

UN SON PARA MI PUEBLO

Songs from the New Nicaragua



Photo by Margaret Randall

Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy
and Grupo Mancotal

THE NEW NICARAGUA: AN OVERVIEW

*I sing to that seed
That was formed in the struggle
That has made the future present
The Sandinista Youth
Whose example is my inspiration
Which ripens with this song
—Luis Mejia Godoy*

What is this new Nicaragua?

In the four years since the overthrow of the U.S.-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza, the people of Nicaragua have been faced with the monumental tasks of rebuilding a new society, of overcoming the generations of poverty, bloody repression and despair. To accomplish this, to create not only a new government but a new kind of person in a wholly new society, has required the participation of everyone and everything that make up the new Nicaragua: mobilization of every sector of society, every man, woman, and child, to create the new reality which for so long was only a dream during the long years of battle to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship.

This effort, of course, was not begun only after the Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction came to power in July of 1979. Rather, the mass organizations, of women, of peasants, of students, workers, professionals, soldiers, even children—in short, of every part of Nicaraguan society, trace their roots back to the years of building the society-wide movement against Somocismo. It was in the course of building that popular revolution that the seeds of the new society were sown. During the long years of the Somoza family rule, Nicaragua's domination by the U.S. created a classic example of the so-called "banana republic;" the country was run by a handful of wealthy families as if it were their personal fiefdom. Those years had been characterized by grinding poverty for the overwhelming majority of Nicaraguans, as well as brutal repression needed to keep the masses under control and continue to reap the huge profits of the coffee harvests. These conditions of life in turn created and sustained an opposition encompassing all but the tiniest minority of Nicaraguan society.

The resistance movement that came to power in 1979 traces its roots back to the legendary Army of Free Men of Augusto Cesar Sandino in 1926, from which the Frente Sandinista took their name. They continued the resistance begun by Sandino, who recognized even then that the Nicaraguan dictatorship could not stand alone: it was inseparably linked to the U.S. attempts to control Nicaragua, attempts which had included repeated military invasions of Nicaragua by Washington from as early as 1853. The revolutionary content of Sandino's resistance, was captured in his slogan "my cause is the cause of my people, the cause of America, the cause of all oppressed

people." After Sandino's assassination in 1934, the entrenchment of the Somoza family took root, bolstered by massive U.S. support and brutal suppression by Somoza's National Guard. Acknowledging the connected realities of Somoza's brutality and corruption was recognized as a "necessary evil" by the U.S. in defense of its own strategic interests. Franklin D. Roosevelt once described Anastasio Somoza Garcia as "a son-of-a-bitch, but he's our son-of-a-bitch." It was the protracted struggle of the Nicaraguan people that finally toppled the dictatorship of the son of that "son-of-a-bitch" and ushered in the Sandinista revolution.

Since the overthrow of the Somoza regime the massive social participation of the population in the revolutionary process has increased a hundred-fold. This society-wide mobilization has provided the indispensable foundation required to build the new, revolutionary Nicaragua. It has taken the concrete form of mass organizations of workers, peasants, intellectuals, youth, women, and virtually every sector of society.

For example, the Nicaraguan Women's Association evolved out of the organization of women during the long years of the anti-Somoza campaigns. During the period of the dictatorship, women represented one of the least organized sectors of society; it is a testament to the deep roots that the revolutionary process has sunk that the women's movement has become a key component in building the new society: it provides job training and political education; mobilizes women's participation in the literacy, health care, national defense, and other efforts of the country. Following the goals of building a new Nicaragua for all its citizens, the Association takes on its work not to separate "women's issues" from the broader building of society, but instead looks to increasing the participation of women in all facets of the new Nicaragua, while protecting the special needs of the women themselves.

GAINS OF THE REVOLUTION

Before the revolution, health care was virtually unavailable to the poor of Nicaragua. Fifty per cent of all children died before their fourth birthday. Diseases including malaria, tuberculosis, and polio were rampant, and many infants died from diarrhea caused by impure water. Today, all health care is free; work is underway creating new institutions for preventive health care, and health education is a high priority. Infant mortality has been cut by one-third. Nation-wide vaccination and immunization campaigns have already drastically cut the incidents of serious disease.

Before the revolution, the illiteracy rate was over 50% in Nicaragua. Today, perhaps the single most important example of mass mobilization of society has emerged in



Agrarian reform fulfills the peasants' demand that "the land belongs to those that work it."

the Literacy Crusade, begun only eight short months after the ascension to power of the revolutionary government. The goal of the campaign was ambitious: to reduce the level of illiteracy from 50% to 12% in a short-term effort initiated on a Nicaragua-wide basis. And the Crusade was a tremendous success. In five months, over 180,000 "brigadistas," mostly teenage students from the cities, taught basic reading and writing skills to some 900,000 Nicaraguans who had long been denied any access to education: the workers, peasants (often in remote mountain villages), and women. Besides meeting its primary goal of virtually ending illiteracy, the effort accomplished other important aims as well. In sending young, often middle class students to live with the impoverished peasantry, it forged new bonds that could help cut across the city-country barriers imposed by the generations of backwardness. Consequently, the mobilization of the brigadistas (teachers) and the study groups themselves, contributed to furthering the continued organization of the Nicaraguan people.

Another key component of the mass mobilization of

society emerged through the land reform efforts. Also begun quickly after the defeat of Somoza, the 1981 Agrarian Reform Law consolidated a process of distributing land titles to increasing numbers of peasants whose former relation to the land they tilled was characterized by endless debt. Additionally, financial assistance has been extended by the government to the peasants on a broad scale, insuring that the new land-owners have access to the tools, seed, fertilizers and other necessary components of agricultural production. The land reform effort has also provided an important means of bringing the peasantry, even in remote areas, into direct participation in the organs of the new society: through the representatives of the peasant organizations in the Council of State, as well as through the continuing efforts at the organization and mobilization of the peasants aimed at bettering their lives and defending their interests, especially among the thousands of agricultural workers still employed at privately-owned enterprises.

Further grass roots organization of society takes place through the Sandinista Defense Committees, block-sized

groups to carry out health, education, and political campaigns as well as to guard against counterrevolutionary threats. The units of the People's Militia illustrate the broad-based popular movement to combat any threats to the Sandinista revolution.

And so, throughout Nicaraguan society today, this kind of mass participation in the work and organization of the revolution continues through the trade union confederations, defense committees, students' and professional associations, even to the Asociación de Niños Sandinistas, the organization of children. Their goal is captured by an eleven-year-old named Moises: "We hope that children will have enough schools, playgrounds, a different kind of Christmas. We want children and their mothers to have hospitals, we want there to be no more kids forced to sell chewing gum in the streets." This is a difficult challenge indeed in a poor country like Nicaragua struggling to pull itself up from the crippling effects of generations of underdevelopment. And it is a challenge that can only be met through the continuing support of the Nicaraguan people for the work of the revolution. In the words of Nicaraguan Minister of Interior Tomás Borge, "We cannot simply capitalize on the prestige which we won in the war and think that this is enough. We have to win the support and respect of the masses every day, each minute, by knowing how to interpret the interests of the working people."

THE CHALLENGES NICARAGUA FACES

The Sandinista revolution has steadily deepened and strengthened its roots among the Nicaraguan people. The popular mandate among the masses is solid. No one dares openly call for a return to the past. Internally, the revolutionary process in Nicaragua is irreversible. The real threat originates from *outside* the country.

Not surprisingly, the greatest challenge to the Nicaraguan revolution comes from the north—from the U.S.A. Since the victory of the Sandinistas, the U.S. has continued to attack Nicaragua, with increasing intensity to try to prevent or undermine its accomplishments. Washington is dead set on its aggressive goals: the maximum, to overthrow the government of Nicaragua and return it to the orbit of U.S. control. Or, if that cannot be accomplished, to minimally destabilize the revolutionary government, and discredit it internationally.

The most serious attack has been in the form of direct military assaults launched by U.S.-backed and financed counterrevolutionary forces led by ex-National Guardsmen, old supporters of the Somoza regime, along with other exiles opposed to the Sandinista revolution. These "contras," many of whom are trained at Florida and California camps staffed by anti-communist Cuban instructors, and armed with U.S. military weapons, have been attacking Nicaragua from bases in Honduras, attempting to overthrow the popular government. The Reagan administration, while claiming that the goal of its "secret war" is mere "harassment," rather than the overthrow of the Sandinista government, has made no

effort to disguise U.S. participation in the not-so-covert war. Rather, it has tried to justify these blatant attacks on the national security of Nicaragua through citing the well-worn "domino theory"—revolutionary dominoes falling from Nicaragua and El Salvador throughout Central America landing on the very banks of the Rio Grande.

For example, in trying to obtain Congressional increases in U.S. aid to the Salvadoran military junta, Reagan warned ominously that "the national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America." He threatened that "the goal of the professional guerrilla movement in Central America is as simple as it is sinister—to destabilize the entire region from the Panama Canal to Mexico." And, he claimed, "violence has been Nicaragua's most important export to the world. . . . Our interest is to ensure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence. . . . We should not—and we will not—protect the Nicaraguan government from the anger of its own people." Here we have a bold and naked assertion of U.S. intentions to direct and support the Somocista bands in attempting to topple the Managua government, along with a clumsy effort to depict such U.S. interference and aggression against Nicaragua as some sort of legitimate "civil war."

The list of evidence of U.S. aggression is long and concrete. In January 1981 National Security Adviser Richard Allen, on behalf of President Reagan, made a commitment to coordinate with Nicaraguan contras plans to destabilize the revolution. In November of 1981, Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, declared that he "cannot rule out" the possibility of direct U.S. military action against Nicaragua. More recently, Thomas Enders former Assistant Secretary of State, acknowledged that the CIA is providing training, money and weapons for former members of Somoza's National Guard, carrying out armed incursions into Nicaragua from Honduran bases. The point is that the war the U.S. is conducting against Nicaragua has not been just a "war of words;" hundreds of people have been killed, and huge amounts of damage inflicted in the sabotage of bridges, factories, and other installations inside Nicaragua.

IMPACT OF U.S. AGGRESSION

All of these military provocations and attacks place a tremendous drain on the scarce resources of Nicaragua—resources that would have otherwise been directed to the rehabilitation of the country. The Nicaraguan government has had to increase its standing army to 25,000, and establish a popular militia of another 55,000 citizens. The cost is high, in lost production time, in the price of weapons and training to equip these citizen-soldiers. But, in the words of Gladys Baez, responsible for the defense of León and the surrounding region, "now people know that the largest sums of the national budget go to education and health, and we won't deny that a great part goes to defense—because we know that we can have schools, centers of children's health, all those things, but—without *power*, we could do nothing. The people are aware of and support completely the resources spent on defense."

More direct economic attacks have also been launched by the U.S. against Nicaragua. For example, in April 1981 the U.S. government cut aid to Nicaragua because of the supposed supplies of arms sent by the Nicaraguans to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Two years later the Reagan administration slashed the quota of Nicaraguan sugar imported to the U.S. from 58,800 tons down to only 6,000 tons, to punish the Nicaraguans and "reduce the fiscal resources that are available to the Sandinist Government for subversion and extremist violence." In the context of other U.S. attempts, many of them successful, to veto loans to Nicaragua from international banking agencies, this economic sabotage has posed severe limits on the capacity of Nicaragua to rebuild. Meanwhile, in attempts to undermine the Nicaraguan government, Washington has channelled funds to the private sector of Nicaragua's business community, aiming at support for those forces viewed as being most likely to turn against the revolutionary government's commitment to nationalization and land reform in the context of the mixed economy. It is interesting to note, though, that despite these economic assaults, Nicaragua today remains the only solvent country in Central America.

In the political realm, U.S. attacks have increased in intensity in preparation for the possibility of more direct military intervention. Attempting to convince the North American people that Nicaragua is merely a puppet of "Cuban-Soviet adventurism," Washington has tried to whip up public hysteria. Reagan's goal is to prevent the people of the U.S. from understanding the reality of the new Nicaragua, while posing the "defense of U.S. interests" as requiring its destruction. It is in this context that Reagan's call to war in Central America takes on its most sinister meaning: "The government of Nicaragua turned out to be just an exchange of one set of autocratic rulers for another. . . . Even worse than its predecessor, it is helping Cuba and the Soviets to destabilize our (sic) hemisphere."

U.S. "JUSTIFICATIONS" FOR INTERVENTION

Why is the U.S. so intent on destroying the Sandinista revolution? Is Nicaragua a threat to the U.S.?

Yes and no. On the one hand, every serious observer would have to acknowledge that the tiny nation of Nicaragua, with a population of less than three million, hardly can be considered a direct strategic threat to the U.S. On the other hand, the dramatic victory of the Nicaraguan people in overturning Somoza and overcoming conditions of oppression and exploitation common to virtually every other neighboring country in the region, indeed in the hemisphere, does pose a serious threat to U.S. imperialism's strategic interests in the hemisphere. The Nicaraguan people's control of their own country, a control strengthening with every passing day, serves as a tremendous source of inspiration, political, spiritual, and material, to the peoples of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, and elsewhere, who look to Nicaragua as both example and rear base of support for their own struggles against U.S.-backed dictatorships.

The myth, that Washington wants so much to perpetuate, is that Nicaragua is an agent of the international communist conspiracy, providing arms to the Salvadoran rebels, and functioning as a mere pawn of "Soviet-Cuban expansionism" trying to foment war throughout the region. The U.S. has even gone to the extreme of claiming, through UN representative Jean Kirkpatrick, that the Soviet Union is planning to build a new canal across Nicaragua to challenge the dominance of the Panama Canal. Washington's self proclaimed responsibility then, is to defend its "free world" allies, the repressive military regimes in El Salvador, Guatemala, and elsewhere, and prevent "another Cuba" from coming into existence. In this manner, the U.S. proclaims its right and intention to inflict upon Nicaragua the same hostility and aggression it has heaped upon Cuba for decades now.

The truth, on the other hand, bears little resemblance to Reagan's ostensible fears. The simple reality is that, in the overthrow of Somoza and the establishment of the revolutionary government, the Nicaraguan people have succeeded in beginning to pull themselves out of the tangled web of economic, military and political domination centered in Washington. They have destroyed a key element in the U.S. plan for continued control of Central America: the Somoza dictatorship. And all this is occurring in a period, after the U.S. defeat in Viet Nam when Washington's foreign policy is becoming increasingly aggressive in attempts to recoup some of its post-Viet Nam losses. In short, U.S. imperialism has mounted a counter-offensive in order to try to prevent or turn back any further revolutionary victories, such as that of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua or the pending victory of the revolutionary forces in neighboring El Salvador.

It is here that we see the sinister motives behind the Reagan administration's cold war style claims that Nicaragua represents a new "Cuban-Soviet beachhead" threatening the security of the hemisphere. It represents a determined attempt to mobilize popular support at home for direct U.S. aggression in Central America and to justify the massive cuts in social spending required for the military build-up. It is this need for broad support among sectors of the U.S. population that leads to the consistent efforts to distort facts, manipulate prejudices, and instill unjustified fears in the Northamerican people through lies about what the Nicaraguan revolution represents.

LIES AND DISTORTIONS

What have been some of the major lies and distortions spread about Nicaragua among the people in the U.S.?

One slander concerns the supposed suppression of religion in Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan revolution has, like all revolutions, had to be built on the foundations of the reality of Nicaraguan society; it is a revolution from within, not imposed from somewhere outside.

One of the things particular to Nicaraguan society is the role of the Catholic church; it is a very religious country. And in the long years of struggle against Somoza, many of the strongest and most courageous fighters emerged from the ranks of the Christian "base communities," the

popular centers of anti-dictatorship activity organized within church structures. By the time Somoza had fallen, there was already, in reality, a divided church in Nicaragua: the established hierarchy still tied to conservative views from Rome, tacitly or explicitly supporting landlord abuses, the Somoza regime, etc. in the guise of separating religious from state concerns. On the other hand, there was a growing people's church movement, built around the Theology of Liberation which preached a responsibility for church activists to be part of the struggle for freedom and human dignity. These activists, many of whom supported or joined the Sandinista Front, foretold of the later participation of significant members of Catholic priests in the revolutionary government—a reality still distasteful to the Pope, but one beloved and respected by the Nicaraguan people.

For example, despite false claims in the U.S. media that the government in Managua tried to prevent people from gathering to hear the Pope during his 1983 visit, the reality is that the government mobilized huge quantities of scarce resources to provide transportation and facilities for the thousands of people who wanted to see John Paul. The outbreak of mass chanting during his speech demanded that the Pope recognize the stark reality of the seventeen teenagers killed by the counterrevolutionaries the day before. The refusal of the Pope to comment on this issue, while sharing his views on numerous other political and social issues, provides a vivid proof of the crucial political divisions within the church in Nicaragua and throughout Latin America.

Another favorite distortion in Washington's campaign against Nicaragua focuses on the supposed denial of free press, centering on the brief temporary closure of the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*.

Washington has attempted to build up *La Prensa* as an organ of mobilization against the Nicaraguan government, remembering its success in backing the counter-revolutionary daily *El Mercurio* in Allende's Chile, and its subsequent role in the military coup that overthrew the elected government in the brutal coup of 1973. *La Prensa* has consistently railed against the "excesses" of the Sandinista government in land reform, popular democracy, and virtually every other campaign, including even the Literacy Crusade. But, unfortunately for Washington, *La Prensa* has never succeeded at influencing a significant sector of Nicaraguan society to oppose the government. Although it has been closed for a few days on several occasions for the most blatant violations of the government press standards (standards which its own editor helped draft in 1979), the ironic fact is that the government has intervened on a number of other occasions to protect the offices of *La Prensa* from outraged mass demonstrations demanding that it be permanently shut down.

But probably the most hypocritical "Big Lie" campaign against Nicaragua has involved the Miskito Indian population of the Atlantic coast. Alexander Haig (who has never distinguished himself as a friend of Native Americans) on February 28, 1982 pretended to be shocked

and horrified as he released to the press photos portraying the supposed massacre of Miskito Indians by Sandinista forces. The next day, the State Department was forced to admit that the photograph was actually of a group of Red Cross workers in 1979 burying the abandoned bodies of Nicaraguan peasants slaughtered by Somoza's troops.

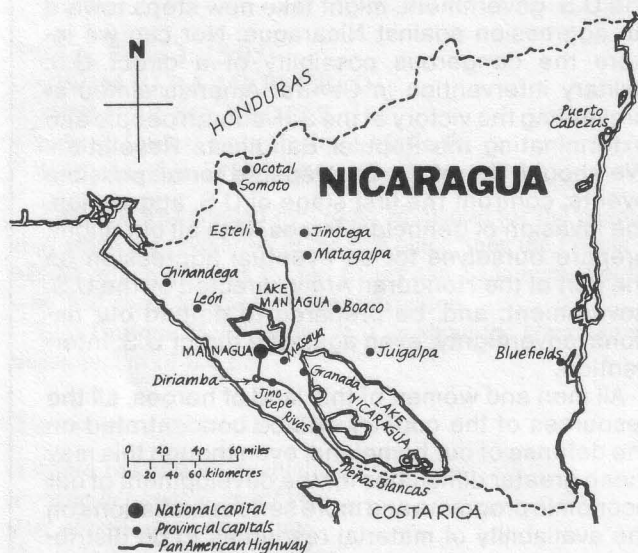
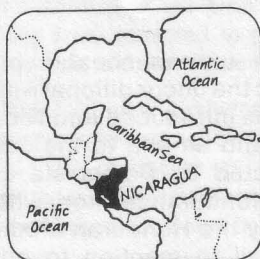
The current reality regarding the treatment of minority tribes in Nicaragua is quite different from the image projected by Washington. For example, the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, the historic home of the Miskito Indians, has long been separated, socially and politically, from the rest of Nicaraguan society, from the earliest periods of the Somoza dictatorship. There was little presence of the revolutionary forces in this region during the civil war, and so the CIA viewed the Miskito as a potential base for counterrevolution. They created in Stedman Fagoth, a Miskito spokesperson and Somoza supporter, a means to manipulate the Miskito population and direct it against the revolution and against its own interests, thereby preventing the full integration of the Miskito into the national life of the new Nicaragua. With the Somocista counter-revolutionaries using the area as a base for their armed attacks, and the resulting danger to civilians from increased shelling, the Nicaraguan government moved many of the Miskito to newly-established villages inland, away from the danger and crossfire. The claim of Washington that they are held in prison camps, or being harshly discriminated against, bears no truth to reality. For example, the difficult work of the Literacy Crusade was carried out not only in Spanish, but in English and Miskito, the languages of the Atlantic coast population. In addition, in an effort to end the decades of marginalization that had characterized the region, the largest single portion of scarce educational, agricultural and commercial resources are being directed to the development of the Atlantic coast, with the long-range goal of accelerating that region's full economic and political integration into the revolutionary process.

NICARAGUA'S ROLE IN CENTRAL AMERICA

What is Nicaragua's real role in Central America?

The regionalization of the conflict stems from Washington, not Managua. It is the U.S. that actively supports Honduras and Costa Rica being used as bases for harboring the Somocista bands trying to topple the Nicaraguan government, and who insists that the popular Salvadoran resistance against the fascist junta would not exist without Nicaraguan instigation.

In reality, conditions of peace would be the best circumstances to consolidate the gains of the Sandinista revolution. In fact, Nicaragua has consistently fought for peace in the region, against the continued military attack by the U.S. and its allies. Nicaragua has again and again introduced offers of negotiation, with the U.S. or with other neighboring countries, aiming at regional peace and non-aggression treaties. All Nicaragua's initiatives have been repeatedly spurned by the U.S. and the dictatorships in the region.



On the other hand, Nicaragua has remained firm that it is prepared and determined to defend its revolution at all costs. Revolutionary Nicaragua represents the staunchest friend of the forces fighting for democracy and peace in the neighboring countries: in El Salvador, in the mountains of Guatemala, in the towns and villages of Honduras. The issue is not the shipping of arms or the export of revolution; the Sandinistas know all too well that a revolutionary movement must be built from within, it cannot be imposed from outside, but grows inevitably from similar injustices that brought on the Nicaraguan revolution.

Consequently, Nicaragua's strategy for regionalization is to fight for peace, to rebuff the threats to their own revolution, and to support a political settlement in El Salvador, which is consistent with the national and democratic interests of the majority of the Salvadoran people.

NICARAGUA IS NOT ALONE

Who stands with Nicaragua?

Despite all of its efforts to isolate Nicaragua, the U.S. has failed. Far from being ostracized from the world community, Nicaragua today has emerged with firm international standing and legitimacy. The Declaration of Managua of the January 1983 conference of the Nonaligned Movement opposing intervention in Central

America represents a major vote of confidence for Nicaragua among the former colonial countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the United Nations the crude efforts of the U.S. to block Nicaragua's entry onto the Security Council were thoroughly isolated and defeated. The diplomatic victories of Nicaragua have been matched by the influx of economic aid: 49% from developing countries (i.e., Mexico, Libya, etc.), 18% from the socialist countries, and 33% from the capitalist countries (i.e., Holland, Canada, etc.).

Nicaragua's success in this battle with U.S. imperialism stems from the fact that its cause intersects with a broader international movement of people and countries fighting against control of their lives and lands by the U.S. bankers, corporations and policy makers. In short, the defense of Nicaragua's revolution and sovereignty has become the common cause of all the progressive, democratic and socialist forces in the world today.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S. PEOPLE

What do we do?

We have seen, just a few years ago in the movement against the war in Viet Nam, the potential for the mobilization of people in the U.S. to provide a crucial component in checking U.S. aggression and war. Today, a similar movement must be built against U.S. intervention in Central America and Reagan's regionalization of the war.

In building this movement we must understand the regional realities of Central America's long struggle against U.S.-sponsored oppression. That means we must not only demand an end to U.S. aid to the fascist Salvadoran junta, but simultaneously demand an end to mounting U.S. attacks against Nicaragua. The new Nicaragua is a centerpiece of the just and revolutionary movement of the peoples of Central America. The right of the Nicaraguan people to build their new society, their revolution, as they choose must be defended. Attempts to divide the Nicaraguan government into so-called "moderate" and "extreme" wings must be opposed as little more than a smokescreen to attack the Nicaraguan revolution. The Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction continues to be the unified, legitimate and sovereign government of Nicaragua, enjoying a broad and active popular mandate from the Nicaraguan people.

Progressive forces in the U.S., who understand and appreciate the message emanating from the new Nicaragua, must also take responsibility to build a broad movement opposing U.S. intervention and explicitly defending the independence and sovereignty of the Nicaraguan revolution, the right of the new Nicaragua to live in peace. In the words of Gladys Baez of the Sandinista Front, "It is very important for the U.S. people to lend themselves, with clarity and a sense of historic responsibility, to the frontal fight against the government, to tie the hands of imperialism. And at the same time as the U.S. people support the Nicaraguan revolution, they are making their own history."

ALTHOUGH UNDECLARED, IT IS A WAR

*The following text is excerpted from the April 8, 1983 statement of the National Directorate of the Sandinista National Liberation Front which analyzes the situation Nicaragua confronts in the face of intensifying U.S. aggressions. The complete text was published in the April 11, 1983 issue of **Barricada Internacional**.*

With the serenity and patriotism of the fighters of San Jacinto, Las Segovias and La Barranta, with the unbreakable determination to struggle for our people's victories and in defense of national sovereignty, in the name of the Nicaraguan people and before the peoples of the world, we denounce the undeclared war the United States has unleashed against Nicaragua, promoting—as a first stage—the invasion by genocidal counterrevolutionary forces from neighboring territories; these Somocista forces, armed, financed and directed by the U.S. government, have invaded our homeland...

The U.S. war against Nicaragua, although undeclared, is a war nonetheless, with all its tragic consequences of bloodshed and destruction. A war in which the U.S. is making use of ample military, political, ideological and economic resources...

A war in which neighboring territories of Nicaragua are used to implement criminal plans... A war which, aside from an international propaganda campaign of gigantic proportions, also includes increasingly intense and shameless pressures against various governments that have maintained a friendly, or at least respectful, posture toward Nicaragua. A war that includes the search for popular discontent, promoting artificial shortages of basic goods and boycotting the revolutionary government's efforts to assure a fair distribution of those goods... A war that makes enormous efforts, through its best-known Nicaraguan agents, to create the image of a religious confrontation, domestically and internationally...

This war, that we denounce before the world, has prompted widespread international support for the Sandinista Popular Revolution. U.S. imperialism has been denounced and repudiated in the distant countries of Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, even in the United States itself; and our small country, revolutionary Nicaragua, has received and continues to receive a torrent of solidarity which includes offers to send brigades of volunteer combatants. Responding to the clamor of their peoples, many governments throughout the world have offered us their unconditional support...

Nicaragua takes up the weapons of war only to defend itself, but it is a staunch advocate of peace. For that reason, Nicaragua is always willing to hold talks with the Honduran government or with the U.S. government; willing to seek solutions within the terms proposed by prestigious countries of this continent and Europe.

There is one unrenounceable prerequisite to these solutions: the unconditional withdrawal of the genocidal forces introduced into Nicaragua by the United States and an end to the constant border attacks conducted by Somocista counterrevolutionaries from Honduran territory with military support provided by the Honduran armed forces...

We cannot fail to mention to our people the possibility that the Honduran Army, obeying orders of the U.S. government, might take new steps toward an aggression against Nicaragua. Nor can we ignore the dangerous possibility of a direct U.S. military intervention in Central America aimed at preventing the victory of the Salvadoran people and exterminating the Popular Sandinista Revolution. We should, therefore, be prepared for all possible events; confront the first stage of U.S. aggression, the invasion of genocidal forces, with all our might; prepare ourselves for an eventual aggression on the part of the Honduran Army, directed by the U.S. government; and, be prepared to defend our national sovereignty, even against a direct U.S. intervention.

All men and women of this land of heroes, all the resources of the country, will be concentrated on the defense of our homeland, even though this may mean greater difficulties for the development of our economic programs and more serious limitations on the availability of material resources to be distributed in the country...

In these difficult circumstances, our Revolution will defend the strategic model of non-alignment, mixed economy and political pluralism—which includes the commitment to hold elections in 1985—which the invaders are trying to destroy...

Nicaraguans:

Let us unite in the defense of our nation. Workers, campesinos, students, intellectuals, professionals, businesspeople, men and women will surely come together in formidable unity to defend the land of their ancestors, the nation's dignity and unrenounceable right to be the forger of the homeland's destiny.

We will confront this new challenge that tests the wisdom and courage of the Nicaraguans. We are going to win, just as the indomitable and ragged soldiers of Sandino won yesterday. We will triumph as did Carlos Fonseca's guerrillas and the combatants of the final insurrection...

We will win because we march with the tide of history, because we are defending a just cause, because we are defending the cause of America...

—Commanders of the Revolution Tomás Borge Martínez, Victor Tirado López, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, Humberto Ortega Saavedra, Henry Ruiz Hernández, Jaime Wheelock Román, Bayardo Arce Castaño, Carlos Núñez Tellez, Luis Carrión Cruz

Managua, April 8, 1983

Year of Struggle for Peace and Sovereignty

CULTURE IN THE NEW NICARAGUA

*Today the dawn
Ceased being a temptation
Tomorrow some day a new sun will rise
That will illuminate
All the land
Which the heroes and martyrs
Bequeathed to us
With abundant rivers
Of milk and honey*

—FSLN Anthem

A cultural transformation is taking place in Nicaragua today. In every corner of the country, in every aspect of life there are unmistakable signs of this change, the most profound cultural transformation in the country's history. It's a transformation completely bound up with the revolution; it is a transformation that has shattered the yoke of the U.S./Somoza alliance and given birth to the new Nicaragua.

It's no surprise that Nicaragua would undergo deep cultural changes once the popular movement won power. Culture is, after all, a reflection and expression of what

political and class forces rule the society at any given stage in history.

In the days of Somoza, the culture of Nicaragua was stagnant and distorted. This was, first and foremost, a reflection of the deadening stranglehold of U.S. imperialism on the country. Nicaragua's culture was a culture of subsistence, in which ignorance and repression encouraged passivity and escapism. U.S. cultural penetration was massive and fostered a distorted self-image and consciousness among the Nicaraguan people who, in great numbers, could neither read nor write.

Today, after the overthrow of the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship, a completely new drama commands the stage. The Nicaraguan people are taking up their new roles as rulers. There are signs of this everywhere—billboards that once advertised U.S. products have been replaced by vivid signs which proudly state, “Compañero—Usted está entrando a Managua, capital de Nicaragua Libre” (Compañero, You are entering Managua, capital of Free Nicaragua) and “Contrarevolucionarios—1000 de ojos los miran!” (Counterrevolutionaries—1000 eyes are watching you!); former mansions of the Somoza family and their cronies are now used as houses of culture, headquarters for mass organizations and government offices, etc. In short, a flourishing and many-sided cultural movement is underway in Nicaragua which mirrors the basic changes which are the fruits of an arduous 20-year struggle.

Of course, material survival is the basis of all human culture, the precondition for any other cultural advancement. It is the structural changes brought about by the revolution that have put Nicaraguan culture on a new foundation. The hunger and disease which plagued the people of Nicaragua under Somoza have been defeated through land reform, immunization programs, improved sanitation, etc. The bedrock for the people's advancement has been laid. How does the new culture get built upon this bedrock? Illiteracy must be eliminated. Previously widespread illiteracy placed a severe limitation on the Nicaraguan people's cultural development. The struggle against ignorance and illiteracy had to be fought, a task taken up within months after the July 1979 victory. Called “the second liberation war,” the Literacy Crusade fought to equip the people to use the power they had wrested, breaking with passivity and unleashing massive participation in the revolutionary process. This “dawn of the people” also established the basis for ongoing education and cultural development. Education is rapidly expanding on all levels, and greater numbers of people are being trained to take up the scientific and technological challenges the country faces. Once the revolution accomplished these initial gains, it meant that schools and libraries, as well as sports and recreational facilities have become accessible to the broad masses of Nicaragua for the first time.



Photo by Margaret Randall

CREATING A NEW CULTURE

However, Nicaragua's cultural growth is not limited to these social transformations. The "arts" of Nicaragua are witnessing a virtual explosion of creativity and participation in all disciplines and forms. This explosion has two aspects: traditional Nicaraguan culture, ignored under Somoza, is being unearthed and revitalized; and new cultural forms are being developed which, along with the traditional, are being woven into a single new revolutionary Nicaraguan culture.

Painstaking attention has been paid to unearthing centuries-old traditions that had been lost or greatly undervalued, bringing to light the people's roots and appropriating their collective history through the revival of folk arts such as the vivid embroidery of the city of Masaya and the stark primitive paintings of the island of Solentiname, the striking carved saddlery of the region of Esteli and the somber masks of the *barrio* of Monimbó, as well as uncovering a number of archaeological treasures. Fighters of the People's Literacy Army in 1980 not only taught people how to read, but listened eagerly with tape recorders to the oral histories of thousands of peasants, jotted down their legends, and put their poems to paper. The struggle of the government to incorporate the culture of long-neglected minority tribes led to writing down the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama languages and traditions for the first time. In these ways, the new culture takes what was formerly fragmented and isolated and establishes in its place a single national culture rich in varied traditions.

At the same time, cultural forms once limited to the very privileged—symphony, ballet, and theater—have been brought into the new mainstream, breaking the former class barriers by creating a National School of Dance and a National Symphony that can at last be called genuinely Nicaraguan.

These more traditional forms of culture are being consciously interwoven with the new and experimental, much of which has its roots in the protracted armed struggle against Somoza. An example of this legacy are the songs of the insurrectionary stage, such as *Guitarra Armada*. Written by leading singer/songwriter Carlos Mejia Godoy, *Guitarra Armada* is a group of songs that explicitly taught people how to dismantle, clean, and discharge arms and make explosives in the battle to overthrow Somoza. As for the M-1 rifle, goes one of these songs, "You don't have to be learned to dismantle it, but in every step, you have to be careful!"

Building on this tradition, new forms abound in every arena of communications and artistic life. Media that was used before the revolution to deaden and pacify today has become a means of awakening the people and teaching them. The Sandinista Radio, Sandinista Television System, and the Nicaraguan Film Institute project a very different image of what it means to be a Nicaraguan worker or peasant, and have broken with the old commercialized view of "entertainment." For example, the Nicaraguan Film Institute's mobile film units have traveled extensively throughout the country, to the remotest

villages, doing 6,000 presentations of films to 1 1/2 million viewers—in a country of 2 1/2 million.

In every art discipline there is a flowering underway, as the numbers of people involved in graphic arts, photography, dance, and poetry expands, while the artistic standards for this work are constantly being raised. Poetry, for example, has become a part of daily life. First, in the massive popularization of the poetry of Rubén Dario, the national poet of Nicaragua, whose name honors the highest cultural order granted by the National Government of Reconstruction. The flourishing of poetry is further inspired by Ernesto Cardenal, leading poet and Jesuit priest who serves as the Minister of Culture. Since the revolution, scores of new poets have been published, including a wealth of work from women poets that include Gioconda Belli, Rosario Murillo, and Daisy Zamora. Poetry readings are common in every community and in political events, and poetry workshops take place all over, including within the ranks of the Sandinista People's Army. The pages of *Ventana*, the cultural supplement of the FSLN's paper *Barricada*, burst with new poetry coming from workers, women, and youth. People have something to say.

Is this great flowering simply a spontaneous renaissance?

No, the development of a popular cultural movement, and the nurturing of that movement, is a conscious activity of the National Government of Reconstruction. In fact, this is what makes it so successful. The government considers this movement to be an important gauge and reflection of the thoughts and feelings of the Nicaraguan masses, and thus encourages and fosters it with great seriousness and creativity.

An example of this was the government's response to Reagan's cut-off of aid for wheat in 1980. Under the slogan of *Pan Con Dignidad* (Bread with Dignity), the government launched a highly successful Corn Campaign in which the centuries-old relationship to *maíz*, corn, was carefully revitalized through Corn Festivals. In these festivals, held throughout the country, a multicultural celebration of corn took place. Nicaraguans danced the ancient harvesting dances, and donned once again masks made of corn husks. Pictures were painted of *campesinos*, or peasants, gathering corn, and new songs were sung about the meaning of this staple. Through contests a myriad of corn recipes were revived, in an effort to renew an essential part of the culture while effectively breaking Nicaraguan dependency on U.S.-supplied wheat. In this way the Nicaraguan people fed themselves with their own resources, acknowledging themselves as "children of corn," who would, despite U.S. designs, survive "as our grandparents did/With corn fermented/In the blood of our heroes."

It takes a great deal to organize this kind of cultural movement. A number and range of organizational vehicles are encouraged to allow the fullest possible participation in the cultural life of the country. These forms include the extensive and complex Ministry of Culture, the Sandinista Cultural Workers Association (which



brings together the unions of artists, musicians, writers, photographers, dancers, and circus workers), the cultural front of the Sandinista Youth Organization, and Popular Councils of Culture.

THE NEW SONG MOVEMENT

Special attention is being paid to the New Song Movement, a crucial component of the new Nicaraguan culture. A section of the Ministry of Culture (called the Nicaraguan Cultural Recording Company or ENIGRAC), was established to record and distribute the new music and yet another section to popularize it through events and festivals. The New Song Movement is a deeply internationalist movement, with its roots in the Nueva Trova movement of Cuba and the New Song Movement of Chile, and through it Nicaragua clearly identifies as a

Latin American country which shares a common history of oppression and resistance with countries throughout the Americas. A movement of both professionals and *aficionados*, or amateurs, the New Song Movement is made up of a host of groups that include Grupo Pancasan, Igñi Tawanka, Los de Palacagüina, Ocho de Noviembre, Grupo Mancotal, and others. Members of this movement participate in national campaigns like the Corn Campaign as well as in efforts to synthesize and popularize the country's history such as the *Cantata a Sandino*. This cantata, which drew on the heritage of the work of Brecht and the *Cantata de Santa Maria de Iquique* of Chile, was written by Government Junta member Sergio Ramirez for the first anniversary of the revolution. The *Cantata a Sandino* brought together 150 ballet dancers, narrators, musicians, actors, and technicians, to create a spectacular multicultural 2-hour history of Nicaragua's revolutionary struggle.

The character of Nicaragua's New Song Movement, and the priority given to culture by the revolutionary government, is clearly revealed in the Festival of New Song held in Nicaragua in spring 1983. Such *encuentros*, or festivals, are a tradition of the international new song movement, and have taken place in Cuba regularly and in Chile during the Allende period. Hosting the 1983 festival posed serious challenges for Nicaragua. Despite intensifying U.S. military aggressions, Nicaragua's New Song Movement brought to Managua 200 musicians from 16 Latin American countries for six days of sharing work and discussing the role and future of the new song movement internationally, especially its role in the struggle for peace in Central America. Over 100,000 people gathered enthusiastically in Managua's July 19th Plaza to hear and support the movement's message. The Festival raised the demand for peace and anti-intervention with an echoing voice, and established Nicaragua as a leading force for building a cultural movement of resistance and solidarity throughout the Americas.

The New Song Movement collectively raises the voice of the new Nicaragua, bringing it to every part of the country and to the world as well, playing a key role both internally and internationally in defending the Nicaraguan revolution.

Grupo Mancotal is an indispensable voice within this movement that sings out about the realities of life in Nicaragua, and the urgency of the struggle for peace and against U.S. intervention. "We are the center of America," they sing:

The most recent hope,
The same blood, the same feeling:
Free Homeland or Death!
If Nicaragua won,
El Salvador will win!
And Guatemala is preparing now
A thousand rifles of liberty.
We are the center of America,
We are the new dawn!

ABOUT GRUPO MANCOTAL

After the triumph of the revolution, through the Department of Music in the new Ministry of Culture, Luis Enrique Mejia Godoy was able to begin gathering the human resources to form Nicaragua's first experimental music group, named Mancotal for the mountain peak in the Las Segovias range at Jinotega where one of the revolutionary martyrs, "Danto" German Pomares, fell in battle. First, he talked to some old musical friends who recommended others with experience playing popular music, salsa, rock and dance music. Then he recruited a flutist and cellist from the National Symphony, giving the group a character and personality different from any other in Nicaragua until that time.

Almost immediately, the group was sent on tour out of Nicaragua, to help build solidarity with the revolution, and a song of theirs called "Josefina" (about the literacy campaign) became immensely popular. The FSLN and the government next gave them the task of helping create new work for the first—and later the second—anniversary of the victory of July 19th. All their experimentation and research had to be done while constantly touring, and in their brief existence they have covered every part of Nicaragua as well as travelled to Holland, Germany, Canada, Mexico, Costa Rica, Cuba and Belize, etc. Luis Enrique would like to see the group have much more time in the workshop, studying and doing investigations in order to continue building on what they have begun, and to experiment further with the incorporation of symphonic and electronic instruments along with some of the native instruments created by the people.

At the present moment, the group utilizes musical influences from folklore, Latin American popular music, jazz and rock music, the Cuban New Music, Chilean music, Calypso, the rhythms of the various popular dance forms, and adds to all this a lyrical content of contemporary political significance that speaks to the burning issues of the moment but also to the changing character of the people themselves, expressing their common experience in the revolutionary process.

ABOUT AND FROM THE MUSICIANS:

LUIS ENRIQUE MEJIA GODOY (lead voice, acoustic guitar) along with his brother Carlos, comes from the small border town of Somoto, near Honduras. "Our world," he says "was that of circus, of clowns, street vendors, puppets, people's musicians and street bands, of trios, strolling serenaders and marimba players. My father played accordion, piano, flute, guitar and marimba. To earn a living, my father made marimbas to sell, and he also worked as a Customs guard, sold cigars, raised chickens, rented bicycles, worked as a fisherman and—in the midst of all this and most wholeheartedly—as a musician. My mother told him not to teach us any music, and felt that we seven children must all become doctors, lawyers, architects and the like. This was in the 50's and 60's in a poor little town like Somoto! There was not even a high school there, and we had to go away to a priests' boarding school in Managua which was a terrible experience but where we learned a lot.

"Our family was a bit like the family circus of Somoto: build a park, dedicate a church tower, call the Mejia family! Take up a collection for whatever movement, call the Mejias. Solidarity began early with us!" But as the political situation heated up, Luis Enrique was forced to live for 12 years in exile in Costa Rica, where he helped to found the Costa Rican New Song Movement. Drawing from Nicaraguan, Central and South American and Caribbean popular and folkloric music, his compositions have had political and social content since 1970. At present he is not only director and lead singer with Grupo Mancotal but also director of ENIGRAC (Nicaraguan Cultural Recording Company). He also served as coordinator of the Festival of New Song in Spring '83.

EDGARD "GATO" AGUILAR (second voice, bongos, zampoña, back-up vocals) is an announcer at the Sandinista System Television in addition to his work with the group. He is a composer who comes from the Salsa music field.

HAROLD GONZALEZ HERRERA (saxophone, clarinet, zampoña, back-up vocals) started to play music in high school and went on to play in the Firemen's Band of his home town, Carazo, and in dance bands, etc. In 1976 he went to Venezuela where he worked at building solidarity with Nicaragua with a musical group called "Grupo Sandino." Returning to his homeland in 1979, he joined the Sandinista People's Army. "And here we are now, in *this* trench working for our people and the world, wherever we are needed, with our music."

SIXTO CAJINA M. (cello, back-up vocals) is a professor at the National School of Music in the Conservatory and came to Mancotal a couple of years back when it was still called the "Experimental Group." "I joined the group because I believe it is necessary to be a part of the revolutionary process within my profession of musician. Before, the Symphony Orchestra was not for the masses of people, to tell the truth, but rather for certain privileged rich people!"

ARMANDO IBARRA (bombo, special effects) is from a family of musicians, and was a combatant during the overthrow of Somoza. Now he is an under-secretary of the Sandinista People's Militia of his neighborhood, and according to Luis Enrique, the most politically and militarily developed comrade of the group.

LUIS EMILIO MARTINEZ RODRIGUEZ (electric bass, back-up vocals) has studied percussion since 1972, and has a degree as an agronomist. "I don't exercise my profession because this (music) calls me and I am in this. I've had problems with my family because here it was always said that musicians were vagabonds without jobs or income. I try to help make a better image, to help people understand that we are no more—or less—than cultural workers."

WEIMAR SERRANO (acoustic and electric piano, synthesizers) is a new member of the group with considerable experience in the field of Latin Popular music.

ALEJANDRO CHAMORRO TENORIO (congas) is in his early 20's and a student at the University who says, "More than anything I am attracted to playing music for solidarity with our people and the whole world!"

JOSE A. TENORIO (drums, timbales, voice, back-up vocals) began to play percussion at age eleven, but his parents were "sure I would die of hunger as a musician." He continued to struggle to teach himself to read and write music, and also to attend the University, where he studied business.

Side A, Band 1: (5:05)

UN SON PARA MI PUEBLO/

A SON FOR MY PEOPLE

Music & Lyrics: Luis Enrique Mejia G.

© 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

This *son* was created by Grupo Mancotal for the people who made the revolution in the first place, then the People's Militia which protects it, and finally the Sandinista Youth who will carry forward the reconstruction.

Luis Enrique Mejia Godoy tells us about the Nicaraguan development of the *son*:

Un son para mi pueblo, un son (4x)

*Yo sólo canto a mi pueblo,
Porque del pueblo es mi voz,
Del obrero, del campesino,
De todo el pueblo trabajador
Que es el motor de mi canto,
El alma de mi canción.*

Un son para mi pueblo, un son

*Yo le canto a esa simiente
Que en la lucha concretiza
Que hace el futuro presente
La Juventud Sandinista
Que con su ejemplo me inspira
Y madura en esta canción*

Un son para mi pueblo, un son

*Y si alguien quiere aprender
Cómo un pueblo se organiza
Que eche un ojo a las Milicias,
Que nadie va a detener!
Porque aquí el pueblo escribió
Su mejor canción!*

Because of the revolution, he had decided to drop his studies in order to dedicate himself to music.

RAUL MARTINEZ (first flute, arranger) is a student and professor of flute at the National School of Music and a founder of Mancotal. He defends the idea that one should enjoy the music created by the people themselves as well as that from the conservatory which, he says, "was made in many cases by people who had no choice but to sell their labor power to the rich and powerful in the past."

"We work with universal musical themes which include Latin Jazz, Afro-Latin American rhythms, Bolero and the music of *Palo de Mayo*, all of which have come to define the *son* of Nicaragua."

Over the music, Luis Enrique shouts "*inspiraciones*," or improvised encouragement for the musicians: "Good, now our people dedicate our invincible *son* to the counter-revolutionaries! *Dale duro* (give it to 'em)!" And all this lets us know that the most urgent message of this *son*, finally, is the defense of the revolution.

A son for my people, a son (4x)

*I only sing for my people
Because from the people comes my voice:
From the worker, the farmer,
From all the working people
Who are the motor of my singing,
The soul of my song.*

A son for my people, a son

*I sing to that seed
Which was formed in the struggle,
That has made the future present:
The Sandinista Youth,
Whose example is my inspiration
Which ripens with this song.*

A son for my people, a son

*And if someone wants to learn
How a people organizes itself,
Take a look at the Militia,
Who can't be stopped by anyone!
Because here the people have written
Their finest song!*

Side A, Band 2: (4:55)

A SANDINO/TO SANDINO

Music & Lyrics: Edgard Aguilar

© 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

The opening musical theme was written by Carlos Mejia Godoy as part of the "Cantata for Sandino," created by large numbers of cultural workers coming together to mount a fitting celebration for the first anniversary of the victory.

This song is a hymn to the land, national unity and love of

country, put in the context of the spirit of Augusto Cesar Sandino, beloved "General of Niquinohomo" (his home town) who led an "army of free men" made up of Nicaraguan peasants and workers along with other internationalists like his friend, Farabundo Marti, leader of the Salvadoran revolution. These valiant forerunners of today's struggle fought for eight years until Sandino was gunned down by the Somocistas of that period. The chorus of the song is a quote from his legacy.

*Es el canto de mi tierra,
Pedacito Nicaragua,
Es el canto de la sierra,
De los ríos y montañas.*

*Ahora que este día
La libertad impera
Vivamos bien unidos
En sólo una bandera
Ahí viene el sol brillando
Y con el nuevo amanecer
Y ya nuestro camino
Para siempre vencer!*

*Sé nacionalista
Patria y libertad
Sandino ya lo dijo
General de Niquinohomo
Y de los hombres libres
Que luchan por su nación
Para obtener la paz
Y la liberación!*

*"Mi causa
Es la causa de mi pueblo,
La causa de América,
La causa de todos los pueblos oprimidos!"*

*This is the song of my land,
Tiny Nicaragua,
This is the song of the sierra,
Of the rivers and mountains.*

*Now that, this day,
Freedom reigns,
Let us live united
Under a single flag.
Here comes the shining sun,
With the new dawn,
And now our path is
Forever to win!*

*I know love of country,
Homeland and liberty.
Sandino said it before,
Our General from Niquinohomo,
General of those free people
Who fight for their nation,
To win peace
And liberation!*

*(Spoken)
"My cause is the cause of my people,
The cause of America,
The cause of all oppressed peoples!"*

Side A, Band 3: (3:55)
**UN GIGANTE QUE DESPIERTA/
AN AWAKENING GIANT**
Music & Lyrics: Luis Enrique Mejía G.
© 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua has had a completely different history from the rest of the country because of its geographical isolation but also because, in contrast to the Pacific region which was colonized by the Spanish, it was colonized by the English who did little to build an infrastructure, looted the resources and left almost nothing behind.

The song speaks to the awakening consciousness of the Miskito, Sumo, Rama, as well as the Spanish and English speaking peoples who live on the Atlantic Coast. It celebrates their new-found power and wealth, and also their growing unity. The music blends the *calypso* of Jamaica and Trinidad with the Afro-Cuban *son*, both of which have historically proven unacceptable to Nicaragua's ruling classes because they involve too much communication, with lyrics which were too outspokenly critical.

*Por esta tierra pasó
El pedernal y la miel pasó
El oro, el jade pasó
Pero nada se quedó
Sólo quedó el duradero
Residuo de las lenguas
Miskito, sumo, y el rama
Que junto al criollo
Se quedó.*

*Donde no hubo ciudades
Ni templos ceremoniales quedó.*



Photo by Margaret Randall

*Through this land, flint has passed
And honey passed,
Gold and jade passed,
But nothing remained.
All that remained was the lasting residues
Of the languages:
Miskito, Sumo and Rama,
Which, along with the Creole,
Remained.*

*Where there were no cities,
Not even ceremonial temples remained.*

*Solamente se quedó
La yuca y el pejibaye
Entre blasfemias y rezos
Del inglés y del español
Un país distinto al mío
Nació en mi propio corazón!*

*Un gigante que despierta es la costa
Un gigante que ya nadie detiene!*

*Ala, ala, alalalala. . .
Un gigante que despierta*

*Mayaya la sin ki
Mayaya o*

*Multirracial, multilingüe,
Multifacético, semiacuático,
Verde por todas partes
La Costa Atlántica
Se nos metió en las venas
Y nació este son.*

Un gigante que despierta. . .

*All that remained was
Yucca and pejibaye.
Between blasphemies and prayers
In English and Spanish,
A country different from my own
Was born in my own heart!*

*An awakening giant is the Coast,
A giant that cannot be stopped!*

*Ala, ala, alalalalalala. . .
An awakening giant!*

*Mayaya la sin ki
Mayaya o*

*Multiracial, multilingual,
Multifaceted, semi-aquatic,
Green all 'round,
The Atlantic Coast
Got into our veins
And this son was born.*

An awakening giant. . .

Side A, Band 4: (3:54)
UN NUEVO AMANECER/A NEW DAWN
Music & Lyrics: Luis Enrique Mejía G.
© 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

The first societies of antiquity to develop effective use of the land and a resulting cultural unity in what is now known as Central America and Southern Mexico were known collectively as Mesoamerica. Now, on the ruins of all that was

built at the dawn of civilization and later bled dry by the "imperial eagle," the people are beginning to build the first of the new societies in the Western Hemisphere to be organized free from exploitation. "Our America," in the phrase of the early Cuban revolutionary José Martí, will open its frontiers in each country according to the internal logic of its own political development, but what the colonizers split asunder the new era will rejoin as the day of the "new dawn" unfolds.

*Somos la garganta de América,
El nuevo canto de América,
El puño cerrado, el grito organizado,
El sol venciendo a la tormenta.*

*Somos el vientre de América,
El nuevo sueño de América,
La guerra decidida,
Más firme y combativa,
Contra el águila imperial.*

*Somos el centro de América,
La más reciente esperanza,
Tierras de volcanes en actividad,
Somos solidaridad!*

*Somos el centro de América,
La más reciente esperanza,
La misma sangre, el mismo sentir,
Patria Libre O Morir!*

*Si Nicaragua venció,
El Salvador vencerá!
Y Guatemala prepara ya
Mil fusiles de libertad!
Somos el centro de América,
Somos el nuevo amanecer!*

*We are the throat of America,
The new song of America,
The closed fist, the organized shout,
The sun overcoming the storm!*

*We are the womb of America,
The new dream of America,
The resolute war
Ever more firm and combative,
Against the imperial eagle.*

*We are the center of America,
The most recent hope,
Land of active volcanoes,
We are solidarity!*

*We are the center of America,
The most recent hope,
The same blood, the same feeling:
Free Homeland or Death!*

*If Nicaragua won,
El Salvador will win!
And Guatemala is preparing now
A thousand rifles of liberty!
We are the center of America,
We are the new dawn!*

Side B, Band 1: (3:09)
**NICARAGUA, TE CANTO/
 I SING TO YOU, NICARAGUA**
 Music & Lyrics: José A. Tenorio
 © 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

In a *salsa* mood, this love song goes beyond the individual and personal to a collective love of the land, the people and

*Te canto, porque Nicaragua,
 Tú eres mi mayor encanto.
 Quiero inspirarme
 Con la vista de tus campos,
 Campos que brillan
 Para nuestro deleitar.*

*Te siento en mi corazón,
 Te juro que no miento,
 Y es que sin ti
 Mi vida es un gran desaliento
 Como alguien que siente
 La separación de amor.*

*Es por eso
 Que en toda lucha hay que sufrir
 Para después
 En nuestras manos recibir.*

*Ya pudo ser la libertad de mi pueblo
 Donde al fin se guiará la meta
 En contra del mal vivido,
 Y tendrás esa verdad de haber construido
 Y ya verás que la bondad es el camino,
 Para conseguir la paz de esa liberación.*

*Te vuelvo a cantar para que pienses
 Que en la vida existe también un altar,
 Cristo que derramó su sangre
 Para el futuro de la humanidad.*

*Nicaragua te canto, sí, sí!!!
 Te quiero y te canto,
 Nicaragua te canto, sí, sí!!!
 Te defiando y te canto.*

*Y de esta Revolución,
 Que es toda corazón,
 Y si persistes en la lucha
 Le harás un bien a tu pueblo.*

*Y vivirás en un sin fin
 De esa felicidad
 Que todo el mundo tendrá,
 Cuando exista el poder
 De la linda Bondad.*

the revolution. The singer and percussionist, José Tenorio, directs our attention to the goal (the *meta* or guiding vision) of defending goodness against evil, which he identifies with the defense of the revolution itself. He expands on the religious idea of a Christ who died to redeem us from our past sins to a larger vision which includes a better future for humanity here on earth.

*I sing to you because, Nicaragua,
 You are my greatest enchantment!
 I want to be inspired by
 The sight of your fields,
 Fields which shine
 For our delight.*

*I feel you in my heart,
 I swear I'm not lying,
 Because without you
 My life would be empty,
 Like someone who feels
 The separation of love.*

*That is why
 In every struggle there must be suffering,
 So that later
 In our hands, we will be able to receive.*

*The freedom of my people becomes possible
 When at last we are guided by our goal:
 To oppose the living evil!
 And you will have this truth
 Of having created,
 And you will see that goodness is the path
 To achieve the peace of this freedom.*

*I sing again to you, so that you understand
 That in life an altar also exists,
 That Christ shed his blood
 For the future of humanity.*

*Nicaragua I sing to you, yes, yes!
 I love you and I sing to you.
 Nicaragua, I sing to you, yes, yes!
 I defend you and I sing to you.*

*And of this revolution
 That comes from the whole heart,
 If you carry on the struggle
 You will do good for your people.*

*And you will live forever
 In that happiness
 That everyone will have
 When the power of
 Beautiful Goodness exists.*

Side B, Band 2: (4:15)
**BALADA CAMPESTRE/
 BALLAD OF THE COUNTRYSIDE**
 Music: Antonio Morales Lazo
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This instrumental contains a strong political commentary through its use of various influences and forms. First, we hear the African influence in the bongos mixed with the romantic

Spanish guitar of the serenade in a *bolero-son*; later, an Argentine *tango* is evoked by the use of reeds and strings. The trap drums suggest the influence of rock and soul music, joined at last by the excitement of Brazilian *samba*. Taken altogether, we are reminded of Simón Bolívar and Che Guevara who insisted that the future of the entire region would rest on the internationalism and the unity of all its peoples.

Side B, Band 3: (5:05)

ES MAYO, MI AMOR (PAN CON DIGNIDAD)/
IT'S MAY, MY LOVE (BREAD WITH DIGNITY)

Music & Lyrics: Luis Enrique Mejía G.

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In 1980 the U.S. cut off a \$9.2 million loan slated to underwrite the sale of wheat to Nicaragua at precisely the moment when the country's wheat supply was nearly exhausted. The Reagan administration had designed this to deal a destabilizing blow to the fledgling revolution. The Government of National Reconstruction, however, launched a campaign which was to transform a setback into a people's victory. Dependency on wheat was a fairly recent phenomenon introduced with the coming of foreign capital. The ancient goddess of corn, *Xilomen*, on the other hand, had provided the bread of life to her people for a thousand years before the arrival of the U.S. And so *Xilomen* was summoned again, through a nationwide Festival of Corn! The state grain company made corn available at wholesale prices and a contest was launched to rescue the hundreds of ancient local and regional dishes, desserts and drinks, tortillas and other staples made with this versatile grain, as well as to create hundreds of new ones. No plastic or metal utensils were permitted: only wood, *jicaro* and other native materials and homegrown things could be used in the preparation. All this was accompanied by a cultural campaign organized by the Ministry of Culture. The high point of the campaign was May 4, the National Day of Dignity, so named to commemorate that date in 1927 when Sandino refused to sign the infamous *Pact of Espino Negro* which essentially handed over Nicaraguan sovereignty to the U.S. through its special envoy H.L. Stimson. This refusal signalled Sandino's rebellion in earnest, and the Army of Free Men was formed shortly afterward. This love song celebrates the Day of Dignity and the joy of winning "bread with dignity."

Photo by Margaret Randall



*Es mayo, mi amor,
Y en mayo
Con las primeritas
Lluvias del mes
Con ese olorcito
A tierra mojada
Crecerá el maíz
En tierra liberada.*

*Es mayo, mi amor,
Y en mayo
Seremos felices
Aunque no haya pan
Y una luna llena
De maíz tiernito
Tendrá el muchachito
Que haremos los dos.*

*Es mayo, mi amor,
Y un cuatro de mayo
Es el día de la dignidad
Entonces yo te prometo
Que este amor más firme
Que nunca será. . .*

*It's May, my love,
And in May
With the very first
Showers of the month
With this fragrance
Of damp earth
The corn will grow
In liberated land.*

*It's May, my love,
And in May
We will be happy
Even if there is no bread,
And the little child
We will make together
Will have a full moon
Of tender corn.*

*It's May, my love,
And a 4th of May
Is the day of dignity,
So I promise you
That this love is as strong
As it will ever be. . .*

*Es cuatro
De mayo eterno
Es un dieciocho de amor
De mil novecientos siempre
Porque nuevamente
Mi pueblo triunfó,
Porque nuevamente
El amor venció!*
Queremos pan con dignidad!

*It's the 4th
Of eternal May,
It's an 18th of love,
Of 1900 always,
Because once again
My people triumphed,
Because once again
Love won out!*
We want bread with dignity!

Side B, Band 4: (5:22)
SOMOS HIJOS DEL MAIZ
WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF CORN
Music & Lyrics: Luis Enrique Mejia G.
© 1981 Ocarina-ENIGRAC

The musical introduction here suggests nature and the indigenous people, mixed with the "menace" of discord on the strings and reeds. The spoken introduction tells of the ancient resistance of the people, who survived on corn in the

mountains when the Spanish came. The synthesis throughout of the triple meters and 3/4 time of Indian dances with the *cancion protesta* (protest song) feeling, piano and trap drums, is a comment in itself. Over the later instrumentals the words tell us: "We must seed the land, *campañeros*, we must seed the new corn, and the new nation that is growing. For the blood of the heroes and the martyrs, we must be more new, corn-new! Comrades, we must seed the land, we must seed so that no corner of the country is left unplanted. . ."

*Si nos quitan el pan
Nos veremos en la obligación
De sobrevivir
Como lo hicieron nuestros abuelos
Con el maíz fermentado
En la sangre de los héroes.*

*If they take away our bread,
We will be obliged
To survive
As our grandparents did
With corn fermented
In the blood of our heroes.*

*Con el maíz sembrado
Desde siempre
Desde antes que ensangrentaran
Nuestra tierra
Los cuervos, los piratas,
La cruz, la espada,
Y el capital.*

*With the corn planted
From forever,
From even before they
Drenched our land in blood,
The ravens, the pirates,
The cross, the sword,
—and capital.*

*Somos hijos del maíz
Constructores de surcos y de sueños
Y aunque somos un país pequeño
Ya contamos con más de mil inviernos
Un millón de manos floreciendo
En la tarea interminable de sembrar
De abril a mayo
Labrando, sembrando,
Tapiscando, desgranando,
Almacenando para la guerra y la paz!*

*We are the children of corn,
Makers of furrows and dreams
And even though we are a small country,
We have had more than a thousand winters,
A million flowering hands,
In the unending task of planting
From April to May,
Working, planting,
Harvesting, shelling,
Storing for war—and peace!*

*Chicha de maíz, chicha pujagua,
Chicha raizuda, pelo de maíz, el atooool!
Chingue de maíz, nacatamal,
Atolillo, perrerreque!
Tamalpisque, cosa de horno,
Pinolillo, pinol, pozol,
Elote, chilote, tortilla, guirila,
Yoltazca, montuca, empanada.*

*Chicha de maíz, chicha pujagua,
Chicha raizuda, pelo de maíz, el atooool!
Chingue de maíz, nacatamal,
Atolillo, perrerreque!
Tamalpisque, cosa de horno,
Pinolillo, pinol, pozol,
Elote, chilote, tortilla, guirila,
Yoltazca, montuca, empanada.*

*Es decir el macizo
E irreversible
Alimento del pueblo.*

*In other words, the solid
And irreversible
Nourishment of the people!*

*De esta manera
Seremos más nuevos,
De esta manera
Seremos maíz nuevo!*

*In this way
We will be new,
In this way,
We will be new corn!*



RESOURCES ON NICARAGUA

Nicaraguan Embassy
1627 New Hampshire Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
202-387-4371

ORGANIZATIONS

Friends of Nicaraguan Culture
1390 Market Street Suite 908
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-561-9060
National network of cultural workers
in support of Nicaragua.

**National Network in Solidarity with
the Nicaraguan People**
930 F Street Room 720
Washington, D.C. 20004
202-223-2328
National network of organizations doing Nicaraguan solidarity
work.

Nicaraguan Interfaith Council for Action (NICA)
942 Market Street Room 709
San Francisco, CA
415-433-6057
Center of ecumenical work in support of Nicaragua.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

**Triumph of the People; The Sandinista Revolution in
Nicaragua**, by George Black. Zed Press, London, 1981.
Most thoroughgoing exposition and analysis in English of
Nicaragua's revolutionary struggle against Somoza and the
development of the Popular Sandinista Revolution since the
July, 1979 victory.

Sandino, by Gregorio Selzer. Monthly Review Press, New
York, 1981.
A historical analysis of U.S. imperialism in Nicaragua and
Sandino's struggle against it.

Nicaragua June 1978-July 1979, by Susan Meiselas. Pantheon
Books, New York, 1981.
Photographic essay on the insurrectionary stage.

**Now We Can Speak; A Journey Through the New Nica-
ragua**, by Frances Moore Lappé and James Collins. Food First,
Institute for Food and Development Policy, San Francisco,
1982.
A firsthand account of Nicaraguan's daily lives. Useful bib-
liography and resources section.

What Difference Could a Revolution Make? by James Collins. Food First, Institute for Food and Development Policy, San Francisco, 1982.

Agrarian reform in Nicaragua today and its impact on this largely agricultural society.

Target Nicaragua, Special Issue of NACLA, Vol. XVI #1 Jan./Feb. 1982.

An extensive examination of U.S. counterrevolutionary strategy towards Nicaragua.

Zero Hour and other Documentary Poems, by Ernesto Cardenal. New Directions Books, New York, 1980.

Recent poems by a leading poet and Nicaragua's Minister of Culture.

Sandino's Daughters; Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle, by Margaret Randall. New Star Books, Vancouver/Toronto, Canada, 1981.

An important glimpse of Nicaraguan women's lives through extensive interviews.

NEWSPAPERS/PERIODICALS

Barricada Internacional, International newsweekly of the FSLN, available in English or Spanish from Barricada Internacional, Apartado #576, Managua, Nicaragua, \$12/yr.

Nicaragua Update. Bimonthly newsletter of the Nicaragua Interfaith Council for Action (NICA), 942 Market Street, San Francisco, CA. \$7.00/yr.

Nicaraguan Perspectives. Quarterly journal of social, political and cultural developments in Nicaragua and Central America. Nicaragua Information Center, 2103 Woolsey Street, Berkeley, CA 94705. \$10/yr.

North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) Report on the Americas. Bimonthly news and analysis on Latin and Central America and the Caribbean. 151 West 19th Street, New York, New York 10011. \$15/yr.

Voices from Nicaragua. Cultural magazine drawing on translations of current material from Nicaragua, 3411 West Diversey, Chicago, IL 60647. \$.75/issue.

Central America Historical Institute Monthly Bulletin. Monthly news and analysis about Central America. Central America Historic Institute, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. 20057. Available in English, Spanish, and German. \$25/yr.

FILMS/VIDEO

ComuNica
P.O. Box 612
Cathedral Station
New York, New York 10025
212-243-2678

Write for catalog of films from Nicaragua's Film Institute, as well as other film and video about Nicaragua.

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