, and I heard such aberrations as that our policy of alliances meant having no allies.

We demonstrated two things: first, unity is possible; second, without unity, there is no victory. We are absolutely certain that, if we hadn't united, we would still be fighting or perhaps our people would have exhausted their energies in struggle and the enemy would have triumphed. The Sandinista revolutionaries made a basic patriotic decision — I don't even say "revolutionary" — to unite in a single organic structure around a single strategy. It wasn't very hard for us to do that, and I'm not sure why — perhaps because we started out as a single organization and then split; we all came from the same trunk. Perhaps in Latin America the problem is more complex because there are several different families that have pitched different kinds of tents; we had shared a single tent for a long time before we split up.

Not only were we able to unite as a revolutionary Sandinista organization; we were also able to unite the entire country, all the people and the various social sectors against a single enemy. Perhaps our chief contribution to the revolutionary struggle in Latin America is the unity of the revolutionary movement and the great national unity we achieved in Nicaragua — a national unity that would have been impossible without the unity of the Sandinista Front. The fact that our organization united and consolidated its vanguard position enabled us to lead the process and be the determining factor in it, the sun around which the planetary system of unity revolved.

If the Cuban Revolution contributed, let us say, the great experience, the path of armed struggle in Latin America, we, on this same path, can perhaps be said to have contributed unity in the revolutionary movement in Latin America. If revolutionaries unite, they win; that is a basic truth and a starting point. Without unity, the

struggle can go on for centuries — because, without unity, there will be no victory.

What is your opinion of imperialism's new tactic, following the Nicaraguan experience, of making changes in certain dictatorships, as in El Salvador and South Korea?

True, imperialism is playing with the future of those countries by making those changes, but it could backfire, because it isn't so easy to change the course of history with political maneuvering. I view the situation in El Salvador very cautiously, and I wouldn't want to express an opinion without considering very carefully what I'm going to say.

Undoubtedly, El Salvador has a revolutionary movement today, a movement with limitations and weaknesses, the main one being that same old problem of division. If the struggle sharpens in El Salvador and armed struggle becomes a serious factor, unity may emerge, because bloodshed also brings people together. I think the public commitments the new Salvadoran government has made should be exploited as much as possible. You have to move your pieces with great skill on the chessboard; you can't simply take a Manichean position that black is black and white is white. That's very easy, but it isn't right. You have to distinguish among shades of black and shades of white and not take opposing positions

mechanically. In my opinion, you have to move with the agility of a fish in water, or at least with the agility of a horse in the field. I don't know; maybe history itself is what teaches men how things should be done. In any case, it seems to me we should look very carefully at the case of El Salvador. The important thing is for the Salvadoran revolutionaries to keep their eyes on the final goal. That's what's important. It is also important for them to agree on how to get there.

I really can't say much about the situation in South Korea. I know the people there are oppressed, that the country has been occupied by US troops and that there are very deep contradictions. And, of course, the death of Park Chung Hee is doubtless a part of imperialism's maneuvering.

The CIA launches its maneuvers and acts of aggression within the general rules of imperialism's aggressive principles. But, I repeat, there are internal contradictions. Maybe the CIA killed Park Chung Hee; maybe not. I'm not sure. It certainly had something to do with the need for a formal change in Korea in order to hold back the Korean people's struggle, but the peoples' struggles aren't easy to contain. They're like a dam that overflows in a storm or a hurricane. When there's a hurricane warning, measures are taken so there'll be as little damage as possible. Revolutions are sometimes like hurricanes: imperialism takes its measures to diminish their effects, but the hurricanes still can't be held back, and revolutions will never be held back. Perhaps some day some way will be invented to control hurricanes, but no one will ever invent a way to control the evolution of history.



Major, it has been said that a small part of the Nicaraguan victory was due to the international solidarity in which OSPAAAL had the honor of participating. How great a contribution did this solidarity make to your country's revolutionary process?

Yes, OSPAAAL always expressed its support and solidarity every time we had any serious problem. I remember, for example, that, when Comrade Carlos Fonseca was imprisoned, OSPAAAL launched an active solidarity campaign to set him free. This was repeated on many occasions.

All the peoples of the world expressed their solidarity with us, and this was a very important factor in our victory. While Central American and Latin-American solidarity were more visible and could be expressed in more practical terms, we also had support from people all over the world, including the people of the United States. I attended a meeting in Libya with representatives of various Palestinian and African parties and organizations, so I know that solidarity with our Revolution, with our struggle, was expressed everywhere. Wherever a Sandinista went, he was welcomed from the heart, with aid and affection.

This is still so: wherever we go, the people and their revolutionary organizations express their affection, support and

warmth for our Revolution. It's very similar to what happened at the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, though there are differences in terms of solidarity, in the sense that broader sectors of the Latin-American and other peoples support our Revolution — because the groups that ally themselves with and support the Revolution have grown. I believe the Cuban Revolution has a great deal to do with this, because it has gained such great prestige, such great authority, and has so completely unmasked its enemies' lies that the people who were taken in by *Readers' Digest* and other such pulp publications have lost faith in their tales; history has shown them to be false. I've heard that, especially in the United States, they're saying the same kind of things about our Revolution that they said about Cuba — primitive, stupid things such as that children can be taken away from their parents and that, if you go to Nicaragua, they'll never let you out.

So the phenomenon is being repeated, but now there's a much smaller margin of credibility than in the past, which also gives solidarity more scope. Of course a number of governments and individuals have also shown very great solidarity with us. I would like to mention, in this regard, General Omar Torrijos, President José López Portillo, President Rodrigo Carazo Odio of Costa Rica, former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, former Costa Rican President José Figueras and our comrade and brother Fidel Castro. Muammar El-Qaddafi of Libya and other governments and world leaders have also shown their complete solidarity, for which we are very grateful.



The workers and SANDINO-ISM

Iván García

The Central Organization of Sandinista Workers (CST) is pleased to extend a fraternal welcome to the comrades representing OSPAAAL at this José Benito Escobar Pérez Sandinista house. We are pleased because you represent one of the organizations that has expressed its solidarity most consistently with the Nic-

araguan people's struggle throughout the last few years. We know your aims and think that you will make a big contribution to the development of our CST, which is one of the political groups to which the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) is giving the greatest priority.





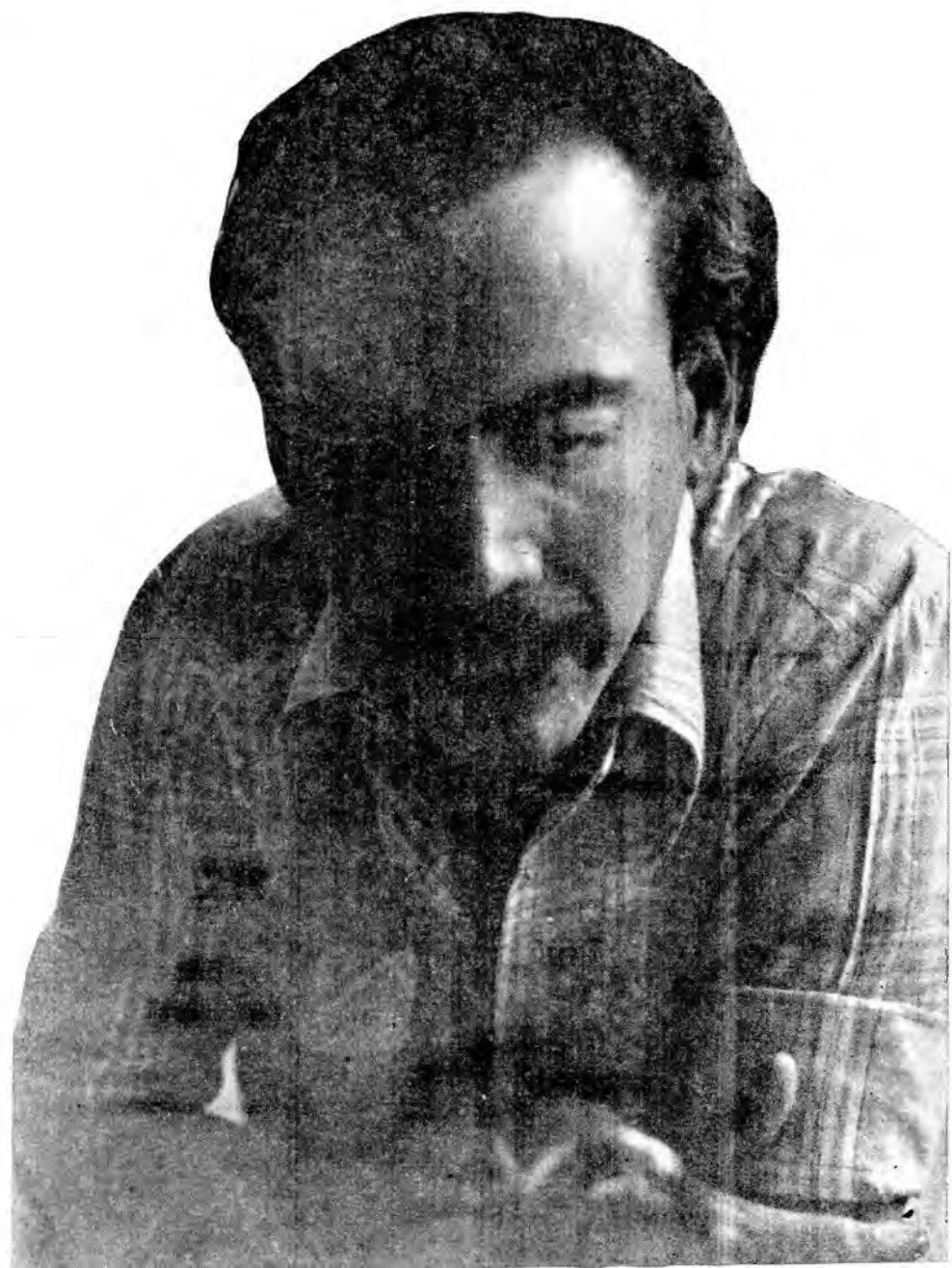
What is the history of the CST?

Our organization was created to meet the needs of our rural and urban workers who, before our Sandinista people's revolution triumphed, were pitilessly repressed by the Somoza military dictatorship, slavish representative of imperialist interests in our country. The regime used the hated National Guard to murder thousands of comrades and to repress the labor movement, the trade union move-

ment, in the mountains the countryside and the cities.

The beloved peasant leader Comrade Bernardino Díaz Ochoa was one of the many victims of the genocidal repression. National Guardsmen murdered him in the mountains of Yaosca in the '70s because he organized the peasants in trade unions, just as they murdered Comrade Lydia Madariaga, a miners' trade union leader, near Santa Rosa del Peñón, in León Department. Many crimes were committed against trade union leaders who courageously opposed the dictatorship and sup-







ported the workers. Scores of comrades went to jail — if they were lucky — or —if they weren't — to the "hill of lead" here in Managua, victims of the National Guard and of the repression that the most reactionary sectors of the bourgeoisie, working hand in glove with the dictatorship, unleashed against our working people.

Now, we would like to make a brief analysis of the historic antecedents of our CST, because we want our people and the other fraternal peoples of the world to know that our trade union federation, our class organization, didn't

start from scratch on July 19 — that is, it didn't begin with the triumph of the Sandinista people's revolution. The Sandinista National Liberation Front, the true vanguard of the people — and especially of the workers in the countryside and the cities — started to carry out organizational and political work in 1961 and 1962. The first thing it did was boost the struggle to attain immediate demands, viewing this as the means for incorporating us in the revolutionary political armed struggle to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship. Thus, in the mountains in the north, our beloved comrade and brother Rigoberto Cruz, going under the pseudo-

nym of Pablo Ubeda, a pill salesman — a medicine man, as our peasant brothers say — organized a vast network of trade unions and cooperatives, with the aim of incorporating the peasants in the revolutionary armed struggle.

Comrades Francisco Belchele Moreno and Enrique Lorente Ruiz also did important work in the factories in our capital — the Corona Oil Factory, for one — organizing the workers in truly revolutionary trade unions. This fell within the FSLN's general line of organizing the workers and showing them the true path they should follow in order to achieve full economic and social independence.

More recently, since 1974, the FSLN, working clandestinely, encouraged rural and urban working class organization. The Revolutionary Workers' Committees (COR), the Working People's Trade Union Movement and the Sandinista Democratic Working People's Trade Union Movement were created as a viable workers' alternative in the political-trade union struggle against the dictatorship.

Because of their efforts, our best workers' cadres, members of the FSLN, were harassed by the dictatorship. Many were murdered — for example, the comrades of Solectra Comercial SA were murdered at kilometer 13 and a half on the new highway to León in 1975.

Throughout this period, the FSLN also supported the Association of Agricultural

Workers (ATC), which became another target of the large landowners' and the National Guard's reprisals.

The historic antecedents of the CST include both the efforts of our brothers in the mountains and those of our Sandinista brothers in the cities. After the triumph of the Revolution, our National Leadership urged that the CST be organized to represent all the workers and channel them in using the power that the Sandinista People's Revolution has given our people, especially the workers.

Our organization is forging ahead. We now have around 350 trade unions throughout the country — 160 here in Managua, alone. Even though we have serious limitations and weaknesses, due to lack of knowledge — the dictatorship kept it from us in the past — our working people have spontaneously and voluntarily set up trade unions in the factories, shops and industries, and the CST councils are seeking leadership and guidance. This is because our people, our workers, have adopted Sandino-ism. Sandino-ism is a part of the history of the workers and has been enriched and fully assimilated by both rural and urban workers. They saw the FSLN as the only viable means for overthrowing the dictatorship and thus breaking the ties that bound us to US imperialism; they see it now as the only viable means for achieving social and economic liberation.



Somoza-ism left an incredibly high number of unemployed. How will the CST contribute to the Sandinista leadership's efforts to find work for those who have no jobs?

To speak only of unemployment would be to limit the CST's participation too much. The Government of National Reconstruction, along with the National Leadership of the FSLN, is working on a project for reanimating the national economy in 1980. Several work commissions have been created as a part of this plan; if I'm not mistaken, seven commissions have been set up to get the country's economy off the ground in 1980. All the

social sectors in Nicaragua are participating in this plan, and the CST is represented on most of the commissions. The commissions tackle such topics as supplies, consumption, prices and a solution to our country's astronomical level of unemployment. The CST, the Government of National Reconstruction and the National Leadership of the FSLN are all working on this problem.

What other tasks does the CST tackle?

— We have two main goals: to increase production and to crush the counterrevolution. With regard to the former, we are making the Nicaraguan workers aware of the need to work hard and to put in overtime so as to get our country's econ-



omy back on its feet, so our revolution can solve the most pressing problems facing our people: problems of health, education, etc.

The CST takes part in all the activities planned by our revolutionary government. For example, a census was taken not long ago to find out how many illiterates there were in the country, and all the affiliates of the CST in the various departments worked hard on it; next, we will be playing an active role in the literacy campaign, itself. Censuses on literacy levels among the workers are also being made, with the participation of the Lead-

ership Boards, in the trade unions. We are planning to create brigades of comrades who know how to read and write, so they can teach those comrades who can't. (The Somoza military dictatorship's scorn for the workers was expressed in many ways, one of which was its keeping them illiterate.)

In the state enterprises — that our people recovered from the dictatorship — the CST is showing our affiliates how to take care of the machinery and how to handle it, because what these industries produce from now on will benefit the great masses of our people.

Nicaragua is a country of workers and peasants. What relations do you have with the Association of Agricultural Workers?

Our Sandinista People's Revolution includes total unity among all sectors and the broad masses of our people. Thus, the CST, the ATC and the Committees of Sandinista Defense (CDS), the eyes and ears of the Revolution, work together on all the political projects assigned us by our vanguard, the FSLN. The National Secretariat of Mass Organizations, the top leadership organization of these three political groups, meets every week to analyze the various work areas, checking on both errors and positive advances and implementing a broad policy for organizing the masses at all levels.

Is the CST the only trade union organization in the country at present, or do other unions represent the workers in the private sector?

There are other central organizations of trade unions, such as the independent General Federation of Workers (CGT), the Central Organization of Trade Union Unity and Action (CAUS) and the Central Organization of Nicaraguan Worker (CTN)

These trade unions have existed for years in our country — the CGT, for example, has been around for 35 years or so. We aren't going to go into whether

or not we had the correct line in the past, because we believe history has shown that, throughout the history of the revolutionary movement in Central America and Latin America, we have set an example on the concept and importance of unity for the workers' triumph. Following our organization's line on unity, the CST wants to organize our working people in a United Central Organization of Workers, without setting any conditions and without any coercion. The only thing we ask, in order to achieve unity, is that the other workers' trade unions follow the general line of our Sandinista People's Revolution, for we can't join sectors that don't support the Revolution. We have already begun to make the necessary contacts for meeting and talking with other trade unions and have even carried out joint activities.* Some of these trade unions have maintained the same line of struggle they had under Somozaism. For example, the CTN, which has a Social Christian orientation, continues to view the state as the enemy of the workers, so when the Government of National Reconstruction and the CST called on the workers to donate their Christmas bonuses to a special fund for the unemployed, the CTN planned a protest dem-

* This interview took place before the Central Organization of Sandinista Workers (CST), the Central Organization of Nicaraguan Workers (CTN) and the Central Organization of Trade Union Unity and Action (CAUS) signed a unity agreement on January 28, 1980, in which they proclaimed their decision to confront the counter-revolutionary maneuvers of Nicaragua's domestic and foreign enemies; guaranteed their support to the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the Council of the Government of National Reconstruction and the revolutionary alliance between the working class and the poor peasants; and announced their joint participation in a National Trade Union Commission.

onstration in front of the government house, demanding the Christmas bonus. Our main objective is unity among all sectors because our present tactic is to isolate the traitorous bourgeoisie, the leftist extremists and the hangers of Somoza-ism and join in a single whole all the positive forces of the Revolution under the leadership of the FSLN.

Is the Social Christian trade union organization influential? Does it group several sectors?

Prior to the triumph of the Revolution, the sectors that had the greatest — relative — freedom were those with Social-Democratic leanings. They had more mobilizations than Sandino-ism — our movement had to survive working underground. This trade union organization grew to have great influence, primarily among the service workers — the hospital workers, in particular. But, luckily, the CST has been working steadily with those workers, and now large sectors of them have joined the CST, though we don't deny that the CTN still controls some sectors of the hospital workers, which we think are going to die of inertia.

How is the CST structured?

The CST still has a provisional structure. Its top leadership body is the Council of Organizations, composed of two delegates from each trade union, elected democratically in meetings held in the trade unions. This Council of Organiza-

tions chooses the Executive Committee of the CST. Then we have a provisional National Coordinating Committee, composed of delegates from the 14 departments. It is subordinate to the National Secretariat of the CST, which is composed of four comrades from the FSLN who have come from the working class and have long years of membership and action in the ranks of the FSLN to their credit.

As I have already explained, this structure is provisional, because the CST will soon hold its first National Constituent Assembly, in which a National Assembly, a National Council and an Executive Secretariat will be set up. Delegates from all the departments will participate, and we will try to make it a very large forum. It will be an event of great historic importance in our country, for it will be the first time that, in complete freedom, the workers will be choosing their own leaders, determining the direction their workers' organization will take and setting the historic goals of the CST. We are hard at work, drawing up the basic documents for the Assembly: the Declaration of Principles and the statutes that will regulate our CST's functioning.

You have spoken of the internal development of the CST. What are its aims on the international plane?

Maintaining broad solidarity with all the workers in the world, especially with our Latin-American brothers. We believe that we have an internationalist revolutionary moral debt to all the peoples in the world that expressed solidarity with us in the past, because it is well known that solidarity was one of the main factors that contributed to our revolutionary triumph.

This is why, now more than ever before, we have a historic duty to extend solidarity to other Latin-American workers and the workers of all the world, because we want to show that Sandino's cause is the cause of all workers who are exploited, repressed and humiliated by the dictatorial regimes imposed in any part of the earth by US imperialism.

The CST hasn't joined any international workers' organization as yet, but, logically, we lean toward the positions of the revolutionary workers' movement. Comrades who represent imperialist-style labor organizations, such as the US ones, have visited us in our headquarters, and a delegate from an Israeli organization was here not long ago, offering us scholarships and a whole lot of other things. We noted their offers, but we didn't swallow the bait. We are closely linked to the fraternal peoples that have truly popular governments. As proof of this, the CST has sent a large number of comrades to take political-trade-union courses in fraternal Cuba, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia.

What message would you like to send to the workers of Africa, Asia and Latin America, based on the triumphant experience of the Sandinista Revolution?

Our message to our brothers in Asia, Africa and Latin America who are suffering from the policy of apartheid, neo-colonialism, Zionism and other theses

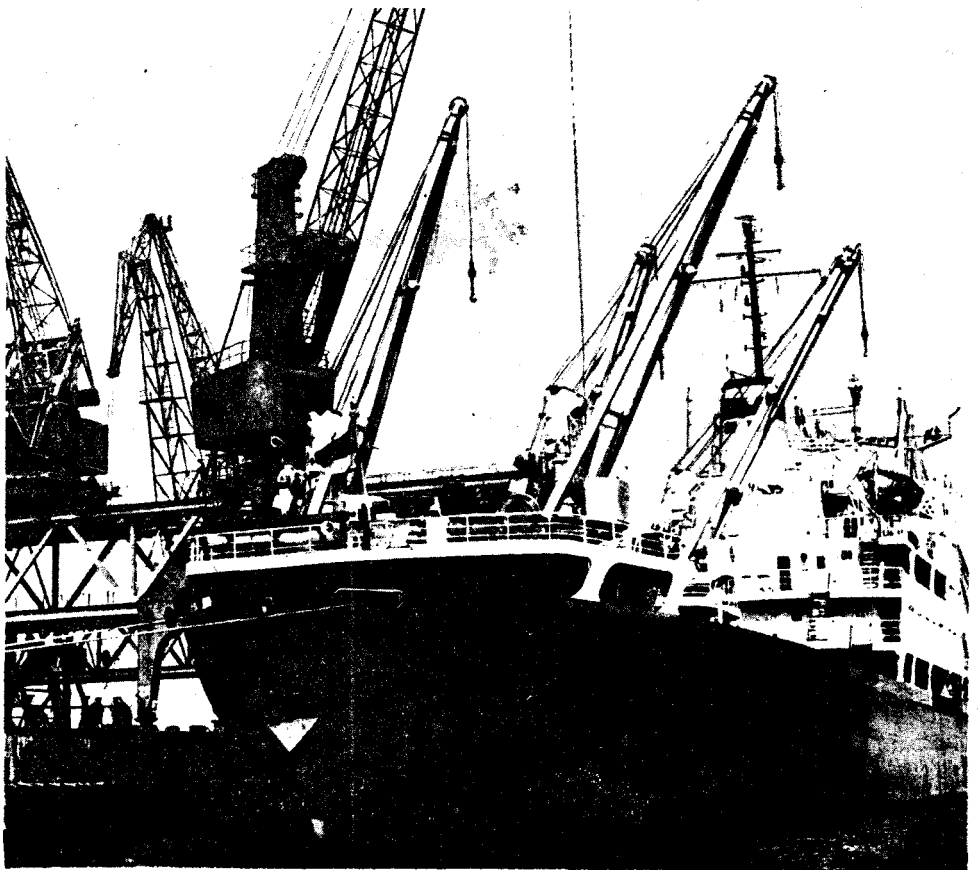
pushed by imperialism is that the workers' triumph is inevitable, that no human or technical force can halt the advance of the peoples' revolutions. We believe what Major Guevara said: "When a revolution is a true one, men fight to the death for it." We Nicaraguans have overthrown one of the most criminal dictatorships in Latin America, a dictatorship that never had the least scruples about bombing its own people and that had an army that treated us as foreigners — even though it was composed of Nicaraguans, it acted like an invading army, like a foreign army — and we defeated it. We defeated it, in spite of all its technical advantages. Whereas we had 400 guns in all throughout the country, the National Guard had around 15 000 or 20 000. It had planes, tanks — everything a repressive army has. But, even so, we defeated it, because the people united around their vanguard. Thus, the comrades in the other countries still subjected to foreign control should remember that their triumph is assured when they manage to unite all the people around a vanguard that can lead their revolutionary process ably, using a correct policy.

We are sure that our brothers in Africa, Asia and Latin America who are still oppressed by imperialism will free themselves, because the history of mankind leads to the full, definitive liberation of the workers. History has shown that societies inevitably progress; that all the peoples of the world will become free; and that, in the not very distant future, we will see the dream of the great teachers of the working class — Marx, Engels and Lenin — made a reality, with mankind united as one big family.



Blazing the to the futur

Bayardo Arce



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Welcome, on behalf of my brothers of the National Leadership of the Sandinista Front. All of us were very pleased when we heard an OSPAAAL delegation was going to visit us. We know your organization well and identify with it fully, considering it to be a comrade in the long struggle the Nicaraguan Revolution must





still wage to attain the objectives for which our people fought and for which the Sandinista Front was given its van-

guard role. Thus, we have contributed not only to the liberation of the Nicaráguan people but also to the anti-imperialist struggle and to the building of a new world in which all workers will have a decent life. We believe our struggle will do its bit for the world effort to shake off imperialist, colonialist, neocolonialist and Zionist domination.

Your presence in our country is significant. It points up the identification that all revolutionaries have with the Nicaráguan Revolution, which is an authentic revolution.

We hope that, during your stay, you will delve deep into this process and understand the heritage left us by the Somoza regime; the great tasks our Revolution has ahead of it; and our people's enthusiasm and determination to remain worthy of this world revolutionary solidarity, that we hope will continue. We want you to see our Revolution — which, though very young, is richly endowed with our people's creativity in solving problems.

Our process has been open to all the people and countries of the world that want to learn about it — especially sister, revolutionary peoples. Because OSPAAAL represents the interests of our Third World peoples and all the other peoples that struggle against the same enemy, it has a special significance. At all the international meetings we have attended — the Sixth Summit Conference of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the United Nations General Assembly, etc. — we have clearly defended the interests of the Asian, Arab, African and Latin-American peoples and the rest of the world that, like us to a certain extent, must still deal with mankind's greatest problem: imperialism.





NICARAGUA'S REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Our process has its own characteristics, which should be noted. Our organization, the Sandinista Front, triumphed after 18 years of struggle, during which it developed four rural guerrilla forces composed of cadres — organizers who were then given political or military tasks of increasing our people's awareness of the need to confront our enemies.

The fruit of our work began to appear in the last 18 months of our struggle — when, with our consistent revolutionary action, we had built our people's confidence in victory. The example of our fighters who died in completely unequal confrontations showed the people that their political-military action could defeat powerful enemies and create the kind of world we wanted for Nicaragua.



As a result of this rural guerrilla experience and broad mass work, the people began to join the revolutionary struggle in droves. Our compatriots saw the Sandinista Front vanguard as the most viable alternative for solving their immediate problem of overthrowing the dictatorship imposed on us by US imperialism. The only sectors that feared this alternative were members of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, who viewed our political action as a prelude to their own eclipse. Because of the need to isolate and neutralize our main enemy, Yankee imperialism, as much as possible, we not only incorporated our people massively but also developed a flexible policy of alliances in which all the social and economic forces in the country that had objective contradictions with the dictatorship could participate —

no matter whether the contradictions were based on the dictator's disloyal competition with them or on his servile representation of US interests in the country. This policy of alliances permitted us to unite all the people.

The Revolution's political and moral strength, which was turned into military strength as time went on, allowed us to create this policy of alliances without going through negotiations, simply by accepting representatives of all the forces in the country within the new power structure that emerged with the Revolution. During the struggle, we were always convinced that the only way we could inflict this great defeat on imperialism would be to unite the people, for it wasn't going to let its chief bastion in



Central America go down without a struggle.

We are equally aware today that we must maintain national unity in order to reconstruct the country and neutralize the United States' aggressive aims. We haven't forgotten that, just a few days before our victory, the United States maneuvered within the OAS to try to bring off an armed intervention in our country. At present, although the US government doesn't appear to be officially involved in counterrevolutionary activities, we know of important individuals and forces representing US imperialism that are encouraging the counterrevolutionary efforts of those of Somoza's National Guardsmen who managed to flee the country and are now trying to create the political conditions for an intervention. This is why we maintain our policy of national unity.

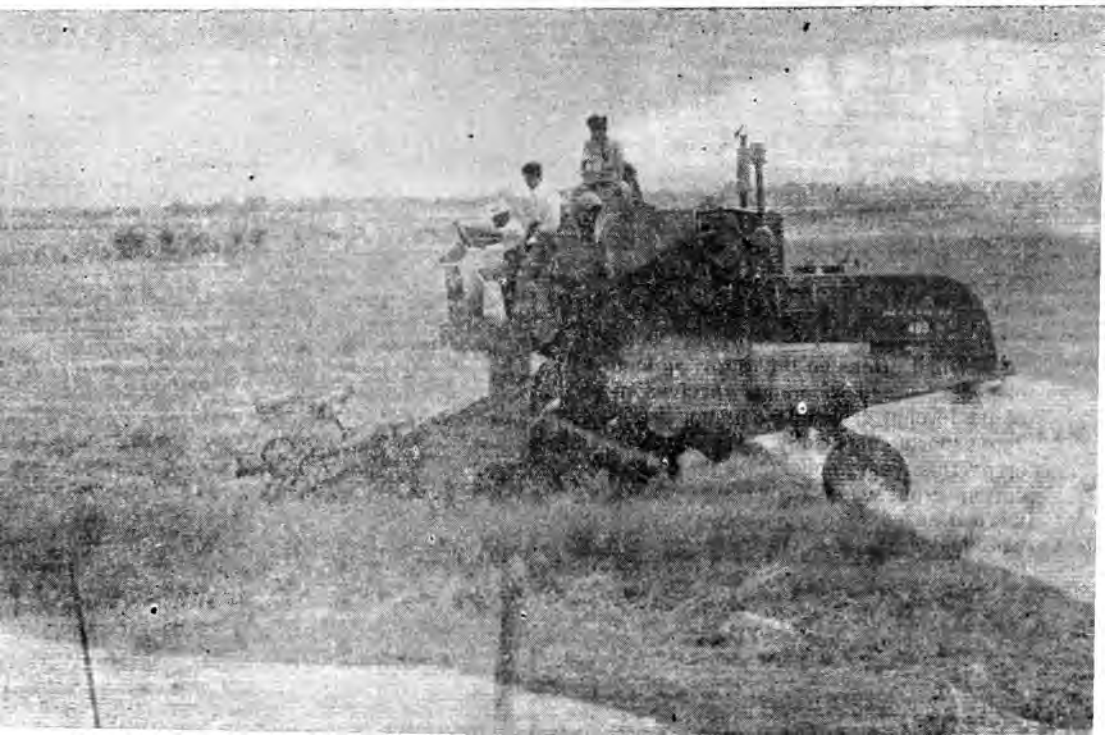
Contact with the people makes it clear there is just one power here, the power

of the workers, represented by the Sandinista Front, the political vanguard of the Revolution.

Our governmental and socioeconomic structures require the unity of the entire nation while the Revolution is consolidated and greater defense capacity is developed for counteracting imperialist acts of aggression.

WHAT SOMOZA-ISM LEFT

The situation we inherited from Somoza is another factor that contributes to our political position. Our country's debt to imperialism stood at \$1.5 billion — three times our GNP — when the Revolution triumphed. Our monetary reserves amounted to only \$3.5 million. The cost of reconstruction is estimated at \$1.5 billion, to be spread over four years of work, \$800 million of which must be in-





vested in the current year (1979). In addition, \$160 million must be paid on the debt.

Our final offensive broke our agricultural cycle — and Nicaragua receives most of its foreign exchange earnings from its agro-exports, especially cotton, our main crop. This year, only 70 percent of the cotton crop was planted, which meant we had an additional 200 000 unemployed, who had to be fed. Production dropped by 30-70 percent in all other crops except

coffee. This means that there is no way our production can solve our economic and social problems on a short-term basis.

Nearly 5000 houses were destroyed; we lost 100 000 head of cattle and all our fowl. Moreover, we still bear the scars of Somoza-ism in the form of an infant mortality rate of 146 for every 1000 live births and an illiteracy rate of 70 percent.

OUR IMMEDIATE TASKS

Some of these realities also require that we strengthen our national unity in order to launch into reconstruction — which, for us, is not simply physical or material but covers the entire range of economic, social, cultural and even moral questions. These are the great tasks with which our people are faced, problems we are trying to solve by mobilizing everyone to raise production, apply a policy of austerity and remain vigilant against the counterrevolution — which we know is getting its forces together. In fact, we were expecting something to happen by December 1979; the artificial conflicts that reactionary groups abroad, allied with Somoza-ism, have tried to create for the Nicaraguan Revolution indicate that something is going on.

CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

We consider our potential to be promising, because, even though our country has a small population, our people are hard-working and combative and we have many natural resources — though some have been plundered over the years by imperialism and the bourgeoisie. We believe that, if we get things organized properly, we can extract from this wealth the elements we need to solve our people's problems. Thus, one of our government's first measures has been to re-





cover for our people all the resources and all the means that will permit us to use these natural resources for the benefit of the people.

We confiscated all of Somoza's property — half the country's arable land and nearly 150 enterprises. We nationalized the banks and the mines, and now we are nationalizing all the natural resources that were exploited by US and other foreign companies.

But, to do this, we need aid from all the fraternal peoples, because our country's potential wealth cannot be developed without financing, technology and skilled workers. We need to acquire these three basic elements from sources chiefly outside the United States, so it won't be able to tie down the Revolution's future. This is why, by joining the Non-Aligned

Movement, we have opened relations with the entire world, thus establishing our Revolution's authenticity. We trust that the countries which refused to have anything to do with Somoza-ism and were always on good terms with the Nicaraguan people will show their solidarity with us now and that, with this what we are recovering for our people and their own great efforts, we will move ahead.

For example, our country has 2.7 billion arable acres, less than half of which were cultivated under the Somoza regime. Crops were grown chiefly for export, and the quota on the international market was limited; meanwhile, hunger stalked the land, and unemployment reigned in the countryside. We propose to work all the land — and not only for one harvest, as we do now. By using irrigation, we hope to guarantee two or even three harvests,

in order to both meet our domestic needs and export enough so we can buy all the things our country needs but doesn't produce, such as medicine.

We now spend \$3 million a month on medicine — something that never happened before, because the people never used to go to hospitals (they knew they wouldn't be admitted or treated). Now that there's a revolution, however, our people are exercising their right to health and are using the hospitals on a massive scale, so we don't even have enough medical personnel. The aid we receive in medical personnel from other countries isn't sufficient to meet this demand, but our lack of medicines is even worse. The transnational companies that produce these medicines are treating us on a straight commercial basis, without taking Nicaragua's plight into account. They demand payment of the Somoza regime's debts before selling us the medicine, and we have nothing to pay them with. We believe that this is a subtle form of blockade and that the only way we can solve this problem is by finding new markets and developing new relations with fraternal peoples and countries.

RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES

In view of the circumstances of the Revolution, our policy is to maintain cordial relations with the whole world, especially with the other Central American countries. Nevertheless, it is an objective fact that thousands of Somoza's National Guardsmen found refuge with the military regimes of Central America: in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, where they constitute a natural base for a counter-revolution.

Officially, these countries have also maintained cordial relations with us, but some of the most reactionary sectors of the government in each of them, sectors that had greater commitments (even economic ones) to Somoza-ism and that act as the most loyal servants of US imperialism in the area, have been engaging in activities that strain these cordial relations.

This has been particularly true in the case of Honduras, which has twice violated our airspace with its Air Force planes, one of which flew 100 kilometers into Nicaragua, toward Estelí. In addition, hostile actions have been taken against our Ambassador to Honduras, who has been unable to present his credentials and who was arrested and jailed on one occasion. On another, following a series of absurd accusations, the Embassy was surrounded by a military task force. Somoza's National Guardsmen also move around with greater freedom in Honduras than anywhere else.

They have considerable freedom in Guatemala, too, but Honduras is closer to us, so we have to conduct our relations with great astuteness and patience, not allowing ourselves to be provoked. Officially, we continue our cordial relations with these governments, for we don't want to make enemies for the Revolution gratuitously.

I would like to take this opportunity to send fraternal, revolutionary greetings from the Sandinista Revolution to all the peoples of Central America, Latin America, Africa and Asia that have expressed their militant solidarity with the Nicaraguan people's Sandinista Revolution, which also expresses the revolutionary aspirations of all the oppressed peoples of the world that have still to free themselves from imperialist oppression.

The Association of Agricultural Workers



As you are aware, Nicaragua is a basically agricultural country that depends, in the main, on the export of such products as cotton, coffee, meat, wood and certain metals (gold and silver). Its main source of income is from cotton and coffee.

Rural economic relations are capitalistic in nature, especially along the Pacific coast, where coffee and cotton are grown; on the big cattle farms; and in the sugar mills. These relations gained strength in our country with the increase in cotton production in the '50s, as a result of the Korean War.

Nicaraguan coffee was first sold on the world market around 1890, and production increased after General José Santos Zelaya came to power in 1893 and eliminated what communal production still remained — especially in the northern department of Matagalpa, where, in 1891, the Indians had fought and lost a war to prevent their form of production from being overrun by the coffee plantations.

Coffee was the country's chief crop until 1955, when cotton replaced it as the principal earner of foreign currency.



Cotton production was also increased by evicting the small farm owners from their land, using force or economic extortion, especially in the zone of Chinandega, where they grew citrus crops. In other words, the latifundist system was extended by expropriating the small farmers' lands. The same process took place in sugarcane.

The peasant struggles against eviction — in this case, because of the expansion of coffee production — go back to the 1891 War of Matagalpa, when the Indians rebelled against the rising strength of the native bourgeoisie. Then came Sandino's struggle, at the head of his Army to Defend National Sovereignty, as it was then called. His forces came mainly from the peasantry; the workers in the San Alpino Mines, in the north-central part of the country; the lumberjacks; and the banana workers of the Atlantic coast — who joined him to fight a war that made this a glorious period for the people of Nicaragua.

With the assassination of Sandino by Anastasio Somoza García in 1934 and the installation of the Somoza dictatorship, tremendous repression was unleashed against the revolutionary movement, especially in the countryside. After Sandino and his generals were killed, the northern part of the country, where Sandino had already organized a number of peasant cooperatives, became the target of a repressive attack that took the lives of more than 2000 families who had belonged to the Army to Defend National Sovereignty.

Isolated uprisings and demonstrations against the Somoza dictatorship and imperialism took place during the ebb tide that followed: peasant struggles in the '50s, when cotton production was increased, led to the violent eviction of small farmers in the west, mainly in Chinandega and León Departments, where most of the cotton was grown.

Many unrecorded uprisings took place in this period, showing the spirit of struggle that existed among the rural workers. In León, especially in the Indian community of Sutiada, the struggle for land was bitter; in Santa Rosa del Peñón, several rural trade unionists were killed; and there were other struggles, as well.

When Carlos Fonseca Amador and other comrades founded the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), based on the history and tradition of Sandino's army, a new stage of struggle began.

At first, the Sandinista Front operated in the north-central part of the country, mainly in Matagalpa and Jinotega, where it engaged in a number of guerrilla actions, never giving up its claims to the land and its political goals.

The peasants played a very active part in the guerrilla movement, particularly in Bocay, in 1963, and in the mountains of Pascasán, in 1967, where most of the members of the guerrilla columns and those who worked with them were *baquianos*, or peasant guides. When Rigoberto Cruz, better known as Pablo Ubeda, arrived in Matagalpa Department in 1975, in the period of guerrilla preparation, he began to organize agricultural trade unions and small farmers' cooperatives.



**A people's sovereignty is not
discussed; it is won with arms**

Augusto César Sandino



Following the military defeat of the Sandinista Front in 1967, Somoza's National Guard systematically wiped out this organizational network of peasants and agricultural workers. The most barbarous massacres in the history of Central America were perpetrated in the northern part of Nicaragua, where the Guardsmen murdered all members of the Sandinista Front, sympathizers and their families. We have the names and data of more than 3000 people who were killed in this genocidal operation.

While this was going on in the north, great land struggles were being waged in León and Chinandega in the west, where the small landowners were violently evicted as the capitalist relations of production spread into that area. Struggles over the land occurred regularly from 1960 on in western Nicaragua. All this was exacerbated by the cotton pickers' poverty, which slowly radicalized them until they came to regard capitalism as a relentless form of exploitation. I remember, for example, that the land struggle in León sharpened after 1974, when the Indians of Sutiada fought against a landowner named Véliz, who had expropriated their land.



THE ATC EMERGES

Our organization, the Association of Agricultural Workers (ATC), emerged in Carazo Department in November 1976, under the auspices of the Sandinista Front. Carazo is a coffee-growing area, and this was the period that required the greatest concentration of agricultural workers to pick coffee.

First, rural workers' committees were organized on each coffee plantation to explain the organization's objectives, which followed the political and organizational line of the Sandinista Front and supported the workers' demands. We didn't limit ourselves to supporting economic demands, however, but also argued that the agricultural workers' real triumph would come with the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship; in other words, the struggle for decent conditions in the camps, established methods of picking coffee, better food and higher wages had to go on, but it wasn't the main thing. Our aim should be to concentrate on workers' political participation in the struggle to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship and totally dismantle it. Nor were we for a formal change from Somoza to someone else just like him. That wouldn't solve anything; it would only be a palliative designed to demobilize the workers. In short, we used reformist demands, organized workers around their immediate interests, but at the same time we showed them their longer-range interests, such as the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship and all it meant: struggle on the military, political and ideological levels.

In spite of the escalating repression, our organization spread to Masaya, Chinandega and Managua Departments in 1977. In April of that year, a constituent assembly of the Association of Agricultural Workers was held in Jinotepe, capital of Carazo Department.

The Association's work was semiclandestine. Even so, we broadcast statements at times, and our General Secretary talked to reporters and spoke up in meetings. Occasionally, we occupied the headquarters of an international organization as a form of protest. There were several sit-ins at the headquarters of the Organization of American States and at the Chinandega and Carazo Red Cross headquarters, to protest against the treatment given political prisoners. We carried out a number of actions of this type, which the dictatorship tolerated to a certain extent in the cities, but repression was implacable in the countryside: the ATC leadership and activists were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and even murdered.

We promoted land seizures in Sirama, in the northern part of Chinandega Department, near the San Cristobal volcano, and in Los Playones, another community in that department. The land seizures meant that the peasants in those areas recovered the land that the capitalists had expropriated and stolen from them as they penetrated their area — land the peasants needed in order to feed their families.

Several ATC activists who lived in these communities were killed. In one case, a big landowner named Fornos evicted the peasants and burned all the food that the Red Cross and our organization had managed to get them, then forced them, with the connivance of the National Guard, to leave for another department. When the peasants returned to reclaim their land, the National Guard intervened again, killing four comrades and setting fire to all the food and the huts they had built.

In the western part of the country, the struggles have always been very violent, because of the notable contradiction between the peasants and the landowners.

In April 1977, we held a hunger march in Diriamba, Carazo Department, in reply to a speech that Somoza had made stating that there was no hunger in the Nicaraguan countryside, that the diet there was a balanced one. The march was repressed by Somoza's National Guardsmen, who fired indiscriminately on the marchers with .50-caliber heavy machine guns and sprayed them with tear gas. Some of the participants were killed, others were wounded and many were arrested. That was when the persecution of our activists in Carazo really began.

In 1978, when the masses took to the streets in direct confrontation with the dictatorship, our organization grew qualitatively and quantitatively in the countryside. We were still limited to a certain degree because of the division within the revolutionary movement that prevented our organization from growing on a national level, but the revolutionary upsurge of 1978, in which the masses were sometimes ahead of us, gave impetus to our organizational growth and to the consolidation of our work in the four departments we've already mentioned: Chinandega, Managua, Masaya and Carazo. Our best organizational nuclei and our most consolidated work were in Carazo and Chinandega Departments.



In September 1978, the ATC shouldered the few weapons it had and supported the insurrection. In Chinandega, some 100 ATC activists joined the ranks of the Sandinista Front, and, in September '78, these comrades were incorporated in the military structure, in the guerrilla columns that were mobilized in the northern sector of the department. The same thing happened in Carazo. Many of our best activists went into the guerrilla army, in anticipation of another — the definitive — insurrection against the dictatorship. This weakened our work to a certain extent, because many of our cadres and founding activists joined the Sandinista Front military structures in those two departments.

Working under increasingly repressive conditions, we continued to promote land seizures and other demands, though our main task was the struggle against the dictatorship — especially after 1978, when we devoted most of our efforts to the political and military training of our members, aware that we would all join the armed struggle against the dictatorship at some point, because that was the only way the workers could be free to organize, improve their living conditions and earn more money. We knew that this could not be achieved through reformist struggles — that the only way was to overthrow the dictatorship, dismantling and destroying the entire state apparatus, the Liberal Party and the National Guard. Thus, from January 1979 on, we did agitprop work in favor of armed struggle and the position of the Sandinista Front, always within the framework of the national political struggle against the dictatorship.

Within five months, we had prepared all the conditions for the members and activists of the ATC in the various departments to turn their energies to the priority activity of the moment: armed struggle and its support. This is what happened in Carazo, where the infrastructure the ATC had created in these communities provided the most effective

logistics support. Chinandega and Masaya weren't far behind. In April 1979, three months before the insurrection triumphed, we began to organize peasant militias; providing them with basic weapons that improved little by little as we stole the enemy's best arms. These militias played an outstanding role in terms of logistics support in the countryside during the insurrection. We also began to collect arms; provide military training; build caches in which our weapons, medicine and food could be concealed; and equip safe houses so the wounded could be treated in the countryside. These activities took place in the northern section of Masaya and Carazo Departments and especially in Diriamba and the northern part of Chinandega.

During the insurrection, land in the liberated departments and zones was seized from Somoza supporters and from the military officers. At the same time, we began to look for a way to get production going, because we didn't have any idea when the insurrection would end, and we knew that, if it continued for a long period, planting in the liberated zones would fall behind.

THE COOPERATIVES ADVANCE

Four months after the triumph of the Revolution, we have already succeeded in structuring some cooperatives, some associated forms of production, on extensive land areas that have been expropriated from Somoza and his supporters. We have organized trade unions on both state and private farms, and we now have some 430 grass-roots organizations with 35 000 affiliated workers throughout the country.

Our country has a great many small farmers who are also semiproletarian workers, and a great many peasants who, as tenant farmers, had to pay high prices or a sizable portion of their harvest for the use of the land — and, therefore, had to work as laborers, too.

The sector of the agrarian bourgeoisie that was not linked to Somoza was not touched by the Agrarian Reform Law. These landowners employ a large number of wage earners whom the ATC has organized in trade unions on the private farms.

We are also working with the small farmers to create and promote Sandinista agricultural "communes" and "houses" that function as credit and service cooperatives.

These agricultural communes are established in two ways. One is with land that is returned to the workers — remember that the latifundist expansion here took place in the last 20-25 years, so there are peasants who are now wage earners who expect to get back the land from which they were evicted 15 or 20 years ago, when it was taken for cotton and sugarcane. In some of these cases, the land will be returned as a block rather than as individual plots. The other way to establish group holdings is to encourage the farmers to join their lands so as to make "houses." For those who do not want to join with others — this is a strictly voluntary procedure — there is still the Credit and Service Cooperative.

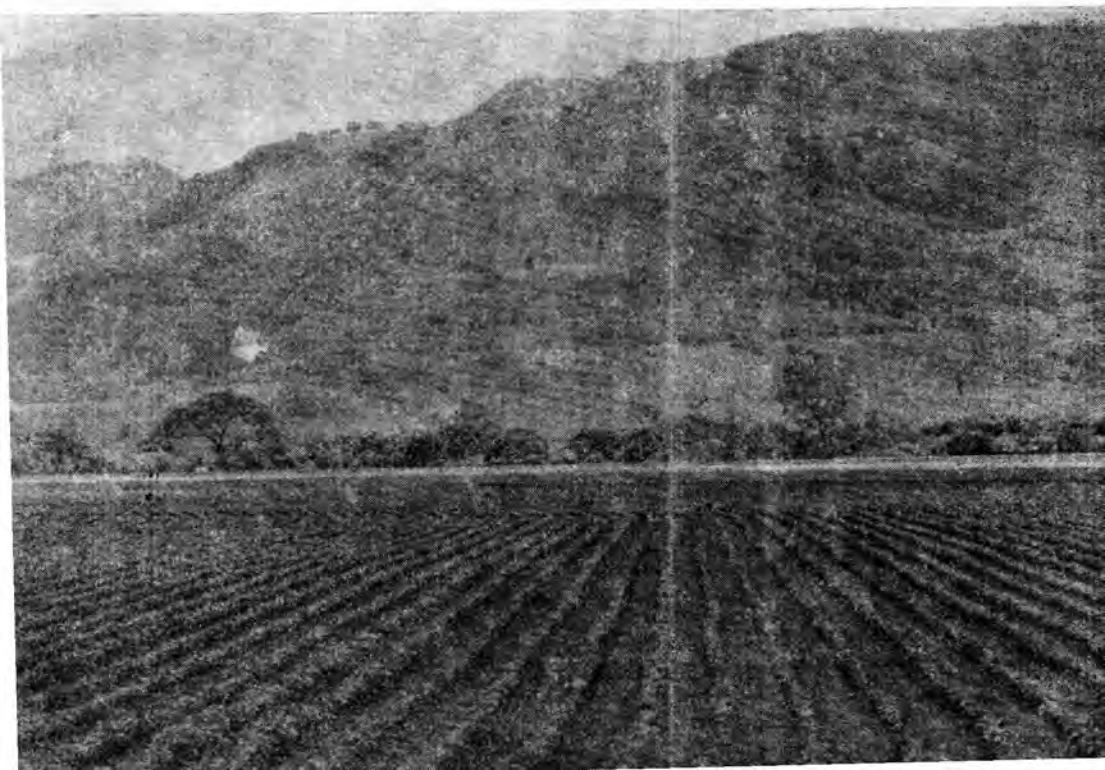
Broadly, this is the work the ATC has been doing since its founding. Now we are involved in extending the organization throughout the country — our experience to date has been mainly in four departments — and in laying the bases for the permanent structure the Association of Agricultural Workers will have.

The first of these aspects is very advanced; in just four months, we have extended our organization to 14 departments.

Our organizational structure now consists of a provisional National Executive Committee composed of five of us who worked as a sort of leadership committee before the triumph of the insurrection. The ATC also has departmental and municipal committees.

Our structure and statutes were definitively established in early 1980, after the National Assembly meeting.

We are also working closely with the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), which is in charge of implementing the provisions of the Agrarian Reform Law. Governmental Decree No. 3, turning all holdings previously owned by Somoza or his henchmen



into state property, has already been put into effect. In the future, we hope to solve the problems of backward forms of production, such as tenant farming.

The ATC also takes part in other tasks such as mobilizations of agricultural workers. For instance, in the northern part of the country, in Madeli Department, near Nueva Segovia, there are small coffee plantations — nowhere near as large as in Matagalpa and Jinotega — that need pickers. The comrade in charge of this area of production works in coordination with ENCAFE, the state enterprise that purchases the coffee; INRA; and PROCAMP, the organization from which the small farmers get their supplies, to bring in the workers who are needed. These workers are paid according to the wage scale that INRA has established for coffee picking and are provided with their meals. A set menu has been established for both private and state farms in order to improve the workers' diet. An attempt has also been made to improve their living conditions in the work camps.

We have won an important battle in militarily defeating the dictatorship, but other, perhaps more difficult battles lie ahead — such as the struggle against the counterrevolution, that is surfacing in many ways; lack of money, loans and medicine (all of which may become still more serious); our struggle against illiteracy; and unemployment. This is why we have to attain a high level of organization among the workers in the countryside, in order to pass this test with flying colors. We must consolidate our revolutionary process, which will be done partly through international solidarity. Moral, political and economic support — including cooperation in the fields of health, education and technical areas — is extremely important at this time.





NICARAGUA