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THE ROLE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
IN THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION

by

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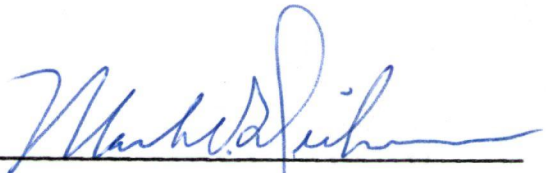
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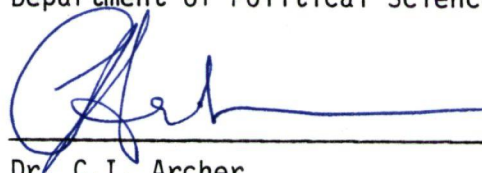
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled, "THE ROLE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION" submitted by Herman Feite Van Reekum in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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ABSTRACT

This thesis applies a model of revolution drawn from the work of Charles Tilly to the Nicaraguan revolution. Tilly's model is particularly useful when analyzing the role of groups or organizations in the political processes of a revolution. The organization that is analyzed in this thesis is the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the political processes that proved to be crucial to the eventual success of the Nicaraguan revolution was the process of coalition formation. As the Nicaraguan revolution progressed, two types of coalitions were formed. One coalition, the National Patriotic Front (FPN), joined together a coalition of moderate opposition groups and a coalition of revolutionary organizations led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). The FSLN became the dominant organization in the FPN because it was the only organization capable of defeating President Somoza's National Guard in battle.

The FSLN acquired the resources necessary to defeat the National Guard through its successful mobilization of the rural and urban poor of Nicaragua. These people had, for generations, passively accepted their impoverished condition but underwent a change in the 1970's which led them to become active in the struggle to defeat President Somoza. The alliance between the FSLN and the rural and urban poor was the second type of coalition that was formed during the revolution.

The Roman Catholic Church in Nicaragua had traditionally been a

conservative Church which openly supported the Somoza regimes. However, in the late 1960's and early 1970's, the Church adopted two new models of political action which caused it to support Somoza's opposition. One model, known as "Christian Democracy," was adopted by a new generation of bishops that assumed control of the Church in 1970. These bishops began to support the moderate opposition and encouraged them to enter into negotiations with Somoza in an effort to create a more democratic regime in Nicaragua.

Another group in the Church, the priests, nuns and monks, adopted a more radical political model known as "Liberation Theology." This model encouraged lay Catholics to take their destiny into their own hands and work to create a more egalitarian society. The many priests, nuns and monks who implemented projects in their parishes based on the Liberation Theology model were instrumental in mobilizing support for the FSLN. They saw the FSLN as an organization that could achieve the ultimate goal of Liberation Theology--the creation of a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

The Catholic Church was a member of both of the coalitions that were formed in the revolution. The fact that the Church supported the revolution was significant because 90 percent of Nicaragua's population is Catholic and the Church occupies a respected position in Nicaraguan society. The Church's support for the revolution was significant also because the Church had never before supported a revolutionary movement in Latin America.

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I also want to thank my family, in particular, my parents, Bert and Christine Van Reekum, and my mother-in-law, Mrs. Betty Barr, who were always willing to help when I needed it most. Finally, I want to express my deepest appreciation for my wife, Shelley, who encouraged me to go to graduate school, who braved the rigours of Nicaragua with me and without whose support this thesis could not have been written.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

On July 19, 1979, the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) and a broad coalition of opposition groups defeated the regime of President Anastasio Somoza Debayle and established a revolutionary government. In a continent known for political violence, the Nicaraguan revolution is only the fourth revolution to have occurred in Latin America in this century. The others were in Mexico (1910-1920), Bolivia (1952) and Cuba (1959). There are a number of important differences between these revolutions. The Mexican revolution was extremely violent and was as much a protracted civil war between revolutionary factions as an attempt to overthrow an ancien régime. On the other hand, the insurrection which swept Bolivia's Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) to power lasted less than a week. However, while the Mexican revolution eventually took hold in Mexico, Bolivia's revolutionary government was easily subverted and was overthrown in 1964.¹ In Cuba, a highly organized guerilla army was the major force behind the revolution and, when it came to power, this guerilla organization in time established a Marxist-Leninist regime led by Fidel Castro. Nicaragua's FSLN also came to power after a lengthy guerilla war, and the Sandinistas have shown themselves to be more tolerant of other political groups and are somewhat less dogmatic than the Cubans.

The differences between these four revolutions were caused by a number of factors that were peculiar to each situation. One such factor could be the different role played by the Catholic Church in each of these revolutions. The Mexican revolution, for example, was decidedly anti-clerical and was therefore opposed by the Church. The

Mexican Constitution of 1917 allowed the state to confiscate all Church property, to rescind the Church's control of education, and effectively placed Church affairs under strict state supervision.² Social reforms introduced by the MNR after the Bolivian revolution were welcomed at first by the Catholic Church, but the Church soon came to oppose the MNR as it became increasingly leftist.³ In Cuba, the Church, by and large, was against the revolution and, when it came to power, the Castro regime expelled many Catholic priests who were in Cuba at the time.⁴ In Nicaragua, however, the Catholic Church came to support the revolution at an early point in the conflict. Shortly after coming to power, the National Directorate of the FSLN acknowledged the contribution that Christians had made to the victory over Somoza. In an official communique, they wrote, "Christians have played an integral part in our revolutionary history at a level without precedent in any other revolutionary movement in Latin America and possibly the world."⁵ Clearly, the Catholic Church had changed considerably in the seventy years that elapsed between the Mexican and Nicaraguan revolutions.

The fact that the Catholic Church participated in the Nicaraguan revolution raises a number of interesting questions. What changes had taken place in the Catholic Church which caused it to support a revolutionary movement? What was the role of the Catholic Church in the revolution? To what extent did the Catholic Church contribute to the eventual success of the revolution? This thesis will attempt to answer these questions by presenting a case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution. The study is important because it is an opportunity to analyze a unique phenomenon in Latin American revolutions and because it may partially explain why the Nicaraguan

revolution differed from other Latin American revolutions. The central focus of this thesis, then, is to analyze the role of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution and to assess the Church's contribution to the revolution.

Tilly's Model of Revolution

In order to analyze the role of a group in a revolution, it is important to apply a model of revolution as a framework for the analysis. Other than the Marxian approach, there are three theories of revolution in the literature which could possibly be applied to a case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution. One is a systems theory approach which is largely the work of Chalmers Johnson. A second theory is based on the concept of relative deprivation. The principal author in this approach is Ted Robert Gurr. A third theory is based on political-conflict theory. The leading exponent of this theory is Charles Tilly. However, for the purposes of this case study, a theory of revolution should meet two requirements. One, it should use groups as its unit of analysis because the Catholic Church is essentially a group actor. Secondly, it should be able to explain the political processes of a revolution so that the actions of a group during a revolution can be analyzed.

The theories of Chalmers Johnson and Ted Gurr fail to meet these two requirements. Chalmers Johnson uses the entire social system as his unit of analysis. According to Johnson, revolutions occur when a society's institutions are no longer synchronized with the society's value structures and can no longer balance the demands and resources coming from the various subsystems of the society. In other words, revolutions occur when the social system has reached a condition of

disequilibrium.⁶ Ted Gurr, on the other hand, focuses on the individual as a unit of analysis. Gurr bases his theory on a psychological principle which says that a frustrated individual will become aggressive. He then constructs a powerful theory which utilizes the concept of "relative deprivation" to explain how people become frustrated. Gurr defines relative deprivation, "as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities."⁷ For Gurr, revolutions occur when relative deprivation is widespread in a population. However, neither of these authors study revolutions at the group level. That is, neither of them examine the role of particular political forces and their contribution to the success or failure of a revolution.

While Johnson and Gurr virtually ignore politics in explaining revolutions, Charles Tilly places politics at the centre of his analysis. As Tilly writes, political conflict theorists begin with the assumption that, "revolutions and collective violence tend to flow directly out of a population's central political processes, instead of expressing diffuse strains and discontents within the population."⁸ Moreover, Tilly focuses on groups when explaining the processes of revolutions. Tilly's theory, then, is the most appropriate theory of revolution for this case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution.

Tilly's theory of revolution begins with a polity model which identifies the government of a population and then identifies the groups, "which during some specified span of time collectively (apply) resources to the influence of a particular government."⁹ These groups, along with the government make up the governing polity. For Tilly, governments are "organizations which control the principle concerted means of coercion."¹⁰

The groups that have some influence and control over the government are contenders. Contenders can be further divided into two classes according to their relative proximity to the government. A contender that, "exercises a routine claim to response on the part of agents of the government", is a member of the governing polity.¹¹ Groups that are not members of the governing polity but that are contending for power are challengers.

The dynamics of the polity model, that is, the processes whereby contenders move in and out of the polity, are partially the result of continuous bargaining and testing between the contenders. Tilly suggests that the members of a polity establish "tests of membership",

The test may include proof of sanctity or wealth or any number of other characteristics, but they always include the ability to mobilize or coerce significant numbers of people. Members of a polity repeatedly test one another's qualifications. When a member fails a partial test, more serious challenges to that membership follow; repeated failure leads to exclusion from the polity. New members enter by passing the tests of membership, old members exit by failing them.¹²

The other source of change in Tilly's model is through the mobilization process. Although the testing process is the actual set of interactions through which groups determine their position vis-a-vis one another, it is the ability to mobilize resources which lends credibility to a contender's claims. Tilly distinguishes between three types of resources that are important in the mobilization process:

Normative resources include the commitments of men to ideals, groups and other people; coercive resources include means of punishing other men and limiting the alternatives open to them; utilitarian resources include all the rest, especially those things men find it rewarding to acquire.¹³

Members that mobilize the most resources are in a better position

to raise the ante in the testing process. Similarly, challengers that are successfully mobilizing resources will begin to petition for entrance into the governing polity or may begin to establish an alternative polity.

It is through the mobilization process that major changes are introduced into the politics of a country. The most extreme form of change is revolution which Tilly defines as a condition of "multiple sovereignty",

Multiple sovereignty is...the identifying feature of revolutionary situations. A revolutionary situation begins when a government previously under the control of a single, sovereign polity becomes the object of effective, competing, mutually exclusive claims on the part of two or more distinct polities. It ends when a single sovereign polity regains control over the government.¹⁴

Thus, if a challenger cannot meet the governing polity's test of membership and if it is successfully mobilizing resources, it may establish an alternative polity and challenge the governing polity's right to sovereignty.

According to Tilly, there are four conditions which must be present in a society before a revolution can begin:

1. The appearance of contenders or coalitions of contenders, advancing exclusively alternative claims to the control over the government currently exerted by members of the polity;
2. commitment to those claims by a significant segment of the subject population;
3. unwillingness or incapacity of the agents of the government to suppress the alternative coalition or the commitment to its claims;
4. formation of coalitions between members of the polity and the Contenders making the alternative claims.¹⁵

It is in suggesting these four conditions that Tilly refutes Johnson and Gurr who say that widespread value conflict and relative deprivation

are sufficient causes of a revolution and are the defining features of a revolutionary situation.¹⁶ Tilly's four conditions emphasize that a channel must appear through which mobilized popular discontent can be directed before a revolutionary situation can be said to exist. Without an alternative contender, revolutions will die stillborn.

Tilly's four conditions are merely proximate causes of a revolution. That is, they are, in turn, caused by other factors. For example, Tilly suggests that the first condition, the appearance of revolutionary contenders, often occurs simultaneously with the appearance of new ideologies in the society. As Tilly says, "an outpouring of new thought articulating objectives incompatible with the continuation of the existing polity is probably our single most reliable sign that the first condition of a revolutionary situation is being fulfilled."¹⁷ Tilly also says that,

An alternative contender can come into being via three different routes: (a) the mobilization of a new contender outside the polity; (b) the turning away of an existing challenger from acceptance of the polity's current operating rules; (c) the turning away of an existing member from its established place in the polity.¹⁸

Tilly suggests that the second condition, widespread popular support for the alternative contender, may arise from the actions of the government. According to Tilly, there are two types of government actions which can cause people to support an alternative contender:

The first is the sudden failure of the government to meet the specific obligations which members of the subject population regard as well established and crucial to their own welfare....The second class of governmental action is a rapid increase in the government's demand for surrender of resources by its subject population.¹⁹

Although the actions of a government may cause people to support a revolution, it is crucial, as Tilly's third proximate condition suggests, that a government be unwilling or incapable of suppressing the alter-

native polity. For Tilly, there are three ways in which government inability can manifest itself: "(a) sheer insufficiency in the available means of coercion; (b) inefficiency in applying the means of coercion; (c) inhibitions to their application."²⁰ Through one or a combination of these three factors, the balance of power can swing in favour of the alternative polity.

Another way in which the alternative polity can gain the upper hand is through the formation of coalitions, "between members of the polity and the contenders advancing exclusive alternative claims to the control over the government."²¹ This type of coalition usually occurs between members that are being squeezed out of the polity and challengers that are able to mobilize resources but are consistently refused access to power. Neither group has an incentive to respect the authority of the governing polity and are likely to form an alternative polity. By joining a coalition, the downwardly mobile members gains access to valuable resources while the challenger gains experienced leadership. An example of a revolutionary coalition is a union between intellectuals and working class organizations.

After laying out the four proximate conditions of a revolution, Tilly suggests that an ideal revolution would go through the following sequence:

1. Gradual mobilization of contenders who make exclusive claims to governmental control and/or whose sheer existence is unacceptable to the members of the polity;
2. Rapid increase in the number of people accepting those claims and/or rapid expansion of the coalition including the unacceptable or exclusive contenders;
3. Unsuccessful efforts by the government (at the behest of members of the polity) to suppress the alternative coalition and/or acceptance to its claims;
4. Establishment by the alternative

coalition of effective control over some portion of the government - a territorial branch, a functional subdivision, a portion of its personnel;
 5. Struggles of the alternative coalition to maintain or expand that control; 6. Reconstruction of a single polity through the victory of the alternative coalition, through its defeat or through the establishment of a modus vivendi between the alternative coalition and some or all of the old members. Fragmentation of the revolutionary coalition;
 7. Reimposition of routine governmental control throughout the subject population.²²

Tilly's four conditions and the factors which give rise to them have in common the fact that they are all essentially political processes. Thus, they constitute a theoretical explanation of Tilly's central thesis that revolutions flow out of a nation's political processes. With the exception, perhaps, of the first two conditions, these conditions and factors show how political processes, such as governmental actions or formation of coalitions, can increase support for a revolution. Tilly's first two conditions still leave unanswered the questions of what causes the initial acceptance of a new ideology and what, other than the actions of a government, causes widespread acceptance of the revolutionary polity. It is in trying to solve these questions that Gurr and Johnson expend most of their theoretical effort while Tilly, for the most part, leaves these questions unresolved.

The way in which a case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution can be integrated with Tilly's model of revolution is through Tilly's concept of coalitions. According to Tilly, coalition building is one of the political processes which increase the resources of the revolutionary polity. These coalitions are usually between downwardly mobile members of the governing polity and challengers in the revolutionary polity. However, Tilly also says that coalitions can

can occur between communal groups and members of the alternative polity.

In positing this second type of coalition, Tilly employs a basic sociological distinction between communal and associational groups. According to Tilly, "Communal structures are small, local and relatively undifferentiated in structure."²³ Also, a communal group, "is unlikely to be able to expand its manpower rapidly, but is quite able to generate strong loyalties."²⁴ Tilly suggests that a religious congregation is an example of a communal structure. On the other hand, "Associational structures are large, extensive and complex."²⁵ However, for an associational organization, "the accumulation of intense commitments is likely to be costly, whereas the acquisition of a range of specialized skills will be relatively easy."²⁶ A political party is an example of an associational group. Tilly also suggests that a group's structure, whether communal or associational affects the type of collective action in which it will engage,

With communal contenders, collective action tends to be uncoordinated, localized, raggedly bounded in space and time, (and) responsive to routines of congregation such as those of religious observance.... With associational contenders, the collective action tends to be planned, scheduled, bounded, disciplined and large in scale.²⁷

Coalitions between associational revolutionary organizations and communal groups are important for both types of groups. The revolutionary organization can capitalize on the support of various local communal groups and coordinate their activities to help achieve the national goals of the revolutionary polity. At the same time, this type of coordination at the national level is important for communal groups that otherwise have very little contact with the world outside their community. Eric Wolf in Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century found that if a

local communal group does not form a coalition with an associational revolutionary organization, then the rebellion of that communal group will amount to nothing more than an incident of localized collective violence and will eventually be defeated by the national government.²⁸ If the coalition is formed, however, then the revolutionary organization can use the mobilized members of the communal group to defeat the governing polity.

Tilly recognizes, however, that members of communal groups rarely rebel,

A communal group is not likely to mobilize extensively, bid for membership in a polity, and therefore become newly involved in violence unless its members are undergoing a major collective transformation of their perception of the world, a millenarian movement would be an example.²⁹

Only if a communal group undergoes a collective transformation and if the goals of their transformation correspond to the goals of a revolutionary organization, then it is possible that a coalition will be formed between the associational revolutionary organization and communal groups.

Both types of coalitions were formed during the Nicaraguan revolution. My hypothesis is that, if the Catholic Church supports the revolution by joining the two coalitions, then it would make a significant contribution to the success of the revolution. In this thesis, I will present a case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution up to the 1979 overthrow of President Somoza. The thesis will be divided into five chapters. Chapter II will describe the history of Nicaraguan politics to provide the setting for the study of the Church. Chapter III will describe changes in Catholic social and political thought in the twentieth century and explain the traditional, Christian Democratic,

Liberation Theology and Evangelical-Pastoral models. Chapter IV will analyze the Church's role in the revolution. Chapter V will present the conclusions of the thesis.

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CHAPTER II: Civil War and Dictatorship: A Profile of Nicaraguan Politics

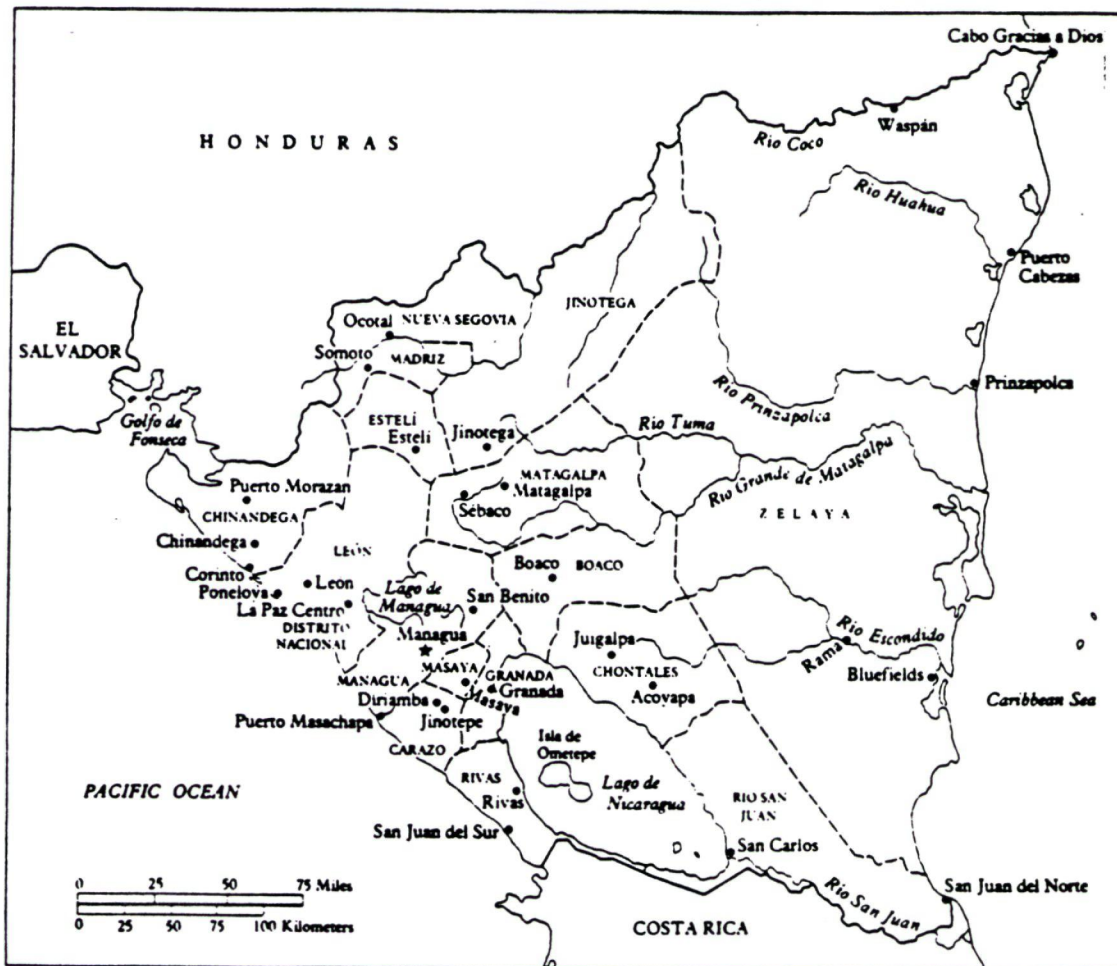
INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history as an independent republic, Nicaragua's politics have been characterized by deep, often irreconcilable divisions between the main political actors. Nicaraguans have suffered through a great deal of political violence as the competition between factions has often escalated into civil war. As will be seen in this chapter, virtually all of Nicaragua's governments have come to power with the support of an army. This was especially true of Nicaragua's most infamous dictators, the Somoza family, who were able to stay in power through their control of the National Guard. The Somoza dynasty was overthrown only when the FSLN raised a fighting force capable of defeating the National Guard in battle. Bullets rather than ballots have been the decisive factors in shaping Nicaraguan politics.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America. Its 50,190 square mile area is divided into three regions.¹ Fully one third of the country's area, lying alongside the Atlantic or Mosquito coast, is made up of swampy rainforest. As its terrain is not conducive to large scale agricultural activities, this area has been inhabited primarily by Mosquito Indians, English speaking creoles and peasant squatters. On the other hand, Nicaragua's mountainous northern region which parallels the Honduran border, is ideally suited for coffee growing. Likewise, the Pacific Coast region which contains the major cities of León, Granada, and the capital Managua, is a flat coastal plain which is suitable for beef, cotton and sugar production.²

Nicaragua has traditionally been an agricultural exporting country dependent on the U.S. as a market for its products and as a source of

Map 1. Nicaragua



Nicaragua

Source: Howard J. Wiarda; and Harvey F. Kline, eds., Latin American Politics and Development, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1979), p. 318.

investment capital.³ As an agricultural economy, Nicaragua has been subject to the social problems that are endemic to other developing Latin American countries. Despite a major earthquake in 1972 and a bloody civil war in the late 1970's, Nicaragua's population has almost doubled from 1,410,289 in 1960 to 2,462,000 in 1979.⁴ Approximately 60 percent of Nicaragua's population has traditionally been employed in agriculture, while the percentage employed in industry has never exceeded 11.6 percent.⁵ In 1975, Nicaragua's average Gross Domestic Product per capita was \$403 (U.S.).⁶ However, the wealth in Nicaragua has been very unevenly distributed. Thomas Walker found that in 1975, "the bottom 50 percent of the population has a median income of less than \$100 a year."⁷ John Booth, a social scientist who has studied the Nicaraguan revolution, summarized the social problems that Nicaragua faced in the late 1970's,

The bottom half of income earners together received 15 percent of the national income, while the top 5 percent of income earners received some 30 percent. Only about 40 percent of the population could read and write, and only 26 percent among the rural population. Nearly half the country's housing (80 percent in the rural areas) lacked indoor plumbing. The average Nicaraguan could expect to live only 53 years, the lowest life expectancy in Central America. Infant and child mortality rates were the second highest in Central America. The lack of potable water outside the cities caused epidemic intestinal diseases that led to almost one-fifth of all deaths.⁸

It was among people who lived in these poor conditions that the revolutionaries eventually found widespread support.

ESTABLISHING THE SOMOZA REGIME: 1821 - 1936

At the time of its independence from Spain in 1821, Nicaragua had a population of only one hundred and ninety thousand.⁹ Yet this small population, which was concentrated in the Pacific Coast region of

Nicaragua, was not homogeneous. Rather, it was divided along mutually reinforcing geographic, economic and political lines. The ongoing conflict between the cities of León and Granada, small landowners and landed elites, and Liberals and Conservatives.

The Liberals, who were generally ranchers, artisans and farmers, were centered around the city of León in northern Nicaragua. They were independent people who were accustomed to managing their own affairs and, as a result, readily adopted the liberal ideology that was spreading through Latin America. When Nicaragua won its independence, the Liberals wanted to create a democratic republic and also "advocated reducing restrictions on trade and commerce, increasing basic infrastructure development...and ending exemption from taxes for the Church."¹⁰ In 1821, the Liberals moved quickly to fill the vacuum left by the Spaniards by proclaiming Nicaragua an independent republic with León as its capital. Two years later, the Liberals entered into an alliance with other Central American Liberals and helped form the Central American Federation.¹¹

The Conservatives reacted violently to the Liberals' attempts to assume control of Nicaraguan politics. The Conservatives were a class of merchants, traders, and large estate owners who produced and sold agricultural goods such as cattle, hides and dyes.¹² Granada was their capital city because its port facilities on Lake Nicaragua afforded easy access to the major international trade routes. Because their production was primarily export-oriented, the Conservatives were interested in maintaining close ties with the markets in Spain and Europe. Moreover, they wanted a political system that would allow them to concentrate political and economic power within an upper class

oligarchy.

The Liberals and Conservatives clashed constantly in the early years of the republic. According to historian Eduardo Crawley,

In the ... nineteen years (after independence) local violence erupted into major battles at least seventeen times, killing more than one thousand people. Executive authority changed hands eighteen times; the country joined the Central American Federation and left again.¹³

Finally, in the 1840's, the Conservatives, with the help of Conservatives in El Salvador and Honduras, were able to defeat the Liberals in battle, and, for a time, brought peace and stability to Nicaragua.¹⁴

It was during this time that external forces began to play a major role in Nicaragua's internal disputes. In 1851, the Liberals began to organize a revolt against the Conservatives and enlisted the help of William Walker, a young American adventurer. In 1855, Walker and the "American Phalanx of Immortals", a force of fifty-eight men, came to Nicaragua and, together with the Liberal army, were able to defeat the Conservatives. Walker then declared himself president of Nicaragua and followed up his military victory with an invasion of the other Central American republics. Walker's "filibuster" lasted until 1857 when he was finally executed by a Honduran firing squad.¹⁵

Walker's filibuster had implications beyond being a mere intervention in a local dispute between Liberals and Conservatives. His expedition was bankrolled by American financiers who were interested in using Nicaragua as a transportation route to bring gold-seekers from New York to California during the California goldrush. Also, Walker was eventually joined by several thousand soldiers from the American south who wanted to annex Nicaragua to the U.S. and create another pro-

slavery state in the union.¹⁶

American interest in Nicaragua had grown steadily since the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. Nicaragua was particularly attractive to imperial powers such as the U.S. and Great Britain because it offered a potential site for a trans-oceanic canal. In 1862, the Conservatives, who had gained power after Walker's defeat, signed a treaty with the U.S. which granted the U.S. a concession to build a canal.¹⁷

The Conservative victory over Walker and the Liberals brought three decades of relative stability to Nicaragua. During this time, the Conservatives transformed Nicaragua into a major coffee producing country through a program of "agrarian reform" which effectively drove indians off their ejido lands and allowed coffee growers to create large plantations on these lands.¹⁸ According to John Booth, ideological differences between the Liberals and Conservatives declined as the Liberals also were anxious to cash in on the coffee boom and as the Conservatives began to adopt Liberal economic policies.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the Liberals began to chafe under the Conservative regime which they felt was not expanding sufficiently the economy and opportunities for political participation.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, a realignment of the economic bases of support for the two factions took place. Although the Conservatives had brought about rapid growth in the coffee sector, many of the coffee growers came to support the Liberals. The Liberals were also able to attract the support of the growing middle class as well as the public sector. As Booth writes,

These elements felt more naturally attuned to Liberal

economic thinking as well as the proclaimed (but not yet demonstrated) Liberal preferences for political democratization than to the Conservative ideology and policies, despite the latter's performance. The consequence of these trends was a gradual shift in the balance of support toward the Liberal faction as the last decade of the nineteenth century began.²⁰

The Conservatives did enjoy the support of some of the coffee growers, but they remained the party of the traditional landowning elite.

In 1893, the Liberals returned to power under José Santos Zelaya, a man who often used ruthless means to consolidate his power. Zelaya's accomplishments included the creation of a professional army which he used to invade Honduras and to drive the British out of their bases on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast. Zelaya was also instrumental in initiating another boom in the Nicaraguan economy. However, according to Crawley,

Zelaya was no democrat or model of civic virtues: his leading Conservative opponents were thrown into prison, exiled or ruined by confiscation of their properties. He ran government operations as if they were private business deals, handed out concessions to his friends, and contracted dozens of irresponsible loans and obligations abroad.²¹

Zelaya's methods of governing Nicaragua later served as a model for the Somozas.²²

Although Zelaya courted the support of the U.S. in the early part of his Presidency, he was soon at odds with the Americans over the canal issue. When the U.S. decided to build a canal through Panama, Zelaya made overtures to the Germans and Japanese, offering them a concession to build a canal through Nicaragua. This angered the Americans who wanted to maintain a monopoly on the trans-oceanic canal route. The Americans were also angry over Zelaya's invasion of Honduras and his nationalist policies in Nicaragua. American dislike for Zelaya led them to support a Conservative revolt which began in 1909.²³

Zelaya's strongarm tactics also alienated a number of prominent Liberals including General Juan J. Estrada, the Governor of Bluefields. Estrada broke with Zelaya and joined the Conservatives in a revolt against Zelaya. Initially, the rebels did very poorly against Zelaya's professionally trained army. After suffering several defeats, the Conservatives retreated to Bluefields where they enjoyed the protection of a contingent of American marines. Thus, the Liberal army was unable to decisively defeat the Conservatives.

The Americans also supported the Conservatives at the diplomatic level when Secretary of State Knox made a public statement in which he denounced the Zelaya regime. Knox spoke favourably of the Conservative revolt which, he claimed, represented "the great body of the Nicaraguan people."²⁴ Zelaya, recognizing that his government was doomed without American support, went into voluntary exile in Mexico in 1909. The fighting went on for another year until Estrada was able to defeat the Liberals and assume the Presidency.

The civil war was far from over, however. Despite their defeat, the Liberals were still a powerful force in Nicaragua and the Conservative coalition, which included several dissident Liberals, was shaky. In 1912, Adolfo Díaz succeeded Estrada in the Presidency. That same year, Díaz' Minister of War, General Luis Mena, together with a Liberal general, Benjamín Zeledón, mounted a revolt against the Conservative government. This time the Americans acted decisively to try to end the rebellion by sending a force of marines, which eventually numbered 2700, to support Díaz. When the revolt was quelled, a permanent 100 man "legation guard" remained in Nicaragua to ensure stability.²⁵

The Americans supported the Conservative government, not only for

strategic reasons, but also because they had developed a substantial financial stake in Nicaragua. This was the age of "dollar diplomacy" when American foreign policy was used to support, and was in turn supported by, American overseas investments. Dollar diplomacy was particularly effective in Nicaragua where, for example, the Nicaraguans turned over their custom's receipts (which were collected by an American appointed customs inspector) to the Brown Brothers Bank of New York as a way of repaying a \$1.5 million loan.²⁶ John Booth writes that during this period,

Nicaragua's economic links to the United States strengthened tremendously. U.S. investment rose from \$1 million in 1908 to \$7.3 million by 1929. U.S. companies became more important in the Nicaraguan economy and Nicaragua's foreign trade became much more concentrated with the United States. The U.S. share of both imports and exports rose to between 75 and 80 percent.²⁷

Another reason for American support of the Conservatives was their desire to stop the spread of Mexican nationalism which had taken an anti-American turn during the Mexican revolution. A number of Nicaraguan Liberal generals who were persistently rebelling against the Conservative government were supported by the revolutionary government in Mexico.²⁸ Thus, it was a coincidence of both economic and political factors that led to American intervention in Nicaragua.

American military involvement in Nicaragua was unpopular both in Nicaragua and in the United States. In order to placate its critics, the State Department promised to withdraw the marines as soon as a non-partisan national guard could be created to fill the vacuum. In 1925, Major Calvin B. Carter and four assistants were hired to train a Nicaraguan constabulary.²⁹

A month after Carter's arrival, the Legation Guard left Nicaragua with the expectation that the new National Guard could maintain the peace and support the government. However, soon after the departure of the marines, a Conservative general, Emiliano Chamorro, launched a coup d'etat which swept him into power. This immediately precipitated another Liberal revolution led by General José María Moncada which, in turn, led to the return of the marines.³⁰

This time, despite the presence of 2000 marines and despite American attempts to mediate between the two factions, the Liberals were not easily put down. After two years of fighting between the Liberals and Conservatives, the Americans realized that a negotiated settlement rather than continued support of the Conservatives would be the best solution. In 1927, Henry L. Stimson succeeded in getting both sides to come to an agreement in which the Liberals agreed to recognize the Conservative government of Chamorro until American-supervised elections could be held in 1928. Also, both sides agreed to put down their weapons and allow another marine occupation until a new National Guard could be created.³¹ As a result of this agreement, Moncada was elected president in 1928 and, for the first time since Zelaya, the U.S. supported a Liberal president.

Despite the fact that the Liberals and Conservatives had finally come to an agreement, a lasting peace had not yet been achieved. One of the Liberal generals, Augusto César Sandino, did not sign the agreement and refused to allow the marines to disarm his men. Sandino, who was the illegitimate son of a Liberal landowner, had been one of the most successful generals during the civil war. Initially, Sandino opposed the Stimson agreement because it allowed the Conservatives to stay in

power until the elections. However, after the elections in 1928, Sandino continued in his opposition because he viewed the new Liberal government as nothing more than a puppet regime of the U.S. As Richard Millett describes it, "Sandino believed that he was a patriot fighting for the sovereignty of his country."³²

Sandino and his "Army for the Defense of Nicaraguan National Sovereignty" fought a successful guerilla war against both the new National Guard and the marines for five and a half years. During this time, despite its losses to Sandino, the National Guard was organized into a well-armed, well-trained force. By 1933, the marines were sufficiently confident of the National Guard that they decided to accede to Sandino's demands and leave Nicaragua. This was the era of President Franklin Roosevelt's good neighbor policy. The marines remained in Nicaragua long enough to ensure that another Liberal, Juan B. Sacasa, was able to succeed Moncada in the presidency in 1933. One of Sacasa's first acts was to appoint his nephew, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, as the new leader of the National Guard.³³

The departure of the marines left Sacasa in an extremely vulnerable position. The new National Guard was supposed to be a nonpartisan force and yet Sacasa appointed a number of Liberals, including Somoza, to high positions in the Guardia. This angered many of the Conservative caudillos. Furthermore, Sandino and his rebel army were still at large and refused to submit to the new government. Also, Somoza was becoming increasingly aware of the potential power that his position as Jefe Director of the National Guard gave him, and rumours of a coup began to circulate in Managua.³⁴

Sacasa began to diffuse this triple threat by entering into negotia-

tions with Sandino. In February 1938, Sandino finally agreed to lay down his arms in exchange for a general amnesty for his army as well as a grant of land at Wiwilí on the Rio Coco on which Sandino planned to organize a commune.³⁵ This agreement angered Somoza who had advocated a military victory over Sandino. Without Sacasa's permission, Somoza ordered the Guardia to harass the Sandinistas at every opportunity and plotted to dispose of Sandino. According to Crawley, Sandino protested to Sacasa and,

began to warn anyone who would listen that the Guardia were a threat to the constitutional government and that it was only a matter of time before Somoza would feel strong enough to overthrow Sacasa and take the presidency into his own hands.³⁶

On February 21, 1934, Sandino attended a dinner in Managua with Sacasa, Somoza and a number of other high government officials. After the dinner, as he was driving to the house of a friend, Sandino, his brother, and two of his generals were apprehended by a National Guard patrol and were executed on the outskirts of Managua.³⁷ At the same time, the Guardia massacred three hundred of Sandino's followers at Wiwilí, thus bringing to a cruel end the threat that Sandino posed to Somoza's ambitions.³⁸

Sandino's prophecy that Somoza would use his power to become president came true soon after Sandino's assassination. Initially, in order to placate the Sacasa administration and the American embassy, who were outraged by the assassination, Somoza denied his complicity in the Sandino murder. Somoza did, in fact, have an alibi. At the time of the murder he was leading a poetry reading to which he had invited several Guardia generals who were Conservative appointees and were, therefore, potential obstacles to his rise to power. Soon after the assassination

however, Somoza admitted his part in the murder and thereby secured the loyalty of a number of Guardia generals who had been sworn enemies of Sandino. Afterward, Somoza promoted his loyal officers and transferred the Conservation officers to remote commands, thereby ensuring that his officers could not launch a coup against him. Thus, with his position as the Jefe Director of the Guardia secure, Somoza was able to carry out a successful coup against Sacasa on June 6, 1936.³⁹

THE SOMOZAS IN CONTROL: 1936 - 1972

Asastasio "Tacho" Somoza García and his two sons, Luis Somoza Debayle and Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza Debayle, held power in Nicaragua from 1936 - 1972. A Nicaraguan social scientist and Jesuit priest, Father Juan H. Pico S.J. called the political and financial bloc that the Somoza formed, "el poder antiguo" (the old power). According to Father Pico,

The 'old power' which was consolidated between 1934 and 1956 was a perfect symbiosis between three components: its ultimate result was a nucleus of power, this power was truly mafioso in its cruelest moments: mafioso economically and mafioso politically. This nucleus of power had three tentacles: one was Somoza's family, including his extended family; another was the high officials of the National Guard, allied to Somoza through personal loyalty and through his extended family; the third were the directors of the Liberal Nationalist Party, who were also allied to Somoza through personal loyalty and through family connections.⁴⁰

Father Pico describes the period of Somoza rule as one in which "el poder antiguo" is eventually supplanted by "el poder nuevo" (the new power) which included the FSLN and a coalition of groups ranging from the Catholic Church to pro-business groups.

When Anastasio Somoza García carried out his coup against Sacasa, he did not immediately succeed Sacasa in the presidency. Instead Somoza made

an effort to adhere to the constitution's anti-nepotism clause which prevented Somoza from directly following his uncle into the presidency. To get around this clause, Somoza had the Congress nominate Dr. Carlos Brenes Jarquín to serve a six month term as president. In the meantime, Somoza created a new Liberal party, The Liberal Nationalist Party, which then nominated Somoza as its presidential candidate. This was something that neither the traditional Liberal party nor the traditional Conservative party were willing to do.⁴¹

Another constitutional provision prevented Somoza, as the leader of the National Guard, from becoming president. To escape this restriction, Somoza resigned and had one of his close friends, Colonel Reyes, exercise de jure control over the Guardia while Somoza continued to maintain de facto control for the six month period.⁴² When the elections came six months after the coup, Somoza ran against candidates who had been jointly nominated by the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties. These two men, however, were defeated by Somoza in an election in which the ballots were counted by soldiers of the National Guard. Thus on January 1, 1937, Somoza was inaugurated into the presidency by a dutiful Congress. Somoza also reassumed his position as Jefe Director of the National Guard and thereby became the most powerful man in Nicaragua.⁴³

Somoza was able to rule until his death in 1956 because he was both the leader of the National Guard, and a skillful politician. Somoza maintained his position as Jefe Director of the Guardia by using paternalistic practices such as rewarding those who were loyal to him and either dismissing or demoting potential troublemakers.⁴⁴ Somoza also created a high morale in the Guardia by gradually transforming it into a modern, well-equipped force. He did this by establishing a military academy that

was staffed by American instructors. Also, his loyalty to the U.S. government was often rewarded with gifts of weaponry. During World War II, for example, Somoza received enough airplanes and ships to form both an air force and a navy.⁴⁵

Somoza's control of the Guardia meant that he had at his fingertips an organization which had a monopoly on the use of force and violence as well as a bureaucracy that performed a wide range of functions. The Guardia was not only responsible for tallying votes at election times, it also,

operated the national radio and telegraph networks, the postal service and the immigration service. It controlled customs...it conducted all police functions and controlled the National Health ServiceThe Guard collected taxes and operated the railways. The Office of National Security...spied on domestic dissidents.⁴⁶

The Guardia gave Somoza the means of potentially controlling or coercing every Nicaraguan. Soldiers and officers of the Guardia, taking their cue from their leader, became a ruthless and corrupt force and resembled an army of occupation rather than an army of national defence.

Although Somoza never hesitated to use the Guardia to control political dissent, he was also a skillful politician who could manipulate his opposition and thereby ensure that they did not become too powerful. One way he did this was to create a facade of pretending to govern within the spirit of the constitution and to adhere to the wishes of Congress. In this way it appeared to outside observers that Somoza was a legitimate ruler, and it was difficult for Somoza's opponents to appeal to the U.S. on the grounds that Somoza was governing illegally.

Somoza could keep up this pretense of legitimacy because he always made sure that the Congress was overwhelmingly stacked with his closest

friends. For example, in 1939, as his first term as president was ending, Somoza began to worry about the clause in the constitution which prohibited a president from succeeding himself. Somoza solved this problem by appointing a constituent assembly made up of loyal friends who then dissolved Congress and drafted the "Constitution of 1939".⁴⁷ According to Richard Millett, "This document provided for a six-year Presidential term with no reelection. A loophole in Article 350, however, exempted the incumbent president from this prohibition."⁴⁸ The constituent assembly then became the new Congress in an election which was boycotted by the opposition. The Congress, in turn, elected Somoza to serve another term as president.⁴⁹

Another factor which allowed Somoza to stay in power was a decline in the political power of the traditional Conservative and Liberal parties. Because of the decades of fighting and rivalry, these two parties became "little more than customary, clan-based cliques with little cohesion."⁵⁰ The only party of any consequence in Nicaragua was Somoza's own Liberal Nationalist Party (PLN) which he used to ensure a compliant majority in the Congress. According to Booth, the PLN "operated the Congress, the courts and bureaucracy to satisfy the dictator in exchange for what he would let them embezzle and take in bribes."⁵¹

Somoza was also a master in co-opting potential opposition groups. Despite the fact that he had once flirted with fascism, when World War II began, Somoza adopted a strong anti-Nazi stance as a way of proving his loyalty to the U.S. Also, because the U.S.S.R. was an ally of the U.S. in the War, Somoza even went so far as to recognize the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and to implement a progressive labour policy.⁵² By appearing as a populist president, he was able to use the support of organized

labour as yet another means of silencing the traditional Liberal and Conservative elites who were then pressing for a more democratic government. In 1948, again in order to win U.S. aid, Somoza became a "rabid anti-communist" and outlawed the PSN and turned his back on organized labour.⁵³

Somoza's political skill and use of the National Guard enabled him to dismantle any serious internal challenges to his rule. The only support that Somoza really needed was the support that was often the most difficult to obtain - that of the U.S. When he first came to power, the U.S. recognized his government even though the Roosevelt administration did not approve of dictators. Because the Roosevelt administration had a policy of non-intervention, the administration continued to support Somoza despite the fact that he became increasingly unpopular with the administration. Legend has it that,

when Secretary of State Cordell Hull showed Roosevelt (a) list of heads of state to be invited to Washington, the President picked out Somoza's name and asked, 'Isn't that man supposed to be a son of a bitch?' 'He sure is', replied Hull, 'but he is our son of a bitch.'⁵⁴

However, despite his poor image at the White House, Somoza was generally able to persuade the U.S. to supply him with weapons and foreign aid.

American distaste for Somoza nearly ended his tenure as President, when, in 1947, Somoza attempted to win another term in office despite the constitution's no reelection clause. This time Somoza's opposition had a basis on which it could make an appeal to the U.S. The State Department responded to Somoza's opponents' wishes by pressuring Somoza to step down from the presidency and to support Dr. Leonardo Arguello instead. Somoza complied with the State Department and saw to it that Arguello was elected in a fraudulent election. However, when Arguello, who was little

more than Somoza's puppet, became a little too independent for Somoza's liking, he was overthrown in a coup which restored Somoza to power.⁵⁵

At first, the Truman administration refused to recognize Somoza's new government but was eventually persuaded to by other Latin American governments.⁵⁶ During this time the White House was becoming increasingly worried about the spread of communism in Latin America. Over time they became less concerned with Somoza's excesses and began to see him a valuable ally in the struggle against communism. From then on, Somoza and his sons were able to play the anti-communist card in order to gain concessions from the U.S.

Not surprisingly, Somoza profitted handsomely while President. Even though he had come to power during a worldwide depression, Somoza soon became one of Nicaragua's richest men. By 1940, his fortune was thought to be between \$3 and \$4 million "a record no previous Nicaraguan president had even approached."⁵⁷ Somoza initiated another boom in the Nicaraguan economy by increasing infrastructure development and by diversifying Nicaragua's agricultural exports to include cotton. Somoza used his political power to form the most powerful economic group in the country. He constantly skimmed money from the national treasury and often appropriated houses and farms for his own use. Eventually, Somoza and his relatives and friends in the PLN built up substantial business interests in every sector of the Nicaraguan economy. It is estimated that by 1945 Somoza was worth somewhere between \$10 and \$60 million.⁵⁸

Although the Somoza group was the most powerful financial group in the country, it was only one of three financial groups. Despite their political problems, each of the two traditional parties had nurtured strong financial elites who survived during the Somoza years. The

Conservatives formed around the Banco de America (BANAMERICA), while the Liberals became the Banco Nicaragüense group (BANIC).⁵⁹ Thus, while Somoza monopolized political power, he did allow the traditional elites to prosper financially. Together, these three groups benefitted from the cotton boom and expanded Nicaragua's industrial capacity.

By 1955, Somoza's old political foes had grown accustomed to Somoza and scarcely protested when he announced that he was seeking another term as president. By then Somoza must have felt invincible. He was constantly protected by crack units of the National Guard and had spies in every corner of the country. These elaborate precautions failed him, however, on the night of September 28, 1956. While he was attending a party in his honour at León, Somoza was assassinated by a young poet named Rigoberto Lopez Perez.⁶⁰

Even in death, Somoza proved to be the consummate dictator. He got around the problem of orderly succession by ensuring that his two sons, Luis and Anastasio Jr., were prepared to assume the reigns of power. Luis Somoza, who had attended the La Salle Military Academy and had studied engineering at Louisiana State University, became the new President. Luis Somoza had already proved to be a capable businessman and politician in the Somoza style. His younger brother, Anastasio, had been trained at the La Salle and West Point Military Academies and had risen to the top ranks of the National Guard. When "Tacho" was assassinated, young "Tachito" was appointed Jefe Director of the Guardia.⁶¹

To avenge their father's death, the two brothers arrested hundreds of known opponents to the Somoza regime. Although most of them were soon released, many of them, including Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, who was the editor of the opposition paper La Prensa, were tortured.⁶²

Despite these abuses, Luis Somoza did make an effort to reform his government. During his tenure, the economy recovered from a recession and most internal opposition evaporated. Luis' main motivation in posing as a reformer was to secure the goodwill of the U.S. In 1959, when Castro came to power in Cuba, the Somozas pointed out to the State Department that, under Somoza rule, Nicaragua would always be a bastion of anti-communism. This earned the Somozas a good deal of military and foreign aid. According to John Booth,

All types of U.S. assistance to Nicaragua grew steadily from 1953 to 1975. Military aid rose from an average of about \$200,000 yearly for the 1953-1961 period to \$1.8 million per year for 1967-1975. Overall economic assistance for the same periods grew from an annual average of some \$1 million to 17.3 million.⁶³

Historian Eduardo Crawley provides a cynical explanation of how this money was spent, "the agency who qualified for this generous assistance was the state. The state in Nicaragua was the Somoza family - the largest business concern in the land."⁶⁴

Luis Somoza's reformist pose was not entirely a facade. He was sufficiently impressed with the democratizing spirit of the Alliance for Progress that, in spite of his brother's opposition he allowed René Schick to succeed him as President in 1963. Luis became the first Somoza to adhere to the no reelection clause in the constitution. The Somoza brothers, however, clearly remained the power behind the throne during Schick's term in office.⁶⁵ Anastasio, as head of the Guardia, was especially powerful. As Schick's terms in office ended in 1967, Anastasio announced that he intended to become the next President. This aroused a great deal of opposition but Anastasio persevered and was elected to the Presidency in a fraudulent election.⁶⁶ In that same

year, his brother Luis died of a heart attack thus leaving Somoza III in sole possession of the Presidency, the leadership of the Guardia and the Somoza family business.

In 1971, in the face of growing opposition, Tachito Somoza finished his first term as President and provoked another constitutional crisis when it became known that he planned to seek another term in office. Somoza's reelection bid was opposed by the U.S. State Department and through negotiations between Somoza, the opposition parties and U.S. Ambassador Turner Shelton, it was decided instead that a Triumvirate made up of two of Somoza's friends and one opposition leader, Fernando Agüero, would govern from 1972 to 1974 when a new presidential election would be held.⁶⁷ Like his father, though, Somoza continued to hold de facto power while the new junta governed. The fact that Agüero, nominally a member of the Conservative opposition, had been co-opted to participate in the junta led to a growing disillusionment on the part of Conservatives, and Nicaraguans in general. The Conservative Party, in particular, lost credibility in the eyes of Nicaraguans.

Somoza's bid for a second term as President was aided by an event that proved to be fortuitous for him but devastating for the country. On December 23, 1972, the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, was the epicentre of a major earthquake which virtually destroyed the city and killed 8,000 to 10,000 people.⁶⁸ Stories of the greedy and corrupt manner in which Somoza and the National Guard behaved after the earthquake are legendary. This group pocketed most of the international relief money and engaged in widespread looting. As a result, very little of the damage was repaired in Managua. Moreover, the little bit of rebuilding that did take place, was done by Somoza-owned construction companies.⁶⁹

Not only did Somoza profit financially from the earthquake, he profitted politically as well. Within days of the earthquake, Somoza dissolved the Triumvirate and imposed martial law. According to Richard Millett, Ambassador Shelton encouraged Somoza to reestablish the dictatorship,

the Ambassador conferred regularly with the Nicaraguan strongman, encouraging him to seize total power, allowing him to regroup his troops and other supporters under the United States flag...the pretense of a ruling Triumvirate was dissolved and Somoza ruled by decree.⁷⁰

In 1974, Somoza had himself elected to another term in office which was supposed to have lasted until 1981. During this time, however, Somoza's opposition grew in strength and his relations with the U.S. cooled until he was finally overthrown in 1979.

When he was deposed, Somoza's wealth was estimated at \$400 million.⁷¹ According to Crawley, "the lands Somoza (owned) occupied an area about equal in size to the neighboring republic of El Salvador, they represented about half of all registered landholdings in Nicaragua and a quarter of the Nation's best arable soil."⁷² Somoza, using the same tactics that his father had used, improved considerably upon his father's fortune.

THE GROWTH OF A UNIFIED OPPOSITION: 1972 - 1979

The most serious challenge to Somoza's power came from a group which took on the legacy of Sandino and were committed from the very beginning to overthrowing the Somoza regime. Inspired by the recent Cuban revolution, three university students met in Tegucigalpa, Honduras in 1961 and formed the Frente Sandinista Liberación Nacional (FSLN).⁷³ These students, Carlos Fonseca Amador, Tomas Borge and Silvio Mayorga, had a history of participation in radical student

politics and had even taken part in sporadic armed attacks against the Guardia. Carlos Fonseca, the leading ideologue of this trio, was convinced that, not only did Sandino's military exploits offer valuable lessons in guerilla insurgency, but that Sandino's political platform was still relevant in Nicaragua. When interpreted in the light of traditional Marxist-Leninist literature and the more recent writings of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, Fonseca could see that, "Sandino had concluded that the Liberal and Conservative politicians were, 'traitors and cowards and must be replaced by worker and peasant leaders'." ⁷⁴ Thus, armed with little more than a radical ideology, these three students set out to conquer the National Guard and depose Somoza.

The Sandinistas were not very successful during the sixties. The few altercations which they had with the Guardia proved to be disastrous. The National Guard were well-trained in counter-insurgency techniques and were ruthless in suppressing the FSLN and their peasant collaborators. One particularly devastating attack was at Pancasán in the Department of Matagalpa where the Sandinistas had cultivated close ties with the local peasantry. In August, 1967, the National Guard descended on Pancasán and virtually destroyed the organization which the Sandinistas had carefully built up. ⁷⁵

Pancasán proved to be a watershed for the Sandinistas. The national leadership regrouped in Costa Rica and devised new strategies. No longer would the rural guerillas stay in one base but, rather, they would be grouped into columns that would be constantly on the move through the mountains. The FSLN also reorganized its urban support network by forming two intermediate organizations, the Freñte Estudiantil Revolucionario (FER) and various Comités Cívicos Populares which were

clandestine cells that operated in the barrios of many cities and towns.⁷⁶ Although the FSLN went underground after Pancasán, its popularity increased. It gained a degree of notoriety by staging bank robberies and acts of terrorism against the regime. Nineteen sixty-seven was also the year that Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza succeeded René Schick in the Presidency and many Nicaraguans were upset at the prospect of another Somoza in the Presidency.⁷⁷ By continuing on after Pancasán, the FSLN proved that it was a serious contender and earned the respect of many Nicaraguans.

By 1970, the FSLN had rebuilt their urban and rural networks and carried out a series of successful attacks against the National Guard in the Zinica region in northern Nicaragua.⁷⁸ These attacks boosted their morale and also earned them the respect of the peasants in the area, which proved to be very important. Once the Sandinistas had won the loyalty of one peasant, they had access to a chain-like network,

Using the familial and god parenthood ties regarded as virtually sacred by Nicaraguan peasants, Sandinistas living with peasants would win the confidence of one person, who in turn, linked them to others. The obligations of familial ties ensured the confidentiality and goodwill of the members of the chain, so that geographically dispersed extended families became FSLN recruits and collaborators.⁷⁹

The peasants in the northern departments also came to hate the National Guard who were becoming increasingly brutal in their counter-insurgency campaigns.

During the early 1970's, the FSLN also became more successful in the urban areas. The Sandinista's student wing, the FER, mobilized student opposition to Somoza and carried out a number of strikes and occupied churches protesting the torture of political prisoners.⁸⁰ The

students groups and barrio organizations were also effective at fund-raising. According to a Sandinista commandante, Henry Ruiz, the FSLN received very little funding from abroad.

The city acted as a sort of lung for the rural operations, but directly from abroad we received nothing.....Our requirement of the urban wing was arms...which were bought with money collected by committees of...companeros, two, three, four, five, who clandestinely obtained money to buy munitions, arms and medicine.⁸¹

The urban support groups also channelled new recruits into the mountains to be trained as guerillas.

The behavior of Somoza and the National Guard after the 1972 earthquake aroused widespread opposition to his government. However, the FSLN was unable to monopolize all of this sentiment and other opposition groups sprang up. By 1974, the FSLN sensed that it was losing momentum and decided to carry out a raid against the home of Minister of Agriculture José María Castillo Quant, who was giving a party in honour of Ambassador Turner Shelton. On the evening of December 27, a few minutes after the Ambassador had left, thirteen guerillas burst into Castillo's home and captured a number of hostages, including Somoza's cousin and several of his closest friends. In exchange for their hostages, the guerillas demanded the release of political prisoners, a ransom of \$2 million and the publication of a communique which stated the aims of the FSLN. The guerillas also demanded that Somoza increase the wages of industrial workers and even asked Somoza to provide a wage increase for the enlisted men in the National Guard. Somoza acceded to these demands and the guerillas and their hostages were flown to Cuba.⁸²

Somoza reacted violently to this humiliating hostage-taking. He

reimposed martial law and instructed the National Guard to arrest anyone who was even remotely suspected of collaborating with the FSLN. As a result, thousands of people were jailed, tortured and murdered.⁸³ Somoza also imposed press censorship which was stringently applied to Pedro Joaquín Chamorro's paper La Prensa. Somoza had even accused Chamorro of instigating the hostage-taking.⁸⁴

Although the hostage-taking had been very successful, the FSLN became increasingly demoralized and divided in the period of martial law which followed. The major dispute was a disagreement amongst the leadership as to what the best strategy should be to carry on the revolution. As a result, in 1975, the FSLN split into three "tendencies". The first of these groups was the Proletarian Tendency (TP) who believed that the FSLN should concentrate on mobilizing the urban workers because, as Marx and Lenin had argued, the proletariat were the revolutionary class and needed only a vanguard to lead them.⁸⁵ The second tendency, the Guerra Popular Prolongada (GPP), was led by many of the original Sandinistas including Tomás Borge and Henry Ruiz. This group wanted to continue the policy of pursuing a rural guerilla war backed up by an urban network. However, according to John Booth, "the other factions criticized the GPP as too cautious militarily and prone to isolate itself from the daily life of the people."⁸⁶

The third group tried to mediate between the other two groups and were thus called the Terceristas (the third force). The leaders of this group, Daniel and Humberto Ortega, Edén Pastora and Victor Tirado, believed that the collapse of the Somoza regime was imminent and that the FSLN could, through spectacular attacks, spark a popular insurrection against Somoza. This group was more successful in recruiting members

than the other two groups because it was more "ideologically heterodox" than the other two groups. As John Booth writes,

the Terceristas relaxed the Marxist rigor of the original FSLN and rapidly increased their ranks with social democratic, social Christian, and bourgeois recruits...the Terceristas pressed the rural and urban insurrection with vigor. The other tendencies criticized them for excessive boldness if not adventurism and for a lack of ideological purity.⁸⁷

The differences between the three tendencies became less profound after martial law was lifted in 1977. Once again, renewed opposition to Somoza forced the FSLN to try to regain the initiative from other opposition groups. Popular hatred for Somoza reached an all-time high when Somoza's arch-enemy, and La Prensa editor, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was assassinated on January 10, 1978. Tens of thousands of people demonstrated to protest the assassination and UDEL, a pro-business group which had been formed by Chamorro, called a general strike.⁸⁸ There were also several spontaneous violent uprisings against the National Guard. One uprising in the Indian community of Monimbó cost the lives of two hundred people as it was savagely repressed by the Guardia. All throughout 1978 there were riots, strikes and uprisings as the level of political violence escalated.

The FSLN were caught off guard by these spontaneous and largely uncoordinated mass protests. In an effort to regain the FSLN's leading role in the revolutionary movement, the Terceristas staged a spectacular raid on the National Palace. On August 23, 1978, twenty-five guerillas disguised as soldiers of the National Guard, captured the entire Congress as well as the employees of several government ministries. Once again, Somoza was unwilling to fight it out with the guerillas because a large

number of the hostages were relatives and close friends. Somoza was forced to give in to the guerilla's demands which included a \$500,000 ransom, release of 60 political prisoners, publication of a communique and safe passage to Cuba. The raid was a brilliant success and thousands of Nicaraguans cheered as the guerillas were driven to the airport.⁸⁹

The attack on the National Palace intensified the momentum of what was by then becoming a revolution. In late August there were more spontaneous violent uprisings in Matagalpa and Jinotepe which were cruelly suppressed by the National Guard. Although they were still unprepared and divided, the FSLN decided to capitalize on the rebellious mood of the people by launching a major offensive known as the "September Insurrection". The Sandinistas attacked several cities including León, Managua, Masaya, Estelí, Chinandega and Chichigalpa.⁹⁰ At this time the FSLN had an estimated 3000 guerillas, many of whom had received only rudimentary training and were poorly armed.⁹¹ In each of the towns that they attacked, however, their forces were supplemented by thousands of townspeople who helped man the barricades and fought the Guardia with whatever weapons they could find. The fighting went on for as much as three weeks but gradually the Guardia retook the towns at an incredible cost in human suffering. It is estimated that as many as two thousand civilians died during the fighting and many hundreds more were tortured and murdered in the "mopping-up" operations that followed.⁹²

Most of the incidents of political violence that occurred in 1978 were incidents of unorganized rebellion. Although the FSLN had carried out several guerilla attacks, their internal disputes prevented them from mounting a coordinated insurrection. Most of the FSLN's activities

throughout that year, including the attack on the National Palace and the September Insurrection, had been aimed at regaining the leadership of the revolution. However, by late-1978, the popular rebellions and general strikes had all been suppressed and, once again, the FSLN were the only opposition group capable of conducting a military offensive against Somoza. By now, though, the Sandinistas realized that they would succeed only if their forces were reunified. Thus, in early 1979, the three tendencies were reunited under the leadership of a nine-man directorate.⁹³ The Sandinistas also began organizing Civil Defense Committees (CDC's) in many barrios and towns so that, in future, popular uprisings could be coordinated by the FSLN.

Not only had the FSLN lost the initiative in directing the popular rebellions of 1978, they were also playing a supporting rather than a leading role in the negotiations that were going on between Somoza and the groups that were arrayed against him. During 1978, this opposition was being represented by a coalition consisting mainly of upper class moderate opposition groups. This coalition, known as the Broad Opposition Front (FAO), represented a number of groups, some of which had been active since 1974.

The oldest of these groups was the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL) which was formed in 1974, the year that Somoza had regained the presidency in a fraudulent election. The members of UDEL, led by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, represented a wide range of groups,

including Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Christian and social democrats and even the Nicaraguan Socialist Party. These forces united around a platform calling for the recovery of democratic rights and a social and economic transformation of society.⁹⁴

Calling for reform rather than revolution, in 1977 UDEL participated in

an attempt to begin a dialogue with Somoza which was to have been moderated by Archbishop Obando y Bravo. The attempt at dialogue fell apart, however, when Chamorro was assassinated in 1978.⁹⁵

Although the general strike that was called to protest Chamorro's death had received massive support, the death of Chamorro and the failure to engage Somoza in a dialogue, resulted in a feeling of disorientation amongst the middle and upper class opposition groups. This slack was picked up in March, 1978 when Alfonso Robelo Callejas, a businessman with BANIC and BANAMERICA ties, formed the Movimiento Democrático Nicaragüense (MDN). As leader of the MDN, Robelo reorganized UDEL and invited other business groups and trade unions to join in the FAO.⁹⁶ In September, 1978, the FAO sought to begin negotiations with Somoza.

This time Somoza was pressured into negotiating by the member nations of the Organization of America States (OAS). Many of these nations were shocked at the brutal methods that Somoza was using to repress his opposition. The Carter administration, concerned about human rights violations in Nicaragua, forced Somoza to accept the mediation efforts of an OAS team made up of negotiators from the U.S., Guatemala and the Dominican Republic.⁹⁷ The OAS team clearly preferred to negotiate with the FAO because it was pro-business, advocated democratic political reforms, and was the best organized opposition group other than the FSLN.⁹⁸

The FSLN were indirectly represented in the FAO through a group known as "Los Doce" (The Group of Twelve). This group was formed by twelve Nicaraguans while they were in exile in Costa Rica. It included among others,

two lawyers (Ernesto Castillo and Joaquín Cuadra); two priests (Fernando Cardenal and Miguel D'Escoto); an academic (Carlos Tunnerman); a writer (Sergio Ramirez); an agronomist (Ricardo Coronel); an architect (Casimiro Sotelo); a banker (Arturo Cruz) and a dental surgeon (Carlos Gutiérrez).⁹⁹

Los Doce gained widespread popularity in 1977 when they issued a declaration which said that Nicaraguans should accept the FSLN as a legitimate opposition group and support the FSLN's struggle against Somoza. Because they came from a wide variety of occupations, the example of Los Doce was instrumental in persuading Nicaraguans from every sector of society to support the FSLN. Los Doce had particularly close ties with the Tercerista tendency.¹⁰⁰

Los Doce's participation in the FAO meant that the FAO had the tacit support of the FSLN. The FAO began the negotiations in October, 1978 by demanding that Somoza's resignation and exile from Nicaragua would have to be an essential part of any future agreement. Somoza countered by offering to resign only if his Liberal party, the PLN, and the National Guard were allowed to share power in the post-Somoza junta. This position came to be known as "Somocismo without Somoza" because it would have allowed Somoza's power base to remain virtually intact. Although groups in the FAO were close to accepting Somoza's conditions, the FSLN refused to allow the PLN and the Guardia into any future government. This disagreement produced a split within the FAO and by early January, 1979, the FAO was unable to continue negotiating because it could no longer claim to represent the opposition.¹⁰¹

The crisis within the FAO had been precipitated by the departure of Los Doce, the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) and a major trade union, the CTN.¹⁰² In January, these groups and other groups such as the

Popular Christian Faction and the Independent Liberals formed a new coalition called the National Patriotic Front (FPN). Two significant members of this new coalition were a recently reunited FSLN and a newly formed FSLN umbrella organization called the United People's Movement (MPU).¹⁰³

The MPU, led by Moises Hassan, had been formed in the latter half of 1978. It grouped together all of the "mass" organizations that had been formed by the three tendencies of the FSLN during the 1970's to act as intermediary groups between the FSLN and the population at large. They included trade unions, peasant organizations, student groups, professional groups and popular militias (the CDC's). Some of these groups such as the Association of Rural Workers (ATC) and a Nicaraguan women's group, AMPRONAC, were the largest organizations in their respective sectors.¹⁰⁴ Altogether, there were some twenty-two different groups in the MPU.

The formation of the MPU coincided with the reunification process that the three tendencies of the FSLN were undergoing. A keystone of the MUP's mandate was a conciliatory political platform that outlined its proposals for an alternative government to the Somoza regime. These included a call for the formation of "a democratic government, representative of the forces which struggled in a committed manner for the overthrow of the military dictatorship."¹⁰⁵ The new program also contained proposals for agrarian reform, improved conditions for workers and a foreign policy of non-alignment.

The MPU's program, which was later echoed by the FSLN, was a clear signal to other opposition groups that moderate factions within the FSLN and its members organizations had prevailed. The other opposi-

tion groups could now be sure that a commitment to the FSLN implied nothing more than a commitment to the overthrow of somocismo and was not a commitment to the creation of a Marxist regime. As John Booth writes of the FSLN,

In the beginning the leaders' Marxist-Leninist faith in the revolutionary vanguard helped sustain the energy of cadres in the face of overwhelming odds. In later years, however, the rapidly broadening ideological pool of non-Marxist recruits and the prospects of widespread mass opposition to the regime led to an FSLN program designed to attract many different groups victimized by Somoza...because of the strategy of uniting within a broad coalition of other forces, overt references to socialism and to nationalization of property other than that of Somoza had vanished from the published FSLN program.¹⁰⁶

The moderate stance of the FSLN-MPU paved the way for the formation of the FPN. Thus, when the FPN entered into a new round of negotiations with the OAS team and Somoza, it represented an overwhelming majority of groups who were opposed to the Somoza regime.¹⁰⁷

The FAO, although it had been eclipsed by the FPN, still contained the more conservative elements of UDEL, some trade unions, and Alfonso Robelo's MDN party. The FAO joined the negotiations with the FPN and also joined the FPN in a campaign of civil disobedience that began in the early months of 1979.¹⁰⁸ The broad coalition was possible because everyone could agree that the immediate aim was to get rid of Somoza and that a coalition was the only way to achieve this end.

There were no major military offensives by the FSLN during the latter part of 1978 and early 1979, although the FSLN carried out sporadic guerilla attacks and the National Guard continued its campaign of repression. During this time, both the FSLN and the National Guard attempted to regroup and build up their forces. It is estimated that, by 1979, the FSLN had approximately 5000 guerillas against a National Guard

force of about 14,000. The National Guard was becoming increasingly demoralized, however, and contained a number of reluctant, hastily recruited draftees. John Booth estimates that in early 1979, the Guardia had a numerical superiority of 2.5:1 but that, through attrition and desertion, this superiority dropped to 1.8:1 by July, 1979.¹⁰⁹ The Guardia was also well-equipped and used its overwhelming firepower and air support indiscriminately against civilians and guerillas alike.

The military campaign escalated in 1979 and, by February, guerilla attacks were occurring almost daily.¹¹⁰ Finally, by late May, the FSLN's forces were fully integrated and a well organized network of popular militias (CDC's) had been created. On May 30, 1979, the FSLN announced that it was beginning a new offensive. This new offensive followed three strategies. The first was a call for a nationwide general strike, to be coordinated by the FPN-FAO coalition. The second strategy was a popular insurrection to be led by the CDC's in each barrio and town. The third strategy was a full-scale military offensive which opened up on three fronts.¹¹¹

As the fighting raged in June and early July, the pace of the mediation efforts picked up. During the negotiations in early 1979, the U.S. sought to implement a solution in which Somoza would resign if the new government contained representatives from the PLN and the National Guard. The overriding concern of the U.S. was that the FSLN be kept out of any future government. This was unacceptable to the FSLN and in June, when it became increasingly clear that they were winning the military offensive, the FSLN took a decisive step and announced the formation of a Provisional Government of National Reconstruction. According to one source,

the membership of the Provisional Government was the result of long months of negotiations with all opposition sectors. The five leaders named to the governing council of junta were Sergio Ramirez, representing the Group of Twelve, Alfonso Robelo, representing the Broad Opposition Front (FAO); Moises Hassan, representing the MPU; Daniel Ortega, representing the FSLN's joint national command; and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of La Prensa editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro.¹¹²

The Cabinet of the new government was also drawn from the various opposition groups.

The Provisional Government, still in exile in San Juan, Costa Rica, began to lobby the member nations of the OAS for their support. By June 18, fifteen nations of the OAS severed their diplomatic ties with the Somoza regime.¹¹³ On June 21, at Venezuela's initiative, the OAS blocked a U.S.-sponsored resolution which called for an OAS peace-keeping force to intervene in the Nicaraguan conflict. This resolution was defeated by a vote of 17 to 2, a significant victory for the Provisional Government.¹¹⁴ These international events had important repercussions inside Nicaragua. On June 27, INDE and COSEP, two groups that represented the non-somocista financial establishment, announced their support of the Provisional Government.¹¹⁵ Thus, by late June, Somoza could only count on the support of his PLN and the National Guard and the U.S.

The U.S. continued to support Somoza in the first two weeks of July, despite the fact that the Sandinistas controlled 80 percent of the country. Finally, on July 16, the U.S. persuaded Somoza to tender his resignation to the Congress and then go into exile in Miami. The Congress chose Dr. Franco Urcuyo Maliaño to act as interim president until the Provisional Government took power. In a bizarre move, Urcuyo

Maliano to act as interim president until the Provisional Government took power. In a bizarre move, Urcuyo attempted to rally the Guardia and hold on to power against all odds. Urcuyo had to be persuaded to resign by Somoza who telephoned from Miami at the insistence of the U.S. State Department.¹¹⁶ Urcuyo was finally convinced and, along with the high command of the Guardia and the remaining members of the government, left Managua at 8:00 P.M. on July 19. John Booth calculates that "Francisco Urcuyo Maliano had been president of Nicaragua for forty-three hours, one hour for every year that a Somoza had ruled Nicaragua."¹¹⁷

On that same day, July 19, the Government of National Reconstruction began to govern a country that had been virtually destroyed in the civil war. It is estimated that 40,000 to 50,000 people (equal to 2% of the total population) had died in the final two years of fighting. According to one calculation, there was also, "some 100,000 wounded, 40,000 children orphaned, 200,000 families left homeless and 750,000 dependent on food assistance."¹¹⁸ Moreover, the economy had come to a standstill in the previous two years and the 1979 cotton crop had not been planted. An estimated \$470 million damage had been done to property while some \$535 million had left the country with the Nicaraguans who had gone into exile. Somoza himself had left behind an empty treasury and a foreign debt of \$1.6 billion which the new government had to repay.¹¹⁹ The Nicaraguans had won their freedom from Somoza at an incredibly high price.

CONCLUSION

The earthquake that devastated Nicaragua in 1972 was an event that triggered the eventual downfall of the Somoza regime. Prior to 1972, the Somozas were able to control the presidency because they were skillful enough to ensure that their opposition remained fragmented and impotent

and because their control of the National Guard enabled them to keep a frightened populace at bay. However, when Anastasio Somoza Debayle showed that he was willing to profit financially and politically from the disaster in 1972, the opposition to his regime grew. Moderate opposition groups that wanted to create a democracy in Nicaragua began to work together while other Nicaraguans, who agreed with the FSLN that an armed insurrection was needed to topple Somoza, joined the ranks of the Sandinistas.

Some moderate opposition groups first joined together in a coalition called the Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL) that was formed in 1974 by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. This coalition pressed for a negotiated solution with Somoza but their efforts failed when Chamorro was assassinated in 1978. The Chamorro assassination further mobilized opposition to Somoza and a new, broader coalition of moderates came together to form the Broad Opposition Front (FAO). The FAO continued to work for a negotiated settlement throughout 1978 but, in the face of Somoza's intransigence, the groups in the FAO finally agreed with the FSLN that a violent insurrection was needed to rid the country of Somoza. Thus, in early 1979 the National Patriotic Front (FPN) was created.

While the FSLN was the dominant group in the FPN, it consisted of almost every organized opposition group in the country. As it became increasingly clear that the FSLN was winning a military victory in June and July 1979, a provisional government was announced which contained representatives from the various member groups of the FPN. This provisional government was able to win recognition in Nicaragua and in the international community and, on July 19, 1979, it became the sole government of Nicaragua.

The FSLN became the predominant group in the opposition because it was the only organization able to meet Somoza's most durable base of support, the National Guard, in battle. The Sandinistas earned the respect of Nicaraguans by continuing in their struggle after suffering several military defeats in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Their popularity increased dramatically after the 1974 and 1978 hostage-takings. The success of the FSLN was due, in large part, to their ability to forge links with peasants and urban poor. It was these social groups that proved to be the most rebellious during the revolution. In August 1978, the people of Monimbo, Matagalpa and Jinotepe rose spontaneously against the National Guard but were easily defeated.

In September 1978, the FSLN decided to capitalize on the rebellious mood of the people in the barrios and peasant villages by launching the "September Insurrection". The Insurrection proved to be premature because the FSLN did not yet have the numbers needed to defeat the National Guard, despite the fact that they were joined by thousands of armed townspeople in each of the cities they attacked. The FSLN learned a lesson from the September Insurrection and, for the remainder of 1978 and into 1979, they organized Civil Defense Committees (CDC's) in the cities, barrios, towns and villages. The CDC's strengthened the coalition between the FSLN and the peasants and urban poor. When the final insurrection came in June 1979, the Sandinistas were able to spark popular rebellions to coincide with their nationwide offensive.

The Nicaraguan revolution succeeded, then, because two coalitions were formed that were able to join all of the diverse political organizations and social classes into a unified opposition. The first coalition between the various opposition organizations played a political

role by conducting negotiations and by forming a provisional government capable of carrying on after Somoza. The second coalition provided the military strength necessary to defeat Somoza's National Guard. Thus, the process of coalition formation was crucial to the success of the revolution.

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CHAPTER III: Changes in Catholic Social and Political Thought in the 20th Century

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand how the Catholic Church could have participated in the Nicaraguan revolution, it is first of all necessary to understand the changes that the Church has gone through in this century. These changes have been considerable, if not revolutionary in themselves. Each phase in the development of the Church in the twentieth century has been accompanied by a model which articulates the Church's view of itself as an institution and prescribes a role for the Church in the politics of a society based on that view. Since the early 1900's, a succession of four models have been dominant in the Church. These are the traditional, Christian Democratic, Liberation Theology and Evangelical-Pastoral models. Each of these four models was developed by important Catholic philosophers and theologians. The latter three models, the Christian Democratic, Liberation Theology and Evangelical-Pastoral models, were in turn adopted in principle by the Church at major ecclesiastical conferences. In this chapter, I will describe these four models.

THE TRADITIONAL CHURCH IN LATIN AMERICA

For centuries the Catholic Church's worldview remained unchanged. The Church was perceived as an institution which stood above history and presented to society a God-given model of how the society should be organized if Catholics were to live a Christian life that offered some hope of salvation. The major architect of this model was St. Thomas Aquinas who conceived of society as being hierarchically structured where the ruler derived his right to rule from God and could thus command the

compliance of his subjects. In the Summa Theologica, Aquinas wrote,

since every man is a part of the state, it is impossible that a man be good unless he be well proportionate to the common good; nor can the whole be well consistent unless its parts be proportionate to it. Consequently the common good of the state cannot flourish unless the citizens be virtuous, at least those whose business it is to govern. But it is enough for the good of the community that the other citizens be so far virtuous that they obey the commands of their rulers.¹

In stressing the need to preserve the common good above all else, Aquinas believed that a good Christian citizen was one who deferred his own desires if they conflicted with the wishes of the ruler or threatened the harmony of the society. According to Aquinas, the role of the Church in the Christian society was to interpret God's eternal law. In other words, the Church legitimated the political order.

Thomism provided predominantly Catholic societies with what Howard Wiarda refers to as a corporatist "religious ideology",

revealed truth, natural and God-given law, Thomistic philosophy, and Aristotelian logic formed the core of knowledge...For the central religio-socio-political ideas in this tradition imply the unquestioned acceptance of each man in his place in the hierarchy ...and the organization of society along corporatist, integralist and authoritarian lines. The religious ideology of traditional Catholicism thus helped legitimize the traditional power relationships, of which it was an integral part.²

Following the Thomist precept that societies should be harmonious, the corporatist model structured society both vertically and horizontally along functional and class lines so that each individual would know his place. The vertical structures were "corporations" or groups of people who performed similar functions. Examples of corporations include the Church, the military, the bureaucracy and trade-related organizations.

Each corporation was, in turn, divided horizontally according to class distinctions with the elites in a corporation being responsible for maintaining order in their corporation. The elites themselves were governed by the state.³

The Thomist or corporatist model was adopted by the Iberic nations and exported to their colonies along with other elements of Iberian culture. The Catholic Church's influence over politics in Latin America was most pronounced during the colonial era. In this period, the Spanish monarchs were allowed a measure of control over the Church in that they had the authority to select bishops and to create new parishes. In exchange for this power, the Spanish kings supported the Church financially, ensured that Catholicism was the only religion that could be practiced in Latin America, and saw to it that the Church prospered.

According to Lloyd Mecham, the most important benefit that the Spanish kings received from their financial and legal support of the Church was the Church's agreement to legitimize the Spanish domination of Latin America,

The king was amply compensated for the obligations and responsibilities he assumed with reference to the Church. Since Catholicism was indissolubly linked with royal authority, the Church was quite as effective an instrument in the conquest and domination of the Indies as was the army. It was one of the principle agents of the civil power in America for over three centuries... Given the almost absolute domination exercised by the (Catholic clergy) over the minds of their ignorant flocks, the inestimable value to the crown of its control over the clergy can be appreciated.⁴

Aside from its legitimating role, the Church played a number of other roles in colonial Latin America. It operated the educational system, had control over marriages and the civil register and became a major landholder. When the Wars of Independence began in 1810, the Church's position

was challenged for the first time.

The Wars of Independence coincided with the rise of Latin American Liberalism which advocated, among other things, the separation of Church and state. In many of the newly independent Latin American republics, the Liberals, who were jealous of the Church's wealth and influence and who wanted to create Liberal democratic republics in Latin America, fought long and bitter battles with Conservatives. The Conservatives defended the Church's position and struggled to retain the oligarchic corporatist model in their country. The Liberal-Conservative disputes had different outcomes in each of the Latin American republics, and the Church's fortunes varied accordingly. Nevertheless, all of the countries in Latin America eventually adopted republican constitutions which separated Church and state.⁵ The Church, however, has survived as an independent institution and Latin America has continued to be a predominantly Catholic continent.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The onset of the industrial age in the late-nineteenth century presented a serious challenge to the Church. In Latin America Thomism was losing ground to liberalism, and the Church was in danger of becoming irrelevant in the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America which had long since adopted democratic institutions. The Church still perceived itself in Thomistic terms as an unchanging institution which governed the religious and moral life of societies and which legitimated corporate political institutions. However, in modern liberal-democratic societies which encouraged religious pluralism and which separated Church and state, the Catholic Church was denied its role as a legitimator of political institutions. This role would also eventually be

denied in the developing Latin American countries. Moreover, the liberal or capitalist ideology stressed individuality and taught that individuals should strive to improve their situation. This doctrine ran contrary to traditional Thomism which taught that each individual had his place in society and should passively accept his position. Thus, as the twentieth century began, it was recognized by many in the Catholic Church that the Church's political and social doctrine needed to change with the times.

The impetus for change within the Catholic Church came from the very highest office in the Church, when, in 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote his famous encyclical entitled Rerum Novarum (on the condition of workers). This encyclical called for Catholic employers to respect the dignity of their workers and to pay them a just wage. Rerum Novarum was followed in 1931 with Pope Pius XI's encyclical Quadragesimo Anno (Reconstructing the Social Order) and in 1961 with Pope John XXIII's encyclical Mater et Magistra (Mother and Teacher.)⁶ These latter two encyclicals stressed "Christian social ethics in conducting economic activity in accordance with the common good and individual dignity. (Mater et Magistra) was a call for renewed dedication to the work of transforming the world motivated by Christian charity."⁷

These three encyclicals enunciated a theme that was to become an integral part of the Christian Democratic model. The encyclicals indicated that, while the Church recognized that liberalism and capitalism were the dominant ideologies in the world, it also recognized that capitalist societies often failed to create the opportunities that individuals needed to better their conditions. The encyclicals were aimed particularly at employers who paid their workers subsistence wages and

who enriched themselves at the expense of their employees. Thus the Church began to create a niche for itself in capitalist societies by taking on the cause of the workers and by beginning to act as the social conscience of modern societies. The Popes who wrote the encyclicals believed that capitalism could be tempered by Christian values.⁸

The themes introduced in the papal encyclicals were later developed by important Catholic thinkers such as Jacques Maritain and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Maritain, a neo-Thomist and one of the leading ideologues of the Christian Democratic movement, believed that the progressive secularization of politics, which had begun with the French Revolution, could cause the downfall of modern civilization. This was evident, he argued, in the rise of fascism which had caused the Second World War, as well as the spread of communism which threatened to engulf the postwar world.⁹ Maritain felt that Christianity should be reconciled with democracy in such a way that Christian principles, such as the concept of brotherly love, would establish the basis for the political order. He believed that Christianity could provide,

a faith in the brotherhood of man, a sense of the social duty of compassion for mankind...the conviction that the political task par excellence is to render common life better and more brotherly and...work to make the structure of laws and institutions and customs of this common life a house for brothers to live in.¹⁰

Like Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius XI and Pope John XXIII, Maritain called for the leaders of modern democracies to allow the working class to participate more equitably in the political and economic life in their society.

However, while Maritain believed that the Church could play a role in modern societies by enunciating Christian principles for society to follow and by encouraging individual Catholics to carry out these prin-

ciples in their daily lives, Maritain also believed that the Church as an institution should not play an active role in politics. According to Daniel Levine, Christian Democracy called for the Church to play an "activation" role in politics, which he defines as a strategy "favoring the stimulation of lay people to action."¹¹ As Levine explains,

although (Christian Democracy)...looks to the transformation of the world in accord with Christian ideals, these are to be promoted by individual Christians, each acting in his or her own capacity as a believer and a citizen-not as a subordinate member of a dominant Church or a corporate state.¹²

Thus, Christian Democracy differed from Thomism in that it encouraged lay Catholics to work to improve their world, rather than passively accepting their situation. It also differed in that it called for the Church to withdraw from active participation in politics.

Early manifestations of the new Catholic focus on the working class came in the form of working men's associations and Catholic trade unions. In the late 1880's, in Chile for example, the Church sponsored the "Society of Workers of St. Joseph". According to Henry Landsberger, this society and other patronatos that were formed by the Church represented a different approach to charity. As Landsberger says,

they were mutual aid societies in which...workers helped workers...They were also educational institutions in which workers were no longer the object of charity on the part of interested members of the upper class, but the object of educational efforts.¹³

Generally, the working men's associations developed into Catholic trade unions. These unions have been an important part of the trade union movement in Europe since the early part of this century. They have also become increasingly important in Latin America since the 1960's.¹⁴ The other important offspring of the Catholic Church's changing social and

political doctrine was, of course, the Christian Democratic parties that were formed in Western Europe and Latin America.

The Christian Democracy model, then, was an early response by the Catholic Church to the rise of liberal democracies in the western world. The model suggested a new role for the Church in modern societies as a critic of capitalism and as an institution which offered a set of values that could temper the excesses of modern capitalism. The model was particularly important because it gave Catholics a platform from which they could participate in the democratic processes of their countries. At the same time, Christian Democracy's focus on the plight of workers in capitalist societies gave Catholic workers an alternative to adopting socialist or communist critiques of capitalism.

The development of Christian Democracy represented an important change for the Catholic Church because it was based on an acceptance of the fact that the Church was now in competition with secular ideologies and other religions and was no longer the dominant religious or ideological group in the world. As Christian Democracy was developed and put into practice by lay Catholics, a simultaneous change had to take place within the Church itself which would correspond to the reforms suggested by the Christian Democratic model. The need for this change was recognized by Pope John XXIII who convened the Second Vatican Council as a forum in which Church leaders from all over the world could meet and implement new policies for the Church.

The Second Vatican Council began in October, 1962, and lasted until December, 1965.¹⁵ The four sessions of the Council produced several important documents that stated the Church's position on a number of issues. In general, these documents indicated that the Church was

becoming more open in the sense that it offered to begin a dialogue with other major religious and political groups in the world.¹⁶ One of the Council's most important documents which reflected this increased openness was Guadium et Spes (The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world).

Guadium et Spes was important because it officially changed the Church's view of itself as an institution which stands above society to one which is actually involved in society.¹⁷ This change was a major departure from the Thomist view of the Church. In Guadium et Spes Church leaders realized that the Church could no longer provide all the solutions to man's problems on earth, but that it could still offer moral and religious principles that were relevant in the modern world. Thus, Church leaders offered to engage in a dialogue with the world in an effort to solve the world's problems, "the aim is true dialogue, not a one-sided laying down of dictates on the part of the Church....The Church stands ready to serve mankind and human institutions, humbly conscious of what it can learn from history and the social context."¹⁸

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND THE MEDELLÍN CONFERENCE

Vatican II was a landmark in the Church's history because it officially recognized the need for the Church to change with the times. At the same time, it created a major problem for the Church because Church leaders at Vatican II stopped short of a commitment to a specific view of what the Church's new political model should be. Even though Christian Democracy was the only alternative to the corporatist model available to the Church at the time, Vatican II did not commit the Church to Christian Democracy. This opening left by Vatican II encouraged those who were critical of Christian Democracy to develop a new political model

for the Church. This model was Liberation Theology.

The Liberation Theology model was developed in Latin American by Latin American theologians who were dissatisfied with Christian Democracy. They felt that Christian Democracy's focus on the working classes was irrelevant in Latin American where the real problem was poverty. Moreover, Christian Democracy aimed at producing social change through democratic means. This goal may have been appropriate in Western Europe where democratic institutions were well developed, but Liberation Theologians believed that social change through democratic means was impossible in Latin America because democracy had thus far failed to take root.

The theologians who developed Liberation Theology wanted to create a rationale whereby Christians could work on behalf of the poor without having to give up their faith. Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the leading liberation theologians, writes,

more than a few people are subject to serious tension when they become absorbed in the political demands occasioned by a commitment to liberation. On the one hand they seek to live in fellowship with the exploited; on the other hand they belong to a Church, many members of which are closely tied to the existing social order. Their faith seems to lose its dynamism, and they feel anxiety when they note the dichotomy between their political activity on the one hand and their life as Christians on the other. Even more cruel and difficult is the case of people who see their love of God fade out in favor of the very thing it supposedly instigates and nurtures: love of other people.¹⁹

Gutiérrez' purpose was to show that not only was a commitment to the liberation of the poor compatible with Christianity, but also that a specific form of political action, or "praxis", which was based on both Marxism and Christianity, could bring about this liberation.

Gutiérrez' analysis is based on a Marxist understanding of politics. There is no question for Gutiérrez that the poor constitute a social class, "which is overtly or covertly exploited by another social class."²⁰ Furthermore, Gutiérrez accepts the arguments of dependency theorists who believe that poverty in Latin America is a direct result of the system of international capitalism in which rich countries exploit poor countries. This international system of exploitation is reproduced within the poor countries as the upper classes, who are in league with international capital, exploit the lower classes. Like Marx, Gutierrez has a wide view of politics as a set of social institutions which reinforce exploitative economic and political structures. According to Gutiérrez,

those who have opted for a personal commitment to liberation see politics as a dimension that embraces every area of human life and activity. It is the comprehensive and conditioning factor and the collective battleground in the struggle for human fulfillment... Every human activity, then, has a political dimension.²¹

Liberation Theologians began referring to the exploitation of one social class by another as "structural sin" and argued that the Catholic Church should no longer support exploitative political, social and economic institutions.

While the political goal of Liberation Theology is to liberate the poor from exploitative economic, social and political structures, through revolution if necessary, there is also an important religious dimension to Liberation Theology. The person who lives and works amongst the poor does not only out of a genuine feeling of Christian brotherly love, but also in active search for God,

The fact is that for many Christians a commitment to

liberation does come down to being an authentic spiritual experience in the original and biblical sense of the term... Only through concrete acts of love and solidarity can we effectively realize our encounter with the poor and exploited and, through them, with Jesus Christ. To give to them is to say yes to Christ; to refuse them is to reject Christ
 (Matt. 25:31-46)
The poor human being, the 'other' now steps forward as the one who reveals the totally 'Other'²²

Religious contemplation used to require the contemplative to separate himself as much as possible from worldly concerns. This was reflected in the Church's traditional doctrine which saw the Church as an institution which sits above society. Liberationists, however, "must be contemplatives in the very midst of (their) political activity."²³

In Liberation Theology, the Church should become a "Popular Church". The fundamental unit of the popular Church is the community. As Gutiérrez says,

proclaiming the gospel means convening a 'Church', coming together as an assembled group. Only in community can we live our faith in the spirit of love... Accepting God's word means turning toward the Other in and through the other people with whom we live out this divine word.²⁴

In many Latin American countries, this focus on an active community of believers has led to the formation of "Comunidades Eclesiales de Base" (Basic Christian Communities or CEB's).²⁵ CEB's are small groups of ten to twenty people who meet regularly to discuss the Bible and to discuss the ways in which the teachings of the Bible can be applied to their own lives.²⁶ The CEB's help to instill a spirit of concern for one's neighbour and a feeling that through cooperation, visible improvements can be made in the community.

Liberation Theology's focus on community was also geared towards

solving a growing problem that the Church in Latin America has faced for several decades - the problem of a low ratio of priests to population. This problem has meant that in countries such as El Salvador, where the priest to population ratio is 1:10,000, priests have been unable to adequately fulfill their responsibilities. The CEB's have helped to overcome this problem because they provide an important training ground for catechists (lay preachers) and "Delegates of the Word" (lay teachers). As Tommie Sue Montgomery suggests, a priest will usually begin a CEB and provide some initial direction and instruction until the members of the CEB can elect their own leaders who then become catechists and Delegates of the Word.²⁷ According to Montgomery,

the catechists assume responsibility for one specific area, such as baptism, catechism, or marriage preparation classes...their responsibility is to lead the community in weekly worship services. Catechists and delegates are selected not only for their leadership qualifications but also for their moral rectitude and their Christian commitment...Willingness to serve the community is essential.²⁸

This involvement of lay members in religious duties also fulfills one of the important reforms that came out of Vatican II; a closer affinity between the clergy and the laity and more participation by the laity in religious ceremonies.²⁹

While catechists are trained to carry out religious ceremonies, Delegates of the Word are trained in certain fundamental skills such as literacy, agricultural techniques and basic health care, which they then teach to others in the community. The teaching that the Delegates of the Word do is intended to impart, not only basic skills to poor people, but also the knowledge that through learning and work, their world can be improved. The idea that the poor had to be taught to help themselves was

developed by Paulo Friere, a Brazilian educator. According to Daniel Levine,

Friere argues that education must do more than impart skills. In addition, each student must play an active role in creating his own awareness of the surrounding world. This process (concientización) in Spanish is intended to develop a critical awareness of society as a human product and therefore changeable. To Friere, the first and most basic step toward change is to liberate people from the oppressors they have internalized. He argues that the dominated absorb the dominator's vision of them: the poor believe themselves to be lazy and stupid. Only when the social order is demythologized, through the development of critical consciousness, can people proceed to liberate themselves.³⁰

Thus the Delegates of the Word aim at "conscientizing" their students.

The implementation of conscientization programs, the training of catechists and Delegates of the Word and the formation of CEB's are the concrete steps through which the Liberation Theology model is applied. These programs are also known as "liberation projects". Many priests and nuns in Latin America have adopted the Liberation Theology model in their own parishes and some have taken a further step by becoming politically active on behalf of the poor. Political activity, even revolutionary activity is sanctioned by the Liberation Theology model as this type of activity is seen as the logical outcome of a true commitment to the poor. As Gutiérrez says,

liberation theology...involves a direct and specific relationship with historical praxis, and historical praxis is a liberation praxis. It implies identification with oppressed human beings and social classes in solidarity with their interests and struggles. It involves immersion in the political process of revolution so that from there we may proclaim and live Christ's gratuitous and liberative love.³¹

The case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution in the

following chapter provides a good example of how priests have become political activists as a result of adopting Liberation Theology.

The diffusion of the Liberation Theology model was given a great boost in 1968 when Latin American bishops met at Medellín, Columbia to discuss the state of the Church in Latin America and to discuss the consequences of Vatican II for the Latin American Church. The Conference was organized by CELAM, The Latin American Episcopal Conference, which had been formed in 1955.³² The Medellín Conference was important because the bishops ratified a set of documents that stated the Church's position on social and political issues. These documents had been prepared by the theologians who were also developing Liberation Theology.³³

The bishops had felt inclined to ratify these documents because they were disillusioned with Christian Democracy. According to Renato Poblete, the bishops felt that "Christian Democracy had shown itself incapable of promoting a real revolution and a definitive break with liberal capitalism and imperialism."³⁴ The position that emerged from Medellín,

is a mixture of conventional terminology on under-development and marginalization and the dependence theory of Latin American social scientists, but its call for 'urgent, bold, thorough and profoundly renewing transformations' could be read as support for revolution, and in its typology of conservative, developmentalist and revolutionary mentalities, it showed most sympathy for the latter.³⁵

The bishops essentially approved the implementation of Liberation Theology in the Latin American Church. Now, priests who had felt inclined to adopt Liberation Theology could point to Medellín as justification for their actions.

Liberation Theology is the most radical political and social

position to have emerged from the Catholic Church. While Christian Democracy had paved the way by assuming a critical posture toward capitalism, Liberation Theology went further by developing a model which reconciled Marxism with Catholicism. Thus, Catholics could now participate in politics at any point on the political spectrum. With Liberation Theology a new vision of the Church emerged. The Church was no longer seen as an ecclesiastical institution above society, nor was it seen as an interest group that motivated Catholics to take part in the pluralist politics of western societies. Liberation Theology saw the Church as a community of believers whose religion encouraged them to educate themselves and to become involved in demanding a greater share of the national wealth. Moreover, the new Church, or popular Church, was to be a community of equals and the political goal of Liberation Theology was social equality rather than corporate inequality.

THE EVANGELICAL PASTORAL MODEL AND THE PUEBLA CONFERENCE

Despite the fact that the Latin American Bishops had approved of Liberation Theology at Medellín, Liberation Theology did not gain widespread acceptance in the Latin American Church. Instead, the liberationists radical views of religion and politics were soon rejected by many Church officials. The development of Liberation Theology created a division in the Latin American Church that still exists.

In the late-1960's, when priests in Latin America began to participate in radical, even revolutionary, politics, many Latin American bishops came to regret the stand they had taken at Medellín. The documents which the bishops had signed at Medellín had been approved hastily, before they could be studied and debated and before theologians with opposing views could present alternative documents. Thus, after

Medellin, as many bishops realized the implications of Liberation Theology, they began to look for ways to reverse the spread of Liberation Theology in Latin America.³⁶

The bishops did this by endowing CELAM with new powers and by appointing a conservative bishop, Alfonso López Trujillo, as the new head of CELAM in 1972. López and his assistant, a Belgian Jesuit named Roger Vekemans, were given a mandate to restrain the excessive commitments to political action which were being made by many priests in the name of the Church. Through CELAM, López and Vekemans gained control over Catholic training institutes and publications such as Tierra Nueva from which the conservative reaction to Liberation Theology could be articulated.³⁷

López and Vekemans were also given responsibility for organizing another region-wide bishops' conference which was held in Puebla, Mexico in 1979. This allowed Lopez and Vekemans to influence the general tone of the conference. They were able to set the agenda, select delegates, and to write the pre-document, which was a paper in which the positions to be taken by the bishops at Puebla were initially discussed.³⁸

According to Phillip Berryman,

it seems that López Trujillo and others (including Vatican authorities) saw the conference as an opportunity to give more status to the positions they were propagating. They hoped to insist on certain 'clarifications' of Medellín and delegitimize certain interpretations of the liberationists, by presenting the official position of the Church and by setting limits on how much pluralism would be tolerated in doctrine and practice.³⁹

However, López and Vekemans could not completely exclude the liberationists position and, in many ways, the Evangelical-Pastoral position that

emerged from Puebla was a compromise between liberationists and conservatives.

One way in which this compromise was reflected was in the images of the Church which were presented in the Puebla documents. In order to preserve unity in the Church, bishops are seen as the authoritative leaders within the dioceses,

Bishops give continuity and authenticity to faith and action by linking them directly to the teachings and legacy of Christ and the Apostles. Contemporary issues and experiences are thus fitted into a long Christian tradition. Moreover, maintenance of explicit ties to the bishops ensures that actions by believers will be contained within the institutional structures of the Church.⁴⁰

At the same time, the bishops at Puebla recognized the value of the CEB's. While they played down the potential political role which the CEB's could play, such as providing leaders for "popular" organization, the bishops viewed the CEB's as an important means through which a priest could fulfill his pastoral duties. Thus the Church was seen as both a hierarchical institution with clear lines of authority and a community of active believers.⁴¹

The bishops believed there would be no contradiction between these two views as long as the Church was involved only religious activities. The bishops reiterated that the Church's primary function was to evangelize.⁴² That is, to spread the gospel message and to renew religious commitment in the society as a whole. Archbishop Marcos McGrath provided the following summary of the Puebla Conference,

its simplest expression is: EVANGELIZATION FOR COMMUNION AND PARTICIPATION...Evangelization which first liberates from sin both personal (conversion) and social (transformation of structures) toward communion and participation, first in the Church (Body of Christ, People of God) and then in our

human communities and societies at every level through the presence of Christians in pluralistic society.⁴³

The stress on evangelization showed that the Church was not retreating from participation in society but was, in fact, becoming more active in the area in which it had the most expertise - religion.

The most important group at which the evangelization effort was to be directed was the poor.⁴⁴ Concern for the poor was a divisive issue at Puebla since it was what had motivated the Liberation Theology model to advocate participation in politics. Liberationists desired more than a revitalization of religious faith amongst the poor but, while the majority of bishops at Puebla agreed that poverty was an extremely important problem, they were against direct political action. The position taken by the bishops at Puebla toward the poor was another compromise.

This compromise was called a "preferential option for the poor." It suggested that the Church should not only direct most of its pastoral efforts toward the poor, but should also denounce poverty and unjust structures of power which caused poverty. Here the Church leaders distinguished between two types of politics:

politics in the broad sense, the pursuit of the common good, which involves the whole community, as distinct from party politics, whereby groups of citizens attempt to acquire power according to their own criteria and ideologies, which may differ. The Church is involved in the former in its witness, teaching and pastoral work, but the latter is the proper field of the laity only.⁴⁵

Thus the Church would help the poor through increased activity at the parish level, particularly through the CEB's, and at a national level through critiques of political and economic policies which cause poverty. The "preferential option for the poor", then, was a compromise because it shared many of the criticisms of capitalism which the liberationists had

made and yet it allowed clergymen to participate in politics in the broad sense only.

The desire to keep the Church out of active politics was expressed at the very highest level by Pope John Paul II who, in his address to the Puebla Conferences, "pointedly told priests and religious to avoid 'sociopolitical radicalisms'"⁴⁶ According to Daniel Levine, unity within the Church and the Catholic community was the main reason why the majority of Church leaders wanted to refrain from political activity:

withdrawal from partisan involvement is seen as necessary in order to avoid giving religious legitimacy to political positions and thus 'absolutizing' what are limited, debatable issues. Such participation would divide the Christian community along partisan lines.⁴⁷

Thus the Evangelical Pastoral position adopted the liberationists commitment to the poor and the Christian Democrats position on clerical involvement in politics. The Church would increase its missionary or evangelization work amongst the poor but would not allow priests to become politically active on behalf of the poor.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the four models that were discussed in this chapter have a number of important differences between them. The three most important ways in which the models differ are in the views of the Church as an institution, the extent to which the Church should be involved in active politics, and in the extent to which the laity should be either passive or active in politics. The traditional model held the most extreme view of the Church as an institution that was somehow above society and dictated to the society its moral and legal codes as well as the organizing principles of the society represented by the corporatist model. In terms of its political role, the leaders of the traditional Church believed

that the Church's authority extended into the political institutions of colonial Latin America. Moreover, the traditional Church told the laity to passively accept their condition.

With the rise of democracy in the western world came the recognition that the Church could no longer dominate the religious, moral and political spheres of modern societies. There was also a new realization that the Church was in competition with secular ideologies such as liberalism and communism and religions such as protestantism. Thus, at Vatican II Church leaders admitted that the Church needed to change and also offered to engage in a dialogue with other religious and political groups in an effort to improve the world. However, Church leaders at Vatican II limited their political role to one of merely suggesting values that the modern world could adopt. As was prescribed by the Christian Democracy model, it was left up to lay Catholics to become socially responsible to attempt to implement their Catholic values through participation in electoral politics.

Vatican II also relaxed and decentralized somewhat the lines of authority in the Church. The Latin American theologians who developed Liberation Theology saw this as an opportunity to create a political model which they felt would suit the needs of Latin America. These theologians also seized upon the fact that Church leaders at Vatican II admitted that Roman Catholicism needed to be revised to meet the needs of the modern world. Thus, liberation theologians effectively reinterpreted Catholicism and argued that Catholics should strive to create a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth which they saw as a society in which differences between rich and poor no longer existed. They felt that the Catholic Church could set an example by transforming the Church into a community

of equals in which no one had complete authority and in which everyone participated. This community of equals, clergy and laity alike, could then set out to transform their society. Any type of political activity, including revolutionary activity, was justified for the members of the popular Church, as long as their goal was the creation of a community of equals. There was a considerable difference, then, between Liberation Theology and the traditional model which encourages the laity to be passive.

The Evangelical-Pastoral model is the most recent political model. The bishops who met at Puebla in 1979 took steps to re-establish the lines of authority within the Church that had been called into question by Vatican II and Liberation Theology. These bishops believed that the Church's long history of participation in politics, which had been revived by Liberation Theology, should come to an end. Politics, they argued, could only divide the Church. The bishops felt that each bishop needed a large measure of control over the priests in his diocese to ensure that the priests did not become politically active. In this way, the bishops retained a hierarchical view of the Church. They also believed, however, that the Church should revitalize the Catholic faith in Latin America and that one effective way of doing this was through the Basic Christian Communities. They agreed, then, with the liberation theologians that, at the parish level, the Church should be more of an egalitarian Church.

The two models that are particularly relevant for the purpose of this thesis are the Christian Democracy and Liberation Theology models. The Nicaraguan revolution occurred, for the most part, in the 1970's, a period in which the traditional model had all but died out and the

Evangelical-Pastoral model had not yet been developed. The Christian Democratic and LiberationTheology models, however, were both current and, in a sense, in competition during the 1970's.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

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34. Renato Poblete, "From Medellín to Puebla", Daniel Levine, ed., Churches and Politics in Latin America, pp. 43-44.
35. Berryman, op. cit., p. 58.
36. Ibid., p. 59.
37. Ibid., p. 61.
38. Ibid., pp. 61-64.
39. Ibid., p. 60.
40. Levine, Religion and Politics in Latin America, p. 308.
41. Berryman, op. cit., p. 71.
42. Ibid., p. 61.
43. Ibid., p. 80.

44. Ibid., p. 72.
45. Ibid., p. 74.
46. Ibid., p. 63.
47. Levine; Religion and Politics in Latin America, p. 310.

CHAPTER IV: The Church in the Revolution

INTRODUCTION

One of the first things that becomes evident when studying the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution is that, although an overwhelming majority of Church officials (bishops, priests and religious*) came to oppose the Somoza regime, the Church was divided over the question of which coalition it should support.¹ As was established in Chapter II, there were two types of coalitions formed during the Nicaraguan revolution. One was a coalition which began as a coalition of moderate groups that favoured a democratic solution to the crisis in Nicaragua, but eventually merged with the FSLN to form the National Patriotic Front (FPN). The second coalition was less formally organized than the FPN, but was equally effective in mobilizing opposition to Somoza. This was the coalition that was formed between the FSLN and the peasants and urban poor of Nicaragua. This coalition joined together two types of opposition groups that were committed to the violent overthrow of the Somoza regime. Just as Somoza's opposition was divided for a time between moderates and revolutionaries, there were two clearly discernable groups in the Nicaraguan Catholic Church, each of which came to support one of the coalitions and thereby helped to create support for the coalitions.

The members of these two groups based their respective choices of which coalition they would support on two models that, by 1970, were well established in the Latin American Catholic Church. These two models were Christian Democracy and Liberation Theology. In this chapter, I will describe how these two models developed within the Catholic Church in Nicaragua and describe how the Church came to support the revolution by following the courses of action suggested by these two models. This

*The term "religious" refers to nuns and monks in the Catholic Church.

**Approximate Boundaries
of the Dioceses of the
Catholic Church
in
Nicaragua**



chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, I will describe the organizational structure of the Nicaraguan Church and suggest how this structure affected the development of the two models within the Church. In the second section I will focus on the Nicaraguan bishops and show how their eventual support for the revolution was motivated by their having adopted the Christian Democracy model. In the third section, I will focus on the lower clergy and describe how their actions were influenced by Liberation Theology.

PART. I: CHURCH STRUCTURE AND CLERICAL ACTIVISM

The Christian Democratic and Liberation Theology models advocate two different political roles for the Church, one more activist than the other. The fact that these two models were adopted by the Nicaraguan Church and the fact that they developed simultaneously within the Church can be explained, in part, by looking at the structure of the Church. As a study of the Catholic Church in Colombia and Venezuela has shown, a clergyman's position in the Church hierarchy has a significant influence over the type of political activity in which he will engage.² In this section I will explain how the Nicaraguan Church is organized, how its organization has evolved and how the Church's structure has affected the development of Christian Democracy and Liberation Theology in the Nicaraguan Church.

The structure of the Catholic Church in any country is like a pyramid with those at the top having authority over the lower echelons. The laity occupy the lowest level of the pyramid. Priests and religious are on the middle level while the bishops are on the top level. Each bishop is in charge of a diocese. Each diocese is, in turn, made up of a number of parishes which are looked after by priests. Often a country or

a region made up of a number of dioceses will have an archbishop who is in charge of an archdiocese and he is the highest religious authority in that country. The Pope is, of course, the highest authority in the Roman Catholic Church as a whole.³ Traditionally, the bishops maintained a tight grip on the reins of authority in their dioceses. Since Vatican II, however, there has been a tendency for the bishops to allow priests and religious more control over the affairs of their parishes.

The Catholic Church came to Nicaragua with the Spaniards in the early 16th century. During the colonial era, Nicaragua was governed by the Captaincy-General in Guatemala. Guatemala was also the seat of the Archdiocese which governed religious affairs for the entire Central American region. Nicaragua itself was organized as one diocese which was administered from the Cathedral in León. For the most part, Nicaragua's bishops during the colonial period were uncontroversial. The exception was Nicaragua's third bishop, Fr. Antonio de Valdivieso. In 1545, Valdivieso angered the governor of the Captaincy-General of Guatemala by denouncing the virtual enslavement of the Indians by the Conquistadors. Because of his outspokenness, Valdivieso became one of Nicaragua's first martyrs when, on February 26, 1550, he was assassinated at the orders of Governor Contreras.⁴

With the coming of independence in 1821, and the continuous state of civil war that followed independence, the Nicaraguan Church fell into disarray. The Diocese of Nicaragua was left without a bishop until 1849 and the Church was often divided as clergymen took different sides on the various battles that raged through Nicaragua. During the Wars of Independence, the lower clergy supported the independentistas while the bishop and his staff remained loyal to the Spanish crown. Likewise,

several priests supported the filibuster of William Walker while others campaigned against him.⁵

This condition of anarchy within the Church decreased as Nicaragua's politics attained a measure of stability. The Conservatives, who came to power in 1857 following Walker's defeat, signed a Concordat with the Church in 1861. This agreement made Catholicism the state religion and gave the Church control over education. At the same time it gave the President the "right of patronage," that is, the right to choose successors to the bishop and to create new parishes.⁶ The Conservatives remained in power until 1893. During this time, the Church maintained close relations with the state and even began to use its favoured position to engender a campaign against freemason, freethinkers and Liberals.

The Church's campaign against the Liberals backfired when the Liberal, José Santos Zelaya, became President. One of Zelaya's first acts was to introduce a new constitution which effectively separated Church and state. The new constitution allowed freedom of religion, thereby giving Protestant churches an opportunity to send missionaries to Nicaragua. The constitution also rescinded the Church's control over education, marriages and cemeteries.⁷ As a result, the Church lost most of its schools and many convents and monasteries were closed. The Church reacted to Zelaya's anti-clericalism by supporting the Conservatives who, with the backing of the U.S. State Department, had mounted a revolt against Zelaya.

When the Conservatives returned to power, they promulgated a new constitution in 1911 which recognized that the majority of Nicaraguans were Catholics but did not go so far as to reinstate Catholicism as the state religion. Instead, Article V of the Constitution reaffirmed the

right of all Nicaraguans to practice whatever religion they chose. Faced with the fact that the Church would never again be supported by the state and recognizing that the Conservatives hold on power was tenuous, Church leaders began to rebuild the Church into an institution that could not only survive without state support, but could also continue to be the predominant religious institution in the country. The hierarchy followed two strategies in revitalizing the Church. The first was to reorganize the Church's administrative structures and the second was to invite more priests and religious into the country.

In reorganizing the Church, the hierarchy increased the number of dioceses in Nicaragua from one to four. They created the Archdiocese of Managua and the Dioceses of Granada, León and Matagalpa.⁹ By dividing Nicaragua into smaller dioceses, which thereby increased the number of bishops, the Church could administer its affairs in Nicaragua more effectively. Together these four new dioceses looked after the populous Pacific coast region of Nicaragua. The more sparsely populated Atlantic coast region was declared to be mission territory and a Vicarate Apostolic was created in Bluefields. This meant that the Capuchins, a foreign order of priests, together with their own bishop, were invited to carry out missionary work in that area.¹⁰

In 1917, the Church further improved its administrative structures by creating the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua.¹¹ The Episcopal Conference serves as a forum in which the hierarchy (i.e. the bishops) can meet on a regular basis. Often, after holding a meeting of the Episcopal Conference, the bishops publish statements of Church policy. These published documents, called pastoral letters, are then distributed to all of the parishes in Nicaragua and read to the congregations. In

1969, one more modification of the Church's administrative structures was made when two new dioceses were created in Estelí and Juigalpa.¹² This increased the number of bishops in the Episcopal Conference from five to seven.

While the first strategy has improved the Church's organization in Nicaragua, the second strategy, that of inviting more foreign priests into Nicaragua, has helped to undermine the Church's organization. As in other Latin American countries, the Church in Nicaragua has never been able to recruit enough priests from within the Nicaraguan population. This forces the Church to depend increasingly on foreign priests. As Table 1 shows, in the 1960-1982 period, foreign priests have consistently outnumbered native priests. (Even with the influx of foreign priests, the priest/population ratio continues to grow. In 1960, this ratio was 1:4556 while in 1982 this ratio has grown to 1:7276.). This basic division between native and foreign clergy has adversely affected the Church in two ways: (1) it has weakened the lines of authority between the hierarchy and the clergy and; (2) it has meant that priests have not been able to develop strong organizational ties between themselves.

Native priests are known as "diocesan" or "secular" priests. These priests are recruited from within a diocese, are sent to a seminary and then return to the diocese to begin their work as priests. However, the chronic shortage of native clergy has not only forced the Church to rely on foreign priests, it has also meant that the Nicaraguan Church cannot support a seminary capable of training priests. Thus, Nicaragua's diocesan priests must go to seminaries in other countries where they may learn approaches to clerical practice that are at odds with the policies and practices favoured by the bishops. This, then, serves as a basis for

TABLE I STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NICARAGUA

YEAR	PARISHES	PRIESTS	NATIVE PRIESTS	FOREIGN PRIESTS	MONKS	NUNS	NO. OF CATHOLICS IN NICARAGUA	PRIESTS/ NO. OF CATHOLICS	TOTAL POPULATION OF NICARAGUA
1960	-	222	97	125	-	-	1,011,631	4,556	-
1968	319	217	112	105	304	638	1,354,522	6,242	1,616,173
1970	145	308	119	189	118	247	1,354,522	4,397	1,684,666
1971	126	300	111	189	262	513	1,698,309	5,661	1,842,000
1972	145	291	106	185	251	554	1,648,632	5,665	1,915,000
1973	144	307	121	186	230	497	1,767,722	5,758	2,000,000
1974	145	312	99	213	266	438	1,780,995	5,708	2,000,000
1978	165	291	107	184	280	610	2,081,172	7,151	2,300,000
1980	183	304	117	187	89	661	2,281,387	7,504	2,447,438
1982	185	318	124	194	101	643	2,389,894	7,515	2,573,920
1983	182	340	119	221	101	692	2,474,000	7,276	2,700,000

Sources: 1960 Enrique Dussel, Hipotesis Para una Historia de la Iglesia en America Latina (Barcelona: Editorial Estela, 1967), Appendix IV.

1968 1968-1983, figures, Catholic Almanac (Huntington, Indiana, Our Sunday Visitor, various editions).

conflict between the hierarchy and the diocesan priests. Moreover, because the diocesan priests lack a common education, there has been very little group feeling between these priests.¹³

The foreign priests are known as "regular" or "order" priests which means that they belong to an order such as the Franciscan, Capuchin, Maryknoll or Jesuit orders. Although some Nicaraguans have become order priests, these priests generally come to Nicaragua from Europe and North America to work as parish priests, missionaries or educators. While they are in Nicaragua, the order priests must respect the authority of the bishop of the diocese in which they are working. At the same time, however, these priests remain loyal to their order, which may be more progressive than the bishops. Thus, the bishops, who are in a sense dependent on order priests, do not enjoy complete authority over them. The presence of a large number of orders in Nicaragua also helps to weaken the ties between priests.¹⁴

These structural weaknesses in the Church, caused by the large numbers of foreign priests, combined in the mid-1960's with the reforms of Vatican II. This produced a situation in which the bishops could do little to stop priests from pursuing an independent course if they so chose. Moreover, the priests themselves did not have an organization that could have been used to promote a conservative attitude among priests. Thus it was possible for both the Liberation Theology and Christian Democracy models to co-exist in the Nicaraguan Church in the 1960's and 1970's.

Both the Liberation Theology and Christian Democracy models recommend courses of action that are attractive to either priests or bishops because they correspond to the roles that priests or bishops are

expected to play. Christian Democracy calls for the Church to take an "activation" position with respect to politics. This type of role appeals to bishops because they are mainly concerned with administrative matters and are motivated, to a large extent, by a desire to protect Church interests.

A bishop in a diocese is in a position somewhat analogous to that of a national political leader. A political leader must try to satisfy as many people as possible in order to maintain his party's dominant position and yet, at the same time, must initiate the changes that were called for in his party's platform. Likewise, a bishop, even though he would like to see some social change take place, risks losing lay members if he becomes too partisan in a political conflict. He is therefore likely to avoid activism. Evidence for this assumption comes from Daniel Levine, who, in a survey of bishops' attitudes in Colombia and Venezuela, found that,

The bishops rejection of activism is strong but not surprising. Their position stems from several convictions, most notably the association of activism with conflict and violence, and the association of activism with division, both within the institutional Church and in the Christian community as a whole. Both sorts of association are seen as potentially very harmful to the Church...¹⁵

Thus, the Christian Democratic model suits the bishops because it calls for "activation" rather than "activism". As will be seen in the following section, this was the model of action that the Nicaraguan bishops chose.

On the other hand, the activism that is advocated by Liberation Theology can come easily to priests whose daily contact with their parishioners leads them to identify with their problems. Priests tend to view issues from the perspective of their parish and are motivated to

participate in national affairs by a desire to help the parish. This is not to suggest that the socio-economic level of a parish determines a priest's politics, but rather, that the relative status of his parish may have a strong influence over his political behavior. Other factors may also influence a priest's behavior and in the Nicaraguan case it is possible to suggest the following rule of thumb: younger priests were more radical than older priest, order priests were more radical than diocesan priests, and priests working in poor parishes were more radical than those working in rich parishes.¹⁶ Also, in Nicaragua many priests became radicalized over time as the revolution progressed. As will be seen in the final section of this chapter, there were very few priests who supported Somoza in the end.

PART II. THE BISHOPS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

The problem of trying to satisfy all of the people all of the time was exacerbated for the Nicaraguan bishops in the late 1960's when Nicaraguan society began to polarize. As the opposition to Somoza grew, the Church hierarchy risked alienating itself from one sector of society if it clearly aligned itself with any one group involved in the conflict. It was difficult, however, for the hierarchy to steer a middle course because, at the same time, the momentum of change that the Catholic Church's social doctrine was undergoing, pressured the hierarchy to sponsor reforms. Nicaraguan society under Somoza was ripe for the types of changes called for by both the Christian Democracy and Liberation Theology models.

Early History

In the 1920's, as the Church began to rebuild itself, Church leaders decided they could not afford another clash with a hostile government as

had happened with the Zelaya government. Thus, the bishops began a policy of supporting whichever government was in power. Arguing that all authority came from God, the Church began to support governments by teaching its followers that obeying the government was a way of worshipping God.¹⁷ The Church firmly held to the traditional model. When Anastasio Somoza Garcia came to power in 1936, the Church supported him even when it became evident that a dictatorship was emerging. According to historian, Jorge Eduardo Arellano, the Church's support was important to Somoza and he cultivated it carefully, "Somoza Garcia...had at his service the ideological mechanism of the Church and always strove to give the people an image of harmonious relations between himself and the Church."¹⁸ At the same time, the Church profitted from its good relations with Somoza in that Somoza did not initiate anti-clerical measures, as Zelaya had done.

Apart from lending the Somoza regimes their official support, most of the bishops in the Church hierarchy maintained close personal ties with the Somozas. This was true of Archbishop Lezcano y Ortega who, in 1942, officiated at a ceremony in which Somoza Garcia's only daughter was crowned Queen of the Army.¹⁹ Lezcano's successor, Alejandro Gonzalez y Robleto, who became Archbishop of Managua in 1948, was also a close friend of the Somozas. An example of the depth of Gonzalez y Robleto's support for the Somozas is an incident which occurred in 1967. In a public statement, the Archbishop announced that he approved of the National Guard's brutal suppression of the riots that took place that year to protest Anastasio Somoza Jr.'s election to the presidency.²⁰

In the 1930 to 1969 period, there was only one bishop who made it known that he did not approve of the Somozas. Mons. Octavio Calderón y

Padilla, the Bishop of Matagalpa, took pains to avoid participating in public ceremonies in which it would appear that he too supported the Somozas. For example, he did not attend the leader Somoza's funeral, choosing instead to spend the day walking to rural chapels visiting the poor. Likewise, when Anastasio Somoza Jr. was campaigning for the presidency in 1967, Calderón y Padilla refused to allow Somoza to visit him as long as there were political prisoners in Somoza's jails.²¹ In one of his pastoral letters, Calderón y Padilla wrote, "The Church is a lover of peace, but not of a peace imposed by bayonets."²²

Calderón y Padilla notwithstanding, the hierarchy remained Conservative even as the Church in other countries began to adopt the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. A study made of the Church in 1962 found,

priests to be few in number and 'poorly formed', the hierarchy unable or unwilling to provide ecclesiastical leadership, and the Church virtually absent in the countryside, where more than half of the people lived. (The report) described the Church as 'living in the past', its priests 'blind about social problems' and aligned with a government that was 'hated by the people'. This was a Church that openly criticized Castro but never criticized the Somoza regime.²³

by the mid-1960's, the bishops in the hierarchy were, for the most part, old and reluctant to change. Attitudes within the Episcopal Conference only began to change when a new generation of bishops came into the Episcopal Conference in the late 1960's.

The most important change in the personnel of the hierarchy took place in 1970 when Mons. Miguel Obando y Bravo became the new Archbishop of Managua, replacing Gonzalez y Robleto who died in 1968. Obando y Bravo became Archbishop at a time when Nicaragua's political battles were becoming more intense. Immediately after his appointment, both sides

attempted to draw Obando y Bravo into their camp. Those who opposed Somoza and who were hoping that the Church would break with Somoza dubbed Obando y Bravo, "the Archbishop of Hope".²⁴ Somoza countered by presenting Obando y Bravo with a new Mercedes Benz. As a way of indicating what his political position would be, the new Archbishop sold the Mercedes and donated the money to the poor.²⁵

In 1969-1970, several other new faces appeared in the Episcopal Conference. In 1969, one of the new bishops, Mons. Julián Barni Spotti, sponsored an event that had never before taken place in the Nicaraguan Church. In two separate sessions in January and February 1969, 258 bishops, priests, nuns, and monks met in Managua to take part in the "First Pastoral Encounter" (Encuentro).²⁶ The purpose of these meetings was to discuss ways of implementing the reforms that had come out of Vatican II and the recently-held Medellín conference. This event was significant because, although individual priests had been carrying out "liberation projects" prior to 1969, the Encuentro was the first institution-wide attempt to reform the Nicaraguan Church along the lines suggested by Vatican II and Medellín.

1971 - 1972

In 1971, Obando y Bravo and five out of six bishops in the hierarchy began to distance themselves from the Somoza regime. They refused to attend the inauguration ceremonies of the Triumvirate to which Somoza had entrusted executive power while he continued to hold de facto power.²⁷ The bishop's absence from the ceremonies was significant because it meant that, for the first time, the hierarchy was not willing to legitimize Somoza's political machinations. The hierarchy had changed considerably in only four years. While only one bishop had boycotted

Somoza's electioneering in 1967, now only one bishop was willing to make a public demonstration of his support for Somoza. This lone holdout was the Bishop of Granada, Mons. Marco Antonio García y Suarez, who died in 1972.²⁸

Although the bishops were careful not to alienate themselves completely from Somoza, the hierarchy of Obando y Bravo sent a clear signal that they would support the moderate, non-violent elements in Somoza's opposition. In a speech in 1972, the Archbishop asked Somoza's opponents not to return violence with violence. Instead he asked them to use non-violent forms of political action such as, "demonstrations, strikes and acts of civil disobedience against unjust laws (but) oriented always towards dialogue."²⁹

In the same speech, Obando y Bravo outlined the conditions which he felt should be fulfilled before Somoza's opposition should resort to violent revolution. He said,

armed revolution is possible only when the State abuses its power in an exorbitant form - when it ignores the essential rights of liberty or when it supplants rights with violence - when (the opposition) has exhausted all peaceful means, they then have the moral security to triumph in a revolution and to employ the violence necessary to eradicate the bad.³⁰

However, in 1972 and for most of the 1970's, Obando y Bravo did not believe that the situation had deteriorated to the point where violence was necessary. During this period, the Archbishop consistently called for the various political factions to use dialogue rather than violence.

While the Archbishop's repudiation of political violence meant that he would not support Somoza, at the same time it meant that he did not support the FSLN.³¹ The Sandinistas were consistently unsuccessful in

in forming a close relationship with the bishops.³² However, despite the bishops' refusal to speak out in favour of the FSLN, the Sandinistas were careful to create a public image in which it was clear that they liked and trusted Obando y Bravo and the other bishops. This public image was reinforced when the Sandinistas asked Obando y Bravo to act as a mediator in both the 1974 and 1978 hostage-takings.³³ Moreover, the Archbishop's willingness to participate in these negotiations indicated that, if he did not approve of the FSLN's methods, he at least empathized with their cause.

The 1971 - 1972 period was one in which the bishops established their distance from the Somoza regime and began to flesh out their own political position. In both 1971 and 1972, the Episcopal Conference published pastoral letters which openly criticized the Somoza regime. As the bishops wrote in their letter of March 19, 1972, "If we examine our reality and the historical record of our country, we have to admit that its political structures do not respond to the needs of our times."³⁴

In these two letters, the bishops used some of the terminology of Liberation Theology. However, according to Dr. Amando López and Dr. Juan B. Arrién, two Nicaraguan Jesuit social scientists who have analyzed the documents of the hierarchy in the 1970's, the bishops, "did not assume the perspective of Medellín," in their letters of 1971 and 1972.³⁵ Instead the bishops appeared to be influenced by Christian Democracy. As López and Arrién write, the bishops', "major preoccupation (in these letters) was with the activities of political parties and associations, with electoral activity, etc."³⁶ In 1974, Archbishop Obando y Bravo and Bishop Salazar of León confirmed that the hierarchy had accepted Christian Democracy when they publicly declared their

support for Nicaragua's Christian Democratic party.³⁷

1974

1974 proved to be a year of intense political activity. In early 1974, Somoza announced that the period of martial law which had been imposed after the 1972 earthquake, would be lifted and that elections would be held in September. At that time, there were three political parties which could have run candidates in the election. One party was the National Liberal Party that, by now, was little more than a political machine designed to return Somoza to the presidency. Another was the traditional Conservative Party which had been discredited when leading Conservatives agreed to participate in the Triumvirate. The third was the Nicaraguan Social Christian Party (PSCN).

The Christian Democratic movement had experienced a great deal of difficulty in getting established in Nicaragua. It began in the 1940's, but was often torn by factional disputes and was not supported by the Church until Obando y Bravo became Archbishop.³⁸ However, in 1972, after the Conservatives had been discredited, the PSCN reorganized and emerged as the most credible opposition party.

While the PSCN may have done well in an election free of corruption, the PSCN recognized, as did many other Nicaraguans, that the outcome of the 1974 election was a foregone conclusion. Rather than participating in the sham elections, the PSCN boycotted the process and joined a coalition of other centrist groups to form the Unión Democrática de Liberación (UDEL). Led by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the editor of La Prensa and a strong Christian Democrat, UDEL presented itself as a democratic alternative to both dictatorship and revolution. Under the slogan "there is no one to vote for", UDEL encouraged Nicaraguans to

ignore the elections and demand Somoza's resignation.

In August, 1974, the bishops publicized their support of UDEL by issuing a pastoral letter in which they reminded Somoza of the all-important democratic right, "the right to dissent". The bishops wrote, "the right to dissent is a right which every person (has)...This right has been (created) especially to counter the abuses of totalitarian regimes."³⁹ Predictably, however, Somoza won the election and, when the Sandinistas carried out their hostage-taking of December 1974, Somoza invoked another period of martial law that was to last until 1977.

When the bishops came out strongly in favour of Christian Democracy in 1974, they encountered a great deal of criticism from clergymen and other Nicaraguans who felt that a more radical approach should be taken by the Church. In May, 1974, the bishops heeded their critics by convening an extraordinary session of the Episcopal Conference. The Conference was also attended by several priests who described for the bishops the horrors that were occurring in various parts of the country. In the letter that the bishops wrote after this conference, they indicated that they were now well-aware of the tactics used by the National Guard in their counter-insurgency campaign.⁴⁰ However, the letter also indicated that the bishops still believed that Nicaragua's problems could be resolved through consultation and that a solution could still be found which would be in accordance with Christian principles.⁴¹ This showed that the bishops were still thinking in terms of a Christian Democratic model and would not yield to their critics who asked that they become more radical.

The middle-of-the-road position that the bishops were following brought them criticism from both the Christian left and from those who

supported Somoza. Many of Somoza's top aids began referring to Archbishop Obando y Bravo as "Comandante Miguel".⁴² The hierarchy had indeed done a great deal to arouse the anger of the Somocistas. In 1974, the bishops had published two pastoral letters in support of the Christian Democrats and Obando y Bravo had acted as a mediator in the hostage-taking. Thus, when Somoza reinstated martial law, he banned the publication of any materials that mentioned his human rights record - including pastoral letters.⁴³

1975 - 1979

During the martial law period, there were no significant documents published by the Church, except for a few letters written by priests which were published abroad. In 1975 and 1976, relations between the hierarchy and Somoza continued to worsen. In 1975, the bishops once again refused to attend the inauguration ceremonies that began Somoza's last term as President. In 1976, the bishops of Matagalpa, Estelí and Bluefields visited Somoza to protest, "The National Guard's indiscriminate repression of peasants in Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia, Madriz and Zelaya."⁴⁴

In the face of the escalation of violence that characterized the martial law period, the bishops broke their silence and issued a New Year's message to Nicaraguans in early 1977. This letter was an even more forceful condemnation of the Somoza regime than the 1974 letters had been. The bishops acknowledged that Nicaraguans were living under a "state of terror". They denounced the National Guard who "continue their investigation of suspects using humiliating methods: from tortures and violations to executions without civil or military trial."⁴⁵ The bishops protested the National Guard's practice of occupying chapels in northern Nicaragua. They also protested the National Guard's harassment of lay

"Delegates of the Word", many of whom had been killed and tortured by the National Guard.

The bishops concluded their letter with three petitions:

- 1) Guarantee the right to life and the right to work and restore other civil liberties.
 - 2) (Provide) adequate trials for common criminals and for those who are called 'political prisoners'
 - 3) (Allow) the liberty to promote an order that is more just and more equal.
- These are the things which cannot be done without freedom of expression and freedom of religion.⁴⁶

Although martial law lasted until September, 1977, Somoza did not censor or repress this letter. The letter did, however, give encouragement to a great many Nicaraguans who renewed their opposition to Somoza.⁴⁷ It also provoked an increasing amount of criticism of the Church from members of Somoza's government and many of his close friends.

On May 22, 1977, the Somocistas began to threaten the hierarchy. Dr. Roberto Cranshaw Guerra, an ex-judge and director of the Anti-Communist League of Nicaragua, held a news conference to publicly accuse Archbishop Obando y Bravo, and the Catholic Church in general, of treason. Cranshaw Guerra announced that Obando y Bravo and other priests would be tried by a "peoples court". He also announced the formation of "the White Hand" (La Mano Blanca), a death squad which had a list of people who were to be assassinated.⁴⁸ The exact ties between La Mano Blanca and the Somoza government are not clear. Somoza himself was careful not to make public statements against the Church. No members of the clergy of hierarchy were ever assassinated by La Mano Blanca, but it was in this ambience that the bishops made sure that 233 masses were celebrated in Somoza's honour while he recovered from a

seriuos heart attack in Miami.⁴⁹

Despite the hierarchy's hope for a non-violent solution to the growing crisis in Nicaragua, the level of violence continued to increase in 1977. In the spring of 1977, the FSLN carried out a series of attacks, and both the FSLN and Somoza remained determined to win a military victory. In late 1977, the hierarchy made one last effort to assist the centrist opposition in their attempt to present themselves as a moderate reformist alternative to revolution.

In November, Obando y Bravo called for a national dialogue and formed a "Co-ordinating Commission for National Dialogue". The Archbishop became the director of this Commission which also included two other bishops and two representatives from the private sector. The hierarchy intended the dialogue to be between the centrist parties and the Somoza government. According to one observer, "the hierarchy hoped a settlement would remove Somoza from power well before an FSLN military victory, thus leaving moderates in control."⁵⁰

Somoza met with the Commission twice but negotiated in bad faith as he had no intention of relinquishing his control of the presidency. This attempt at dialogue fell apart when the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro all but destroyed the possibility of a peaceful change of government. While UDEL, and later the FAO, continued to represent the middle ground and continued to press for negotiations with Somoza, this was to be the last time that the hierarchy attempted to bring the various sides together in a dialogue.

In 1978, the hierarchy continued to publish pastoral letters that called for a peaceful resolution to the crisis and the creation of a democratic government. One of the most effective documents written by

the bishops in 1978 was an open letter to the President of the United States. In this letter, which received widespread publicity both in Nicaragua and abroad, the bishops blamed Somoza for Nicaragua's troubles. They described the situation in Nicaragua which was then going through the "September Insurrection", and also spoke of the, "necessity to construct a true democracy."⁵¹ The bishops wanted Nicaragua to have,

Without ambiguities: a new socio-political order which makes it possible for the majority of our people to live in humane conditions, in the sphere of administration of health, housing, work, property, wages and human rights....The mandate of fraternal love means that, in our situation, we must establish a condition in which evangelical values of love, truth and justice prevail and are translated into the social, political and economic order in such a way as to conform to the plan of God.⁵²

The bishops ended their letter with a plea to President Carter that he stop sending financial and military aid to Somoza, "You Señor Presidente, recently made a statement which proposed that your government would respect the self-determination of all Peoples. We ask that you keep your word, do not aid the government of General Somoza in any manner."⁵³

As Nicaragua entered into a full scale civil war in 1979, the bishops came to the realization that a peaceful solution was no longer possible. On July 2, 1979, as the FSLN began its final offensive, the bishops issued a message which said the Somoza's opposition had indeed exhausted all peaceful means of resolving the conflict and that a violent solution was now justified. The hierarchy now acknowledged "the moral and juridical legitimacy of the Sandinistas' popular insurrection."⁵⁴

The pastoral letters of the bishops had always had a great deal of influence over Catholics in Nicaragua. Gregorio Smutko, a Capuchin missionary in the Diocese of Bluefields, writes that the letters of 1977

through 1979 were particularly influential,

the letters of Episcopal Conference in this time were very important in the Department of Zelaya and in all Nicaragua. Perhaps the most important letters which motivated Catholics in the struggle against oppression were the letters of January 9, 1977 and July 2, 1979. The first letter protested publicly for the first time the tortures and assassinations that the peasants were suffering. The second presented the conditions of a just war and was interpreted as being a justification of the armed insurrection against the dictatorship.⁵⁵

The bishops judgement that the insurrection was now a just war meant that Catholics no longer needed to have reservations about supporting the insurrection.

After coming to power, the FSLN enjoyed a brief honeymoon period with the hierarchy. In August 1979, the bishops welcomed the revolution in a brief pastoral letter. Four months later, in November, they wrote a more elaborate letter. Again, they welcomed the revolution which they saw as being uniquely Nicaraguan, "not capitalist, not dependent, not totalitarian."⁵⁶

The bishops had, by now, adopted the "Evangelical-Pastoral" model that had been worked out at the Puebla Conference, which had just taken place. This model called for the Church to adopt a preferential option for the poor, but also asked that the Catholic clergy stay out of active politics. In their letter of November 17, 1979, the bishops asked only that the Church be allowed to work for the poor in the "New Nicaragua",

For itself, the Church requires only, 'a free space large enough to permit it to complete its work without interference, (it must be allowed) freedom of worship, freedom to teach the faith and to develop various activities that will lead the faithful and have meaning in their private lives... (Puebla 144)'...The Church must learn to see things from the perspective of the poor whose cause is the cause of Christ.⁵⁷

The hierarchy also asked its priests to stop working for the revolutionary Junta. This is something that several priests have been unwilling to do. These include Ernesto Cardenal who is Minister of Culture, and Miguel D'Escoto, the Foreign Minister.⁵⁸ This issue reflects the fundamental difference between the Liberation Theology and Evangelical-Pastoral models. It is this issue which has increasingly brought the hierarchy into conflict with many of its own clergy as well as the governing Junta.

PART III. THE LOWER CLERGY AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY

While the Nicaraguan bishops' support for Somoza's opposition was not extended to the more revolutionary elements until the final days of the revolution, the lower clergy were, by and large, quick to support the revolution. The contribution that Nicaragua's priests and religious made to the revolution came in many different forms. Some priests achieved a high national profile by becoming involved as political actors in the revolution. Others contributed to the revolution simply by carrying out liberation projects in their parishes which led to their parishioners becoming active in the revolution. Both types of involvement were sanctioned by the Liberation Theology model. In this section, several well documented cases of clerical involvement in the Nicaraguan revolution will show how the involvement increased support for the revolution.

Gaspar García Laviana

Perhaps the most spectacular, but extreme, case of clerical involvement in the FSLN is the case of Fr. Gaspar García Laviana. García was a Spanish priest in the Order of the Sacred Heart who came to Nicaragua in 1968 to become a parish priest in the town of Tola, near the Costa Rican

border. Almost from the time of his arrival, García's main concern was with the poor. In 1974, this work led him to become involved with a Church-sponsored organization known as CEPA (The Evangelical Committee for Agrarian Advancement). (CEPA will be discussed in greater detail below). CEPA had begun organizing peasant labourers in the Tola area and Garcia worked with them for a number of years. Through CEPA, Garcia was introduced to the FSLN and eventually joined the Sandinistas as a guerilla on Christmas Day, 1977.⁵⁹

When he joined the FSLN, García published an open letter to all Nicaraguans outlining his reasons for becoming a guerilla. García wrote that he was fighting because the revolution was, 'a just war...in my conscience as a Christian, (the revolution) is good because it is a struggle against a state of affairs that is hateful to God, our Father.'⁶⁰ In justifying his decision to fight, García cited the documents of Medellin and called on all Nicaraguans to show their love for Christ by helping the FSLN in their struggle. García ended the letter by saying that he believed the revolution would ultimately create a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth,

Somocismo is sin, when we liberate ourselves, from oppression, we liberate ourselves from sin.
(Therefore) with a gun in my hand, full of faith and love for my Nicaraguan people, I will fight until my last breath for the advent of the reign of justice in our country, this reign of justice was announced to us by our Messiah...⁶¹

García eventually rose to the rank of Commandante before he was killed on December 11, 1978, scarcely a year after he had entered combat.⁶²

The example that García set was important for the FSLN because he personified the belief - held by many people both within the FSLN and the Church - that there was a close identity between the goals of the

FSLN and the goals of Christians. The Sandinistas took care to keep García's name before the public and cited his example in their "Official Communique on Religion" published in October, 1980. They wrote,

Special mention must be made of the revolutionary work and heroic sacrifice of the Catholic priest and militant Sandinista Gaspar García Laviana, in whom was synthesized the maximum level of a Christian vocation and a revolutionary consciousness.⁶³

García has become one of the most popular "heroes and martyrs" of the revolution. Since 1979, streets and public buildings have been named in his honour, a book of his poetry has been published.⁶⁴ and a biography has been written about him.⁶⁵

Fernando Cardenal, Miguel d'Escoto and "Los Doce"

Two more priests who achieved a high political profile were Fr. Fernando Cardenal, a Jesuit priest and social scientist, and Fr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, who is a Maryknoll priest. These men first achieved wide-spread notoriety in 1977 when they testified before a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee that was investigating human rights in Latin America. In their testimony, they cited numerous examples of human rights abuses committed by the Somoza regime. Their testimony proved to be embarrassing for the U.S. State Department because the Carter administration, which supplied military and financial aid to Somoza, had recently ratified the inter-American Convention on Human Rights.⁶⁶

In mid-1977, Cardenal and d'Escoto became members of the influential "Group of Twelve" (Los Doce). This group originally came together when the FSLN named them to cabinet posts in a proposed provisional government. In late-1977, the Group of Twelve were forced into exile where they

published a document proclaiming their unequivocal support for the FSLN.⁶⁷ This document was very successful because it came from a group of professionals and businessmen which was the first time that people from these sectors had publicly supported the FSLN. The Group of Twelve helped to provide the basis for establishing a coalition between moderate and revolutionary elements in the opposition which had hitherto been unable to form a common front.⁶⁸

The Group of Twelve became very popular with the Nicaraguan people, partially because their name had religious significance. In Costa Rica the Group of Twelve continued to work for unity between the various groups in Somoza's opposition and later became a key group in the FAO and the FPN. The Group of Twelve also lobbied successfully in the international community helping to increase international feeling against the Somoza regime.⁶⁹ Through their international connections, the Group of Twelve gained a worldwide reputation, and when President Carter began to pressure Somoza to improve his human rights record, he insisted that Somoza allow the Group of Twelve to return from exile. When they returned to Managua in July, 1978, the Group was greeted by one of the largest crowds that had ever gathered in Managua.⁷⁰ This massive popular demonstration proved their success in creating opposition to Somoza and, by implication, support for the FSLN.

When Somoza was overthrown in July 1979, nine members of the Group of Twelve were given important positions in the new government.⁷¹ Fernando Cardenal became the leader of the tremendously successful Literacy Crusade that was held in 1980. He has since become Vice-Coordinator of Youth.⁷² D'Escoto became the Foreign Minister and continues to hold that post despite repeated requests from the hierarchy

that he resign.⁷³

José de la Jara, Ernesto Cardenal, Uriel Molina

While García, F. Cardenal and d'Escoto chose to participate directly in revolutionary politics, most of Nicaragua's priest and religious helped to increase support for the revolution in less public but equally successful ways. These were the priests and religious who adopted the Liberation Theology model and carried out programs in their parishes that were suggested by Liberation Theology. Three priests who were pioneers of Liberation Theology in Nicaragua were José de la Jara, Ernesto Cardenal and Uriel Molina. José de la Jara, for example, began the first Christian Base Communities (CEB's) in Nicaragua in a Managua barrio in 1965.⁷⁴

Ernest Cardenal, a Trappist priest and brother of Fernando Cardenal, founded a religious community in 1964 on the Archipelago of Solentiname in Lake Nicaragua. The community was formed to provide an atmosphere in which poor people could work as artists and artisans and meet in groups to discuss the Bible and apply its lessons to their lives. This is something which later CEB's began doing as well. The community began with some thirty couples, but eventually numbered 1000 people.⁷⁵ Many of these people had been victims of the National Guard or had seen other family members and friends be killed or tortured by the Guard. By working together in cooperatives and by selling their artwork, the people of Solentiname created a self-supporting community.

In the 1970's a pattern was established that was to be often repeated by members of other religious communities and Christian conscientization programs. Members of the Solentiname began establishing contacts with the FSLN. In 1977, twenty guerillas from Solentiname

joined the "October Offensive" and attacked a military post in San Carlos, near the Costa Rican border. Although the guerillas achieved a brief victory, the National Guard recovered and retaliated by destroying the Solentiname community. Cardenal did not participate in the attack but he did support the decision of the twenty guerillas who carried out the attack. As he saw it, the guerillas attacked "for one reason only; their love for the Kingdom of God."⁷⁶ With the destruction of Solentiname, Cardenal was forced into exile. He spent the remainder of the civil war in various countries, lobbying alongside the Group of Twelve. After the victory in 1979, Cardenal returned to Nicaragua to become Minister of Culture in the new Sandinista government.

Another priest whose work helped to bridge the gap between Christianity and the revolution is Father Uriel Molina. In 1965, Molina, a Franciscan, became a parish priest in Barrio Rigüero, one of Managua's poorest barrios. Shortly after arriving in Rigüero, Molina began a conscientization school which was funded by the German Catholic missionary fund, Miserior. Also, as part of his pastoral work, Molina organized CEB's, youth clubs, cooperatives and Bible study groups.⁷⁷ Like Cardenal, Molina was carrying out these liberation projects even before the Medellín conference took place.

Molina's parish of Barrio Rigüero is a relatively poor neighborhood which suffered a great deal of damage during the 1972 earthquake and in the civil war. Their poverty notwithstanding, the people of Barrio Rigüero have a great deal of community spirit, much of which centres around their church "Santa Maria de los Angeles." Even in the early stages of the revolution, the majority of the community supported the FSLN. Many of the people worked as couriers or allowed their houses to be used as storage depots for weapons.⁷⁸ In the final months of the

revolution, virtually all of the community members assisted the guerillas by building barricades, fighting alongside the guerillas and by supplying food, shelter and first aid stations. As one observer has written of the barrios in Managua "in the zones which were to become the centres of the popular insurrection, the CEB's were making active preparations for the war and the dividing line between a CEB and a Comite de Defensa Civil often became hard to draw."⁷⁹

Barrio Rigüero was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in Managua. This was the barrio in which Bill Stewart, an ABC news cameraman, was killed in 1979, by a soldier. Also, in this barrio, two hundred children were killed in a National Guard "clean-up" operation. During the times when the fighting was most intense, or when the area was being bombed by Somoza's air force, many people took shelter in the parish church as it was the only building in the barrio strong enough to afford some protection.⁸⁰

Many of the young people of Barrio Rigüero joined the FSLN and Molina himself was involved with the FSLN from the very early stages of the revolution. In fact, he was often caught up in the clandestine activities of the Sandinistas. He describes one incident in which,

One morning, I encountered a young member of our community in the parish rectory. He was dirty and hungry and I could see clearly that he was an operative (of the FSLN). We embraced with happiness. I served him some food...Suddenly, before he could offer me an explanation, eight young men appeared. They had established my office as their meeting place.⁸¹

Father Molina enjoyed the confidence of the Sandinista leadership and often held meetings with them. In one secret meeting, he and Tomas Borge talked for hours about the need to enroll more Christians into the

struggle.⁸²

Molina's involvement in the revolution extended beyond his pastoral work in Barrio Rigüero. In the late 1960's, he began teaching theology at the newly formed Catholic university. The Universidad Centroamericana (UCA). He soon became popular with the students, particularly after he and six other priests wrote an open letter to Somoza criticizing his government. This letter, written in 1967, was the first public document in which officials of the Church expressed their disapproval of the Somoza regime. It earned Molina a reputation as one of the "seven brothers of Marx."⁸³ In 1971, several of Molina's students approached him with the idea of organizing a commune in Barrio Rigüero. Father Molina liked the idea and, in November, The Christian Revolutionary Movement (CRM) was born.

The CRM was comprised of a core of about twenty original members who lived and worked with the people of Barrio Rigüero. The group included students, nuns, priests (including Fernando Cardenal) and even a protestant minister, José Miguel Torres. As Molina describes it, they lived together as a CEB and formed a daily routine which revolved around religious and political activities,

Every morning, before breakfast, we would rise to say prayers. Then we would read a passage from the Bible and discuss it. At night after our classes at University were over, we would have a session in which we analyzed Nicaraguan reality using a Marxist methodology.⁸⁴

The CRM soon became politically active and concentrated their efforts on two fronts. In Barrio Rigüero, the students established a Bible school and often held political discussions with the residents of the Barrio. They also helped to organize the Barrio and led the people

in a strike to demand improved bus service. The CRM were also active in student politics and were an important force in helping to radicalize the student body at the UCA.⁸⁵

Shortly after it was formed, the CRM forged close ties with the FSLN. Eventually one of the most important functions of the CRM became one of integrating both students and Christians into the guerilla columns. Many of the original members of the CRM also became guerillas. One of them, Luis Carrion, rose to the rank of Comandante and is now a member of the FSLN's National Directorate and is second in command of the Sandinista Popular Army. Clearly, the CRM was an important organizational link between Christians and revolutionaries.⁸⁶

Through his position in the Church and as professor of theology, Molina was instrumental in influencing the development of Liberation Theology in Nicaragua. He was a participant in the first Encuentro held in Managua in 1969, and also participated in a second Encuentro which was held in 1971. These meetings were important watersheds for the Church as a whole because they brought most of Nicaragua's priests and religious together to discuss Liberation Theology. Because of these meetings, liberation projects such as conscientization courses and CEB's began to be implemented in many parts of Nicaragua.⁸⁷ Molina also travelled to Santiago, Chile to participate in the "Primer Congreso de Cristianos por el Socialismo".⁸⁸ Today Molina is still a priest in Barrio Rigüero and is also the head of the "Centro Antonio Valdivieso", an ecumenical institute which continues to promote Liberation Theology in Nicaragua.

The Maryknoll Sisters in OPEN 3

The work done by Molina, the Cardenal brothers and José de la Jara,

as well as the institution-wide attempts to reform the Church that occurred at the two Encuentros, combined to produce an atmosphere within the Church that encouraged the development of Liberation Theology. Also, the increasing repressiveness of the Somoza regime during the martial law periods that followed the 1972 earthquake, and the 1974 hostage-taking convinced many priests and religious that the situation of oppression which Liberation Theology described, existed in Nicaragua and needed to be overcome. The example of the Maryknoll sisters in the town of OPEN 3 illustrates how the sisters and the community they served became increasingly radical as they became more aware of Somoza's tactics and as they learned that concrete steps could be taken to oppose Somoza.

OPEN 3 was a small town until the 1972 earthquake brought a tremendous influx of refugees from Managua. After the earthquake, the Maryknoll sisters, who had established a Christian youth club in OPEN 3, suddenly became responsible for distributing Catholic relief supplies to the thousands of refugees.⁸⁹ Shortly after the earthquake, however, Somoza seized control of all the relief money and supplies that were coming into Nicaragua, which virtually cut off all aid to OPEN 3. According to Michael Dodson and Tommie Sue Montgomery, two social scientists who have studied the Church in Nicaragua,

both the Maryknoll sisters and the Christian youth were in a position to see the regime's indifference to the poor and its willingness to profit at the expense of their misery. It was widely understood throughout OPEN 3 that Somoza and his officials were hoarding or selling the relief supplies...these Church people took the first steps toward a prophetic* interpretation of their religious mission as a direct consequence of living through the effects of systemic political corruption and oppression.⁹⁰

* Dodson and Montgomery define a "prophetic" attitude in the same way that I define the Liberation Theology model. See Dodson and Montgomery, page 162.

Unfortunately, the Maryknoll sisters and the refugees could do little to stop the corruption of the Somocistas.

It was not until 1974 when the FSLN carried out their successful hostage taking, that the residents of OPEN 3 began to believe that they too could struggle against injustice. In the years that followed the earthquake and the hostage-taking, the Maryknoll sisters and the Christian youth were actively conducting conscientization programs and helping to form CEB's. According to Dodson and Montgomery,

Based on the assumption that Christian faith was compatible with social action, these study and reflection groups focused on issues concerning the dignity of poor people and questioned the possibilities of achieving such dignity under a Somoza government. Many of these young people went from being anti-Somoza to being Christian revolutionaries.⁹¹

In the summer of 1976, during a period of martial law, the Maryknoll sisters and the Christian youth organized a strike to protest against increases in the price of water. During the strike, which lasted three months, the Catholic church in OPEN 3 became the focal point for the strike organizers. Eventually the strikers succeeded and the price of water was reduced. As Dodson and Montgomery write,

the (strike) was a lesson in political organization; it helped to solidify the politically conscious members of the Christian Communities and sharpened their confidence to act politically. For the Church itself, it was a lesson in how to 'accompany' the people in the historical process of their own self-determination. As one Maryknoll missionary put it, participation in these struggles, 'carried the Church into the stream of history'.⁹²

As with Solentiname and Barrio Riguero, the pattern in which people who have participated in a program that was introduced by practitioners of Liberation Theology and have gone on to become revolutionaries, was evident in OPEN 3. This pattern was repeated countless times throughout

Nicaragua.

Because of their activism, the Maryknoll sisters and the priests of the church in OPEN 3 were continually harrassed by the National Guard, but were never seriously threatened. The same was not true for the Christian youth, many of whom were imprisoned, tortured and executed. In December, 1978 several young people of OPEN 3 occupied the Catholic Church to protest the Guard's repressive tactics. Fortunately for these young people, the Guard did not attack the Church. The occupation ended on January 10, 1978, when the protestors heard the news of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro's assassination.⁹³ According to Dodson and Montgomery, news of the assassination stunned the people of OPEN 3 and they, "instinctively grew together. Church people in their community now concluded that the 'Church was the only place people could speak the truth in Nicaragua.'" ⁹⁴

The practice of occupying churches to protest against the Somoza regime began in the early 1970's when opposition to Somoza was still largely spontaneous and unorganized. Several times in 1970, 1971 and 1972, the Cathedral of Managua and other churches in the country were occupied by students who had the permission of the priests in these churches.⁹⁵ Dodson and Montgomery observe that,

One result of these protests was that members of the FSLN began seeking out these priests and students to explore possibilities for cooperation between the FSLN and the Church...Moreover, the taking of the Churches was a signal to many people 'that the priests and sisters were beginning to have some solidarity in opposition to Somoza'.⁹⁶

According to Father Molina, the Church occupatinos were a success, "they succeeded in mobilizing many people, especially young people".⁹⁷ The students chose to occupy the churches because they were usually located in the centre of a city and afforded a good vantage point from which to

spread their message of protest. Also, the students hoped that the National Guard would respect the sanctity of the churches and not attack them. Unfortunately, in some cases the students overestimated the piety of the Guard as several churches were attacked and the protesters summarily executed inside the churches.

The Vicariate Apostolic of Bluefields and the Diocese of Estelí

The Archdiocese of Managua, which includes Barrio Rigüero and OPEN 3 was not the only diocese in which priests were carrying out liberation projects. These projects were going on in all of the dioceses of Nicaragua. Rather than discussing every one of Nicaragua's dioceses, I will focus here on two, the Vicariate Apostolic of Bluefields and the Diocese of Estelí. They serve as typical examples of what priests and religious were doing in Managua's hinterland.

The Vicariate Apostolic of Bluefields comprises the Department of Zelaya, located in the eastern half of Nicaragua alongside the Atlantic coast. Zelaya has traditionally been isolated from the more populous Pacific coast region of Nicaragua because of its difficult terrain which is made up of swamps, mountains, and dense jungles. It was originally occupied by Mosquito Indians and English speaking creoles who live in the former British settlement of Bluefields. However, since the 1960's, Zelaya has become home to an increasing number of peasants who were forced to leave their farms in the western half of Nicaragua.⁹⁸

The peasants who came to Zelaya faced a precarious existence. Because of the terrain, it is difficult to establish productive farms in Zelaya. Moreover, the peasants were often the victims of the National Guard and local officials known as Jueces de Mesta. According to John Booth, these officials,

spied for the government and exercised certain police powers. It became common for many jueces to abuse their influence in order to steal newly improved agricultural plots from squatters whose shaky land titles made them vulnerable to anyone close to the government.⁹⁹

It was among these people, the Moskitos, creoles and poverty-stricken peasants in eastern Nicaragua that Capuchin priests and missionaries began to establish liberation projects in the early 1970's.

The Capuchin priests first came to Nicaragua from the U.S. in 1917 at the invitation of the Nicaraguan hierarchy. Working alongside protestant missionaries from the Lutheran and Moravian churches, the Capuchins have concentrated on missionary work in Zelaya. In 1971, the Capuchins began an intensive program of conscientization courses in the many peasant villages of Zelaya. These courses taught health care, literacy, agriculture and political leadership. Eventually the Capuchins established several rural schools in the peasant villages.¹⁰⁰

The teaching methods that the Capuchins used in their schools and conscientization programs were invented by the famous Brazilian educator, Paulo Friere, whose work influenced the development of Liberation Tehology. The courses were aimed at providing both practical knowledge and, more importantly, at developing a critical attitude in the peasants. Gregorio Smutko, an American Capuchin priest, who has lived in Zelaya for many years, explains that the conscientization courses were, "oriented at developing critical judgement and at enabling (the peasants) to work together to forge their own lives and overcome fatalism."¹⁰¹ The courses taught the peasants how to organize themselves and about politics and their rights under the Nicaraguan constitution. However, as Smutko makes clear, the courses were not specifically designed to motivate the peasants to take up arms against the dictatorship, although many of them did. Rather, the peasants were taught to form their own judgement about

politics, and above all, to take their destiny into their own hands and work for a better life.¹⁰²

As in other parts of Latin America, the Capuchins in Zelaya did not have enough manpower to enable them to fulfill their religious duties and to carry out the conscientization programs at the same time. To overcome this problem the Capuchins, since the late 1960's, relied heavily on "Delegates of the Word" to assist them in their clerical and educational activities. Delegates of the Word are lay Catholics who are trained to perform some of the rites that are part of the Catholic liturgy. As Smutko explains, the Delegates of the Word, "prepare Christians for the Baptism of their children and for marriage; (they also) visit the sick and bury the dead."¹⁰³ Delegates of the Word also carry out simple religious ceremonies in the villages that they work in. In these ceremonies, a verse in the Bible is read and then a discussion is held on the meaning of the verse. This is similar to what goes on in the CEB's.

Apart from their religious duties, the Delegates are also trained to teach conscientization courses. Thus, when properly trained, the Delegates were potential religious leaders and educators. Also, because of the emphasis on political education in the conscientization courses, the Delegates emerged as potential political leaders. At one point in 1975, the Capuchins trained 500 Delegates of the Word.¹⁰⁴ It is estimated that in the years 1975-1979, there were as many as 900 Delegates of the Word operating in Zelaya.¹⁰⁵ These people greatly strengthened the presence and the effectiveness of the Church in Zelaya.

The difficult terrain of the Department of Zelaya made it a favorite zone of operations for the FSLN. This in turn caused the National Guard

to increase their presence in the area which thereby increased the overall level of oppression in Zelaya. Because the guerillas were usually skillful enough to elude the National Guard, the frustrated soldiers began harrassing the peasants, accusing them of collaboration with the FSLN. These accusations soon became self-fulfilling prophecies as the number of atrocities committed by the Guard continued to grow. As John Booth explains, the actions of the National Guard caused an increase in the overall level of support that the FSLN enjoyed in Zelaya,

The torture, extortions and killings enraged many peasants and convinced them they had nothing to lose by joining the FSLN, especially if they were already suspected of collaboration. The FSLN thus recruited successfully in this region, and the guerillas collaboration with the local peasants ultimately became excellent.¹⁰⁶

John Booth, however, does not solely attribute the reasons for the peasants' collaboration with the FSLN to the increasing level of repression in Zelaya. He also attaches a great deal of importance to the work which the Capuchin priests and Delegates of the Word had done amongst the peasants.¹⁰⁷ Likewise, Gregorio Smutko says that it was the Delegates of the Word program and the conscientization courses, combined with the repressive methods of the Guard, which caused peasants to support the Sandinistas. As Smutko writes,

The compromise which many of the communities in the rural zone of Zelaya made with the Sandinistas was the result of three factors: 1) the Unity which the communities achieved through the efforts of the Delegates of the Word and other community leaders (2) the conscientization efforts undertaken by these same Delegates of the Word (3) the despair which the peasants saw as many of their family and friends were jailed by the National Guard.¹⁰⁸

Thus, as in other parts of Nicaragua, there was a link between the development of Liberation Theology and support for the FSLN in Zelaya.

Because of their high profile in the peasant villages, the Delegates of the Word were often the victims of the National Guard's counter-insurgency campaign. While the Capuchin priests were never seriously threatened by the National Guard, they did feel a strong sense of moral responsibility toward the Delegates and peasants who were being persecuted. In 1976, the Capuchins began to compile a list of people who had been jailed, tortured or executed by the National Guard. In May, 1976, the priests asked their bishop, Mons. Salvador Schläefer, to protest these indiscriminate killings to Somoza. Schläefer agreed and on May 10, together with Bishop Julian Barni of Matagalpa and Bishop Clemente Carranza of Estilí, he presented the Capuchin list to Somoza and asked him for an explanation of the killings and disappearances.¹⁰⁹ Somoza denied that the people on the list had been innocent, claiming instead that anyone who was jailed or executed by the Guard was a member of the FSLN.¹¹⁰

Dissatisfied with results of the bishops' visit to Somoza, the Capuchins wrote a letter to the President themselves.¹¹¹ They also wrote a letter to the Bishops' Conference asking them to bring increased pressure to bear on the Somoza regime.¹¹² When these letters failed to alleviate the repression in the Zelaya area, the priests decided to go one step further by publishing their list. Because the country was then under martial law, the Capuchins were forced to publish their list abroad. According to Dodson and Montgomery, the Capuchin list was widely circulated and "increased international pressure on the (Somoza) regime."¹¹³ In 1977, the Capuchin list was also submitted to a U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee by Fernando Cardenal as part of his testimony on the human rights record of Somoza.¹¹⁴

From 1976 to 1979, the Capuchins constantly updated their list until, in 1979, it had grown to 350 people, all victims of the National Guard. The Capuchins' list did not tell the whole story, however. After the war, an ex-National Guard officer told Smutko that the number of people who had been tortured or killed by the National Guard in the Zelaya area, was closer to 1000.¹¹⁵

Like the Capuchins in Zelaya, the Catholic priests in the Diocese of Estelí also relied heavily on Delegates of the Word to assist them and also developed CEB's and conscientization programs.¹¹⁶ The experience of the priests in Estelí is similar to that of the Capuchins in Zelaya except that in Estelí, the priests themselves were more directly involved with the FSLN and were more active in actually organizing support for the FSLN.

Like Zelaya, Estelí was an area in which the FSLN, and consequently the National Guard, were present in great numbers. Estelí is a tiny city in the heart of a major coffee producing province in the Segovia Mountains of northern Nicaragua. The mountainous terrain around the city was suitable for the Sandinista guerillas who also enjoyed widespread support from the peasants and townspeople. The actual support which the FSLN had from the people of Estelí became evident when the Sandinistas overran the city during the "September Insurrection" in 1978. The three hundred Sandinista guerillas who captured the National Guard barracks on September 9, were assisted by 1500 armed townspeople. Thousands of other townspeople who did not have weapons helped the FSLN by building barricades and by supplying medical aid, food, water and shelter to the combatants.¹¹⁷

After being overrun, the National Guard returned to Estelí with a

force of 2000 soldiers and laid siege to the city. During the siege, which lasted for a month, the Nicaraguan Air Force continuously bombed and strafed Estelí. Finally, in the first week of October, the Guard recaptured the city at a terrible cost in human lives. During the siege in September and the "mopping-up" operation that followed in October, several hundred townspeople died and many thousands more were injured or left homeless.¹¹⁸ The brutality of the National Guard only served to strengthen the resolve of the people of Estelí to defeat Somoza. After the September insurrection, many people left the city to join the guerillas, including 67 Catholics.¹¹⁹

The fact that the people of Estelí were so supportive of the FSLN during the September Insurrection was in large part due to the work of the Catholic priests. The Diocese of Estelí, which was formerly the eastern half of the Diocese of León, was created in 1969 in an attempt to increase the Church's presence in Estelí. The new diocese was staffed by young native and foreign clergy who had been schooled in the liberal atmosphere of Vatican II and Medellín.¹²⁰ In the early 1970's, these priests began implementing liberation projects and, from 1975 on, were active in organizing the people of Estelí. Father Julio Lopez, a Catholic priest who lives in Estelí, describes how closely involved he was with the FSLN and how the priests helped organize support for the FSLN,

The Frente first approached me for organizational and political help in 1975, and I gave it willingly. (My) barrio was the most militant and best organized in the whole of Estelí, and our (CEB's) formed the nucleus of what would become the CDC's (Civil Defense Committees)...We divided Estelí up into 56 zonal committees in preparation for the insurrection, and work was in hand as early as March (1978). Outside the town, we tried to instill revolutionary consciousness in the peasants by taking loudspeaker vans round the valleys

playing Carlos Mejia Goday's 'Misa Campesina'. The local women would bring the communiques of the Frente into Estelí hidden in pots of goods and we priests would then distribute them. Many of the kids here who joined the Frente did so out of their Christian convictions...¹²¹

According to a document written by the priests of Estelí in 1980, "the Church stood at the forefront of the popular organizations...It is a well-known fact that the organization of the barrios and communities of Estelí came from the Church."¹²²

The degree to which the priests in Estelí were involved with the FSLN is reflected in the amount of harassment which they received from the National Guard. During the late 1970's, six priests were accused by a military tribunal of collaboration with the FSLN, a number of Delegates of the Word were killed or tortured, and one foreign priest was expelled from Nicaragua.¹²³ Also one priest and a Delegate of the Word were killed during the fighting in September. The animosity which the National Guard felt for the Catholic priests is evident in a slogan written by a soldier on a wall of the Catholic college in Estelí: "Death to communist, Marxist-Leninist curates...Viva la Guardia Nacional".¹²⁴

It is not possible here to describe the activities of priests in all of the seven dioceses of Nicaragua. However, the examples of the Capuchins in Zelaya and the priests in the Diocese of Estelí serve to illustrate how priests developed support for Somoza's opposition through the liberation projects which they implemented. The conscientization programs, the CEB's and the work of the Delegates of the Word helped people to overcome their fatalism and taught them that something could be done to improve their situation. Thus, as Nicaragua's politics became increasingly polarized and as the level of repression increased, these people chose to become involved rather than passively accepting the

abuses of the Somoza regime.

The Evangelical Committee for Agrarian Reform (CEPA)

CEPA was formed in 1969 by three Jesuit priests to help rural workers form labour organizations and to provide conscientization courses and train Delegates of the Word. CEPA began working in the southern towns of Masatepe and San Rafael del Sur, near Gaspar García Laviana's parish. Based on the experience they gained during five years of work on these two areas, the Jesuits who founded CEPA made a presentation to a Congress of Rural Pastors, held in Managua in 1974. As a result, they succeeded in getting funding from the Archdiocese of Managua and in getting permission from other rural priests to begin implementing programs in their parishes.¹²⁵ This allowed CEPA to expand into northern Nicaragua.

The conscientization courses that CEPA initiated, taught political lessons based on biblical themes. The texts they used were based on the texts that were developed by the Capuchins in Zelaya.¹²⁶ According to Dodson and Montgomery, one series of texts published by CEPA came in the form, "of a cartoon-like pamphlet entitled 'Cristo Campesino' which interpreted political demands such as the right to land as being sanctioned by the Christian gospel."¹²⁷ To assist them, the Jesuits who organized CEPA used Delegates of the Word and were also joined by many students from Father Molina's Christian Revolutionary Movement.¹²⁸

During the mid-1970's, as CEPA became more heavily involved in organizing peasant labour and as their publications and courses began promoting a more explicitly Marxist view of politics, CEPA came increasingly into conflict with the Archdiocese. They also came into conflict with some priests who did not agree with CEPA's method of combining bibli-

cal themes with Marxist ideology. According to one source, these priests, "accused CEPA of promoting excessive socialization and very little religion."¹²⁹ In 1977, when the FSLN formed its Association of Rural Workers (ATC), many CEPA organizers began working for the ATC. This direct connection with the FSLN increased tension between CEPA and the Archdiocese and eventually CEPA was refused further funding from the Archdiocese.¹³⁰ CEPA continued as an independent agrarian reform institute and is still active today.

In a sense, then, CEPA tested the limits to which the Archdiocese of Managua and some priests were willing to go to in allowing the Church to be used as a means of mobilizing support for the FSLN. The Archbishop of Managua, who by and large reflected the opinions of all seven bishops, was unwilling to fund the CEPA program when it began working directly for the FSLN. More importantly, the refusal of some priests to agree with the methods of CEPA represents, to my knowledge, the only documented case in which priests are known to have spoken up against the increasing radicalization of the lower clergy.

CONCLUSION

Although the Nicaraguan hierarchy had a long history of support for the Somoza regime, this policy changed when a new generation of bishops came into the Church in 1969 and 1970. The new group of bishops began to oppose Somoza in a cautious way at first, but gradually became more openly opposed to Somoza as the situation in Nicaragua polarized. The fact that the bishops' political actions during the revolution were motivated by the Christian Democratic model is evident in two ways.

The Christian Democracy model calls for the Church as an institution to participate in politics in the "broad sense" only. This the bishops

did through their pastoral letters which always suggested values that Nicaraguans should apply to solve their political problems. In these letters, the bishops made it clear that they thought that the Somoza government was not a suitable form of government and that they would prefer a democratic government. The bishops held this position through to their 1978 letter to President Carter which said that Nicaraguans needed a true democracy and which suggested that values such as love, truth, and justice could be translated into the political order. At the same time the bishops were not revolutionaries and it was not until July, 1979 as the moderate opposition groups joined in a coalition with the FSLN, that the bishops supported a violent insurrection in their letter of July 2, 1979.

The other way in which it is evident that the bishops had adopted the Christian Democracy model is through their outright support of the Nicaraguan Social Christian Party which they extended in 1974. In November, 1977, Archbishop Obando y Bravo and two other bishops made an even more active attempt to assist the moderate opposition when they formed the Co-ordinating Commission for National Dialogue which they hoped would help bring about a change in government in which moderates prevailed. Thus, by acting according to the prescriptions of the Christian Democratic model, the Nicaraguan bishops followed a course in the revolution similar to that of other moderate opposition groups. The bishops and the other moderates worked for a peaceful, democratic solution to the crisis in Nicaragua until they realized in 1979 that such a solution was impossible and that support for the revolutionaries was their only alternative.

On the other hand, the lower clergy supported the FSLN from the

earliest stages of the revolution. The support which Nicaragua's priests and religious extended to the FSLN was not only evident in their public statements but in their actions as well. This support was given as a result of their having adopted the Liberation Theology model. This model was diffused to all parts of Nicaragua in a number of ways: it was diffused through the Encuentro held in 1969; through the examples of priests such as Ernesto Cardenal and Uriel Molina; through the work of foreign priests and religious such as the Maryknolls and Capuchins; and through CEPA.

As I tried to show by presenting selected cases, whenever priests began implementing liberation projects in their parishes, they discovered that there was a close affinity between their goals and the goals of the FSLN. In fact, many priests saw the FSLN as a means through which the ultimate goals of Liberation Theology could be realized. This was especially true of Gaspar García Laviana. Moreover, these priests and religious were able to help support the FSLN through the liberation projects which helped to convince many of their parishioners to work for the Sandinistas. Thus, Nicaragua's priests and religious played a role in the revolution in which they acted as a catalyst in forming the coalition between the FSLN and the peasants and urban poor.

NOTES -- CHAPTER IV

1. Michael Dodson and T.S. Montgomery also divide the Nicaraguan Church into three groups,

a small group remained loyal to Somoza, a larger, nonviolent opposition...sought a mediator role, believing strongly that Somoza must go but fearing a Sandinista victory. The third group...actively worked to bring about a Sandinista victory.

Dodson and Montgomery, "The Churches in the Nicaraguan Revolution", Thomas W. Walker, Ed., Nicaragua in Revolution, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1982), p. 172.

2. Daniel Levine, Religion and Politics in Latin America, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 178-182, see also Part II - Part III, passim.

3. For a more thorough explanation of the Catholic Church's organization see, The Catholic Almanac (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1982).

4. Jorge Eduardo Arellano, Breve Historia de la Iglesia en Nicaragua (1523-1979), (Managua: Centro de Estudios de Historia de la Iglesia En America Latina, 1980), pp. 29-30.

5. Ibid., pp. 49 and 57.

6. Ibid., pp. 58-59.

7. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

8. Ibid., p. 73.

9. Ibid., p. 77.

10. Ibid., pp. 77-79.

11. Ibid., p. 87.

12. Ibid., pp. 101-102.

13. Dr. Amando López, Interview held in Managua, Nicaragua, July 26, 1982.

14. Nuns and monks in Nicaragua also belong to various orders. Like the order priests, they are either trained in a foreign country or they come to Nicaragua from a foreign country.

15. Levine, op. cit., p. 181.

16. Dr. Amando López, interview held in Managua, Nicaragua, July 26, 1982.

17. Arellano, op. cit., p. 85.
18. Ibid., p. 90, author's own translation.
19. Ibid., p. 90.
20. Thomas W. Walker, The Christian Democratic Movement in Nicaragua, (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1970), p. 52.
21. Arellano, op. cit., pp. 98-99.
22. Ibid., p. 90, author's own translation.
23. Dodson and Montgomery, op. cit., p. 162.
24. Arellano, op. cit., p. 123, author's own translation.
25. Dodson and Montgomery, op. cit., p. 164.
26. Arellano, op. cit., p. 101, author's own translation.
27. Nicaragua: La Hora de los Desafíos (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1981), p. 60.
28. Arellano, op. cit., p. 124.
29. Ibid., p. 125, author's own translation.
30. Ibid., p. 125, author's own translation.
31. John Booth, The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), p. 137.
32. Dr. Amando López, interview held in Managua, Nicaragua, July 26, 1982.
33. George Black, Triumph of the People (London: Zed Press, 1981), p. 319.
34. The Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, "Sobre los Principios que Rigen la Actividad Política de Toda la Iglesia como tal:", López and Arrién, eds. "El Papel de la Iglesia en la Coyuntura Nacional:", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December 1978): 128, author's own translation.
35. López and Arrién, "El Papel de la Iglesia en la Coyuntura Nacional", p. 129, author's own translation.
36. Ibid., p. 129, author's own translation.
37. Black, op. cit., p. 318.
38. Thomas W. Walker, The Christian Democratic Movement in Nicaragua, op. cit., passim.

39. López and Arrién, op. cit., p. 129, author's own translation.
40. The Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, "Declaracion de la Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua Reunida en Sesión Extraordinaria", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December 1978), pp. 87-88.
41. Ibid., p. 88.
42. Booth, op. cit., p. 137.
43. López and Arrién, op. cit., p. 130.
44. Nicaragua: La Hora de los Desafíos, op. cit., pp. 61-62, author's own translation.
45. The Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, "Renovando la Esperanza Cristiana al Iniciarse el Año 1977", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura (Managua: July-December, 1978): 96, author's own translation.
46. Ibid., p. 97, author's own translation.
47. Gregorio Smutko, "Cristianos de la Costa Atlántica en la Revolución", Nicaragua: Revista del Ministerio de Cultura de Nicaragua, Year 3, Number 5, (April-June, 1981), p. 56.
48. López and Arrién, op. cit., pp. 132-133.
49. Ibid., p. 133.
50. Booth, op. cit., p. 137.
51. The Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, "Carta de la Iglesia al Presidente de los Estados Unidos", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December, 1978): 119-120, author's own translation.
52. Ibid., p. 120, author's own translation.
53. Ibid., p. 121, author's own translation.
54. Arelanno, op. cit., p. 136.
55. Smutko, op. cit., p. 56.
56. The Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua, "Compromiso Cristiana para una Nicaragua Nueva", Nicaragua: La Hora de los Desafíos, op. cit., p. 79, author's own translation.
57. Ibid., p. 83, author's own translation.
58. Black, op. cit., p. 316.

59. Manuel Rodríguez García, Gaspar Vive, (San Jose, Costa Rica: Artes Graficas de Centroamerica, 1981), pp. 120-123.

60. Gaspar García Laviana, "Carta al Hermanos Nicaragüenses", Nicarauac: Revista del Ministerior de Cultura de Nicaragua, Year 3, Number 5, (April-June, 1981), p. 67, author's own translation.

61. Ibid., p. 67, author's own translation.

62. Ibid., p. 67, author's own translation.

63. National Directorate of the FSLN, "Comunicado Oficial de la Direccion Nacional del FSLN Sobre la Religion", Nicarauac: Revista del Ministerior de Cultura de Nicaragua, Year 3, Number 5, (April-June, 1981), p. 93, author's own translation.

64. Gaspar García Laviana, Cántos de Amor y Guerra, (Managua: Ministerior de Cultura, 1981).

65. Manuel Rodríguez García, Gaspar Vive.

66. Black, op. cit., p. 174.

67. Booth, op. cit., p. 102.

68. Black, op. cit., p. 104.

69. Booth, op. cit., p. 131.

70. Wheaton and Dilling, Nicaragua: A People's Revolution, (Washington D.C.: EPICA Task Force, 1980), p. 32.

71. Black, op. cit., p. 105.

72. "The Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan Revolution", Envio (Managua: Instituto Historico Centroamericano, Year 3, Number 30, (December, 1983), p. 11b.

73. Ibid., pp. 7b-8b.

74. Dodson and Montgomery, op. cit., p. 164.

75. Black, op. cit., p. 317.

76. Ibid., p. 317.

77. Uriel Molina, "El Sendero de una Experiencia", Nicarauac: Revista de Ministerior de Cultura de Nicaragua, Year 3, Number 5, (April-June, 1981), p. 19.

78. Ibid., p. 27.

79. Black, op. cit., p. 319.

80. Molina; op. cit., pp. 33-35.

81. Ibid., p. 27, author's own translation.

82. Ibid., p. 27.

83. Uriel Molina, "La Iglesia en la Revolución", Apuntes Para una Teología Nicaragüense, (Managua: Centro Antonio Valdivieso y Instituto Historico Centroamericano, 1980), p. 43.

84. Molina, "El Sendero de una Experiencia", op. cit., pp. 22-23, author's own translation.

85. Ibid., pp. 23-25.

86. Ibid., p. 24.

87. Arellano, op. cit., pp. 101-107 passim, and Dodson and Montgomery, op. cit., p. 165.

88. Molina, "El Sendero de una Experiencia", op. cit., p. 24.

89. Dodson and Montgomery, op. cit., p. 166.

90. Ibid., p. 166.

91. Ibid., p. 169.

92. Ibid., p. 169.

93. Ibid., p. 173.

94. Ibid., p. 173.

95. Ibid., p. 165.

96. Ibid., p. 165.

97. Molina, "El Sendero de una Experiencia", op. cit., p. 25.

98. Booth; op. cit., p. 120.

99. Ibid., p. 120.

100. Smutko; op. cit., pp. 51-52.

101. Ibid., p. 52, author's own translation.

102. Ibid., p. 52.

103. Ibid., p. 51.

104. Ibid., p. 52.

105. Dodson and Montgomery; op. cit., p. 171.
106. Booth; op. cit., p. 121.
107. Ibid., p. 120.
108. Smutko; op. cit., p. 55, author's own translation.
109. Salvador Schläefer, "Carta de Monsenor Salvador Schläefer", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December, 1978):91.
110. Dodson and Montgomery; op. cit., p. 171.
111. Capuchin Fathers, "Carta de los Padres Capuchinos Al Presidente Somoza", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December, 1978):94.
112. Capuchin Fathers, "Carta a la Conferencia Episcopal", Encuentro: Revista del Departamento de Cultura, (Managua: July-December, 1978):94.
113. Dodson and Montgomery; op. cit., p. 171.
114. Smutko; op. cit., p. 56.
115. Ibid., p. 56.
116. Diocese of Estelí, "Presencia Cristiana en el Proceso Revolucionario: Diócesis de Estelí", Apuntes Para una Teología Nicaragüense, op. cit., pp. 46-47.
117. Black; op. cit., p. 132.
118. Ibid., pp. 132-133.
119. Wheaton and Dilling; op. cit., p. 56.
120. Diocese of Estelí; op. cit., pp. 45-56.
121. Black; op. cit., p. 320.
122. Diocese of Estelí; op. cit., p. 48, author's own translation.
123. Ibid., p. 47.
124. Ibid., p. 49, author's own translation.
125. Rodriguez García; op. cit., p. 120.
126. Smutko; op. cit., p. 52.
127. Dodson and Montgomery; op. cit., p. 170.

128. Rodríguez García; op. cit., p. 120, author's own translation.
129. Ibid., p. 121.
130. Dodson and Montgomery; op. cit., p. 170.

CHAPTER V: Conclusion

There is a close fit between the model of revolution outlined by Charles Tilly and the events of the Nicaraguan revolution. In Tilly's view revolutions flow out of the political processes of a nation. As Tilly describes it, nations are governed by a polity which consists of a government and all groups that have some influence over the government. The dominant group in the polity establishes "tests of membership" which other member groups must meet in order to maintain their position. If they fail the test, the members lose their position in the polity and may even be excluded from the polity.

However, while Tilly's model was useful as a framework for the case study of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan revolution, it should be noted that, as with any model, there are analytic limitations. Essentially, a model can be used to help describe an event, but, at the same time, the description does not necessarily lead to an explanation of the event. In other words, Tilly's model provides a set of categories under which particular phenomena can be subsumed. However, in the case study it was necessary to go beyond merely applying labels to phenomena in explaining how an organization such as the Catholic Church was able to participate in the revolution and how it contributed to the success of the revolution. Thus, the model helped in describing the Church's relationship to the larger processes of the revolution but it was also necessary to analyze the dynamics going on within the Church to explain why it chose to support the revolution and how it contributed to the revolution.

It is possible to think of Nicaragua's governments during the Somoza years in terms of the polity model. The Somozas dominated the governing polity for many years through their control of the National Guard and

through their political party, the National Liberal Party (PLN). Other groups that can be said to have been members of the governing polity include the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties which continued to elect members to the Congress and which were able to protect and even enhance their financial position in the economy. Another institution that, for many years, was willing to support and even lend an air of legitimacy to the Somoza regimes, was the Catholic Church. There were other political parties such as the Social Christian Party (PSCN) that would have liked to have seen some political change take place but initially were willing to participate in politics under the rules and conditions established by the Somozas. All of these members of the somocista polity were allowed a measure of political power and autonomy in exchange for their acquiescence, if not outright support.

When the earthquake hit Nicaragua in 1972, the tests of membership escalated. It was at this point that Somoza revealed the extent to which he was willing to use his power by reestablishing the dictatorship and by seizing the international aid that flowed into Nicaragua. This public demonstration of corruption by the somocistas made it clear to Nicaraguans who had formerly been willing to support Somoza that, in order to maintain their position in the polity, they would have to be as corrupt as the somocistas, or at least not oppose it. It also proved to Nicaraguans who had been members of the governing polity but who were not in the PLN or the National Guard that they would never be allowed to have a meaningful share of political power. Prior to 1972, the Conservative Party had been allowed to fill one of the positions in the Triumvirate. However, when Somoza dissolved the Triumvirate, Nicaraguans realized that it (The Triumvirate) was as close as anybody would come to holding real

political power under the Somozas. Thus, after 1972, the price of membership in the governing polity became an acceptance of the fact that no one but Somoza would control the government. It was at this point that many Nicaraguans moved into a position of active opposition to Somoza.

According to Tilly, a revolution begins when the society enters a condition of "multiple sovereignty" in which an alternative polity is formed that attempts to seize control of the government from the governing polity. In Nicaragua, the onset of multiple sovereignty can be traced to the formation of the FSLN, a group that from the beginning was dedicated to the overthrow of somocismo. However, the FSLN did not win the revolution by itself. In Tilly's model, one of the processes that is crucial to the success of the alternative polity is the process of coalition formation. One type of coalition that Tilly describes is a coalition between former members of the governing polity and newly-formed opposition groups. This type of coalition was eventually formed in the Nicaraguan revolution when a coalition of moderates and a coalition of radical groups joined together to form the National Patriotic Front (FPN) in 1979.

It was possible for moderate and radical groups to join together because all members of the coalition could agree that the most urgent task facing Nicaraguans was to rid the country of Somoza before any substantive political change could take place. Thus, the Sandinistas watered down their rhetoric in order to accommodate the moderates. Likewise, the moderates agreed to accept the FSLN because, after the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, they realized that it would take a military victory to oust Somoza, something only the FSLN was capable of doing. In

July, 1979, as a Sandinista military victory drew near, the groups of the FPN felt confident enough to form a provisional government. The provisional government was, in turn, recognized by member nations of the OAS and was able to convince the United States that it should be the legitimate government of Nicaragua. Thus, in mid-July, the U.S. pressured Somoza to resign and, on July 19, 1979, the alternative polity became the governing polity.

The FSLN became the dominant group in the FPN because it was able to mobilize the coercive resources necessary to defeat the National Guard. Tilly describes three types of resources that groups can mobilize as they contend for power: normative; coercive; and utilitarian. The Somozas controlled the government for generations because, in the National Guard, they had at their disposal the most effective coercive resource in Nicaragua. In order to combat the National Guard, the Sandinistas mobilized the rural and urban poor, a sector of the society that, traditionally, had accepted their impoverished condition.

From the very early stages of the revolution, the Sandinistas cultivated close ties with the peasants and urban poor. As the revolution progressed, the Sandinistas were able to carry out their operations amongst these people, secure in the knowledge that there were very few informants among them. Moreover, the Sandinistas recruited successfully from the rural and urban poor and were also successful in organizing them into Civil Defense Committees, peasant labour organizations and other types of FSLN-controlled occupational organizations. At times the FSLN was not able to control the anti-Somoza feeling harboured by the people in some Nicaraguan communities and, in August and September 1978, the communities of Monimbo, Matagalpa and Jinotepe rebelled against the National Guard

with very little help from the FSLN. This prompted the FSLN to begin an insurrection in September, 1978 that proved to be premature and was eventually quelled by the National Guard. The FSLN then strengthened their organization in the peasant villages and barrios which allowed them to coordinate future uprisings to coincide with a national insurrection.

In Tilly's model, there are two types of coalitions. The second type of coalition is between national associational organizations and local communal groups. This is the type of coalition that was formed between the FSLN and the people of the peasant villages and urban barrios. Tilly notes, however, that while members of communal groups will bring strong commitments to the cause for which they fight, they are usually passive and rarely rebel. That is, unless they "are undergoing a major collective transformation of their perception of the world, a millenarian movement would be an example."¹ Thus, before the FSLN could mobilize the rural and urban poor it had to effectively change their attitudes and convince them that, by supporting the FSLN, they could help bring about a revolutionary change in the society. This the FSLN was able to do, in part, through its rhetoric which promised agrarian reform, reforms in health care and education and new social, economic and political structures for Nicaragua. The Sandinistas tailored their ideology to appeal to the poor by taking on the mantle of Sandino, the peasant revolutionary of the 1930's, and by synthesizing Marxist thought with Sandino's writings.

The early Sandinistas were not from the peasant villages and urban barrios, however. They were students and intellectuals who were as foreign to the poor people of Nicaragua as were the members of other

political parties who rarely included the poor in their political activities. In order to form a coalition with the poor, the Sandinistas needed a sympathetic ally that was both trusted and influential in the peasant villages and urban barrios. The FSLN found just such an ally in the Catholic Church.

It was in acting as a catalyst in the formation of both types of coalitions that the Catholic Church was able to make a significant contribution to the success of the Nicaraguan revolution. In the years prior to 1970, the Church in Nicaragua had been a conservative Church which taught its members that obeying the government was a way of worshipping God and which provided elaborate inauguration ceremonies for new Somoza governments. The Church began to change, however, in the late-1960's and early 1970's. This change was facilitated, in part, by the new generation of bishops that gained control of the Church in the late-1960's and, more importantly, by the fact that two new political models were developed within the Catholic Church that supplanted the traditional conservative model. These two new models, Christian Democracy and Liberation Theology, were each adopted by a sector of the Church in Nicaragua and used to guide the actions of the people in these sectors as they participated in the political changes that Nicaragua underwent in the 1970's.

The seven bishops of the Nicaraguan Church were influenced by the Christian Democracy model. In 1970, when Miguel Obando y Bravo became Archbishop, the Church hierarchy began to distance itself from the Somoza regime and indicated that it supported the non-violent, moderate elements in Somoza's opposition. The bishops no longer accepted gifts from Somoza and refused to inaugurate the Triumvirate, which was the first time that the Church hierarchy did not legitimate a somocista regime.

In their speeches and pastoral letters of 1971-1974, the bishops came out in support of the Christian Democratic Party (PSCN) and later the Democratic Liberation Union (UDEL) that had been organized by Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. In 1977, the bishops became more aware of the methods used by the National Guard, they issued more strongly worded denunciations of the Somoza regime. In November, 1977, the bishops intervened directly in national politics by forming the "Co-ordinating Committee for National Dialogue" which they hoped would end the bloodshed and bring about a change in government before the Sandinistas could win a military victory. The attempt failed, however, with the assassination of Chamorro and, by 1979, the bishops agreed with other moderate groups that the FSLN was the only group capable of defeating Somoza.

The bishops, then, exerted some influence over the moderate opposition groups. On the other hand, priest and religious in Nicaragua became more directly involved in the conflict on the side of the FSLN. The majority of these priests and religious adopted the Liberation Theology model which motivated them to work to change the attitudes of their parishioners. Through conscientization courses, the priests taught the poor to believe that they were capable of improving their lives, instead of passively accepting the political and economic domination of the upper classes. Also, through the formation of Basic Christian Communities and the training of Delegates of the Word, the priests encouraged the poor to form stronger communal ties and to treat their fellow community members as equals. This emphasis and desire for equality carried over into a vision of a new society in which everyone would be equal. This society would be a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

It was the desire for a new, egalitarian society on the part of the

priests and religious who adopted the Liberation Theology model that led them to support the FSLN. They saw the FSLN as an organization that could, not only topple Somoza, but could also create a new order in Nicaragua. The FSLN agreed with these priests and religious that they shared a common goal and began to work closely with Christians. Many Catholics joined the Sandinistas and some, including Gaspar García Laviana and Luis Carrion, rose to important positions in the FSLN. In all parts of Nicaragua, priests and religious worked to create support for the FSLN in the parishes. In many barrios, they organized Civil Defense Committees and assisted the FSLN in their clandestine activities. As was shown in the examples presented in Chapter IV, whenever priests implemented liberation projects in their parishes, the people of these parishes began to actively support the FSLN.

The alliance between the priests and the FSLN added a religious dimension to the appeal made by the FSLN for support amongst the poor. The Liberation Theology model, in fact, provided a religious rationale for supporting the FSLN and was a key force in changing the attitudes of the poor and in making them more rebellious. Thus, when the peasants and urban poor, whose Catholic faith was being strengthened in the Basic Christian Communities, began to bear the brunt of the National Guard's counter-insurgency campaigns, they turned against the National Guard instead of blaming the FSLN. These people had been taught by their religious leaders that they could take their destiny into their own hands and be activists in helping to create a better society. The FSLN provided the means through which their world could be changed. In many respects, then, the implementation of Liberation Theology in Nicaragua was like a millenarian movement which Tilly suggests as an example of the magnitude of

change that must take place in the attitudes of members of communal groups before they will rebel.

Tilly's model is useful not only in explaining the overall processes of the Nicaraguan revolution, in terms of the changes that took place in the national political arena, but it also helps to put into perspective the role played by the Catholic Church in the revolution. The Church did not initiate or lead the revolution. Rather, it went through some changes that coincided with the rise of a moderate and revolutionary opposition to the Somoza regime. This coincidence led the Church to support both of the different types of coalitions that were formed during the revolution. The Church, then, can be integrated into Tilly's model because it was one of the members of the alternative polity and as such contributed normative resources to the polity. That is, there was a great deal of commitment to the Church in the Nicaraguan society. The Church was able to direct this commitment in support of the revolution.

By supporting the moderates at first, and later the entire opposition, the bishops helped to legitimate the opposition in the eyes of the Catholics. The bishops' pastoral letters and public speeches helped to convince Nicaraguans that opposition to Somoza was morally justified and would not bring them into conflict with their religion. The priests and religious played a more direct role than the bishops by working to change the attitudes of the rural and urban poor from being passive to being activists in the fight to overthrow Somoza. Thus, both groups in the Church were instrumental in mobilizing support for the revolution. The Church's participation in the revolution was significant because the Church has a great deal of influence in Nicaraguan society, 90 percent of which is Catholic. Other than the government, the Church is the only

national institution which occupies a position of respect in every community in every part of Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan revolution was the first revolution in Latin America in which the Church played a major role in support of the revolution. The Church's participation in the revolution may have changed to the tone of the revolution. One of the factors that proved to be important to the success of the revolution was the unification of the various opposition groups. Although it was the dominant group in the opposition, the FSLN learned as the revolution progressed that, if it moderated its rhetoric somewhat, it could appeal to a broader range of people. The institution that taught the FSLN this lesson was the Church. By tolerating the priests similar, but still somewhat different point of view, the FSLN gained valuable support. This was a lesson that the FSLN applied, to a certain extent, to the other opposition groups, thereby paving the way for the formation of the coalition that eventually toppled Somoza.

NOTES - CHAPTER V

1. Charles Tilly, "Revolutions and Collective Violence", Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., Handbook of Political Science, (Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), Volume 3, p. 507.

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