

THEIR GRAVES WILL BE VOLCANOES: MARTYRDOM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
HISTORY IN SANDINISTA NICARAGUA, 1960-1990

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## ABSTRACT

Shannon James: *Their Graves Will Be Volcanoes: Martyrdom and the Construction of History in Sandinista Nicaragua, 1960-1990*  
(Under the direction of John C. Chasteen and Miguel La Serna)

In 1979, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) led the Nicaraguan revolution against the Somoza dictatorship. The FSLN as the ruling party began institutionalizing the revolution and consolidating its rule, immediately contending with political groups within and outside of Nicaragua, including the domestic business class, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. government. The Sandinistas faced the task of legitimating their power amid economic and political struggle. This thesis, analyzing the works of FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca, materials used in Sandinista education reform projects, and speeches, writings, and statements by Sandinista leaders in the 1980s, explores the FSLN's construction of an official historical narrative of resistance to exploitation through martyrdom and sacrifice. The party inserted the Sandinista revolution into this nationalist narrative, claiming moral superiority, authenticity, and legitimate representation of the Nicaraguan people. The martyrdom discourse incorporated the experiences of Nicaraguans under Somocista repression, contributing to the creation of official memory.

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## INTRODUCTION

A headline in the April 21, 1968 edition of the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Prensa* announced a “sinister human sacrifice” to a volcano.<sup>1</sup> It was a report on the death of a student activist, David Tejada, and the rumor that circulated about the details of his murder. Tejada was a leader in the student government of the Central American University in Managua. He was also a member of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN, or the Sandinistas), one of a number of organizations opposed to the repressive government of the Somoza family. The regime, in power essentially since Anastasio Somoza García seized state control through a coup in 1936, intensified the repression of dissident activism in the late 1960s. The National Guard was the institution that carried out many of the measures to suppress protests; the regime used the Guard to imprison, torture, disappear, or execute those who spoke out against its policies.<sup>2</sup> The death of David Tejada was a matter of Somocista routine.

The rumor that the National Guard officer who killed Tejada, Oscar Morales, threw the young man’s body into one of Nicaragua’s many live volcanoes shook the public, as *La Prensa* reported. One of his associates in the Sandinista Front, a law student and activist named Carlos Fonseca, understood Tejada’s death as part of something larger. Fonseca added a note about the death of his friend to one of the political writings credited to the FSLN. He acknowledged the tragedy and injustice of the murder, but also expressed hope that Tejada did not die in vain. Tejada had become a martyr, Fonseca wrote, and his death occasioned a call for hope, a demand that “the people of Nicaragua – students, peasants, workers, and other honest people – will rise up in rebellion against a prevailing system.” Fonseca, having founded

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<sup>1</sup> *80 años de lucha por la Verdad y la Justicia* (Managua: La Prensa, 2006), 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> John A. Booth, *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 93-95.

the Sandinista Front seven years prior, believed that “the people of Nicaragua will be true to the hope and vision of their immortal martyrs and heroes” like David Tejada.<sup>3</sup>

The Sandinista National Liberation Front would later lead a multi-class coalition in a revolution overthrowing the last of the Somoza dictators in July of 1979.<sup>4</sup> Following the overthrow, the FSLN transitioned from revolutionary vanguard to the ruling party of Nicaragua, its members holding positions in various government ministries and leading the governing junta before the official election of Daniel Ortega to the presidency in 1984. The first period of Sandinista state power lasted for a decade, ending with the election of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in 1990. For the duration of this decade, the Sandinistas embarked on a massive program to transform Nicaragua politically and culturally, institutionalizing the revolution through mass organizations and a series of reforms.

While the FSLN led the 1979 revolution, other social and political groups in the nation and abroad quickly contested the power of the organization in the national government. The Marxist-Leninist leanings of the Sandinistas, though fairly moderate in policy, made the new government the target of anti-communist rhetoric from the United States, which supported a destructive counterrevolutionary war in Nicaragua. Representatives of the domestic business class challenged the Sandinista reforms. Latin American liberation theology of the 1960s contributed to the success of the revolution and the Sandinista government included a number of Catholic priests, but a backlash from the more conservative religious sectors and the Catholic Church hierarchy led to accusations that the Sandinistas were anti-religious. To compound these difficulties, the government faced the task of rebuilding the country and its infrastructure during the regional economic recession of the 1980s and the growing damage that the counterrevolutionary insurgents, known as the Contras, inflicted on the land. The FSLN may have

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<sup>3</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN, a los estudiantes revolucionarios,” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, Carlos Fonseca (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985), 147-148.

<sup>4</sup> *The End and the Beginning* by John A. Booth provides a useful overview of opposition organizing during the Somoza dictatorship as well as the insurrection and the early years of Sandinista government policy.

succeeded in the removal of Anastasio Somoza Debayle, but legitimating its power in a time of political as well economic crisis was an uphill battle.

One way the Sandinistas undertook legitimating the revolution was the construction of a new, official historical narrative. The history of Nicaragua was an element of *Sandinismo* since its earliest years, when Carlos Fonseca added 'Sandinista' to the name of the Front as a tribute to Augusto César Sandino, the anti-imperialist general of a six-year rebellion against the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The Sandinistas went even further, though, envisioning their organization as the successor to an even longer and more deeply-embedded history of rebellion and resistance in the name of national liberation.

The experience of the Sandinistas with the opposition movement of the 1960s shaped the historical narrative of the organization both before and after 1979. The repression that resulted from the years of the dictatorship – itself a byproduct of U.S. imperialism – made the revolution a moral issue as well as a political one. The Sandinistas recognized this and appealed to a sense of morality after the fall of Somoza by highlighting the heroic martyrdom that had made the revolution possible. David Tejada was not the only martyr the Sandinistas claimed. The Sandinista guerrillas had been targets of the National Guard, and Fonseca himself died for the cause in 1976. The FSLN of the 1980s incorporated this experience into a constructed historical narrative of exploitation and resistance, portraying their organization as the collective representatives of an authentic Nicaraguan nation exemplified by the heroes of its history. Carrying out the Sandinista revolution, in this vision, was therefore the proper way to honor the memory of all of the nation's martyrs and fulfill the hope that they did not die in vain.

This thesis argues that the FSLN in the 1980s used a nationalist discourse based on the memory and national history of heroic martyrdom and sacrifice to claim a moral high ground in defense of the revolution. This was a key element of Sandinista legitimation efforts in a time of heated contestation and economic crisis. My work advances our understanding of Sandinista ideology as communicated in the party's political discourse beyond its Marxian elements. They sought legitimacy by integrating the

revolution into both a more recent history of Nicaragua, including the student movement and its subsequent martyrs, and a longer history of resistance to exploitation and repression.

The theoretical underpinnings of this thesis are works on nationalism, primarily the “imagined communities” framework advanced by Benedict Anderson and the work of Anthony Smith. With Anderson’s framework in mind, I suggest an understanding of the Sandinista language of martyrdom and sacrifice as a nationalist discourse which drew on kinship-like links between the Nicaraguan people of the 1980s and national heroes of the past. Anderson argued that nationalism is comparable to structures of kinship or religion, especially as it engages with concepts of death and immortality, “generally by transforming fatality into continuity.”<sup>5</sup> While Sandinista nationalism has been noted for its Leninist anti-imperialism, Anderson proposed that nationalism should also be understood “by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.”<sup>6</sup> The leaders of the FSLN indeed subscribed to a Marxist-Leninist ideology of anti-imperialism, but other factors shaped their nationalism as well, such as the dictatorial repression that increasingly made martyrs of Sandinista and non-Sandinista Nicaraguans.

This thesis understands Sandinista discourse as it contributed to the construction of an official historical narrative which linked the revolution and the program of the FSLN to the past. In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Anthony Smith asked why so many societies across time and space claim and use the past to legitimate social and political movements. His answer is that “By linking oneself to a ‘community of history and destiny’, the individual hopes to achieve a measure of immortality which will preserve his or her person and achievements from oblivion; they will live on and bear fruit in the community.”<sup>7</sup> Smith distinguished between earlier religious communities’ methods of promising their adherents immortality and modern secular histories in which national ties to future generations provide the posterity that

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<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 11.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1986), 174-175.

overcomes death. “It is in and through offspring that deeds live on and memories are kept alive,” Smith wrote. “But these deeds and memories only ‘make sense’ within a chain of like deeds and memories, which stretch back into the mists of obscure generations of ancestors and forward into the equally unknowable generations of descendants.”<sup>8</sup> The construction of an official narrative – official memory and chronology – was the way in which the Sandinistas “made sense” of their place in Nicaraguan history, the way they understood the experience of the Somoza years, and the way in which they urged contemporary Nicaraguans to honor their ancestors in the nation. As Smith stated, citing the work of Eric Hobsbawm, nationalist constructions of history are selective, but not total fabrications.<sup>9</sup>

As an investigation of the Sandinista nationalist historical narrative, my work falls at the intersection of scholarship on nationalism, memory, and state formation. Luciano Baracco has written about the use of history in the creation of a Nicaraguan nation.<sup>10</sup> Baracco’s work encompasses Nicaraguan history from the beginning of independence in 1821 through the FSLN’s attempts to form a revolutionary nation-state in the 1980s. He built on Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” framework to position the Sandinista national project as one that took up the task of imagining the nation from the closest previous attempt, that of Sandino and his Army in Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua. Sandino, Baracco argued, had aspirations for his country beyond anti-imperialism and state sovereignty; he had the goal of creating a “distinct national political community.”<sup>11</sup> The FSLN, then, constructed a narrative in which it was continuing on Sandino’s path of imagining the Nicaraguan nation, to be achieved through a nationalist and anti-imperialist ideology and the addition of Marxism-Leninism made possible by the Cuban revolution of 1959.

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 176.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 177.

<sup>10</sup> Luciano Baracco, *Nicaragua: The Imagining of a Nation: From Nineteenth-Century Liberals to Twentieth-Century Sandinistas* (New York, NY: Algora, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Baracco, *Nicaragua: The Imagining of a Nation*, 59.

Robert Jansen analyzed in more depth the way the FSLN used the image of Sandino in a comparative study of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the 1994 Zapatista (EZLN) movement in Chiapas, Mexico. Jansen, a sociologist, concurred with Baracco's illustration of Sandino as a historical "path" for the Sandinistas to follow, but elaborated on this idea by placing the FSLN's ideological and strategic tactics within a model of memory work. The Sandinista use of Sandino was an example of historical "resurrection" as opposed to the model of "appropriation by capture" which the EZLN utilized in their co-optation of the name and image of the Mexican revolutionary champion of agrarian rights, Emiliano Zapata.<sup>12</sup> In the work of both Baracco and Jansen, the principal actor behind the historical resurrection of Sandino was Carlos Fonseca in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Jansen acknowledged the limits of his own study and suggested possible scholarly threads to continue, writing in his conclusion that "the political use of historical figures is one of many ways in which movements may work toward these ends [of movement legitimacy], and as such the tactic demands analysis on its own terms."<sup>13</sup> The FSLN in the 1980s was no longer an insurgent movement, but was the leading political party in the Nicaraguan government, facing continuous change and challenge as it carried out projects like education reforms and literacy campaigns. Without the Somocista dictatorship to unite the people for the revolution, the Sandinista state had to use other means to legitimate its rule. Frequently, those means involved drawing on the memory of the dictatorship and placing it in the Sandinista narrative of national history.

Many scholars have focused their studies of the FSLN on the Marxian elements of Sandinista ideology or the sociopolitical structures of the revolution. In studies from the 1980s, David Nolan, Donald Hodges, and Dennis Gilbert prioritized Marxism-Leninism in the group's ideology and revolutionary program.<sup>14</sup> Ilja Luciak in his 1995 work on the political legacy of the revolution focused on the

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<sup>12</sup> Robert S. Jansen, "Resurrection and Appropriation: Reputational Trajectories, Memory Work, and the Political Use of Historical Figures," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 4 (January 2007): 956.

<sup>13</sup> Jansen, "Resurrection and Appropriation," 998.

<sup>14</sup> David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, FL: Institute of Interamerican Studies, University of Miami, 1984); Donald C. Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1986); Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the*

institutionalization of representative democracy and “radical political economy.”<sup>15</sup> More recently, in her discussion of the disconnect between the Sandinista national project and the concerns of local villages, Rosario Montoya focused on the gendered language of class exploitation and class consciousness as the discourse that guided mass mobilization and the organization of agricultural cooperatives in rural communities.<sup>16</sup> While Marxian and other political elements undoubtedly influenced the intellectual development of the Sandinistas and the programs of the revolution, they have largely overshadowed the role of memory and martyrdom in the ideology of the FSLN. This thesis will argue for an appreciation of the martyrdom discourse as a moral and nationalist one contributing to the construction of official memory, emphasizing the emergence of the discourse from the experience of the Somoza dictatorship and the moral appeal of Nicaraguan sacrifice.

The work of sociologist Jean-Pierre Reed helps to open an analysis of Sandinista legitimation to include defending the revolution based on morality. Seeking to move “beyond the political process model” of understanding revolutionary mobilization through more conventional factors, Reed assessed moral outrage as an emotional product of specific events capable of transforming political consciousness.<sup>17</sup> In the case of Nicaragua, the events that stimulated outrage were the increasing instances of state repression in the 1970s. Reed was careful to not overstate the role of emotions in successful popular action, but argued that they comprise one factor among many in mobilization and the shaping of political narratives.<sup>18</sup> While the 1979 revolution brought an end to Somocista repression, the memory of

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*Revolution* (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1988). Nolan and Hodges give the moral undertones of Sandinista discourse only brief mentions. Gilbert also briefly discusses the emotional resonance of “patriot-martyrs” but does not give martyrdom an extended treatment, generally focusing on the ways in which the FSLN adapted Marxism, “the basic source of Sandinista thought,” to the Nicaraguan context.

<sup>15</sup> Ilja A. Luciak, *The Sandinista Legacy: Lessons from a Political Economy in Transition* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), xi-xii.

<sup>16</sup> Rosario Montoya, *Gendered Scenarios of Revolution: Making New Men and New Women in Nicaragua, 1975-2000* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2012).

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Pierre Reed, “Emotions in Context: Revolutionary Accelerators, Hope, Moral Outrage, and Other Emotions in the Making of Nicaragua’s Revolution,” *Theory and Society* 33, no. 6 (December 2004): 655.

<sup>18</sup> Reed, “Emotions in Context,” 687-689.

those events remained a powerful force in Nicaraguan society and politics, especially as a part of state legitimization efforts.

The discourse of martyrdom and sacrifice, and the larger historical narrative in which the FSLN articulated it, was a form of official memory constructed by the Sandinista state. The anthropologist Francisco Barbosa has looked at the popular and official memory of one event in Nicaragua in particular, the 1959 student massacre in León. Barbosa presented the different memories of the event as competing narratives between the local community in León, the Somoza regime, present-day (in 2005) university students, and the FSLN, who appropriated the massacre as a symbol of resistance that lent legitimacy to the Sandinista government.<sup>19</sup> While former students in modern-day León articulate their memory of the event in a narrative of 1950s student politics, the FSLN in the 1980s incorporated it into a narrative of growing revolutionary consciousness, punctuated by other moments such as the Cuban revolution and the formation of the FSLN in 1961, culminating in the victory of the revolution led by the Sandinista vanguard. Barbosa wrote that Sandinista appropriation of the massacre is “expressed through what might be called artifacts of official memory,” like the official commemorations and monuments located in León.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, historian Bradley Tatar has examined the memory in oral testimonies from the early 1980s concerning the 1978 insurrection in the Monimbó neighborhood of Masaya.<sup>21</sup> Barbosa and Tatar both assessed the impact and use of social memory in political contestation, constructed in competing historical narratives.

The narrative of resistance, martyrdom, and heroic sacrifice which was central to the Sandinista understanding of history can be found in a variety of “artifacts of official memory.” The official Sandinista narrative can largely be attributed to the work of FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca from the 1960s

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<sup>19</sup> Francisco J. Barbosa, “July 23, 1959: Student Protest and State Violence as Myth and Memory in León, Nicaragua,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (May 2005): 187-221.

<sup>20</sup> Barbosa, “July 23, 1959,” 213.

<sup>21</sup> Bradley Tatar, “State Formation and Social Memory in Sandinista Politics,” *Latin American Perspectives* 36, no. 5 (September 2009): 158-177.

and 1970s. Fonseca was the primary intellectual architect of the organization, writing political analyses and historical chronologies during his time as a student and Sandinista guerrilla. The Sandinista leaders of the 1980s continued his tradition of inserting the revolutionary program in a chronology of resistance to injustice, including resistance until death. Their official speeches, political statements, and interviews illustrate this continued tradition in attempts to mobilize support and defend the new government from domestic and foreign critics. They also deployed the narrative in materials intended to educate the people of Nicaragua, to transform them into the New Men and New Women of the reborn nation, and they created and used these materials in the literacy campaign and education reform projects of the decade.

Other scholars have seen the concept of martyrdom as important for mobilization during the 1977-1979 insurrectionary period of the revolution. Their works have focused on the immediate effects of one event in particular, the 1978 murder of *La Prensa* editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, which stimulated protests and outrage among upper-class Nicaraguans.<sup>22</sup> Others, such as Steven Palmer, have mentioned the religious dimension of the death of Sandino, especially in the writings of Fonseca, who portrayed Sandino descending from the mountains as a “willful martyr” for liberation.<sup>23</sup> However, little has been said about the continued use of this discourse in later Sandinista attempts to legitimate the revolution.

This essay will trace the discourse of political martyrdom and self-sacrifice in a variety of Sandinista historical narratives, beginning with Fonseca and continuing through the 1980s, when the Sandinistas controlled the state and its educational institutions. The Chamorro murder mobilized Nicaraguans of varying socioeconomic standings and ideologies against a common enemy, Somoza and his regime, but the FSLN in the 1980s were in a position without a dictator to unite the people behind them. As I will show, they continued systematically to deploy Fonseca’s mobilizing discourse of

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<sup>22</sup> Booth, *The End and the Beginning*, 160. The death of Chamorro as martyrdom and a catalyst for protest is also discussed in David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, FL: Institute of Interamerican Studies, University of Miami, 1984); Jean-Pierre Reed, “Emotions in Context: Revolutionary Accelerators, Hope, Moral Outrage, and Other Emotions in the Making of Nicaragua’s Revolution”; Bradley Tatar, “Emergence of Nationalist Identity in Armed Insurrections: A Comparison of Iraq and Nicaragua,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 78, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 179-195.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Palmer, “Carlos Fonseca and the Construction of Sandinismo in Nicaragua,” *Latin American Research Review* 23, no. 1 (1988): 105.

martyrdom in their nationalist, revolutionary appeals, making it central to the construction of history in Sandinista Nicaragua.

## CHAPTER 1: CARLOS FONSECA AND SANDINISTA MARTYRDOM

The writings of Carlos Fonseca from 1960 until his 1976 death formed the basis for later Sandinista appeals to morality and nationalism through the discourse of martyrdom and heroic sacrifice in Nicaraguan history. Many overviews of Fonseca's outlook and works emphasize his political development through Marxism, noting his travels to Moscow and Havana and his student years in the Nicaraguan Socialist Party. These were formative experiences for his political thought and writings for the FSLN in its first two decades, but Fonseca also makes frequent appeals to the moral superiority of the anti-Somocista and revolutionary cause through references to the sacrifice of martyrs, drawing on the experiences he and other young Nicaraguans had with the brutal repression of the regime and the historical precedents of those experiences.

Fonseca biographer Matilde Zimmermann describes the FSLN founder as an unpretentious Marxist intellectual with a deep understanding of the difficulties in the lives of the poor. Born in Matagalpa in 1936, Fonseca grew up sympathizing with the condition of the Nicaraguan women who lived like his single mother in "nothing but sadness."<sup>24</sup> Fonseca was also passionate about history early in his young adult life, especially the national history of Nicaragua and its undiscovered heroes.<sup>25</sup> A dedicated student since primary school, he attended the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua in León beginning in 1956 with the financial assistance of his affluent father. He quickly became involved in student activism, creating a campus arm of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and a Marxist study group. Because of these activities, Fonseca was among a number of students arrested for suspected

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<sup>24</sup> Matilde Zimmermann, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Zimmermann quotes Fonseca urging his co-workers at a library to delve into the archives to learn about Cleto Ordóñez, to "rescue him from the disdain and neglect the fake historians have condemned him to." Zimmermann, *Sandinista*, 38.

dissidence after the assassination of Anastasio Somoza García, the head of the dictatorial dynasty, by a poet. After serving several weeks in jail, he traveled to the Soviet Union as a party delegate to the Sixth World Congress of Students and Youth for Peace and Friendship, a trip which he would write about in one of his earliest major essays, “A Nicaraguan in Moscow.”<sup>26</sup> However, Fonseca broke from the PSN in the late 1950s, energized by what he saw as a real revolution occurring in Cuba.<sup>27</sup> Along with a few former followers of a man named Sandino and with fellow students Tomás Borge and Silvio Mayorga, Fonseca founded the group that would soon be called the Sandinista National Liberation Front in 1961.<sup>28</sup> Fonseca brought his passion for Nicaraguan history to the new group, eventually naming it after the hero Sandino.

Steven Palmer argued that the analysis of Nicaraguan history by Carlos Fonseca became the “axis of all subsequent Sandinista discourse.”<sup>29</sup> Palmer acknowledged that other members of the FSLN contributed to the collected literature on Sandinismo, and some, namely Jaime Wheelock, had more sophisticated understandings of Marxism and economics, but Fonseca essentially built the intellectual groundwork for the Sandinistas who would comprise the state in the 1980s. Other scholars have noted Fonseca’s centrality as the intellectual architect of the FSLN, many of them focusing on his resurrection or reconstruction of Augusto Sandino. Fonseca was indeed the figure responsible for the adoption of Sandino as the symbol and primary hero of the new Sandinista struggle; he can be seen as the unofficial historian of the organization in the 1960s and 1970s, writing a number of analyses and chronologies of national history, including a “Chronology of Sandinista Resistance” that began with the United States

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<sup>26</sup> Zimmermann, 42-45.

<sup>27</sup> Zimmermann, 49.

<sup>28</sup> Zimmermann, 72.

<sup>29</sup> Palmer, 92.

Monroe Doctrine in the early nineteenth century and which detailed Sandino's life from his 1895 birth to his 1934 assassination.<sup>30</sup>

History and Sandino played an integral role in Fonseca's political analysis. Fonseca believed two things about the revolutionary spirit: that it came partly from a longer history and an innate Nicaraguan character formed over centuries and that it was informed by recent historical developments like Sandino's war and the Cuban revolution. He characterized Nicaragua as distinctly violent and tumultuous even among other Latin American countries. Other nations in the region had experienced peaceful transitions of power while Nicaragua had not, he argued, which was why Nicaraguan history was marked by so much armed struggle in lieu of a functional political system.<sup>31</sup> In his analysis of contemporary Nicaragua and the possibility for revolution, Fonseca emphasized that the current generation of youth and students was the generation that would achieve liberation. As opposed to the generations of 1944 and 1926, the generation of the early 1960s had the ideological and strategic tools of both Sandino and the more recent Cuban revolution, which contributed to a new revolutionary consciousness.<sup>32</sup>

Fonseca partly employed a Marxist interpretation of history in which different stages lead up to the moment of revolution, but there is also a strong element of nationalism elsewhere in his narrative. The members of the revolutionary generation were the descendants of Sandino, Fonseca wrote, and they learned from Sandino the lesson of sacrifice. The role of history in his "Brief Analysis of the Popular Nicaraguan Struggle against the Somoza Dictatorship" is one of inspiration. From Sandino, the youth had learned to maintain morale even in the face of a much more materially powerful enemy, referring to both the United States Marines and the Nicaraguan National Guard, an institution with U.S. support.<sup>33</sup> While

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<sup>30</sup> Carlos Fonseca, "Cronología de la resistencia sandinista," in *Obras, tomo 2: Viva Sandino*, Carlos Fonseca (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985), 87-167.

<sup>31</sup> Carlos Fonseca, "Nicaragua: Zero Hour," in *Sandinistas Speak: Speeches, writings, and interviews with leaders of Nicaragua's revolution* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1982), 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Carlos Fonseca, "La lucha por la transformación de Nicaragua (1960)," in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 126-128.

<sup>33</sup> Carlos Fonseca, "Breve análisis de la lucha popular nicaragüense contra la dictadura de Somoza (1960)," in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 113.

Fonseca envisioned the long-term success of the revolutionary generation, he recognized that this lesson was one that necessitated sacrifice. In the same writing, he elaborated on the role of sacrifice in the larger struggle, citing the martyrdom of Rigoberto López, the poet who died while assassinating the Somoza patriarch. While López committed a heroic act, it was not enough to achieve a revolutionary transformation. But “personal sacrifice can undoubtedly play a great role if it is tied to the masses,” Fonseca wrote, and those masses would fight in a popular, armed insurrection based on the victories of Sandino.<sup>34</sup>

In the Fonseca narrative, the contemporary youth and students had the “revolutionary spirit,” and they demonstrated that spirit and their worthiness to take up the original Sandinista struggle through the willingness to suffer losses and sacrifice, and thus resume that struggle. Fonseca wrote about the incident at El Chaparral and the National Guard massacre of students in León in 1959, where the generation, coming of age, demonstrated “with death and blood” that it had the “spirit of love for the people and the Patria,” proving that “the youth must be the heart of the people’s liberation.”<sup>35</sup> It was the sacrifice of their lives that proved the student movement as the authentic bearers of the renewed Sandinismo. This is where the Fonseca narrative took on a moral dimension. He presents the youth of Nicaragua, represented by the FSLN by the late 1960s, as collectively the “standard-bearers” of the nation by virtue of their revolutionary consciousness and their privilege of being educated in a country plagued by illiteracy. They had a moral responsibility to the future of the people and the *patria*, or homeland, and could not turn their backs to the oppressed majority.<sup>36</sup> Sacrifice, in Fonseca’s view, was a moral act for the good of the patria; the youth and the FSLN proved their moral capacity through behavior as well as heroic martyrdom.

Fonseca often referred to the moral authority of revolutionaries, especially as it compared to the character of the National Guard. He established the importance of moral behavior in “The Struggle for the

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<sup>34</sup> Fonseca, “Breve análisis,” 105, 112.

<sup>35</sup> Fonseca, “Breve análisis,” 108.

<sup>36</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN, a los estudiantes revolucionarios (1968),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 133-134.

Transformation of Nicaragua” from 1960, in which he included a section titled “The Revolutionary Morality.” The section is about the moral behavior of the revolutionaries that would overcome the immorality of the dictatorship. Fonseca believed that successful guerrillas should maintain a moral high ground in revolutionary activity – the guerrilla fighter should only fire in the time of combat; the guerrilla fighter should maintain respect for the lives of prisoners, even Somocistas in the National Guard; and only those responsible for the most horrendous crimes should face the possibility of execution. He contrasted the ideal guerrilla sharply with the Guard. The Guard and the revolutionaries differed in morality, especially in how they treated one another and the respect they gave or did not give to human lives. Fonseca mentioned the exemplary behavior of Manuel Díaz y Sotelo and “the martyrs of ‘El Dorado,’” whom he listed by name. One function of revolutionary moral authority was strategic. Fonseca argued that the moral guerrilla should understand that many members of the Guard were confused and did not have revolutionary consciousness. If the revolutionaries treated them humanely, then, they would ideally return to the National Guard and recount their experiences, spreading greater esteem for the revolutionary cause and contributing to the long-term success of the revolution.<sup>37</sup> After the founding of the Sandinista Front in 1961, Fonseca continued to assert superior morality in the revolutionary cause, which he used to explain why, by 1975, the state had still not defeated the Sandinista forces.<sup>38</sup>

The other function of revolutionary morality, including the act of martyrdom in the necessary and ultimate dedication to the patria, was that it demonstrated authenticity and the worthiness of the cause. In 1964 Fonseca wrote “From Prison I Accuse the Dictatorship.” In this essay, he accused the dictatorship and the National Guard of the systematic murder of patriots and other respectable people, the proof of Somocista immorality.<sup>39</sup> He proceeded to list the murdered Nicaraguans by name, date, and location,

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<sup>37</sup> Fonseca, “La lucha por la transformación de Nicaragua,” 123.

<sup>38</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Síntesis de algunos problemas actuales (1975),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 170.

<sup>39</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Desde la cárcel yo acuso a la dictadura (1964),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 305.

including at last Sandino and his companions in the 1930s. Fonseca wrote that his generation, the contemporary Nicaraguan youth and the FSLN, would ensure that the martyrs of the dictatorship did not die in vain by exhibiting the same kind of dedication. “The heroic Sandinista veterans Raudales and Heriberto hoped that our generation would grow and the youth would mix their blood with our blood,” Fonseca wrote, suggesting that the new Sandinistas had a responsibility to both the Nicaraguan past and the Nicaraguan future. “We march towards the sun of liberty or to death, and if we die our cause will live, and others will follow.”<sup>40</sup> In many of his writings, Fonseca further asserted that the FSLN represented the struggle for authentic Nicaraguan liberation by contrasting his organization with those in the upper classes who also opposed the dictatorship. He was notably critical of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the leading voice of dissent among the business class, for being one of the “false opponents” faithful to the bourgeoisie.<sup>41</sup> Chamorro was a target of scorn especially because, as Fonseca said, he “dares to hold the image of Sandino” in his office, a symbol of which he was not worthy.<sup>42</sup>

Fonseca argued in his writings that the Sandinistas and the authentic Nicaraguan youth opposing the Somoza dictatorship had lived up to their moral responsibilities by indeed committing themselves to sacrifice. In “This is the Truth” from 1964, he again contrasted the brutality of the regime with the revolutionaries. Despite the accusations from the regime that the guerrillas were mere terrorists,

the people of Nicaragua know very well through experience who are the bloodthirsty and who are the patriots; the people know who are responsible for the campesinos of Tempisque dying of hunger; they know who are responsible for the murder of innocents in Posoltega... The people know that the Sandinista revolutionary fighters instead long for the happiness of all the people. On this path we have spilled our own blood and our brothers have heroically offered their lives.<sup>43</sup>

Fonseca increasingly exalted Nicaraguan martyrs in his writings from the late 1960s and early 1970s, likely influenced by the increasing repression of the regime in that period. In 1967, he wrote a

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<sup>40</sup> Fonseca, “Desde la cárcel,” 310-311.

<sup>41</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Por un Primero de Mayo guerrillero y victorioso (1969),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 325.

<sup>42</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Síntesis de algunos problemas actuales,” 174.

<sup>43</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Esta es la verdad (1964),” in *Obras, tomo 1: bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 313-314.

letter to the parents of Francisco Moreno, a Sandinista who fell victim to the regime. Moreno had the purity of a saint, Fonseca said, and he compared Moreno to early Christian martyrs. Like those Christian martyrs, Moreno died for a cause which his revolutionary companions would maintain. “The future is ours and pertains to the patria and to justice. The blood that Francisco Moreno gave will be honored.”<sup>44</sup> For his dedication and martyrdom, Moreno was a model of the generosity and heroism necessary in achieving liberation, and his sacrifice would serve to further the cause of the patria through the continuing revolution. Towards the end of the letter, Fonseca called Moreno a great hero, quoting Cuban independence fighter and martyr José Martí, who said that “The blood of the good does not spill in vain.”<sup>45</sup>

In other writings, Fonseca incorporated lists of the revolutionary martyrs as exemplary Nicaraguans, a feature which later Sandinistas would also include in nationalist discourse. The “Message from the FSLN to the Revolutionary Students” from 1968 is about the role of students in creating a new Nicaragua. Fonseca used terms like liberation and justice as words that embodied the popular revolution’s ideals for the worker and the peasant, “for which many Nicaraguan patriots have heroically given their lives.”<sup>46</sup> He then listed the martyred patriots, most of them students as well as a young professor. Fonseca referred to them as “militant student martyrs” of the FSLN who “constitute a shining example for the revolutionary students who, filled with courage, propose to continue the combat for a radical change from the capitalist system, the system of exploitation and oppression that dominates the land of Nicaragua and almost all of Latin America.”<sup>47</sup>

In the Sandinista message to Nicaraguan students, Fonseca again drew a parallel between Christian morality and revolutionary morality, echoing the sentiments of some liberation theologians in

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<sup>44</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Carta a los padres del Héroe Sandinista Francisco Moreno (1967),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 226.

<sup>45</sup> Fonseca, “Carta a los padres del Héroe Sandinista Francisco Moreno,” 226-227.

<sup>46</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, FSLN, a los estudiantes revolucionarios,” 129.

<sup>47</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente,” 129-130.

Latin America. While the FSLN was a Marxist organization, Fonseca reassured religious students that “The Marxist conviction does not exclude respect for the religious beliefs of the Nicaraguan population.” Instead, it overlapped with Christian morality by encompassing the defense of the downtrodden in society. Fonseca compared revolutionaries with early Christians by comparing the two martyrdoms, which served the same purpose of justice for the poor. He referred to one martyr in particular as a model for revolutionaries and Christians alike, Camilo Torres, a Colombian priest who, “wielding the guerrilla’s rifle,” gave his life defending the exploited people of his own country.<sup>48</sup> He emphasized that the martyrdom of these heroes served as a call to the living, as “those who sacrifice themselves demand sacrifices.”<sup>49</sup> Before signing with “*patria libre o morir*,” the words of Sandino, Fonseca ended the message by once more invoking “the names of the sacred martyrs of the Sandinista National Liberation Front... In their name I demand of the revolutionary students, men and women... to faithfully meet their patriotic and revolutionary duties.”<sup>50</sup>

As well as appealing to Nicaraguans in the country, Fonseca also used the discourse of martyrdom and sacrifice in appeals for support from Nicaraguans who had left their homeland to escape the dictatorship. He wrote a letter “To the Nicaraguan Residents in the United States” with the stated goal of “forging the liberty of a martyred Nicaragua.”<sup>51</sup> Though he understood the reasons many had for leaving, especially after the 1972 earthquake in Managua, he called on the expatriates to not abandon their people and to give the FSLN any moral and material support they could. Fonseca described the FSLN in particular as representative of the “traditional Nicaraguan rebellion,” working with the ideals of Sandino to “unite all of the Nicaraguans of good conscience.”<sup>52</sup> Supporting the revolution would entail a sacrifice,

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<sup>48</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente,” 141.

<sup>49</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente,” 143.

<sup>50</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente,” 146.

<sup>51</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Carta a los nicaragüenses residentes en Estados Unidos (1973),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 228.

<sup>52</sup> Fonseca, “Carta a los nicaragüenses residentes,” 229.

Fonseca admitted, but he assured the readers of the letter that their sacrifice would be for a just cause, proving them to be authentic Nicaraguan “*hijos de la tierra*” like the heroes Diriangén, Andrés Castro, and Benjamín Zeledón. Alongside those historical heroes, Fonseca listed more recent Sandinista martyrs, those who were official members of the Sandinista Front like Silvio Mayorga, Julio Buitrago, and Luisa Amanda Espinoza.<sup>53</sup>

One of the Sandinista martyrs in Fonseca’s writings was David Tejada, the student whose body was rumored to be at the bottom of a volcano. Tejada was one of the many Sandinista victims of the National Guard to whom Fonseca wished “eternal glory” for his sacrifice.<sup>54</sup> His death deeply affected Fonseca, who included a special post-script note in the 1968 message to Nicaraguan students. The note acknowledged Tejada’s torture and murder by the Guard, but it was ultimately a reminder to the guerrillas and students to maintain their revolutionary spirit. In all its grimness, Fonseca found in Tejada’s death a metaphor for the vital role of heroic sacrifice in Nicaraguan liberation, a metaphor epitomizing the discourse of the later Sandinistas as they led a new Nicaragua: “The martyred body of David Tejada lies in the depths of the Santiago volcano. The graves of all the Nicaraguan martyrs will also transform into volcanos, volcanos whose fire will reduce to ashes the crime, the robbery, and the pillage, volcanos whose light will illuminate the dawn of the desired new day full of justice.”<sup>55</sup>

Carlos Fonseca, to honor Tejada, often used “David” as a pseudonym for the remainder of his years as a Sandinista guerrilla until the National Guard ambushed and killed him in November of 1976.<sup>56</sup> By that time, the FSLN had split into three major factions with considerable ideological conflict between them. However, the ongoing repression of the Somoza dictatorship served to unite the factions, whose

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<sup>53</sup> Fonseca, “Carta a los nicaragüenses residentes,” 229.

<sup>54</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Yanqui Johnson: En Nicaragua nació y luchó Augusto C. Sandino (1968),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo*, 323.

<sup>55</sup> Fonseca, “Mensaje del Frente,” 148.

<sup>56</sup> Zimmermann, 113.

representatives signed a reunification agreement in March of 1979.<sup>57</sup> The repression also continued to mobilize the people of Nicaragua, especially following the murder of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro and the Monimbó uprising of 1978. The last months of the insurrection brought significant growth to the ranks of the Sandinista Front, which became the leading organization of the revolutionary victory in July of 1979.<sup>58</sup>

After the three factions of the FSLN reunited, its members formed a National Directorate as the central authoritative body of the organization. Among the most important Sandinista leaders at this time were National Directorate members Daniel and Humberto Ortega, Víctor Tirado López, Tomás Borge, Henry Ruíz, Bayardo Arce, Jaime Wheelock, Luis Carrión, and Carlos Nuñez Téllez.<sup>59</sup> Once the last Somoza had fled to Miami that July, representatives of various political groups including the FSLN also formed a governing junta to begin the process of rebuilding the country. The Sandinistas dominated this junta, comprised a majority in the new Council of State, and assumed important cabinet positions.<sup>60</sup> The new government created mass organizations and reforms to address public health, reconstruction, and agriculture while promising a mixed economy and political pluralism to the middle and upper classes that were already wary, or in some cases hostile, toward the party's control in the new Nicaragua. Once in state power, the FSLN was ready to take up Fonseca's narrative of martyrdom and sacrifice once again, beginning with the preeminent project of the revolution in education.

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<sup>57</sup> Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Booth, 143-146.

<sup>59</sup> Gilbert, 11.

<sup>60</sup> Gilbert, 13.

## THE REVOLUTION IN EDUCATION

The construction of history often begins at school, where students, especially those in state institutions, receive official narratives in civic and historical curricula. Education is an area of potential cultural and political transformation of the population by a revolutionary state.<sup>61</sup> Martin Carnoy argued that education is a key factor in establishing legitimate power in a transition state, which aptly describes the Sandinista-dominated governing junta of Nicaragua in the early 1980s. Establishing that legitimacy depends on acceptance of the ruling group's ideology and the ability to establish state hegemony, the project of legitimation. Because the appeal of a revolution is primarily negative, resting on the need to oppose and overthrow an existing regime, new values must replace the common enemy that united the people in revolution in order for the state to transform society.<sup>62</sup> Adhering to this need, one of the first projects of the Sandinista revolution was education. The FSLN carried out a massive literacy campaign in 1980, followed by reform in formal schooling for children and adult education programs throughout the decade. Sandinista educational reforms aimed to make schooling more modern and accessible to all, but also, and perhaps above all, to inculcate the revolutionary values of Sandinismo, including the Sandinista vision of history. This goal of education is evident both in early statements of Sandinista objectives, in the

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<sup>61</sup> Elsie Rockwell explores schooling in revolutionary Mexico with her contribution to *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, writing that rural schools “contributed in a crucial way to the formation of a more centralized state” as the spaces of relations between the state and Mexican citizens. These spaces could be the sites of popular negotiation and contestation as well as the means through which the state “disseminated an official revolutionary discourse.” Elsie Rockwell, “Schools of the Revolution: Enacting and Contesting State Forms in Tlaxcala, 1910-1930,” *Everyday Forms of State Formation*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph and David Nugent (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 171, 202.

<sup>62</sup> Martin Carnoy, “The State and Social Transformation,” in *Education and Social Transition in the Third World*, ed. Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 24-28. Carnoy also comments on the role of nationalism, which is often the discourse the state uses to “accomplish what the conditioned capitalist state could not: to recreate the individual as a member of the nation-state.” For the FSLN, this meant the transformation through education of the Nicaraguan people into “New Men” and “New Women” of an authentic Nicaragua.

discourse around the 1980 Literacy Crusade, and in materials related to the formal education reform the FSLN carried out during its first decade in power. Before discussing Sandinista historical narratives themselves, we should observe the large importance given to their dissemination in revolutionary education.<sup>63</sup>

The FSLN first established the importance of education in “The Historic Program of the FSLN,” the first document that elaborated the ideology and goals of the organization. The program comprised a series of numbered articles elaborating on the national issues of Nicaragua that the FSLN hoped to address through the revolution. Among the concerns listed were agrarian reform and land redistribution, nationalization of industry, and political corruption and democracy. Article III was “Revolution in Culture and Education.”<sup>64</sup> The first task listed in the article was to eradicate illiteracy, which had grown to approximately 50 percent under the Somoza regime. Literacy indeed became one of the very first projects of the Sandinista government following the revolution in 1979.

The planning for the National Literacy Crusade (Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización, or CNA) began in early August of that year, just weeks after the July triumph of the revolution, when the new Ministry of Education named Fernando Cardenal as the coordinator of the campaign. Cardenal and the CNA set to work organizing volunteers and creating training workshops. The volunteers included many young, urban Nicaraguans and *internacionalistas* from abroad, many of them from Cuba. The new Nicaraguan government put approximately 200 million córdobas (at the time, about 20 million U.S. dollars) into the project, according to an official CNA bulletin. To finance the project, the government

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<sup>63</sup> The publication of a number of books and articles about Sandinista education followed the revolution, beginning in the 1980s until the early 1990s. While many of these works are academic in tone and investigative rigor, several authors are also explicit in their support for the FSLN and actually took part in education reform themselves through activity in international solidarity efforts or by traveling to Nicaragua to volunteer in some capacity in reform campaigns. More theoretical works specific to Nicaraguan education tend to see new pedagogical methods and mass mobilization as the most important political aspects of the Sandinista programs. See Valerie Lee Miller, *Between Struggle and Hope: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985); Sheryl L. Hirshon, *And Also Teach Them to Read* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1983); Deborah Barndt, *To Change This House: Popular Education under the Sandinistas* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991); Robert F. Arnove, *Education and Revolution in Nicaragua* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1986); George Black and John Bevan, *The Loss of Fear: Education in Nicaragua Before and After the Revolution* (London: Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 1980).

<sup>64</sup> “The Historic Program of the FSLN,” in *Sandinistas Speak*, 17-18.

solicited countries, institutions, organizations, and political parties in solidarity with the revolution.<sup>65</sup> The new literacy teachers did much of their work in the rural regions of Nicaragua, where illiteracy was at its highest with estimates approaching 80 percent.<sup>66</sup>

The language that the FSLN used in organizing and promoting the campaign mirrored the militant language of the revolution itself. Tomás Borge referred to the campaign as a battle in the war for ideological liberation on the same level of importance as the insurrection of the late 1970s.<sup>67</sup> The organization that carried out the campaign had the title of the Popular Literacy Army (Ejército Popular de Alfabetización, or EPA). Teachers received the title of *brigadistas* and formed different “fronts” sent to various regions. Within a front, a group of teachers in a *municipio* was a brigade and a group of 30 teachers was a column.<sup>68</sup> The bulletins of the Literacy Crusade contained several running tallies of progress made in the campaign; on the front of Bulletin 14, from August 1980, red letters proclaimed that the brigadistas carried out the “final offensive,” echoing the victory of 1979.<sup>69</sup> The CNA declared Nicaragua a “territory victorious over illiteracy” that month.<sup>70</sup>

The proclaimed victory of the Literacy Crusade did not end the Sandinista education efforts. Much like the “Historic Program,” the party platform in the 1984 and 1990 national elections continued to include education as a revolutionary priority. The 1984 platform addressed issues like the cost of education, the continuing fight against illiteracy, the technical education of workers, and the

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<sup>65</sup> *La Cruzada en marcha: Órgano oficial de la Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización*, bulletin 1 (Managua: Ministry of Education, February 1980). Managua. Black and Bevan also list some specific funding sources.

<sup>66</sup> *La Cruzada en Marcha*, bulletin 1.

<sup>67</sup> Tomás Borge, “The New Education in the New Nicaragua,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, ed. Bruce Marcus (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1985), 77.

<sup>68</sup> *La Cruzada en marcha*, bulletin 1, 4.

<sup>69</sup> *La Cruzada en marcha: Órgano oficial de la Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización*, Bulletin 4 (Managua: Ministry of Education, April 1980), 8.

<sup>70</sup> *La Cruzada en marcha: Órgano oficial de la Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización*, bulletin 16 (Managua: Ministry of Education, August 1980).

transformation of curricula.<sup>71</sup> Five years later, the platform for the 1990 election emphasized again free and accessible education at all levels as well as a new campaign to further reduce illiteracy.<sup>72</sup>

Practical considerations guided many education programs under the FSLN. Advancing education reform was especially important for general national and human development. The “Historic Program” included a dimension of modernization, expressed as a desire to train teachers with “scientific knowledge that the present era requires.”<sup>73</sup> Along with teaching literacy, the FSLN embarked on a process of expanding basic education. The 1984 party platform included a commitment to free education as a right of the people, promising to “end the expensive education still offered by certain private schools.”<sup>74</sup> Within the first four years after the revolution, the rate of formal, public school enrollment doubled and more poor, rural, and indigenous students gained access to the Nicaraguan university system. As part of an effort to “improve the country’s capacity to generate scientific and technical knowledge,” the Ministry of Education collaborated with West Germany to create new materials and curricula for natural science education.<sup>75</sup> Reforms also initiated the government’s adult education program. Though the decade brought economic difficulties with the recession and the Contra War in the countryside, the Sandinista government managed to increase dramatically the number of schools and working teachers, including those in rural communities.

Parallel to these practical concerns, education was also a realm in which the FSLN sought to inculcate revolutionary values in the people of Nicaragua, including Nicaraguan children. The education article in the “Historic Program” included as a goal of the FSLN to “root out the neocolonial penetration

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<sup>71</sup> The Sandinista National Liberation Front, “Plan of Struggle,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 322.

<sup>72</sup> FSLN, “Plataforma electoral (1990-1997),” in *Sandinistas: Key Documents / Documentos Claves*, ed. Dennis Gilbert and David Block (Ithaca, NY: Latin American Studies Program, Cornell University, 1990), 165.

<sup>73</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 18.

<sup>74</sup> The Sandinista National Liberation Front, “Plan of Struggle,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 322.

<sup>75</sup> The Sandinista National Liberation Front, “Plan of Struggle,” 322; *PERME 1981-1986: Cinco años de cooperación en educación* (Managua: Ministry of Education).

in [Nicaraguan] culture.”<sup>76</sup> What was at stake was not just basic education and skills necessary for development, but a larger notion of constituting an authentic Nicaraguan identity through education. The discourse around the Literacy Crusade took on moral and political dimensions. Fernando Cardenal referred to the campaign as the dream of Carlos Fonseca, who engaged in teaching peasants and guerrillas in the mountains in the years leading up to the revolution. Cardenal was also clear about the political dimensions of literacy itself, stating, “In the process of learning to read, our workers and peasants learn their dignity, their history, their country, and their Revolution.”<sup>77</sup> Sandinista intellectual and Vice President (1985-1990) Sergio Ramírez later echoed Cardenal’s sentiments in a report to the fourth National Congress of ANDEN, the country’s largest union of teachers, in 1987. Ramírez referenced the “Historic Program of the FSLN” before calling education a “fundamental part of a project of self-determination and of social transformation,” proclaiming at the end of his report that the New Nicaragua was largely the work of the nation’s teachers.<sup>78</sup>

The political dimensions of public education under the Sandinistas did not go unrecognized by their detractors. From the beginning, teachers and facilities of the Literacy Crusade faced attacks by opposition forces. In May 1980, in the middle of the CNA, Fernando Cardenal, the head coordinator of the campaign, sent a letter to the Chief of State Security about his concerns regarding the safety of the CNA brigadistas.<sup>79</sup> Cardenal asked for increased security and communication measures, writing that the brigadistas in the north were experiencing harassment and abuse from former members of the Somocista National Guard and counterrevolutionaries “with the help of certain reactionary sectors and the bourgeoisie vende-patria.” Cardenal had also written a letter to Tomás Borge, at the time a member of the

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<sup>76</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 17-18.

<sup>77</sup> *La Cruzada en Marcha*, bulletin 1, 7.

<sup>78</sup> “El proyecto político-educativo de la Revolución Popular Sandinista: Informe inaugural al IV Congreso Nacional de ANDEN del Dr. Sergio Ramírez Mercado, Vicepresidente de la Republica, Managua, 22 de abril de 1987” (Nicaragua: Fourth National Congress of ANDEN, 1987), IHNCA, Central American University, Managua.

<sup>79</sup> Fernando Cardenal to Lenín Cerna, Ernesto Vallecillo, Carlos Carrión, and Carlos Tünnermann, May 1980, IHNCA, Central American University, Managua.

National Directorate and Minister of the Interior, about the capture of an individual who was suspected of assaulting a brigadista in the northwestern department of Chinandega. Earlier that month, the Minister of Education Carlos Tünnermann authored a confidential document titled, “The Security Concerns of the National Literacy Crusade and Suitable Measures” in which he referred to the campaign as “the most important program of our Popular Sandinista Revolution.” While he included praise for the brigadistas and optimism for the success of the campaign, he expressed serious concerns for the security and safety of both the brigadistas and literacy teachers, blaming extremist opposition forces and counterrevolutionaries.<sup>80</sup>

Sandinista education was the target of non-violent domestic political opposition as well. One source of opposition – and the most powerful – was the conservative, traditional hierarchy of the Catholic Church. While many local churches supported the literacy campaign in 1980, others opposed its political, secular nature.<sup>81</sup> A major area of contention between the Church and the Sandinista state was the issue of public versus private education, especially in the Church criticisms of the Ministry of Education. The government allowed for private, religious education and in fact subsidized such schools. However, the Church opposed the state’s handling of education because the Ministry worked directly with schools rather than through the Church hierarchy and required private school curricula to be approved by the Division of Private Education. Additionally, segments of the Church opposed core Sandinista politics as taught in education materials, which promoted “godless Marxist-Leninist ideology” instead of traditional Christian values.<sup>82</sup> After the Literacy Crusade, the Church continued to oppose Sandinista education, criticizing the Ministry for religious intolerance in 1984 and engaging in a “counterrevolutionary

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<sup>80</sup> Fernando Cardenal to Lenín Cerna, et al.

<sup>81</sup> Arnove, *Education as Contested Terrain*, 25-26.

<sup>82</sup> Arnove, *Education as Contested Terrain*, 33

discourse” in the realm of education.<sup>83</sup> Outside of the official Church hierarchy, other conservative sectors and organizations opposed Sandinista education on the basis of its imposition of secular, Marxist-Leninist ideology and intrusion into private schools.<sup>84</sup>

In carrying out education reform, the Ministry of Education released guides for teachers of primary school. A guide from 1983 focused on language and grammar education and presented teaching objectives, contents of education, and examples of instructional activities. In addition to developing language skills, the guide included as a general objective to “promote the revolutionary spirit through civic-patriotic, political-ideological activities, for their inclusion in the new society,” essentially to mold primary school students into proper revolutionary citizens.<sup>85</sup> The Ministry continued to create similar planning guides and documents for education. Fernando Cardenal wrote in the 1985 *Teaching Guide for Third Grade Teachers* that the revolution initiated the construction of a “New Education.”<sup>86</sup> The guide contained a list of general objectives for social science education with a lesson plan corresponding to primary school textbooks. The list combined explicitly political objectives with curricular ones, aiming to give students the tools for “moral and revolutionary formation” along with skills of critical analysis.

Despite budgetary obstacles, new textbooks continued to be printed for Nicaraguan students late in the decade. The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with ANDEN, published third and fourth grade social studies textbooks in 1987. The third grade text, *So Our Homeland Has Been Built: Social Science Textbook for the Third Grade*, was a third edition of a book first published in 1985 by a company listed only as RDA, then in 1987 in its second edition by Ediciones Cubanas. The book referred to formal education’s place in the Sandinista revolution, marking 1983 as the beginning of the transformation in

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<sup>83</sup> Martin Carnoy and Carlos Alberto Torres, “Education and Social Transformation in Nicaragua, 1979-1989,” in *Education and Social Transition in the Third World*, ed. Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990) 348-349.

<sup>84</sup> Arnove, *Education as Contested Terrain*, 36-37

<sup>85</sup> *Programa de segundo grado: nivel primario* (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1983), 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Guía didáctica para el maestro de tercer grado: Plan de estudio programa* (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1985).

education.<sup>87</sup> That year referred not to the year of literacy, but to the undertaking of producing new textbooks for the first grade, the materials from which Nicaraguan children would learn the lessons and values of Sandinismo. The way to do that, the FSLN decided, was through a new rendering of the nation's history.

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<sup>87</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado* (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1987).

## NATIONAL HISTORY AND REVOLUTIONARY VALUES

The construction of a historical narrative was a primary means of the Sandinista effort to instill a new set of revolutionary values. The New Men and New Women of Nicaragua were to be molded based on an understanding of the past structured, in part, as a series of what Fonseca called “martyrs and immortal heroes.” Just as Fonseca had created historical chronologies to illustrate the Nicaraguan tradition of resistance to exploitation, the FSLN continued to insert the revolution and Sandinista legitimacy in a longer timeline of patriotic heroism, claiming to represent authentic national values.

The appropriation of history is a common means of nation-building and legitimizing processes by states in many periods and places. Invented traditions involve historical appropriation through the use of “official ritual, symbolism, and moral exhortation” from the past for new purposes.<sup>88</sup> We can certainly see this tactic in other Latin American contexts. Drawing on the work of Anthony Smith on national myth-making as an “excavation” process, historian Samuel Brunk has examined various memories and uses of agrarian revolutionary Emiliano Zapata in Mexico.<sup>89</sup> After the Mexican revolution, Zapata’s memory became “a central element of various imagined communities,” a powerful symbolic resource in the discourses and imagery of opposing forces like President Carlos Salinas and the EZLN.<sup>90</sup> The interpretation of national history was a similar resource and the subject of political contestation in Paraguay during the twentieth century, eventually becoming ritualized, Lambert and Medina have argued,

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<sup>88</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2-6. Hobsbawm explains invented traditions as “responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations.”

<sup>89</sup> Samuel Brunk, *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata: Myth, Memory, and Mexico’s Twentieth Century* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008).

<sup>90</sup> Brunk, *The Posthumous Career of Emiliano Zapata*, 3, 18.

to reproduce a ‘banal nationalism’ in defense of the Stroessner regime.<sup>91</sup> In the 1980s, the Sandinistas used a national historical narrative to articulate the values of the revolution.

The Sandinista narrative extolled revolutionary values found in the past. The FSLN integrated the revolution in a timeline that positions 1979 as the logical culmination of a long history of rebellion. The national past was the primary repository of the values, particularly resistance and devotion to the patria, which made the revolution possible. Sandinista discourse was explicitly anti-imperialist, particularly concerning the role of the United States in global and Nicaraguan affairs. While the FSLN referenced the United States role in the counterrevolutionary war as ongoing Yankee imperialism and also offered a Marxist-Leninist framework to understand it, they sometimes articulated twentieth-century imperialism as coming out of a larger history of exploitation. The tradition of rebellion, which Fonseca had articulated as a core part of the Nicaraguan national character, was a national tradition opposed to foreign control of the patria, first by Spanish colonialism, then through U.S. imperialism.

Marxism-Leninism was undoubtedly one part of Sandinista political discourse and it was certainly reflected in the organization’s conception of history. “Nicaragua: Zero Hour” was a foundational essay by Carlos Fonseca. In this 1969 essay, Fonseca wrote about the history of Latin America and Nicaragua up to the 1960s. He promoted revolution by explaining that Nicaragua had entered a historical stage in which revolution was possible, owing much to the Cuban revolution a decade earlier.<sup>92</sup> Numerous rebellions marked Nicaraguan history, including the rebellion of Augusto Sandino. But it was only in the 1960s, Fonseca wrote, that a sector of the population was “conscious that they are trying not simply to achieve a change of men in power, but a change of the system—the overthrow of the exploiting classes and the victory of the exploited classes.”

In addition to the above ideological elements of the Sandinista conception of history, however, the FSLN found in the Nicaraguan national past a larger value system that went beyond Marxism. This

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<sup>91</sup> Peter Lambert and Ricardo Medina, “Contested Discourse, Contested Power: Nationalism and the Left in Paraguay,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 26, no. 3 (July 2007): 353-354.

<sup>92</sup> Fonseca, “Nicaragua: Zero Hour,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 39.

value system incorporated devotion to the patria and defense against foreign intrusion, exemplified by a national tradition of rebellion and resistance. “Nicaragua: Zero Hour” referenced this national tradition in the 1960s. Fonseca characterized contemporary Nicaragua as coming out of a distinctly violent and tumultuous past, even in comparison to other Latin American nations, many of which had experienced peaceful transitions to power that Nicaragua lacked. According to Fonseca, a historical absence of democracy and a constant struggle for political dominance among the Nicaraguan elites resulted in a country in which armed struggle was the only means of acquiring political power. “There is no doubt, then,” he concluded, “that the Nicaraguan people have a rich tradition of rebellion.”<sup>93</sup> Quoting Marx on the history of the Spanish, however, Fonseca argued that this did not mean Nicaragua had been a revolutionary people yet, only a rebel people, at least until the right national and international conditions could make revolution a real possibility after 1959. In Fonseca’s historical articulation, this rebellious character of Nicaragua was not the product of political ideology, but of the pre-existing instinct of the Nicaraguan people, something perhaps inherited through generations.<sup>94</sup>

Other Sandinistas would further Fonseca’s interpretation of national history after the 1979 victory. In a speech celebrating the first anniversary of the revolution, Tomás Borge, founding member of the FSLN and then Minister of the Interior, referred to the Sandinista revolution as a “synthesis... of a whole history of heroic struggles, which began in the colonial period and broke like lightning bolts in the new epoch that opened up in 1821, which lying historians falsely call independence.”<sup>95</sup> A speech by Magda Enríquez, who served in the Sandinista government, emphasized indigenous women as having exhibited the spirit of rebellion. In discussing the history of women’s participation in “all of Nicaragua’s struggles,” Enríquez referenced indigenous women who “refused to bear children in order not to give the Spaniards any more slaves,” an example followed by women in the struggle for independence from Spain

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<sup>93</sup> Fonseca, “Nicaragua: Zero Hour,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 34-35.

<sup>94</sup> Fonseca, “Nicaragua: Zero Hour,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 34-35.

<sup>95</sup> Tomás Borge, “The second anniversary of the Sandinista revolution,” in *Sandinistas Speak*, 161.

and later in the Sandino rebellion, wherein “women participated – not by following their men to help them with the dishes or the laundry but by picking up weapons and being guerrilla fighters.”<sup>96</sup>

Education was another arena in which the FSLN asserted its interpretation of history as demonstrative of revolutionary values. In 1981, the Ministry of Education sent a social science textbook to the newly-formed Institute for the Study of Sandinismo for feedback and corrections. In a memorandum sent to Sergio Ramírez (at the time part of the governing junta), the head of the Institute, Francisco de Asís Fernández, identified problems of both ideology and historical accuracy, indicating that those directing a cultural revolution via education sought to inculcate simultaneously particular values compatible with the revolution and an understanding of a “true” Nicaraguan history.<sup>97</sup>

In constructing a “true” Nicaraguan history, materials from Sandinista education projects continued Fonseca’s work by emphasizing the historical roots Sandinista resistance. They did this by connecting the revolution to a specifically indigenous spirit of resistance. The Sandinista narrative in education materials included a longer tradition of indigenous resistance under the umbrella of the struggle for Nicaraguan sovereignty. Juliet Hooker and Jeffrey Gould have both written about the persistence of *mestizaje* in the discourse of the FSLN. Sandinista education echoed this *mestizaje* element of discourse by incorporating historical indigenous resistance into the official historical narrative.<sup>98</sup> As Hooker has noted, the Sandinista style of *mestizaje* departed from older versions by emphasizing the exploitation that resulted from Spanish conquest and celebrating the indigenous heritage of the mestizo.<sup>99</sup> In education, the narrative did this by connecting the revolution with a spirit of indigenous resistance that was part of Nicaragua’s supposed mestizo character.

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<sup>96</sup> Magda Enríquez, “We Women Learned What We Were Capable of Doing,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 257.

<sup>97</sup> Francisco de Asís Fernández to Sergio Ramírez Mercado, 29 October 1981, folder titled “La Vida y Gesta del General Augusto C. Sandino y otros temas,” IHNCA, Central American University, Managua.

<sup>98</sup> Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in this Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998); Juliet Hooker, “‘Beloved Enemies’: Race and Official Mestizo Nationalism in Nicaragua,” *Latin American Research Review* 40, no. 3 (2005): 14-39.

<sup>99</sup> Hooker, “‘Beloved Enemies,’” 26.

The Ministry of Education under the new government produced guides for teachers as well as textbooks that connected indigenous resistance with Sandinista revolutionary ideals. The *Teaching Guide for Third Grade Teachers* included among its objectives for third grade history education “to emphasize the spirit of the struggle and fight of our indigenous people against the colonial yoke.”<sup>100</sup> In the narrative, one textbook listed the main indigenous groups of Nicaragua - Niquiranos, Chorotegas, Miskitos, Sumos, and Ramas – and their origins elsewhere in Latin America; some were of “origen mexicano,” some of “origen maya,” and others from present-day Colombia. It noted the diversity of the different groups due to different histories – they were not all just “indios.” Rather, they were the nation’s “first settlers,” with pan-American origins.<sup>101</sup> But, while the narrative recognized ethnic nuances in Nicaragua’s racial history, it proceeded to frame indigenous resistance, both in the colonial era and in the post-independence nineteenth century, as primarily a class struggle. The Sandinista narrative suggested that resistance to exploitation was an inherent part of indigenous character, long ago exhibited by the cacique Diriangén against the conquistador Gil González. This virtue of resistance was therefore, due to the alleged consensus of a mestizo Nicaragua, a part of the Nicaraguan people’s character.

The FSLN at times used this historical discourse to build support for the revolution outside of Nicaragua. They made efforts to build and maintain solidarity with other countries, particularly those in Latin America and the Non-Aligned Movement. In the “Historic Program” was an article dedicated to “Central American people’s unity,” for the “true union” of the peoples of Central America. The article posited that unity was the means for achieving liberation from foreign domination for the nations of the isthmus, which had a 15-year period of official union as the Federal Republic of Central America after independence from Spain. The FSLN also aligned their program with the struggles of other subjugated, “fraternal” peoples in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.<sup>102</sup> After the revolution, members of the FSLN

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<sup>100</sup> *Guía didáctica para el maestro de tercer grado.*

<sup>101</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado*, 39-42.

<sup>102</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 22.

attended the 1979 summit of the Non-Aligned Countries in Havana, where Daniel Ortega expressed support for non-alignment and self-determination. Ortega framed imperialism as a historical detriment to the interests of “a free people, a sovereign people, an independent people,” experienced throughout the Third World. The revolution represented a rupture in a long history of oppression.<sup>103</sup>

The FSLN extolled the value of solidarity within Latin America and appealed to the notion of a historical bond between nations. Celebrating the support of Mexican President José López Portillo, the Government of Reconstruction published a short book of photos and speeches by various Nicaraguan figures and Portillo from his visit to Managua in early 1980. According to the book, Mexico had always been close with Nicaragua and often participated directly in the struggle for a new Nicaragua. It mentioned the time that national hero Augusto Sandino spent in Mexico as an expatriate laborer, where he “consolidated his revolutionary ideas in the heat of the struggle of the oil workers and agrarianists headed by Emiliano Zapata” and his later trip during his rebellion in 1929.<sup>104</sup> Sandinista National Directorate member Víctor Tirado, originally from Mexico, “became Nicaraguan” by fighting in armed combat for the Nicaraguan liberation, demonstrating a “tradition of solidarity” between the peoples of Mexico and Nicaragua.<sup>105</sup>

The Sandinistas clearly found the Nicaraguan past to be a rich source of revolutionary values and emphasized those values in the national historical narrative. However, the narrative had to be structured in some way that could demonstrate those values in action. The way the FSLN most often illustrated the embodiment of those values was through the celebration of national heroes.

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<sup>103</sup> Daniel Ortega, “Nothing will hold back our struggle for liberation,” in *Sandinistas Speak*, 55-56.

<sup>104</sup> *México y Nicaragua, Unidos en la Victoria, Enero 24 1980* (Managua: Directorate of Dissemination and Press of the Governing Junta of National Reconstruction, 1980), 8.

<sup>105</sup> *México y Nicaragua*, 8.

## THE HEROES OF SANDINISTA NICARAGUA

“The history of our people... is a heroic one,” proclaimed Tomás Borge to a Nicaraguan crowd in 1981, typifying the historical narrative of the Sandinista National Liberation Front.<sup>106</sup> In their construction of an official national history, the Sandinistas structured their narrative around a new pantheon of heroes who represented their revolutionary values, exemplary figures on whom the New Men and New Women of Nicaragua were to model themselves.

Just as the appropriation of history is a common means of nation-building, the use of heroes is a nearly universal component of national myth-making. Samuel Brunk and Ben Fallaw have defined a hero as “a person to whom remarkable courage, talent, and other noble, even godlike traits are attributed by members of a community and who thus acquires a lasting place of importance in that community’s culture.”<sup>107</sup> Brunk and Fallaw cited *Imagined Communities* to position hero figures as the subjects of ancestor worship which binds communities as nations, and which states can therefore wield as tools of legitimacy.<sup>108</sup> The FSLN in the 1980s did exactly that, creating a narrative of heroes and their heroic acts for the patria in which they could integrate the 1979 revolution.

Historical heroes had a significant place in education, one of the primary areas in which the FSLN constructed its narrative. The general objectives of the *Teaching Guide for Third Grade Teachers* included “to inculcate in the students love for the nation, highlighting in history the examples of the Heroes and Martyrs who have fallen in the struggle for our liberation and for the defense of National

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<sup>106</sup> Tomás Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 161.

<sup>107</sup> Ben Fallaw and Samuel Brunk, “Introduction: Heroes and Their Cults in Modern Latin America,” in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Brunk and Fallaw (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>108</sup> Fallaw and Brunk, “Introduction,” 3.

Sovereignty.”<sup>109</sup> The narrative portrayed the history of both Nicaragua and Latin America at large as a struggle for national sovereignty, fought by a number of heroes from decades and centuries past, whose legacy the Sandinistas took up in the revolution.

The most significant hero of Sandinista history was, of course, Augusto César Sandino, the guerrilla general of the 1920s and 1930s. Sandino led a protracted insurrection against the United States Marine occupation of Nicaragua and against the *vendepatrias* who ran the country in the interest of foreign gain, namely that of the “Yankee imperialists” in the United States. Sandino was a logical choice as a hero for both the nature of his struggle and the nature of his death: members of the National Guard, under the orders of the institution director Anastasio Somoza García, assassinated him in 1934, two years before Somoza officially seized executive power through a coup. Carlos Fonseca ended his “Nicaragua: Zero Hour” essay with a nod to Sandino, Che Guevara, and the “combative examples of our fallen brothers” who would lead Nicaragua toward liberation; he promised to them that he would “defend the national honor.”<sup>110</sup>

Along with sociologist Robert Jansen, historians Steven Palmer and Richard Grossman are among those who have looked at Sandino as a hero for the FSLN. Before the founding of the Sandinista Front in 1961, Sandino and his rebellion maintained some resonance among Latin American intellectual circles, Nicaraguan exiles, and opposition political parties within Nicaragua. Despite attempts of the Somocista state to restrict his image to nothing more than a troublesome bandit, he became an inspiration for the assassination of the first Somoza in 1956.<sup>111</sup> It was up to Carlos Fonseca in the 1960s, then a young university student, to reconstruct him as the father of the New Nicaragua. After the success of the Cuban revolution, Fonseca reimagined Sandino as a symbol of national and anti-imperialist resistance. Grossman noted that this reimagining was selective and strategic, omitting elements of Sandino’s

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<sup>109</sup> *Guía didáctica para el maestro de tercer grado.*

<sup>110</sup> Fonseca, “Nicaragua: Zero Hour,” 51.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Grossman, “Augusto Sandino of Nicaragua: The Hero Never Dies,” in *Heroes and Hero Cults in Latin America*, ed. Brunk and Fallaw (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2006), 163.

ideology and goals that were not as easily translatable to later Sandinista revolutionary visions.<sup>112</sup> Palmer focused on Fonseca's reconstruction of Sandino into the preeminent symbol of resistance and his reconciling of the general with the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the FSLN. He argued that Fonseca reconstructed Sandino as a "protosocialist" who began, but for historical reasons could not complete, the path to liberation from exploitation and foreign domination. It was the task of the Sandinista Front, with ideological tools and conditions provided by the Cuban revolution, to resume that path as the rightful heirs of the original Sandinismo.<sup>113</sup>

The FSLN continued to invoke Sandino after the 1979 revolution not only as the initiator of the path to liberation, but also as an exemplary Nicaraguan. Like Fonseca, the Sandinistas of the 1980s continued to use the motto "patria libre o morir," a phrase which Sandino had used in his rebellion, in the signing of official documents and in communications within the organization. The invocations of Sandino took on more performative qualities at times, such as when Tomás Borge ended a speech by shouting "patria libre," to which the crowd responded "o morir!"<sup>114</sup> In a speech celebrating the anniversary of the revolution in 1983, Daniel Ortega cited Sandino, along with Fonseca and other historical fighters as men who "left [Nicaragua] a legacy of dignity, bravery, love of the people, and love of the homeland," the qualities which the ideal Nicaraguan should emulate.<sup>115</sup> Ortega referred to Sandino a year later in a more defensive stance. In a speech to the parliamentary session of the Nicaraguan Council of State, he urged the national military forces to continue the struggle against the counterrevolutionary forces, commending

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<sup>112</sup> Grossman, "Augusto Sandino of Nicaragua," 165.

<sup>113</sup> Steven Palmer, "Carlos Fonseca and the Construction of Sandinismo in Nicaragua," 99. For a biographical treatment of Carlos Fonseca and his intellectual endeavors about Sandino, including the inclusion of Sandino in the name of the FSLN, see Zimmermann, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*.

<sup>114</sup> Borge, "Second anniversary," *Sandinistas Speak*, 177.

<sup>115</sup> Daniel Ortega, "The Sandinista People's Revolution is an Irreversible Political Reality," in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution*, 203.

the various military and security sectors and “recalling the heroic act of Sandino” in continuing his own violent struggle until the United States Marines departed the country.<sup>116</sup>

As part of the various reform efforts of the revolution, the new government sought to educate the youth of Nicaragua as the future New Men and New Women of a revolutionary society. The heroic Sandino was an example to the young students of the nation who should aspire to revolutionary values like devotion to the patria and resistance to exploitation. The textbooks and readers for some of the youngest primary school students emphasized Sandino’s heroism in fighting for the future of his country and especially to better the conditions in which the future laborers of Nicaragua would live and work.<sup>117</sup> Others praised the patriotic dedication and humility in his writings.<sup>118</sup>

Sandino was the central hero of Sandinista history, but the pantheon included other exemplary figures as well. The Sandinista narrative was a historical one, stretching further back into the past before Sandino took up arms against the North American invaders. One of the earliest heroes of the post-independence period was Francisco Morazán, the Tegucigalpa-born president of the Federal Republic of Central America, a republic consisting of Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and, briefly, the future Mexican state of Chiapas between 1823 and 1838. Sandinista educational materials honored Morazán for standing up against powerful institutions like the Catholic Church, large landowners, and commercial interests, all remnants of colonial-era hierarchies.<sup>119</sup> Morazán was exemplary as an early fighter in the struggle for liberty, especially for pan-American liberation from unjust and exploitative hegemonic forces. In a speech at the 1983 Conference on Latin America held in Managua, Sergio Ramírez referred to both Morazán and South American hero Simón Bolívar while defending the government against U.S. accusations that it was “exporting revolution” to its Central

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<sup>116</sup> Daniel Ortega, “A Dirty War is Being Carried Out Against Nicaragua” in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 299.

<sup>117</sup> *Los Carlitos: libro primero de lectura* (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1984), 141.

<sup>118</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Historia, cuarto grado* (Managua: Ministry of Education, 1987), 60.

<sup>119</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado*, 135.

American neighbors. He referred to them alongside U.S. heroes George Washington and Thomas Jefferson; none of the four men were able to avoid “having their revolutions exported,” inspiring by their example other colonized peoples to lead a “historic crusade of radical changes that was to bury the old colonial world.” Completing that crusade, according to Ramírez, was the task of the twentieth-century Sandinistas who were to continue the fight for a free people.<sup>120</sup>

In the twentieth century, Benjamín Zeledón and Rigoberto López joined the ranks of heroes like Sandino and Morazán. Like Sandino, their historic contributions relate to the tyranny of the United States in Nicaragua. Zeledón participated in a 1912 rebellion following overthrow of President José Santos Zelaya, which an alliance of Conservatives and dissident Liberals carried out with U.S. support. López was the poet who assassinated the patriarch of the dictatorship, Anastasio Somoza García, in 1956. Zeledón and López, in the Sandinista narrative, embodied values like “dignity, bravery, love of the people, and love of the homeland.”<sup>121</sup> One fourth-grade Sandinista textbook showed Zeledón’s family trying to convince him to retreat from the rebellion, but he refused, prioritizing the dignity and sovereignty of his homeland over their concerns, an expression of true devotion to the patria.<sup>122</sup>

To illustrate an even more historic origin of Sandinista values, the FSLN included the indigenous hero Diriangén in the pantheon. He first made an appearance in the works of Carlos Fonseca, who mentioned Diriangén as an “authentic son of the land” and pre-Sandinista hero in the same vein as Zeledón.<sup>123</sup> Later Sandinista educational materials similarly exalted the *cacique* for embodying the Nicaraguan spirit of rebellion. One third-grade history textbook, in a section on Diriangén, stated that “Our natives as well as our people never bowed to foreign imposition and continued fighting to regain

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<sup>120</sup> Sergio Ramírez, “Our Promises Were Made to the Poorest of Our Country,” in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 186-187.

<sup>121</sup> Daniel Ortega, “The Sandinista People’s Revolution is an Irreversible Political Reality,” *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 202.

<sup>122</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Historia, cuarto grado*, 43.

<sup>123</sup> Carlos Fonseca, “Carta a los nicaragüenses residentes en Estados Unidos (1973),” in *Obras, tomo 1: Bajo la bandera del sandinismo* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985), 229.

their independence.”<sup>124</sup> The FSLN constructed a narrative in which the resistance and rebellions of the colonial and national periods of Nicaragua, whether they were the work of indigenous caciques or Spanish-speaking mestizos, were part of the same tradition. That tradition was an expression of national values like devotion to the patria against foreign conquest, even in a time before the patria was the modern nation-state of Nicaragua.

The FSLN of the 1980s constructed an official historical narrative for the purpose of legitimating the revolution and the position of the group as the ruling party in a time of political contestation and in a period of major reconstruction of the country. However, to claim that the Nicaraguan people had a historical tradition of rebellion was not enough. The Sandinistas had to position their organization and party as inclusive of the legitimate heirs of Nicaraguan history, the true recipients of the heroic legacy. They did this, in many cases, through combining nationalism with an emphasis on moral virtue based on a culture of martyrdom.

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<sup>124</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado*, 82.

## NATIONALISM, KINSHIP, MARTYRDOM, AND MORALITY

In the official historical narrative, the FSLN positioned themselves as the heirs to the struggles and values of the nation's heroes through a nationalist discourse of kinship. In this framework, they imbued the revolution with the moral integrity of the national heroes through the concept of martyrdom: to carry on the revolution was to honor the fallen heroes of the past. They employed this discourse while seeking support for continued Sandinista leadership after 1979, from both international allies and domestic audiences, as part of a larger project of building legitimacy for the new Sandinista state.

The Sandinista revolution entailed not just overthrowing the Somoza dictatorship but also a complete transformation of Nicaraguan society. The discourse of the FSLN referred to this transformation as the initiation of the "New Man." The FSLN adopted the New Man from Marxist-Leninist ideology, and especially the ideology of Che Guevara, who saw the New Man as the product of Marxist struggle in Latin America, complete "only through the coming to power of the proletariat" and education to transform the collective mentality of the people.<sup>125</sup> For the Sandinistas, Luciano Baracco has understood this concept as it relates to moral authority, especially the values of dedication and asceticism which overlapped with Christian ethics, but he limited his discussion to Fonseca's formulation of the New Man as a product of guerrilla life in *la montaña*.<sup>126</sup> After the death of Fonseca and well into the 1980s, the Sandinistas partly used the concept of a New Nicaragua to strengthen their argument about authenticity and the representation of the nation.

Sandinista speeches and writings reflected the Marxist-Leninist origins of the New Man ideal, especially when appealing to the Nicaraguan working classes. Tomás Borge, in a speech delivered in

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<sup>125</sup> Michael Löwy, *The Marxism of Che Guevara: Philosophy, Economics, Revolutionary Warfare* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1973), 8, 18.

<sup>126</sup> Baracco, 75-77.

celebration of May Day in 1982, told the crowd in Managua that the FSLN, as the party of the workers and the peasants, was moving Nicaragua “toward a new society.” He employed Marxist-style historical materialism in his speech, outlining the progress of that society from primitive to feudal, through industrialization and the “bourgeois regime of somocismo,” to the new era of proletariat consciousness which the vanguard FSLN ushered in with the 1979 victory.<sup>127</sup> At times, members of the Sandinista leadership intertwined the trajectory of the Cuban revolution with their own, as when Tomás Borge referred to Fidel Castro as the “resurrection” of Sandino.<sup>128</sup>

The Sandinista formulation of the New Nicaragua also framed it in terms of a rebirth of the patria, a rediscovery of an authentic national culture and character. This shaped the nationalism of the narrative, pitting the oppressed peoples of the country and heroes like Sandino as authentic Nicaraguans against Spanish colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and the domestic traitors who sold Nicaragua to foreign interest. The “Historic Program of the FSLN” called for dismantling neocolonialism in Nicaraguan culture, because it had obscured the country’s true national character.<sup>129</sup> Sandinista leaders continued to appeal to the notion of authenticity as political contestation intensified. On the same date that the party announced its candidates for the 1984 national election, Tomás Borge called for the unity of its supporters. Because of the revolution, Borge said, “for the first time in history, Nicaragua is Nicaragua, and we Nicaraguans are Nicaraguans.” This, he said, was the greatest achievement of the revolution.<sup>130</sup> The education program materials similarly emphasized the need for texts to reflect Nicaraguan reality, an urgent need of the revolution.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Tomás Borge, “This Revolution Was Made to Create a New Society,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution: Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*, ed. Bruce Marcus (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1985), 23-24, 38.

<sup>128</sup> Tomás Borge, “The FSLN and the Nicaraguan Revolution,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 109, quoting from Borge’s *Carlos, el amanecer ya no es una tentación*.

<sup>129</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 17-18.

<sup>130</sup> Tomás Borge, “The Unity of the FSLN Cannot be Challenged,” *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 330.

<sup>131</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado*, inside cover.

The Sandinistas after the 1979 triumph further tried to establish their party as the “genuine vanguard” of the revolution, contending with political groups of the upper class who had opposed Somoza but were also uneasy with Sandinista leadership. Shortly after the July victory, Daniel Ortega referred to Sandinismo as not just the ideology of the party, but the “incarnation of the nation” itself.<sup>132</sup> The two members of the governing junta who represented the national business class, Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo, challenged that sentiment by resigning from the junta after less than a year of membership in 1980.<sup>133</sup> The next year, Tomás Borge criticized the “unpatriotic bourgeoisie,” referring to them as “the traitors... the false prophets” who had been complicit in injustice despite, like the FSLN and other groups, opposing the dictatorship of Somoza. Borge directly contrasted the “bourgeoisie,” the sector that included Chamorro and Robelo, with the FSLN, the latter of which aimed to fulfill the promise of Sandino to “defend the national honor” and achieve “victory for the oppressed.”<sup>134</sup> The authentic people of Nicaragua whom the Sandinistas claimed to champion was not inclusive of the most elite strata of society and it was certainly not inclusive of those like Robelo who would later lead Washington-supported counterrevolutionary forces in the country.

The Sandinista heroes, on the other hand, clearly represented the cause of the people, according to the new official narrative. Above all, the FLSN portrayed their heroes – Augusto Sandino, Benjamín Zeledón, Rigoberto López, Diriangén – as devoted to the homeland and staunch opponents of its exploitation, whether that exploitation was by the institutions of Spanish colonialism or the Somoza dictatorship as a client state for the United States. It was the ideological tools of Augusto Sandino that the FSLN wielded between 1961 and 1979, to fulfill his promise of national honor and victory for the oppressed.<sup>135</sup> In 1984, Sergio Ramírez argued for the relevance of Sandino in contemporary politics,

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<sup>132</sup> Daniel Ortega, “Nothing will hold back our struggle for liberation,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 61.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Sholk, “The National Bourgeoisie in Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua,” *Comparative Politics* 16, no. 3 (April 1984): 257.

<sup>134</sup> Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 160-161.

<sup>135</sup> Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 160.

suggesting that his struggle in defense of sovereignty and in favor of popular democracy and economic change had yet to be fully achieved and it was up to the contemporary Sandinistas to do so.<sup>136</sup> The FSLN incorporated this into the historical narrative in popular education. The narrative drew together the struggles of Francisco Morazán, Sandino, and Carlos Fonseca himself as struggles principally for Nicaraguan liberty; the three men “aspired that the homeland, that is the people, would be free” in peace and harmony.<sup>137</sup>

The FSLN, to claim their place as representing the authentic, New Nicaragua, first claimed to be carrying on the struggle of the past heroes. They did this through a nationalist discourse of kinship and martyrdom. Benedict Anderson identified nationalisms as similar to kinship structures. Anderson referred to language which describes the nation as something natural, something inevitable, unchosen, and primordial, remarking that “patria” denotes kinship. The unchosen and primordial character of national community ties are exactly what gives them their power. If the nation is akin to family, then it is a community which a member cannot “join or leave at easy will,” a community based on historic destiny.<sup>138</sup>

The Sandinistas of the 1980s used a language of kinship to articulate their ties, and the ties of all the modern and authentic Nicaraguan people, to the heroes of the past. Such a language is not rare, and one of its precedents in Nicaragua was in the mobilizing discourse of Sandinista hero Augusto Sandino. Michael Grossman wrote about Sandino’s use of a “gendered and familial discourse” among his peasant base in the northern Segovia Mountains as contributing to their formation of a national identity. In his discourse, the nation of Nicaragua was a metaphorical mother, the “*madre patria*,” and her “children” were the peasants in arms whose duty it was to defend her honor. The peasants under Sandino were then “brothers” united around their responsibility to the family.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Sergio Ramírez, “The Relevance of Sandino’s Thought,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 332.

<sup>137</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Libro de texto de ciencias sociales para tercer grado*, 135.

<sup>138</sup> Anderson, 143-149.

<sup>139</sup> Richard Grossman, “The Nation is Our Mother: Augusto Sandino and the Construction of Peasant Nationalism in Nicaragua, 1927-1934,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 35, no. 1 (2008): 80-99.

Later Sandinista kinship discourse was not identical to that of Sandino. It united Nicaraguans as *hermanos*, but their patriotic duty was to serve a somewhat more patriarchal lineage of the national heroes. The Sandinista pantheon was overwhelmingly male, composed mostly of historical forefathers, and those exemplary heroes became models for the contemporary people of Nicaragua through acts of martyrdom. Further, the FSLN integrated the martyrs of national history with the victims of Somocista repression during the 1960s and 1970s in the chronology of the struggle against exploitation. With kinship comes familial duty, and it was the responsibility of authentic Nicaraguans to honor the national martyrs by supporting the revolution.

Historian Louis Pérez has written about a similar discourse of exemplary martyrdom for the patria in the Cuban independence movement of the late nineteenth century. Leading independista figures like Carlos Manuel de Céspedes and José Martí expressed that the martyrs of the war with the Spanish, “fathers and brothers” of the insurgents, set an example in blood, thereby creating a debt for future generations of Cubans to fulfill. “To commemorate past sacrifice was to consecrate future sacrifice,” Pérez wrote. “To fail or otherwise falter in the pursuit of liberation was to signify that all who had previously perished, those revered for the sacrifice as martyrs, had died in vain, for nothing.”<sup>140</sup> The Sandinistas in Nicaragua, a century later, used a similar language of dutiful, patriotic commemoration of the nation’s heroic martyrs – meaning support for the revolution – to assert their legitimacy as the state.<sup>141</sup> They used this language well before 1979 and afterward in official materials promoting the organization, its political goals, and the mobilization of the people.

The “Historic Program,” the first published statement of Sandinista objectives, included as its final article “Veneration of Our Martyrs.” The article promised “eternal gratitude and veneration toward

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<sup>140</sup> Louis A. Pérez, Jr., *To Die in Cuba: Suicide and Society* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 85.

<sup>141</sup> It is likely that Cuban nationalist historiography influenced the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, as Fonseca referred to Martí as “el apóstol” and the Cuban revolutionary experience of the mid-twentieth century was highly influential on the FSLN. Matilde Zimmermann covers Fonseca’s time in Havana in *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*, in which she argues that the Cuban revolution of 1959 was fundamental to his political thought even in his final writings in 1976.

those who have fallen in the struggle to make Nicaragua a free homeland,” the struggle which the FSLN saw their organization continuing in the revolution. The same article included the establishment of schools for the education of the “children of our people’s martyrs” with the goal of inculcating in the people their “imperishable example.” These heroes were paternal figures and founding fathers of sorts, tied by the nation to their “children,” contemporary and authentic Nicaraguans. The way to live morally by this example is to defend the ideals of the revolution.<sup>142</sup> During the 1980s, the FSLN continued to place the veneration of martyrs in the official party statements of ideology and purpose. The 1984 “Plan of Struggle” for that year’s election and the 1989 “Electoral Platform” for the 1990 election both included the preservation of official memory of the martyrs as a final point. The “Electoral Platform” credited the revolution to the martyrs and pledged that new generations would live by their example.<sup>143</sup>

Sandinista leaders frequently referred to themselves and the authentic people of Nicaragua as descendants of national heroes, tied to the nation and its past through ancestry. Tomás Borge energized a Managua crowd of the “sons and daughters” of Nicaragua, the “descendants of Sandino’s rag-tag army” who in 1981 should continue filling the ranks of the Sandinista mass organizations.<sup>144</sup> When discussing Sandinismo and the structure of the organization in 1983, Jaime Wheelock explained to an interviewer,

The Sandinistas called each other brother, and practiced a life based on respect and equality. Sandino was loved, not feared. Carlos Fonseca also helped to forge a certain sentiment of anticaudillismo, of equality among us... His authority was transmitted to the organization in such depth and profundity that from the beginning the members felt this authority as an organic substance, something not linked to individuals.<sup>145</sup>

That the FSLN did not have one central, authoritative, living leader spoke to the strength of its moral character, and this was a quality that the FSLN received from the first generation of Sandinistas under Sandino. Wheelock was partly reflecting on the fragmentation that occurred among the members of the

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<sup>142</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 25.

<sup>143</sup> FSLN, “Plataforma electoral (1990-1997),” in *Sandinistas: Key Documents / Documentos Claves*, 169.

<sup>144</sup> Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 164.

<sup>145</sup> “The Great Challenge” interview with Jaime Wheelock, in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 125-126.

FSLN between 1977 and 1979, a development which hampered the progress of the organization in those years and which, following the triumph, had the potential to harm the Sandinistas further for reasons of both practical support (particularly as the 1984 election neared) and of legitimacy of the party as a whole.

Leaders of the FSLN sometimes used familial or kinship language in direct dialogues with supporters. For the fourth anniversary of the revolution, Daniel Ortega spoke to a crowd in León. He made a number of references to historical heroes and martyrs, including Benjamín Zeledón, Rigoberto López, and Carlos Fonseca. He also mentioned Sandino, speaking of him as a paternal figure whom the Nicaraguan people should seek to honor. “A new Sandinista consciousness,” blossoming in the 1979 revolution, “makes us worthy sons of Sandino.”<sup>146</sup> Reading the points of the declaration of the FSLN National Directorate, Ortega then engaged in a call and response performance with the crowd, asking them after each point, “Brothers and sisters, do you agree with this proposal?”<sup>147</sup>

The Sandinistas of the mid-1980s used the language of history and kinship in reference to the need to address current problems. The war with the United States-supported Contras prompted a press statement from Humberto Ortega in the name of the National Directorate in 1984. Ortega listed instances of U.S. imperialist intervention from history and from more recent years, establishing a chronology of exploitation by the United States that began decades prior to the contemporary conflict. He implied that the strength and inevitable victory of the New Nicaragua had historical roots: “the children of Zeledón, Sandino, Rigoberto, and Carlos Fonseca will crush the mercenaries in order to win peace.”<sup>148</sup>

The FSLN asserted moral standing through direct association with past struggle. They attributed the victory of 1979 to the legitimacy of Sandinista morality, which the organization acquired as the culmination and synthesis of decades of resistance. The FSLN of the 1960s onward claimed to assimilate

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<sup>146</sup> Daniel Ortega, “The Sandinista People’s Revolution is an Irreversible Political Reality,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 202-203.

<sup>147</sup> Daniel Ortega, “Irreversible Political Reality,” 213.

<sup>148</sup> Humberto Ortega, “The People are Going to Defeat and Annihilate the Mercenary Forces,” in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 300-308.

Sandino's struggle into their own, and this was what gave them "moral standing," according to Humberto Ortega in 1980.<sup>149</sup> They aligned the two partly on the basis of opposition to the Somoza dynasty and imperialism. The first Somoza ordered the assassination of Sandino by the National Guard, the institution through which he rose to power, and Sandino's authentic descendants in the FSLN led the victory against the last Somoza son to rule the country, "the last Yankee marine." The Somoza regime was not the lone injustice in Nicaraguan history; it was part of a longer "historic past of servility toward imperial policy," stretching back to the nineteenth century intrusions of the United States and Great Britain and the colonialism after the Spanish conquest.<sup>150</sup>

The FSLN asserted that their organization, as the leading force in the coalition against Somoza, broke from that historic past but did so by adhering to an authentic Nicaraguan tradition of resistance. If the FSLN was continuing the legacy of Sandino, then they also claimed to be continuing the historic legacy of resistance that shaped movements and struggles of the nineteenth century and of the colonial era, for "Sandino was not only Sandino, but he was the historical rebellion of our people," embodying the previous acts of resistance by indigenous communities, the fighters for independence from Spain, and the Central Americans who rose against filibuster William Walker. "He was the blood of Zeledón... He was the collected history" of the nation and its tradition of rebellion against injustice.<sup>151</sup> To celebrate the anniversaries of the revolution, days of remembrance as well as rededication, Daniel Ortega and Tomás Borge each expressed the sentiment that the FSLN was a synthesis of past, righteous struggles.

The Sandinistas aligned their cause with past struggles through references to their own dedication and martyrdom, which gave their cause its moral quality. Members of the FSLN risked their lives and many became martyrs for the revolution, showing that it was their cause that was worth the risk of death and showing that it was Sandinismo that contributed the moral courage to do so. When FSLN leaders

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<sup>149</sup> Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua – The Strategy of Victory," *Sandinistas Speak*, 66-67.

<sup>150</sup> Daniel Ortega, "Nothing will hold back our struggle for liberation," *Sandinistas Speak*, 55-59.

<sup>151</sup> Daniel Ortega, "Sandino Ayer, Sandino Hoy, Sandino Siempre," in *Sandinistas: Key Documents / Documentos Claves*, 274.

listed the national heroes and martyrs in speeches and print statements, they frequently included members of the organization who died in specific Sandinista confrontations with the National Guard during the 1960s and 1970s, like Jorge Navarro at Río Bocay and Silvio Mayorga at Pancasán.<sup>152</sup> On one anniversary occasion, Tomás Borge referred to “those who shed their blood to make this wonderful anniversary possible.”<sup>153</sup> Discussing the need to rebuild the economy according to Sandinista ideology, Jaime Wheelock referred to the FSLN as part of a long chronology of Nicaraguans “ready to die” in order to achieve liberation, putting the Sandinista forces of the 1970s directly in line with the anti-filibuster forces of the 1850s and Sandino’s army in the 1920s.<sup>154</sup> In the Sandinista narrative, martyrdom was for the ultimate cause of the revolution and the revolution was for the martyrs.

In terms of historical education, national heroes and martyrs served as examples to new and future generations of Nicaragua. In the official narrative, to carry out the revolution under the Sandinistas was to do right by the martyrs who gave the patria their ultimate sacrifice. Like the rest of the education platform, the exemplary status of martyrs was a part of the 1969 “Historic Program” which elucidated the goal of inculcating “in the entire people the imperishable example of our martyrs,” the effect of which was to defend the “revolutionary ideal.”<sup>155</sup> On the second anniversary of the overthrow of Somoza, Tomás Borge called on the crowd to honor the martyrs of national history by moving forward with the revolution, a process which would end the various evils from the past that still plagued the country. Borge emphasized the moral quality of the remembrance of heroic acts, telling the Nicaraguans before him that “It is right that we remember them... that our people repeat, in the mountains and in the valleys, the names of these heroes.”<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Tomás Borge, “The FSLN and the Nicaraguan Revolution,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 117-118.

<sup>153</sup> Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 160.

<sup>154</sup> Jaime Wheelock Román, “Nicaragua’s economy and the fight against imperialism,” *Sandinistas Speak* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1982), 158.

<sup>155</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 25.

<sup>156</sup> Borge, “Second anniversary,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 175-176.

Heroic acts like self-sacrifice made the martyrs part of the nation, which itself had a transcendent quality. In a section of *Imagined Communities* titled “The Biography of Nations,” Anderson remarked on the structuring of national narratives around death. He referred to the narratives in early nineteenth-century print culture as well as in the Christian Bible. Such narratives of identity, marked by a birth and death, create an awareness of serial time and continuity beyond the lifetime of an individual. For a nation, though, there is no analogous ‘birth,’ but there are deaths. Citing Braudel, he concluded that nations have no beginning and their narratives are fashioned from the present, marked by deaths rather than births. The deaths that matter are those resulting from “poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars, and holocausts,” of individuals “of whom the last question asked is their nationality... to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as ‘our own.’”<sup>157</sup> This understanding of nation and death was part of Cuban consciousness in the late nineteenth century, as Louis Pérez has noted. To die for the cause of the independent patria had a meaning of both personal redemption and national salvation. “Death was commemorated as a deed of devotion and dedication, at once heroic and holy, where the dead really did not die at all... dying for the patria was a means of eternal life... a way to transcend oblivion through posterity.”<sup>158</sup> Pérez discussed the blurred line between the political and the spiritual in the act of sacrifice for the patria, as patria offered “immortality embedded in the continuity of community. Death on behalf of the patria was conceived as a means of transubstantiation, entrée to the larger domain of the nation that was itself immortal.”<sup>159</sup> Some anthropologists have also observed totem rituals around sacrifice for the nation in the sense of civil religion.<sup>160</sup> Self-sacrifice entailed giving oneself to the nation, which would continue indefinitely.

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<sup>157</sup> Anderson, 204-206.

<sup>158</sup> Pérez, *To Die in Cuba*, 85-86.

<sup>159</sup> Pérez, 86-87.

<sup>160</sup> Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-2. Marvin and Ingle see patriotic rituals around the United States flag as totem rituals that “transform the bodies” of blood sacrifices through warfare, contributing to group cohesion and the preservation of the nation.

The Sandinistas frequently referred to the immortality of the martyrs in the revolution. Their martyrdom elevated them in spiritual status, making them worthy of emulation and reverence, part of a national pantheon. But the role of contemporary Nicaraguans was to continue the revolution, the representation of the authentic nation, thus perpetuating the martyrs in memory. Remembering the martyrs who sacrificed themselves to create the New Nicaragua gave meaning to the revolution that transcended political ideology. It was not Marxism that connected the living with the dead, but their shared history in the authentic patria. To fulfill one's patriotic duties even in the face of death and give a sacrifice worth remembering was to live eternally.<sup>161</sup> The Sandinistas of the 1980s frequently called on Nicaraguans to honor and pay tribute to the heroic martyrs. Invoking the names of the martyrs would give them an eternal presence in the continuing revolution.<sup>162</sup> Tomás Borge's 1982 May Day speech to workers was about creating a new society and he recalled the past through Marxist historical materialism, but he ended it by speaking directly to Carlos Fonseca at his tomb. Borge told Fonseca, "Here is your working class... we are the gatherers of your resurrection," promising to move forward toward the New Nicaragua that Fonseca envisioned.<sup>163</sup>

The members of the FSLN stressed that it was their organization that would properly carry out the task handed down by the martyrs. The cause of Sandino, the great hero assassinated by the first Somoza, continued living in the work of the Sandinistas decades after he perished.<sup>164</sup> Though Carlos Fonseca had died in 1976, in the Sandinista vision of Nicaraguan reality he "did not die because it is the peoples who make revolutions. Revolutions are nothing but the resurrection of the heroes." Martyrs like Sandino and Fonseca made the revolution possible, and in turn the revolution made their immortality possible, placing

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<sup>161</sup> National Directorate of the FSLN, "The role of religion in the new Nicaragua," *Sandinistas Speak* (New York, NY: Pathfinder Press, 1982), 132-133.

<sup>162</sup> Borge, "Second anniversary," *Sandinistas Speak*, 175-176.

<sup>163</sup> Tomás Borge, "This Revolution Was Made to Create a New Society," *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution*, 38.

<sup>164</sup> Tomás Borge, "The FSLN and the Nicaraguan Revolution," in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People's Revolution*, 111.

them among “the saints, heroes, and immortals.”<sup>165</sup> The deaths of the martyrs rendered the 1984 election redundant, according to Tomás Borge, as their sacrifices had been the votes of the people for the FSLN to lead the nation.<sup>166</sup> The Front was the incarnation of the heroic achievements of the past. Its leaders claimed that the battle of San Jacinto against William Walker in 1856, the rebellious spirit of Benjamín Zeledón, the “immortal struggle of Sandino,” the “just action” of Rigoberto López, and the heroism of thousands in the movement against Somoza all lived in the FSLN, the revolutionary vanguard. It was the FSLN who continued the struggle to achieve the dreams of the martyrs.<sup>167</sup>

Some of these martyrdom references were responses to criticism of the Sandinista government. The Sandinistas of the 1980s used the notion of a moral standing, granted by their partaking in the historical tradition of righteous rebellion and the dedication exhibited through heroic acts like martyrdom, in response to attacks from political opponents. Echoing the works of Fonseca, Tomás Borge cited the repression that the National Guard directed toward Sandinista militants in the two decades before the Somoza overthrow as a factor in the “moral authority” of the FSLN as the deserving organization to lead the New Nicaragua; the Sandinistas had been at the forefront of the struggle which entailed suffering and often dying at the hands of the National Guard. He said the party further demonstrated this moral authority by its humane treatment of former Guard members, responding to criticisms that the new government was cruel and totalitarian.<sup>168</sup> Carlos Fernando Chamorro, editor of the Sandinista newspaper *Barricada*, gave a speech in Toronto in 1982 in which he countered accusations of totalitarianism with the existence of “an entire people ready to give its life to defend the revolution,” appealing to martyr-like dedication as evidence for the democratic nature of Sandinista Nicaragua. He also responded to

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<sup>165</sup> Borge, “The FSLN and the Nicaraguan Revolution,” *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 117-118, 123-124.

<sup>166</sup> Tomás Borge, “This is a Revolution of Working People,” in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 173.

<sup>167</sup> Daniel Ortega, “The Sandinista Front is the Fire of Popular Justice,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 309-310.

<sup>168</sup> Tomás Borge, “On Human Rights in Nicaragua,” in *Sandinistas Speak*, 113.

accusations that Nicaragua was supplying arms to rebels in El Salvador: “What you do is export your example and that is the power and moral authority which the Sandinista revolution has.”<sup>169</sup> The dedication of the Nicaraguan heroes and martyrs, and the moral authority that came from it, was thus an example not only to future generations of Nicaraguans, but to all oppressed and subjugated peoples.

Some of the most extensive discussions of martyrdom and moral authority were responses to contestation by religious sectors of Nicaragua. As discussed, the conservative elements of the Catholic Church voiced much of the opposition to Sandinista reforms, including education projects. However, they were not the only religious voices in revolutionary Nicaragua. The liberation theology movement in Latin America in the 1960s and early 1970s, combined with the repression by the Somoza dictatorship, had produced an ideology of Christian duty to alleviate the suffering of the poor.<sup>170</sup> In Nicaragua, the result was what Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O’Shaughnessy have characterized as a religious renewal with the growth of Christian base communities, increased loyalty to local and especially rural churches, growth in the importance of lay clergy, the elevation of the poor in religious activity, and the participation of women.<sup>171</sup> A backlash against liberation theology from the Church hierarchy began in the 1970s before the Sandinista revolution, but Christian morality was still a terrain of political contestation in which the FSLN articulated its heroic martyrdom discourse.

The Sandinista position on religion in the 1969 “Historic Program” was brief, guaranteeing the freedom of all religious practice and profession. It also supported “the work of priests and other religious figures who defend the working people,” referring to the new generation of local clergy working on behalf of the poor.<sup>172</sup> A number of priests with leftist leanings participated in the government under the

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<sup>169</sup> Carlos Fernando Chamorro, “Without Solidarity it is Difficult to Talk About Revolution,” in *Nicaragua, The Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 16.

<sup>170</sup> Michael Dodson and Laura Nuzzi O’Shaughnessy, *Nicaragua’s Other Revolution: Religious Faith and Political Struggle* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 91.

<sup>171</sup> Dodson and O’Shaughnessy, *Nicaragua’s Other Revolution*, 143-144.

<sup>172</sup> “Historic Program,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 22.

FSLN, the most well-known being Ernesto Cardenal, a poet and the Sandinista Minister of Culture. That did not shield the FSLN from criticisms from more conservative or traditional segments of Nicaraguan Christians.

Responding to those criticisms in 1980, the National Directorate of the party released a statement on religion and the revolution. The statement addressed the argument that the FSLN was anti-religious or using religion in order to later suppress it. To the contrary, the National Directorate argued, Christianity was in no way exclusive from revolutionary activity. Referring to the religious activists who participated in opposition to Somoza, the statement used martyrdom to unite Sandinista and Christian morality, since many religious activists supported the FSLN “to the point of shedding their blood to water the seed of liberation.” It listed by name the “beloved martyrs” who were also “Messengers of the Word” and became victims of the National Guard, praising them for not letting philosophical discussions impede their patriotic duties.<sup>173</sup> This statement and its historical references could also be interpreted as a pointed remark about the Church hierarchy. It briefly mentioned the role of missionaries in “the process of domination and colonization of the Indians” of Nicaragua, implying that the Church itself had not always been on the ‘right side’ of history, before continuing to affirm that there was no contradiction between being a revolutionary and being a Christian.<sup>174</sup> However, it was not necessarily an argument for liberation theology and it maintained that the goals of the revolution in a secular Nicaragua were officially separate from religion.<sup>175</sup>

Some of the Sandinista leaders were less stringent about maintaining distinctions between Sandinismo and Christian ethics. In a 1983 interview, Jaime Wheelock answered a question about why the Church moved from supporting the overthrow of Somoza to opposing the Sandinistas. Wheelock explained the participation of Christians in the 1970s as the expression of “an authentic Christian

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<sup>173</sup> National Directorate of the FSLN, “The role of religion in the new Nicaragua,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 132-133.

<sup>174</sup> National Directorate of the FSLN, “The role of religion,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 134-135.

<sup>175</sup> National Directorate of the FSLN, “The role of religion,” *Sandinistas Speak*, 138.

morality” that coincided with the revolutionary consciousness of Sandinismo.<sup>176</sup> He then said that in Nicaragua, contrary to recent accusations that they were anti-religious or anti-Christian, the Sandinistas were truly living up the ideas of Christianity:

We do more than just live up to them because we are prepared to shed our last drop of blood for you. How many died in the war that made this triumph possible? Thousands. Why did Carlos Fonseca die? Carlos fell and shed his blood for the Nicaraguan people. Where did he die? In the heart of the mountains, at the side of peasants. Julio Buitrago was a student. He wasn't fighting for himself or for his own happiness... and Edgar Lang, who was the son of a very rich family. Why did he want to fight, since he already had everything? He fought for a higher purpose – to die and give life for the people. That is why we are fighting.<sup>177</sup>

The next year Wheelock raised the issue of Christianity and Sandinismo in a May Day speech to a crowd of workers. He emphasized that differences between the Church and the FSLN were political, not religious differences, and in fact there was no contradiction between Christianity and revolution. He refuted the suggestion that the Sandinistas were atheists, contrasting the FSLN with the regime of José Santos Zelaya in the 1890s. While Nicaraguans were free to be atheists, Wheelock argued, the Sandinista government was “a government of Christian and revolutionary principles, a government oriented by Christians,” and much of the work of the revolution was by priests.<sup>178</sup>

The discourse of martyrdom also notably incorporated women. Although the Sandinistas proclaimed the revolution for both the New Men and New Women of Nicaragua and officially addressed issues of gender equality, the FSLN still articulated a gendered historical narrative which frequently framed female sacrifice as gender-specific, often centered on motherhood. Some scholars have noted the gap between Sandinista discourse's attention to women and the revolution's actual victories for Nicaraguan women, and in the Sandinista historical narrative, even the group's revolutionary discourse is overwhelmingly masculine. Lorraine Bayard de Volo has discussed the ways in which the Sandinistas

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<sup>176</sup> Jaime Wheelock, “The Great Challenge,” *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution*, 139-140.

<sup>177</sup> Jaime Wheelock, “The Great Challenge,” *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution*, 141.

<sup>178</sup> Jaime Wheelock, “The Sandinista Front is the Organization of the Working People,” in *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People's Revolution*, 286-287.

used representations of femininity, particularly images of motherhood, in their political discourse in order to mobilize women and how such efforts simultaneously inhibited women's equality.<sup>179</sup>

Members of the FSLN acknowledged the role of women in the movement and insurrection against Somoza, which was relatively high compared to contemporary revolutions, and credited female support for the revolution to the history of Nicaraguan women. Humberto Ortega mentioned the role of women in the Sandinista victory, telling an interviewer that the FSLN was "heir to the tradition of women's participation" in previous struggles against U.S. imperialism. He referred to internationalist women who contributed to the Sandino rebellion as well as earlier women martyred in the 1912 rebellion against the United States-supported Conservative coup and the Constitutionalist War of the mid-1920s.<sup>180</sup> Several female martyrs from the period of the 1960s and 1970s also received recognition alongside their male compatriots, including students like Arlen Siu.<sup>181</sup>

Still, many other references to women in the martyrdom discourse particularized their participation on the basis of traditional gender roles. Bayard de Volo characterized Sandinista discourse as constructing an ideal of "combative motherhood" for women.<sup>182</sup> This was true of the discourse around martyrdom. Tomás Borge gave the first major speech by a Sandinista leader regarding the status of women in post-1979 Nicaragua. Borge spoke to mobilize female support for the new government, an important consideration as the 1980s progressed and tensions rose between the FSLN and women's groups.<sup>183</sup> Women had an integral role in the liberation of Nicaragua, Borge said, especially the mothers

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<sup>179</sup> Lorraine Bayard de Volo, *Mothers of Heroes and Martyrs: Gender Identity Politics in Nicaragua, 1979-1999* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Despite optimism for women's advancement in the early years of the revolution, Bayard de Volo contends that this optimism did not translate into real progress towards women's emancipation as women were excluded from the draft and women's organizations were seen as subservient to the central FSLN hierarchy.

<sup>180</sup> Humberto Ortega, "Nicaragua - The Strategy of Victory," in *Sandinistas Speak*, 103.

<sup>181</sup> National Directorate of the FSLN, "The role of religion," *Sandinistas Speak*, 132.

<sup>182</sup> Bayard de Volo, 41-42.

<sup>183</sup> The conflict between women's rights activists and the FSLN grew particularly in the years of the escalating counterrevolutionary war between 1982 and 1986. In that period, some women in the Sandinista women's association (AMNLAE) began to question the relationship between their group and the party at large. One critical

of martyrs. Borge referred to specific women in leadership positions during the insurgency, including Dora María Téllez, Doris Tijerino, and Gladys Baez, and women who became martyrs. He discussed at greatest length, though, Claudia Chamorro, a woman who “had yearned for a child up to the final moment” and became a symbolic mother when the FSLN named a child development center after her. Borge further emphasized Nicaraguan women as mothers when he praised heroic women for being “as fertile in their wombs as they are in revolutionary consciousness,” combining rebellious militancy with reproduction and childcare.<sup>184</sup>

Very few women from pre-Somoza history entered the narrative. In history education materials, Margarita Calderón, Sandino’s mother, received a mention as a “humble campesina,” drawing attention to Sandino’s identification with the common poor of Nicaraguan society.<sup>185</sup> The Sandinista narrative of national history excluded Rafaela Herrera, whom Somoza-era textbooks had earlier celebrated as a hero against British advances into Nicaragua in the eighteenth century.<sup>186</sup> Her exclusion was most likely a product of her upper-class background and connections to the Spanish colonial military, which contrasted sharply with the Sandinista identification with indigenous resistance in the colonial period.

Like men, however, some women could still be considered exemplary heroes. One martyred woman of the 1970s, an urban student named Luisa Amanda Espinoza, did warrant a biography published by the Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education. Using “*nosotras*” to refer to the biography’s audience, the introduction named Espinoza as one of the first Sandinista militants who died in combat and a representative of urban, proletarian women. Espinoza’s importance was fundamentally related to her gender as her participation affirmed women’s role in the guerrilla struggle and the Sandinista women’s

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member of the AMNLAE referred to it as “the submissive wife” of the FSLN and said that party concerns took precedence over women’s interests. The civil war further put emphasis on traditional gender roles as conscription excluded women, who were expected to “keep the home fires burning.” See Helen Collinson, ed., *Women and Revolution in Nicaragua* (London, UK: Zed Books, 1990) and Karen Kampwirth, *Feminism and the Legacy of Revolution: Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chiapas* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004).

<sup>184</sup> Tomás Borge, “Women and the Nicaraguan Revolution,” *Nicaragua, the Sandinista People’s Revolution*, 51-60.

<sup>185</sup> *Así se ha forjado nuestra patria: Historia, cuarto grado*, 58.

<sup>186</sup> *Historia Patria para tercer grado* (León, Nicaragua: Editorial Hospicio, 196?).

organization was named after her “to express the identification of women with Sandinismo.”<sup>187</sup> But Espinoza was also an important figure because of her death in dedication to the revolution. Like the male heroes and martyrs, Espinoza served as an example to Nicaraguan women of devotion to the revolution.

In the vision of the Sandinista Front, Nicaraguan men and women alike were to become the New Nicaraguans, honoring the sacrifices of their martyred ancestors by serving the victorious revolution. Just as Carlos Fonseca had appealed to his people through references to the moral virtue of the revolutionary cause as demonstrated by the experience of repression, the FSLN in the 1980s continued to use the martyrdom discourse to legitimate the party’s rule. They used that language to attempt to build and maintain support for the reforms that they hoped would create the New Nicaragua in the face of both internal and external opposition.

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<sup>187</sup> *La biografía de Luisa Amanda Espinoza* (Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women, National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN, 1981), 1, 8.

## CONCLUSION

In the reforms of the revolution, the FSLN enacted policies of moderate socialism in Nicaragua.<sup>188</sup> They maintained a mixed economy and promoted political pluralism while also carrying out agrarian reform and attempting to lead as a vanguard party. Such policies and the Marxism-Leninism of Sandinismo spurred many in the U.S. State Department, who soon supported the developing Contra War, to warn that Nicaragua had the potential to become a “second Cuba,” another hemispheric loss in the Cold War.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, many scholars have also remarked on the leftist ideology of the organization in terms of the Marxist language that the Sandinistas used in various areas of reform, promoting class consciousness, mass mobilization, vanguard leadership, and collectivism.

However, as this thesis has shown, there was more to Sandinista ideology and discourse than these Marxian elements. Carlos Fonseca certainly found inspiration for his political thought in his travels to Moscow and Havana, but he and his companions in arms also found inspiration in their experiences with state repression. The Sandinistas from the 1960s through the 1980s understood the injustice and tragedy in Somocista Nicaragua as the meaningful martyrdoms and sacrifices for a great, historic cause. Constructing a new, official narrative and memory, they integrated those experiences into a longer history of resistance and rebellion, claiming that the FSLN represented the authentic Nicaraguan nation exemplified by heroic devotion to the patria above all else, even if devotion would lead to torture and death. Martyrdom made the heroes of Nicaraguan history immortal in the living nation, part of a new

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<sup>188</sup> Dennis Gilbert characterized the Sandinista revolutionary project as somewhat contradictory for the sake of pragmatism, applying Marxism-Leninism in ways that accommodated the historical specificities and needs of Nicaragua. Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution*, 178.

<sup>189</sup> Thomas W. Walker, *Nicaragua, the Land of Sandino* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 41.

pantheon of ancestors which the Sandinistas vowed to honor. That vow, the FSLN asserted in the 1980s, gave the Front moral authority and true legitimacy as the ruling party.

Barbosa and Tatar argued that the FSLN appropriated some events in their construction of official memory and they both demonstrated the popular contestation in response to the organization. However, it is also important to consider that the FSLN used their own links with the student movement, the target of much state repression under Somoza, to integrate their government into a longer national history. The discourse around martyrdom in the Fonseca writings referenced other opposition activists with whom he was in close contact through the nascent FSLN or other student groups. Many of the same names appeared in later speeches, and Fonseca himself became one of the revolution's most important martyrs after his death in 1976. While the notion that the Sandinista political project could be linked to the sacrifices of past heroes was a potential resource for state legitimacy, the leading FSLN members who used this discourse likely believed in the truth of it as well. As John Chasteen wrote in his analysis of nineteenth-century insurgent discourse in the Uruguayan borderland, "Contextualization must be the watchword of those who seek to interpret political discourse."<sup>190</sup> The members of the party and many of the Nicaraguans they hoped to persuade experienced Sandinista martyrdom as the loss of their own companions and comrades, making the invocations of these heroes personal and political, whether it was Carlos Fonseca's hopeful eulogy for David Tejada or Tomás Borge speaking to Fonseca's tomb with the promise of fulfilling his dream. An attempt at objectivity can sometimes result in cynicism toward processes like state formation, but we must also understand political discourse in the context and memory of the actors who use it.

The 1990 election brought an end to the first decade of Sandinista leadership in the Nicaraguan government. The widow of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, Violeta Chamorro, was the victor and her support for the private business sector appeared to challenge the state formation and legitimation efforts of the FSLN. Daniel Ortega, the previous president and candidate defeated by Chamorro, conceded the results,

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<sup>190</sup> John Charles Chasteen, "Fighting Words: The Discourse of Insurgency in Latin American History," *Latin American Research Review* 28, no. 3 (1993): 87.

but the press quoted his concession speech promising his party's followers, "There will be no steps back from the fundamental conquests of the revolution."<sup>191</sup> Today, the FSLN is once again in power and has the potential to remain the ruling party for years to come. But the FSLN has undergone much transformation since its first period of rule. Several leading members left the party in the 1990s, including former Vice President Sergio Ramírez and former insurgency commander and Minister of Health Dora María Tellez, who formed a new party as the Sandinista Renovation Movement in 1995.<sup>192</sup> Many had expressed and continue to express their disillusionment with Ortega's leadership, accusing him of turning Sandinismo into 'Danielismo.' President Ortega, who picked up the reins in 2007 and won reelection in 2011, has made attempts to change the country's constitution to permit more successive terms. Additionally, First Lady Rosario Murillo has shown to be an influential figure in his cabinet and some suspect that she also has greater leadership designs. Murillo is responsible for the change in the image of the FSLN, overwhelming the revolutionary red and black flag with billboards and fliers, drenched in hot pink peace signs and bright yellow hearts, declaring, "*Amor, paz y vida!*" Yet the heroes and martyrs of the nation and the revolution still haunt the city landscapes in monuments, galleries, murals, and museums.

One of those heroes is, of course, Augusto Sandino. A massive statue of Sandino stands next to a similar statue of the beloved Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío, both of them gazing upon the National Palace, the poet and the fighter. Darío is a fitting companion for Sandino, for his poem "Momotombo," about one of the looming volcanoes of Nicaragua, brings to mind the call of Fonseca for the graves of the

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<sup>191</sup> Richard Boudreaux, "Hard Bargaining Ahead for Chamorro and Sandinistas," *Los Angeles Times*, February 28, 1990, accessed online March 12, 2014, [http://articles.latimes.com/1990-02-28/news/mn-1353\\_1\\_sandinista-leader](http://articles.latimes.com/1990-02-28/news/mn-1353_1_sandinista-leader).

<sup>192</sup> Steven Kent Smith, "Renovation and Orthodoxy: Debate and Transition within the Sandinista National Liberation Front," *Latin American Perspectives* 24, no. 2 (March 1997), 102. Sergio Ramírez writes about his disappointment in the turn of the FSLN in the preface to the 2007 Spanish edition of his memoir, *Adiós Muchachos*, published in English in 2012. Sergio Ramírez, *Adiós Muchachos: A Memoir of the Sandinista Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

martyrs to transform into volcanoes, referring to them as great cinder cones “full of ancient triumphal pride,” holding the memory of the past.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Rubén Darío, *Stories and Poems/Cuentos y Poesías: A Dual-Language Book*, ed. and trans. Stanley Appelbaum (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), 197.

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