

THE CAMPESINO ROAD TO SOCIALISM? THE SANDINISTAS AND RURAL CO-OPERATIVES

Gary Ruchwarger

In the agricultural countries of the periphery, revolutions have generally been based on a wide class alliance comprising those sectors known as the 'third social force.' Every analysis of the popular character of a revolutionary process implies raising the question of the class nature of the state, and what system of alliances it represents. Such an analysis also entails the evolution of the country's correlation of forces and its relation to external enemies, as well as to imperialist aggression which nearly always accompanies liberation struggles.

The Sandinista revolution must be analyzed with all these considerations in mind. The insurrection against the Somoza dictatorship triumphed as a result of the convergence of struggles waged by the popular urban sectors, the peasantry, the rural proletariat, and radicalized sectors of the petit-bourgeoisie—all headed by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), and in alliance with the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie.² The post-triumph changes in the revolution's social base cannot be understood apart from the class struggle within the country, a class struggle which has been sharply influenced by the development of imperialism's counter-revolutionary project. The war and the economic crisis, the principal results of this project, accentuate the social contradictions in Nicaragua and have generated the search for new forms of political and economic survival.

Of course, the war and the economic crisis directly affect the debate over how to institutionalize popular power.³ While some believe that the aggression is forcing the Nicaraguan revolution to depart more and more from the model of a participatory democracy and a mixed economy, we argue that, on the contrary, the possibilities of resisting the aggression and confronting the economic crisis increase to the extent that the popular character of the revolution deepens.

Indeed, this essay makes the case that the Sandinista attempt to empower Nicaragua's poor peasantry via rural co-operativization shows that a mutually reinforcing relationship between the party, the state, and the masses can greatly strengthen a revolutionary process facing sustained military and economic attack. Because Nicaragua's rural co-operative movement cannot be dissociated from the efforts to involve the country's

peasantry in the structural transformation of the countryside, we begin with accounts of how the FSLN organized the peasantry against the Somoza dictatorship and how the 'campesinos' helped shape the post-victory agrarian reform.

The Sandinistas and the Peasantry before July 19, 1979

Of the 500,000 Nicaraguans engaged in agriculture at the end of the Somoza dictatorship, approximately twenty per cent were landless wage workers who could find employment only four months of the year during the coffee, sugar cane, and cotton harvests. These agricultural workers were primarily victims of a period of expanded cotton production in the 1950s and 1960s, when landowners expelled tenants and sharecroppers from the haciendas: similar 'land clearance' occurred in the sixties and seventies with the expansion of cattle ranches. In addition, the vast majority of peasants who possessed land did not have sufficient land to meet their subsistence needs. Consequently, they were compelled to work for the big landowners during the harvest season. In total, almost eighty per cent of the rural labour force was engaged in wage labour.⁴

Orlando Nuñez, a Sandinista economist, points out that this agricultural work force was characterized by a forced mobility:

Although the seasonally-employed agricultural proletariat might be the most numerous group during four months of the year. . . , they survive unemployed or as semiproletarians, going from the cotton, coffee, and sugar harvests on the plantations back to their peasant plots, from the countryside to the city where they struggle for survival, unemployed or underemployed.⁵

This very mobility tended to draw together some of the most oppressed sectors of the population. Deere and Marchetti note that most peasants shared the same fate as the rural workers:

Middle peasant farmers who have sufficient access to land are organizationally isolated from one another. While they are also exploited by merchants and usurers, their exploitation is not so easily identified. In contrast, the vast sector of smallholders without sufficient access to land migrated for four months out of the year to the harvests to engage in wage work. There they lived in the most wretched conditions and worked 12 to 15 hours a day picking coffee or cotton only to be cheated out of a day's work by crooked measuring scales. For these months of the year, their conditions were one and the same with the landless rural workers and those workers either permanently employed on the haciendas or who were renters.⁶

In short, 'the material conditions for the rural worker-peasant alliance were provided by the pattern of Nicaraguan agrarian capitalist development'.⁷

Although the FSLN sought to develop a rural worker-peasant alliance based on the two classes' common interests, its efforts to organize peasants and rural workers had only mixed results in the 1960s. Between 1964 and 1967 urban cadres made important contacts with the peasant sector in the northern region of the country. The Sandinistas studied the peasants' problems and attempted to organize a revolutionary movement in the countryside. During this period, however, the FSLN was unable adequately to mobilize the peasantry, and the low level of political activity that did occur failed to gather strength.

The FSLN's first real successes in the countryside occurred a decade later in the north-central region of the country, once Sandino's base of operations. In 1974 German Pomares, a Sandinista leader of peasant origin, established *guerrillitas de campo*, units of part-time peasant guerrillas who later served as a rearguard for major guerrilla actions.⁸ By the end of 1976 the drive to incorporate peasants into the armed struggle had gained considerable momentum; Hugo Torres of the FSLN would later comment that the six urban cadres in Victor Tirado's rural guerrilla column were considered an excessive number.⁹

During these same years two religious groups, the Agrarian Promotion and Educational Centre (CEPA) and the 'Delegates of the Word', made the first concrete attempts to ameliorate the living and working conditions of Nicaraguan peasants and agricultural workers.¹⁰ CEPA, founded by the Jesuit order of Catholic priests in 1969, was a rural pastoral programme that trained leaders in the theory and practice of organizing 'grassroots communities'. From 1970 to 1976, CEPA conducted workshops mainly for priests and coffee plantation workers. These workshops attempted to integrate biblical reflection and technical agricultural training. Those who attended these training sessions later shared their skills and helped expand social awareness within their own communities.

Many of the participants in CEPA's seminars were part of another Catholic movement, 'Delegates of the Word', that also sought to improve peasant conditions throughout the country.¹¹ In response to the comprehensive reforms proposed for the Catholic Church at the 1968 Medellín Conference of Latin American bishops, Nicaragua's Catholic hierarchy sought ways to identify the Church with the poor. Faced with a shortage of priests to carry out this task, the Church offered basic training to lay people who became known as Delegates of the Word and who returned to their own communities with this socially-oriented gospel.

Influenced by CEPA's reflection/training seminars and the Delegates' social work, plantation workers in Carazo and Masaya formed Committees of Agricultural Workers that demanded higher wages, decent food and housing, and sanitary facilities. Promoted by the FSLN and staffed in part by former CEPA organizers, a new organization, the Rural Workers Association (*Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo*, ATC) emerged, and

began to organize peasants in other areas of the Pacific Region, concentrating on day labourers in sugar, cotton, and coffee. By the end of 1977 the ATC had united all the Committees of Agricultural Workers in the departments of Carazo, Masaya, León, Chinandega, and Managua. The Association's ultimate goal was to unite all semi-proletarianized peasants and agricultural workers around demands for improved living conditions, year-round employment, and an end to political repression in the countryside.

By March 1978, ATC representatives had established an organizational network to co-ordinate the efforts of the Association's different zonal branches. The ATC established sub-committees to co-ordinate security and defence, finances, political education, and public information. Many regional committees began to demand workers' control over the farms in their areas. Furthermore, urban workers—originally from the countryside but now working in small factories, public transportation, and small shops—had joined the ranks of the Association. In April, the ATC published its first national newsletter, *El Machete*, which enhanced members' political awareness and extended the Association's prestige.

The insurrections of September 1978 and May–July 1979 demonstrated that 'the ATC was able to convert itself into a powerful force of the FSLN, not only in building the armed struggle but in organizing political action by workers and peasants in the rural areas.' The Sandinistas began to organize military training schools for ATC committees in response to National Guard repression of land take-overs and peasant demonstrations, and by September 1978 ATC military contingents had assumed an active combat role. Armed only with outdated weapons, Association combatants provided cover for the Frente's withdrawal from the cities of Chinandega and Carazo, and throughout 1979 carried out a series of harassment operations against Somoza's troops.¹³

The early history of the ATC exemplifies the dynamic relationship that developed between the FSLN and the rural masses. Spontaneous peasant struggles were given form and direction under Sandinista leadership, and a coherent class-based organization emerged: formally independent of, but intimately linked to, the FSLN.

The Agrarian Reform

The restructuring of Nicaragua's agrarian sector actually began with the overthrow of Somoza in July of 1979, when the new government declared that lands owned by the Somoza family and their close associates were to be confiscated by the state. The decision was made to run these properties, many of which were modern agro-export estates, as state farms. This gave the state direct control over some 20 per cent of Nicaragua's farm land, and made it an important participant in the country's agro-export sector.¹⁴ During 1980 the Sandinistas attempted to calm growing rural tensions

through liberal credit to small farmers, particularly those who organized themselves into 'credit and service' co-operatives (CCS), and rental decrees helping tenant farmers. By the spring of 1981, however, pressures for land reform had mounted and a new agrarian reform was developed with the participation of rural workers' and peasants' organizations.¹⁵

Under the 1981 Nicaraguan agrarian reform law, Decree No. 782, landowners were allowed to retain any size farm if that land was being efficiently worked. Land on holdings of more than 500 manzanas¹⁶ (in the Pacific coast region; 1,000 manzanas elsewhere) that was not being efficiently farmed was subject to expropriation, as was any land on holdings more than 50 manzanas (in the Pacific region; 100 manzanas elsewhere) in sharecropping or labour service arrangements. 'Inefficient' included idle or under-utilized land.¹⁷

While abandoned properties were to be confiscated without compensation, the owners of expropriated properties were to be compensated by the state. Unlike the Salvadoran reform of 1980, the expropriated land was to be delivered free of charge to the beneficiaries of the reform. Also unlike the Salvadoran reform, the legislation did not restrict the form in which beneficiaries could receive the property: although co-operatives were encouraged, peasant families could receive land individually.¹⁸ To maintain the integrity of the agrarian reform process, the beneficiaries were not allowed to transfer agrarian reform property except through inheritance (with no subdivision).¹⁹

It was originally estimated that up to 2,500,000 acres would be affected by the reform.²⁰ That figure was later increased to 3,575,000 acres,²¹ or approximately 25 per cent of the country's 14,500,000 acres in farm land. Including the state farms, then, it was envisioned that some 45 per cent of the country's farm land would be incorporated into the 'reform sector'.

The government cautiously implemented the agrarian reform in its first year. By July 1982, the Ministry of Agriculture had expropriated 242 properties totalling about 166,000 acres and had redistributed only 40 per cent of the land to 6,503 beneficiaries who received titles either individually or as part of a production co-operative.²² The National Agrarian Reform Council carefully determined each case of expropriation and a special Agrarian Reform Tribunal adjudicated all appeals. Although the Sandinistas attempted to identify and expropriate only the worst cases to avoid alienating the bourgeoisie, evidence of landowner resistance to government economic policies mounted daily. By early 1982, both the ATC and the UNAG (the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers, created in April 1981) were urging the government to hasten the implementation of the agrarian reform process.²³

Faced with an agrarian bourgeoisie engaged in a campaign of economic sabotage and the growing militancy of the rural mass organizations, the

Ministry of Agriculture (MIDINRA) decided to shift more control over the agrarian reform process to the UNAG and the ATC. The Ministry turned over final decisions on land expropriation to regional commissions that included ATC and UNAG representatives. In the fall of 1982, both organizations mobilized their base level activists throughout the country to study the patterns of land tenure and utilization, and to propose detailed plans for the expropriation and redistribution of land in their communities.³⁴

Since late 1982, UNAG representatives on the Regional Commissions of Agrarian Reform have played a decisive role in land adjudications.³⁵ The peasants' union has a direct voice in determining the criteria used to decide which land is to be turned over and to whom. If there is a large plot of under-utilized or abandoned land, the UNAG regional representative ensures that it is given to the co-operative movement according to the provisions of the agrarian reform law. Union leaders insist that the primary beneficiaries be poor peasants who have no land or who are exploited by landowners. UNAG representatives also propose that those peasants who want to move from marginal land in order to join a co-operative be allowed to do so.³⁶ According to Nicolas Chavez, director of the Co-operative Development Programme in Region I: 'UNAG is the organization that has the most weight, the most social force, in determining the distribution of land because of the great number of peasants it organized and the overall strength of its organization.'³⁷

An Overview of the Co-operative Movement

One of UNAG's primary tasks is to help consolidate the co-operativization process that the government initiated as part of the agrarian reform.³⁸ Because the peasantry in Nicaragua is not monolithic, individual 'campesinos' have different interests and ideologies, UNAG convinces peasants to form co-operatives by appealing to a variety of class and personal interests. Peasants have joined co-operatives to gain land, to improve crop sales, to defend themselves against the contras, and to work alongside family members.

The co-operativization programme has three goals: (1) to consolidate the peasant alliance with the revolutionary project; (2) to expand the efficiency of basic grains and vegetable production; (3) and to begin to develop socialist forms of agricultural development. The governing principles of the programme are 'voluntary enlistment, gradualism, and democracy', and its driving forces are the interests and motivations of the campesinos themselves.³⁹

Four types of agricultural co-operatives exist in Nicaragua. The two major types are *cooperativas de credito y servicio* (credit and service co-operatives, CCSs) and *cooperativas agricolas Sandinistas* (Sandinista agricultural co-operatives, CAsS). Credit and Service co-operatives, which

comprise 57 per cent of all co-operatives, are associations of private, individual producers who organize to receive jointly low interest credit, resources, and higher prices for their products.³⁰ Members negotiate for their loans as a unit, but the co-operative disburses the money individually to each member, who works his or her land separately. The CCS may also organize the joint purchase, rental, and delivery of inputs and then distribute these for individual use on each member's farm. The individual producers retain the entire product of their farms, but CCS members may sell their products jointly in order to receive a higher price.

Private landowners form 'dead furrow' co-operatives by removing the divisions between their parcels in order to work their land co-operatively. They collectively manage labour, land, and other means of production, but each of the producers retains ownership of the land and the means of production. Some small producers create dead furrow co-operatives to gain the advantages of co-operative labour and resource management; peasants formed many of the earliest CASs in this manner. At the same time, some credit and service co-operatives establish dead furrow co-operatives as a step toward the creation of a CAS.

Sandinista agricultural co-operatives are the most advanced form of co-operative organization in Nicaragua. All aspects of production are collectively owned and managed on a CAS: labour, land, natural resources, livestock, financing, and the product. As in the co-operative movement as a whole, there is a wide range of flexibility in the actual organization and operation of individual CASs. Though certain requirements, such as collective ownership, are established by law, each co-operative is free to decide its own methods and standards of labour organization, reimbursement, ownership of domestic animals, and other internal matters.³¹

In early 1983, a new type of co-operative began to emerge in the northern departments of the country in response to increasing attacks by Honduran-based counter-revolutionaries. Co-operatives are often the target of contra attacks since they are most often the centre of agricultural development programmes, health posts, schools, machine shops, and other economic and infrastructural aid from the government. To defend themselves, co-operative members, as well as previously non-integrated campesinos, began to organize themselves for protection. Although all co-operatives throughout Nicaragua maintain a secretary and committee of self-defence, the new *cooperativas de defensa y produccion* (defense and production co-operatives, CDPs) 'divide their tasks as much for defence as for production. Depending upon the situation, if there are 30 members, 20 are working and 10 are guaranteeing their defence. But all of them are armed and ready.'³²

The Nicaraguan agrarian reform is designed to complete the first steps toward collectivized production. The government encourages peasants to form co-operatives as an initial step away from individualistic social

relations and toward socialist relations. Indeed, many Sandinistas envision the long-term goal of co-operativization as the voluntary transformation of all lower forms of co-operatives into Sandinista agricultural co-operatives.³³ At the same time, however, more and more Sandinistas are becoming aware of how difficult this transformation will be.

Problems in the Co-operative Movement

During the 1984-1987 period, the rural co-operative sector made significant advances. In 1983 the large landowners, small producers and poor campesinos all received more or less the same amount of long-term credit for agricultural investments. But by 1986, the small producers and poor campesinos received almost three times as much long-term credit as the large business sector. Within the campesino sector, the co-operative movement's share of long-term credit increased the most. In 1983, co-operatives controlled 47 per cent of the long-term credit awarded to small producers and campesinos; by 1986 that figure had increased to 67 per cent.³⁴

At the beginning of 1986 co-operative production comprised 35 per cent of all internal agricultural consumption and 21 per cent of all agro-exports.³⁵ Given its importance to the national economy, the co-operative movement has become a fundamental concern for Sandinista policy-makers. In an agrarian country, with an essentially campesino-oriented social and economic structure, the co-operative process is a strategic piece in the overall economic puzzle. It is quite possibly the key to the social organization of production, and the foundation on which the new revolutionary economy should be developed.

In his speech at the First National Peasant Congress, held by the Union of Small Farmers and Cattle Ranchers in May 1986, Comandante Luis Carrión discussed the co-operative movement in Nicaragua:

This movement, although still not consolidated, has already transformed the lives of thousands of campesinos and has constituted itself as a firm revolutionary base with enormous productive potential. . . We are entirely convinced that the co-operatives are the only viable route to make it possible for tens of thousands of small producers to gradually leave behind the poverty and backwardness to which they historically have been relegated. . . But at the same time that we strongly support the co-operative movement, it should be clearly stated that the Frente Sandinista categorically reject the use of compulsion or force in the forming of co-operatives. The distribution of land to campesinos who demand it should not be used as a means of forcing them into co-operatives. No one can or should be obliged to become part of a co-operative against his or her will.³⁶

Generally speaking, the Nicaraguan co-operative movement has obtained better results when compared with similar experiences in agrarian reforms enacted in Chile under Salvador Allende's Popular Unit government, and in Peru under the Velasco Alvarado government. Nevertheless, the agri-

cultural co-operatives are plagued by a number of serious problems.

In his overview of the 1987 Agricultural Plan, Jaime Wheelock, Minister of Agriculture, outlined shortcomings within the co-operative movement and the agrarian policies carried out from 1979 to 1985. According to Wheelock, the negative tendencies in the movement arose from an excessively dogmatic way of promoting co-operative models along with a lack of training among the co-operative members who were selected to lead the movement. These negative tendencies generated a series of problems including: contracting wage labour without integrating the labourer's family into the work; the lack of internal democracy within the co-operative movement; the abandonment of co-operatives by members; poor use of the surplus; inadequate planting programmes; insufficient administrative capability; lack of co-operation and organization between different co-operatives; and weaknesses in the organization of the small producers belonging to credit and service co-operatives.³⁷

As researchers at the Instituto Histórico Centramericano insist, these problems and negative tendencies must be put into perspective:

All these problems are closely linked to: (1) the history of the Sandinista co-operative movement; (2) the weaknesses of the agrarian policy and its technical cadre (the majority of whom come from an urban background and have little experience in organizing campesinos); and, (3) more than anything, the limitations imposed on the revolution by the US aggression, along with the restrictions resulting from the international economic crisis.³⁸

Just as the revolutionary process itself, the Nicaraguan co-operative movement has had to develop amid crisis and aggression. During the first eight years of the revolution the movement has gone through three major phases.³⁹

Phase I: 1979-1982. Consolidation of the state sector and credit programmes for the campesino population

Recently, many observers have seriously questioned the Sandinistas' decision to concentrate a majority of resources and efforts on the state sector (the Area of People's Property—APP), postponing until 1982 the vigorous development of the co-operative movement. The FSLN's decision was largely based on political considerations. As early as August 1979, the Sandinista government had decided to halt campesino land seizures, thereby putting a brake on the formation of the first Sandinista Agricultural Co-operatives. By adopting this political measure, the Frente attempted to ensure national unity against US aggression during the revolution's initial development. They were also intent on avoiding the insecurities and social conflicts that always accompany a process of land expropriation and massive land distribution to a campesino population.

The Sandinistas' decision to create state farms and retard both the pace

of agrarian reform and the transition towards production co-operatives was also based on economic considerations. First, the success of these farms was crucial to guarantee the ongoing receipt of foreign exchange. Second, these highly developed properties had been run with a small permanent labour force and a large seasonal workforce; worker ownership could easily generate a rural elite. If the state had direct control of the surplus created on these farms it could distribute the benefits throughout the population. Third, the Sandinistas thought that it would be easier to generate more jobs—so desperately needed by landless farmworkers—under state administration than on worker-owned lands.

The revolution's initial policy of limiting peasant land seizures, prioritizing the creation of the state sector, and adopting only tentative first steps towards organizing the campesinos effectively prevented the peasantry from taking a leading role in the agrarian reform process. It also had an adverse effect on both the subsequent development of the co-operative movement and the character of the revolutionary alliance between urban sectors and the campesino population.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, it must be recognized that the decision to postpone the distribution of land to the peasantry was an important element in reviving the national economy and improving the conditions under which the country could confront the US threat. For example, rural policies generated an annual 10 per cent growth rate in the agricultural GDP between 1980 and 1983.

The Sandinistas began by forming a strong state sector. Instead of distributing land to campesinos, the revolution distributed credit. The tremendous expansion of credit—from 4 per cent of the total credit package under Somoza to 23 per cent in the revolution's first year—was eagerly welcomed by small individual producers in the countryside. This massive small farm credit programme was designed to fulfil four goals: increase food production, build political support among the small producers, improve the economic situation of poor campesinos, and encourage peasants to form co-operatives or credit associations. The government enticed tenants and owners into forming co-operatives with lower interest rates, providing credit at 7 per cent to production co-operatives, at 8 per cent to members of credit and service co-operatives, and at 11 per cent to unorganized peasant producers.

Motivated by the government's credit policy, thousands of campesinos organized into 1,185 credit and service co-operatives (CCS) and 876 pre co-operatives (those with fewer than 10 members). Rather than functioning as true co-operatives, however, these CCS were little more than rural banking outposts. They shared no services and received no technical assistance or training. Within a short time, this co-operative sector, which organized peasants only on the basis of credit, gradually declined. Of the 2,000 co-operatives formed in the first year of the revolution, 1,500

disappeared because of lack of state attention, high accumulated debt, the termination of credit in **1981** and later, the impact of the war. Between **1981** and **1986**, the government began to rehabilitate the CCS sector, replacing failed co-operatives with new ones, many of which were plagued by some of the same problems.

During this initial phase of the co-operative movement, the production co-operatives (CAS) emerged out of the transformations that began before the Sandinista victory, when landless peasants and rural semi-wage workers seized Somocista land holdings during the war against the dictatorship. The Rural Workers' Association backed these land takeovers, which mainly occurred around the Pacific Coast cities of León and Masaya during the final months of the popular insurrection. The seizures not only vindicated the economic and political struggles of the rural workers and peasants, but also provided the food necessary to the liberated areas. Between June and August **1979**, peasants collectively farmed the seized land, refraining from converting them into individual holdings.

But the peasantry's struggle to retain control of the invaded land and to occupy new lands contradicted the revolutionary government's policy of national unity. The Sandinista leadership, concerned with maintaining the support of the large landowners, tended to oppose ATC land takeovers. By early **1980**, tensions over land occupations were building toward a dramatic climax. In late **1979**, the courts moved to return to owners those farms and ranches that ATC members had seized, if it could not be shown that the owners had been linked to Somoza. For the Association, however, any return of land to private owners symbolized an end to the process of agrarian reform at a time when thousands of workers and peasants expected its continued advance.

Carrying banners and machetes, more than **30,000** peasants and landless rural workers from all over Nicaragua converged on Managua's Plaza of the Revolution on February **17, 1980**, to submit their demands to the Government of National Reconstruction. Speaking to the gathering, Edgardo Garcia, Secretary General of the ATC, demanded that all land then under the control of the agrarian reform agency be legally transferred to the *Area de Propiedad del Pueblo* (Area of Public Ownership, APP). Garcia insisted that 'not one inch of land be returned' to the original large landowners.⁴¹ The ATC also demanded the reduction of land rental prices and a more liberal credit policy for peasant producers.

Shortly before the ATC rally, the FSLN relinquished its previous position and decided to support the Association's demands. Jaime Wheelock, the Minister of Agriculture, made an appearance at the demonstration and declared: 'We know that your demands are just, and this march gives us the confidence to advance and make further transformations.' Although Wheelock stressed the need for the agrarian reform to follow an orderly path, avoiding 'anarchic and spontaneous actions', he

affirmed that 'there are elements among the landowners who must be hit hard if their lands are left idle'.⁴³ He promised that the state would move quickly to meet the ATC's demands. At the same time, Sergio Ramirez of the governing junta announced that a new decree was imminent. Issued on March 3, the decree ordered the immediate confiscation of all the intervened lands, excluding those owned by small producers.⁴³

This shift in Sandinista policy permitted the survival of almost 500 CAS. These co-operatives were consolidated between 1980 and 1982 even though they only possessed 1.2 per cent of the land at the end of the period, and despite the many problems arising both from the instability of the co-operatives and the weakness of state support and services.

Phase II: 1982-1985. Emphasis on the CAS model and semi-wage labourers over the CCS and middle-size campesinos

During the second phase of the co-operative movement, the Sandinistas concentrated on developing the CAS among the rural semi-wage labourers. Five hundred co-operatives from across the country were chosen to receive special state attention for modernizing production. The motto was 'few, but good'. Although this is a necessary practice for any intensification of production based on imported technology, in practice, it left 75 per cent of the co-operatives and 90 per cent of the peasant population disenfranchised by the revolutionary government. While the number of CAS members tripled in this period, that of CCS members dropped by some 10 per cent. Many peasants resented the revolutionary government's favouring a collective mode of production over a model based on individual plots of land. Even some previously formed co-operatives decided during these years to hand their land deeds over to their members in individual parcels rather than keep them in common ownership.

Analyzing the organizational weaknesses in the co-operative movement during the First National Seminar of Co-operative Movement Cadre, Jaime Wheelock recognized 'the organic inflexibility we are suffering to some degree. This probably has to do with problems of our experience, [and] problems of verticalism in the model. . .'.⁴⁴ Although today it is a widely held view that such inflexibility and making land plots available only to peasants willing to enter collective production structures hindered the transition towards an efficient system of production co-operatives, it would have been an error not to exploit the peasantry's potential for economic organization, mobilization, and apprenticeship represented by the advance in the organization of production co-operatives. A fair number of CAS—especially those created during the early years of the revolution—have been consolidated.

Just as the Sandinistas' decision to develop the state sector in the first phase was based on political considerations, so was their decision to emphasize production co-operatives in 1982. The Frente's decision reflected

the classic socialist agrarian reform strategy of 'unleashing' the peasantry against the landlords and then beginning the painstaking process of campesino co-operativization, gradually shifting from credit and service co-operatives to agricultural production co-operatives. The FSLN also based their decision on the desire to maintain economies of scale and to avoid 'repeasantization' on small plots.

Moreover, as the *Envío* notes, class forces also played a major role in the move toward production co-operatives:

As with Chile and Peru, the decision in Nicaragua to emphasize production co-operatives and discourage tiny parcels of land was born not only of the necessity to provide guarantees to the landholding bourgeoisie, preventing the spontaneous invasions of their land, but also of the interaction of social forces: semi-wage earning campesinos were fighting for land and many Sandinista cadres from urban origins were struggling to bring modernization and progress to what they considered the backward rural sector.⁴¹

But really to understand why the Sandinistas chose to develop the CAS we need to examine the historical and social roots of their decision.

During the first phase of the co-operative movement, semi-wage earning peasants were the motive force driving the creation of the Sandinista Agricultural Co-operatives. These campesinos, most of whom lived near the cities where the Sandinista insurrection occurred, were the 'natural' allies of the urban guerrillas for the development of the first Sandinista associative forms in the countryside. Poor, and lacking the stable roots in the social structure of the small campesino producer or the full-time agricultural proletarian, the part-time rural worker was a complex figure. Such a worker could play, according to need, a variety of social roles: campesino, wage-earner, migrant worker, seasonal entrepreneur, or unemployed worker. He or she had to be quick and audacious to survive amidst the inequalities of the Somoza world.

When semi-wage earning peasants clamoured for land takeovers during and immediately after the insurrection, Sandinista cadres from urban backgrounds offered them the properties they deemed the best—farms already developed and modernized, with confiscated tractors, infrastructure, investment, and fuel. For the campesinos, they were merely the best lands. For the urban cadres, they were lands that required collective work, that could best guarantee modern, technically proficient and more collective structures, in short, definitely 'more socialist'. In offering these lands, the Sandinistas also offered the campesinos the ideals of a new, more just and egalitarian world:

The three commandments for being a 'good Christian' in the Sandinista co-operative movement at the beginning were: (1) not to possess private property, (2) work together in a community or a collective, (3) share the proceeds equally. The mortal sin was individualism, symbolized by the campesino's tiny parcel.⁴²

In expecting that the semi-wage workers could immediately follow these 'commandments', some Sandinistas lapsed into idealistic and utopian attitudes. For, simply put, the rural semi-wage labourer is not prepared immediately to become a collective producer. The direct transition from a part-time wage earner to being a member of a production collective cannot be a smooth one. Wheelock has described what it entails:

(The new member) has to learn collective practices. He has to learn a co-operative democracy, how to make collective decisions, whereas before he made decisions on his own. Now he has to be a piece of a complex organization and, at the same time, a collective leader. All this cannot be achieved overnight—it is an extremely difficult process.⁴⁷

To ease the transition from rural semi-wage labourer to collective producer ideological leadership and considerable training must be provided. But in Nicaragua, as in other countries that tried to co-operativize rapidly, the resources for training, advice, and follow-up were insufficient. Nevertheless, the relative strength of the Nicaraguan production co-operatives, compared with the co-op experiences in Chile and Peru, indicates that both the agrarian reform cadres and the peasants are committed to a deep-rooted social revolution in the countryside.

According to top Ministry of Agriculture officials, the problems that plague the co-operative movement are largely due to the accelerated pace of the co-operativization process and the lack of human resources for education and training. The Ministry's 1987 work plan admits:

The other problem concerns the management of the co-operative movement. . . We have organized the co-operative movement with semi-proletarians and poor peasants. . . and although we have made a great effort to train them, the truth is that we have only covered some co-operatives. As a result, the leadership of the co-operatives is weak and giving them massive support is very complex.⁴⁸

In an interview with Barricada, the official FSLN daily newspaper, the Director of Agrarian Reform, Comandante Alonso Porras, pointed out that the CAS developed rapidly because 'we were conscious that it was the only and best form for the campesino to reach a higher standard of living and self-development'. In addition, the war hastened the creation of production co-operatives, obliging small and middle-size producers to unite, 'not so much for economic reasons as to defend themselves and to survive'.⁴⁹

According to Comandante Porras,

to move from an individual or family economy and consciousness to a different form of collective organization requires the development of social consciousness in a gradual process of apprenticeship and that process was accelerated by the characteristics of the CAS model, which gave no space to the individual demands of the campesino.⁵⁰

The FSLN today is well aware that the problems in the CAS sector can only be resolved through sustained political-ideological work—ongoing education and cultural development of the rural semi-wage labourer, in a gradual and flexible process of co-operativization that moves towards more complex forms of socialization. Moreover, the Sandinistas understand that such a process requires a comprehensive programme in which the party, along with all the rural-based institutions that it has fostered, discuss politically and ideologically the interests of the peasants and the revolution.

As Comandante Wheelock emphasized to the cadres of the co-operative movement:

After seven years, this is the first time that we are meeting in an assembly of the political forces to discuss how we are going to move, what the government is going to do, the Frente, UNAG, the ATC, women. . . Sometimes it is believed that the co-operatives are a problem of one institution. And since MIDINRA has a section that is called Agrarian Reform, it is supposed that it is a problem of MIDINRA or of the Agrarian Reform Section, when in reality it is a problem of the revolution. It is a problem that touches the changes in the entire society as well as human **consciousness**.⁵¹

Credit and Service Co-operatives: A Less Developed Model

During the co-operative movement's second phase, the excessive emphasis on the state enterprises and the CAS blocked the integral development of simpler forms of co-operation, particularly the Credit and Service Co-operatives (CCS). Unlike the CAS, which are concentrated in the heavily populated areas of the Pacific, most CCS exist in the interior where the majority of the traditional campesinos live. Some 73 per cent of the CCS members are in Regions I, V, and VI—the major areas of the war since it began in 1982. The relative neglect of the CCS during the 1982-1985 period contributed to the counter-revolution's ability to confuse and manipulate a small but significant percentage of the traditional peasantry. Among them, the CIA and former Somoza National Guard members developed a small social base for their operations.

For several years, the only link between the traditional peasant and the revolution was through bank loans. Apart from this limited service, the Sandinistas left the peasant in the country's interior to the mercy of the 'rich' campesinos, medium-sized producers, large farmers, or even the landed bourgeoisie. 'Little changed for the peasant,' observes the *Envío* staff,

since in all material organization of production the traditional peasant depended on more affluent producers to satisfy the needs of productive investment and services, to get goods to market, to satisfy unusual, family consumer items, and to obtain loans and transport in case of an emergency. Many times—and this is the most serious—the poor peasant was left in no one's hands, inasmuch as the

revolution broke up unjust systems of commerce without replacing them with new systems."

Even in areas where there are sufficient roads and productive services, the contact between state enterprises and institutions was minimal. To overcome this problem MIDINRA is now encouraging the model of a 'state territorial enterprise' in which state farms and CAS in a specific territory lend productive and commercial assistance to neighbouring CCS.

Phase III: 1985-present. The peasants shift the co-operative movement

As we have seen, the Sandinistas' early strategy of developing the agro-export sector had pushed aside the small and medium farmers, relegating them to a secondary, even a marginal, position. Until 1985 the government's official view was that the peasants' production would be mainly for subsistence and would therefore contribute little to national economic development. As a result, by 1984 the agrarian reform had failed to meet the demands of most campesinos, leaving intact a large proportion of *latifundias*.

In Region V (Boaco and Chontales Departments), for example, 2 per cent of the private producers owned 22 per cent of the land in 1984, while 41 per cent of the small producers held 8.5 per cent.⁵³ Moreover, in December 1984, in an attempt to reassure large private producers, MIDINRA suspended the implementation of the agrarian reform law. In the future, the ministry declared, the focus would not be on the 'recovery of lands, but on their organization'.

But by mid-1985, rural pressure for land, UNAG's opposition to agricultural price and trade policies, and resistance among certain farmers to the co-operative movement, forced the government to change course and satisfy the peasants' need for land.⁵⁴ The government began to extend the reform to a number of large private farms and to some state enterprises. In January 1986 a new provision in the agrarian reform law lowered the minimum acreage subject to reform from 500 manzanas to 100 manzanas or 50 manzanas, depending on the region. But it left intact previous regulations regarding absenteeism, inefficiency, and abandonment. By doing so the government was able to increase substantially the potential land fund at its disposal without attacking the large landowners. The revised law thus allowed it to meet the demands of the peasants and the large landowners at the expense of the middle landowners who are absent, or inefficient, or who abandon their lands.

It is too early to judge the full effects of this extension of the land reform. But there has been a clear shift in landownership since mid-1985. Between 1981 and 1984, only 50,000 manzanas of land were given to the peasants. But between June and December 1985, the peasants received 160,000 manzanas, or about three quarters of the total distributed

throughout the entire course of the reform. Almost two-thirds of the land distributed came from the state sector.”

Together with the extension of the land reform, the government sought to respond to peasant needs by easing the policy of forced commercialization and improving the supply of equipment such as machetes and boots. In addition, the state changed its agricultural pricing policies to meet peasant demands, raising prices sharply and granting dollar incentives to those sectors of the peasantry and medium agricultural bourgeoisie that produce export crops.

With the policy of giving individual parcels of land to peasants, investing more money to supply the countryside, becoming more flexible in its cooperative models, as well as with strong military moves against the contras, the Sandinistas reversed the course of the war in 1985 and 1986. The supply of peasant combatants for the counter-revolution dried up and the FDN entered a strategic decline.

As changes in the agrarian reform produced more peasant co-operation, the Sandinistas began a process of self-criticism regarding the cooperativization policy. By early 1987 many base militants and workers in MIDINRA felt the time had come to consolidate military victories, raise production, and organize traditional peasants around their own demands, responding to what they want: less complex co-operative models tailored to their experiences and the characteristics of each region of the country.

Comandante Wheelock summarized this new position in the 1987 Agricultural Work Plan:

On the question of the models we have observed organic inflexibility. We introduced the Sandinista Agricultural Co-operative (CAS) model without evaluating it afterwards, and the result is that many peasants are not interested in agricultural co-operatives; they have problems, there is desertion by their members, and sometimes a co-operative that had 30 members appears with 10, and consequently with three times as much land as they can productively work. This is related to problems of inflexibility, as much in the CCS as in the CAS. Every territory must function in accordance with general norms that we are going to revise and formulate, and in their application the regions must participate actively in the definition of microeconomic models, to which the co-operative movement must adjust itself.”

Of the 180,000 rural families that could potentially join the co-operative movement, only 76,000 are reached by the programme of the General Direction of Agrarian Reform, (DGRA, a MIDINRA department). Another 14,000 families belong to traditional 'limited responsibility' co-operatives and some 40,000 families are in church-sponsored social action groups or in UNAG supply co-ops. This leaves some 70,000 peasant families (about 40 per cent of the potential co-operative population) who remain outside of the co-operative movement. If the Sandinistas are to continue to fight their battle for economic development using the weapon of organizational

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efficiency they must tap this potential.

The Sandinista Campaign to Strengthen Co-operatives

In early 1987 the Sandinistas launched a campaign to broaden popular support for the co-operatives and the agrarian reform. On March 22, a national seminar for cadres involved in the co-operative movement was held to begin the campaign. Jaime Wheelock appealed to the participants to prepare a plan 'which takes into account the suggestions and concerns of the campesinos. This plan should respect the campesinos as our main sources of solutions to the problems of agrarian reform, abandoning any type of bureaucratic, highly administrative approaches'. And he insisted that 'the suggestions of the campesinos must be heard, their problems must be identified, and solutions to their problems must be turned into plans of action'.⁵⁷

The Sandinista-led campaign to strengthen the co-operative movement contains five principal elements:

(1) *Only the organized force of the peasantry can strengthen the revolution.* This political message is central to the new campaign as it emphasizes that the self-organization of the campesinos is a necessary condition for the development of the Sandinista revolution. The FSLN has renewed its recognition of the peasantry as a fundamental force of the revolution, calling upon the rural masses to recognize that they themselves are responsible for the strengthening or weakening of the revolution. Moreover, the Sandinistas have reiterated their commitment to the worker-peasant alliance: 'We want to foment, cement, and consolidate the power of workers and peasants and the alliance between the workers and peasants as the fundamental base of the revolution.'⁵⁸

(2) *The co-operative movement must increase its level of production.* The Frente stresses that the co-operatives, as an economic and social model, must be concerned with augmenting production.⁵⁹

(3) *The campesinos must play an active, participatory, and protagonist role in the major tasks of the revolution.* The FSLN emphasizes here the major defence burden that co-operatives must bear:

The co-operatives must organize themselves better to defend themselves and defend the revolution. If necessary a co-operative that only has 16 members should join another one to make a co-operative with 50 members, that is, 50 combatants. Thus the organizational mode sometimes has to adapt itself to the current tasks of the revolution. And now the revolution needs combatants. It needs to create mines throughout the national territory—and these mines are the co-operatives. This participation in defence also must include the disposition on the part of the campesinos to place no obstacles in the path of the enforcement of the SMP (Nicaragua's draft law).⁶⁰

(4) *Basic supplies must be guaranteed to co-operative members.* The FSLN acknowledges that many co-operative members still lack secure

access to basic supplies. As part of its new line on strengthening the co-operative movement, the party has pledged to develop more *tiendas campesinas*—peasant stores—and consolidate those that already exist. As Wheelock asserts: 'We must organize our mechanisms (of basic supplies distribution) so that we don't create obstacles that would impede the campesinos' ability to supply agricultural products to the working class.'⁶¹

(5) *The educational level of co-operative members must be raised.* The Sandinistas propose to accomplish this goal through two measures. First, they have taken steps to strengthen the educational system on the co-operatives, with a special emphasis on reaching the younger co-operative members and their children. Second, the FSLN has appealed to graduating agricultural technicians to join co-operatives in order to lend their scientific and administrative skills to the co-operative movement:

MIDINRA cannot absorb the 300 to 400 technicians that graduate each year. We don't want the state enterprises to be filled with technicians. We must send them to where they are needed, where the model of the revolution is technically weaker. Thus we must carry out political work to convince the technicians to join the co-operative sector.⁶²

During the insurrections of 1978 and 1979, the FSLN's willingness to empower social movements not directly under its control was one of its most original features as a political organization. The Frente was able to form relationships with these various movements while consolidating the influence of its own organization. In the current stage of the revolution, the FSLN may not be able to extend its hegemony in the co-operative movement unless it fosters the development of different forms of peasant organizations that are outside the official agrarian reform programme. The debate about how much autonomy these organizations should have is directly related to the varying perspectives on what role the peasantry as a social class should play in the revolution.

Many of the Sandinistas who are promoting the campaign to strengthen co-operativization make a clear distinction between controlling the co-operative movement and leading it. They argue that the Frente's role is to guide the spontaneous movement of the campesinos, reorienting the new forms of co-operativism to make them compatible with the co-operatives that MIDINRA has traditionally backed. This includes supporting co-operatives outside state regulation.

These Sandinista cadres are guided by a clear set of principles:

1. *Nicaragua's economic development depends on the peasantry and its involvement in the co-operative movement.* The peasantry is a pillar of the revolution, a social force which needs to be developed. As Cornandante Victor Tirado declared recently:

The co-operative movement currently represents 3,100 base organizations that unite some 76,200 campesinos. These statistics reaffirm that these peasants form

one of the principle axes of the revolutionary transformations taking place in the countryside. For this reason co-operatives constitute one of the targets of continuous attack by the counter-revolution. In an agricultural country such as ours, the process of co-operativization comprises one of the principal forms of social production on which the development of the revolutionary economy is based.¹³

2. *Co-operativization has to be voluntary, gradual, and long-term.* The decision to join a co-operative must come from the experience of the peasants' themselves, based on their own sense of the advantages. As Luis Carribn put it: 'Co-operatives should come about only as an expression of the campesinos' free will, and both the government and the Frente Sandinista should be promoting the co-operative movement through persuasion rather than force.'¹⁴

3. *Co-operatives must be autonomous entities and run on a self-managed basis.* Although the revolutionary state must continue to lend economic and organizational support to the co-operatives, the co-operative must become a truly autonomous social force. As Tirado stresses:

Above all, the co-operatives should exercise a maximum of autonomy which implies a greater commitment by their members: they must identify themselves as owners of the land and increase their capacity for self-management. We must really motivate the co-operative members, assist them in improving the co-operatives' development so that they continue advancing in taking charge of their own movement. This means providing the co-operatives with help in order to develop the realms of production as well as distribution and services so that they feel themselves to be owners, not workers of the state.¹⁵

4. *The co-operatives can play the role of organizers of production and exchange in a locale.* To achieve greater efficiency and mobility, the co-operatives should assume the functions of territorial production organizations. Although the state will continue to regulate and integrate production among the state sector, individual owners, and co-operative producers, territorial organization need not be the sole responsibility of the state.

5. *A vertical management style by the state and other political forces of the FSLN is one of the main causes of the problems that the co-operative movement is suffering.* This verticalism in the countryside derives mainly from the difficulty of guiding social movements without giving in to the temptation of converting them into purely party functions. In a recent UNAG document on the role of the peasants' union in the campaign to strengthen the co-operative movement, the union acknowledges that its regional cadres—all FSLN members—have blocked base-level participation:

The co-operatives have become very dependent on the promoter (UNAG official assigned to assist co-operatives) to the extent that in most co-operatives meetings are not held unless the promoter or a government technician arrives. Both in the past and now we have tended to direct co-operative meetings. We arrive at the

co-operatives laying down policy directives or tasks to be carried out, and often we don't explain them or convince the members of their importance. We make more decisions than the co-operative assembly or the executive councils and we often carry them out without consultation. This way of working with the co-operatives had provoked a loss of initiative and creativity in many co-operatives. And what is even worse, the members don't feel as if they themselves are protagonists of co-operativization.⁶⁶

Thus, with the revolution in its ninth year, in the middle of a severe economic crisis and the war, the FSLN is attempting to create a new political strategy with the campesino sector. What are the possibilities that the party will be able to transform the present form of state management into one that better heeds the criticism of the peasants as well as taking seriously the concept of a worker-peasant alliance? The fate of this new Sandinista experiment will depend largely on two factors: (1) the ability of the campesinos who participate in the co-operative movement to organize and have their concerns heard, and (2) the FSLN's ability to both respond to peasants' concerns and to channel those concerns in a way that strengthens the revolution.

Despite what many foreign observers believe, the Sandinista revolution was not a classical socialist revolution nor is Nicaragua undergoing an imminent transition to socialism. Nevertheless, the fact that the Sandinistas are not progressively socializing both the forces and relations of production does not mean that Nicaragua is experiencing a bourgeois democratic revolution. The FSLN has created a popular, democratic, and anti-imperialist regime, introducing forms of both participatory and representative democracy in both the state sector as well as civil society. In addition, the revolution comprises social as well as political elements, and neither serves nor represents the interests of the bourgeoisie. Although it is not planning to eliminate the bourgeoisie, the Sandinista revolution has stripped the capitalist class of its political power and severely curtailed its economic influence. Revolutionary policies are mainly designed to meet the demands of the popular classes—the peasantry, the workers, the artisans, the semi-proletariat, and segments of the petty-bourgeoisie.

As Harris and Vilas contend: "The Sandinista revolution can most accurately be characterized as a revolution of national liberation directed against imperialist domination as manifested in its contemporary neo-colonial and dependent capitalist form."⁶⁷ Nevertheless, characterizing the Sandinista revolution as a revolution of national liberation does not mean that the FSLN rejects socialism or that the revolution will not lead Nicaragua towards a future transition to socialism. Indeed, on May Day 1982 Interior Minister Tomás Borge asserted: "The Sandinista Front is the vanguard of the workers and peasants. . . is the living instrument of the revolutionary classes, is the guide leading toward a new society."⁶⁸

Although the development of social revolutions in the twentieth

century has furnished many surprises and abrupt changes in their orientation have frequently occurred, the Nicaraguan revolutionary experience reveals the clear possibility that this revolution could take the road of a type of agrarian socialism, based upon small peasant producers. The revolutionary government's medium-range investment projects are reinforcing this tendency, and the statements of revolutionary leaders appear to confirm it.⁶⁹

To be sure, the kind of socialism that is constructed in Nicaragua will be based upon the composition of the block of popular forces that leads this process and the way in which this block develops itself as a political vanguard. Concretely, Nicaragua's socialism will depend upon the political relationship between the peasantry, the small and medium producers in the urban areas, and the working class; and the capacity of one of these classes to establish hegemony over the revolutionary bloc of forces. At this juncture, all signs seem to indicate that the perspectives and interests of the peasantry will take primacy over those of the proletariat. Therefore, if there is a transition to socialism, it will be towards a socialism based on small property rather than a proletarian socialism in the strict sense. As a MIDINRA document declares: 'The construction of socialism in Nicaragua is not only the task of the proletariat, but mainly the task of the poor peasantry. . . Co-operativization constitutes the campesino road to socialism.'⁷⁰

NOTES

1. See Orlando Nuñez Soto, 'The Third Social Force in National Liberation Movements', *Latin American Perspectives*, 29 (Spring 1981).
2. See Gary Ruchwarger, *People in Power: Forging a Grassroots Democracy in Nicaragua* (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey, 1987).
3. See Peter Marchetti, 'War, Popular Participation, and Transition to Socialism: The Case of Nicaragua', in Richard R. Fagen, Carmen Diana Deere, and Jose Luis Coraggio, eds., *Transition and Development: Problems of Third World Socialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986).
4. Carmen Diana Deere et al. 'Agrarian Reform and the Transition in Nicaragua: 1979-1983', (unpublished mimeo, November 1983), pp. 5-6.
5. Orlando Nuñez Soto, 'The Third Social Force', p. 11.
6. Carmen Diana Deere and Peter Marchetti, 'The Workers-Peasant Alliance in the First Year of the Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform', *Latin American Perspectives*, 29 (Spring 1981), p. 49.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
8. Bayardo Arce, in Pilar Arias, *Nicaragua: Revolución relatos de combatientes del frente sandinista* (Mexico: Editorial Siglo XXI, 1980), p. 92.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
10. This section draws on Dilling et al., *Nicaragua: A People's Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: EPICA Task Force, 1980), pp. 23-26.
11. See Philip Berryman, *The Religious Roots of Rebellion Christians in Central American Revolutions* (New York: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 60.
12. ATC General Secretary Edgardo Garcia, speech to ATC Assembly, *Memorias*,

- p. 17, quoted in George Black, *Triumph of the People* (London: Zed Books, 1980), p. 273.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
 14. Carmen Diana Deere, Peter Marchetti, and Nola Reinhardt, 'The Peasantry and the Development of Sandinista Agrarian Policy, 1979-1984', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (October, 1985), pp. 79-80.
 15. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-84, 88-91.
 16. One manzana equals 1.72 acres.
 17. *La Gaceta*, No. 188, 21 August 1981 (Managua).
 18. Beneficiaries included tenant farmers, small-holders with insufficient land, landless workers, state farms, and urban residents interested in producing basic grains.
 19. This provision has been relaxed. In some areas of the country peasants are permitted to sell their agrarian reform titles.
 20. *El Nuevo Diario*, 22 July 1981, 'Wheelock detalla alcances de Reforma Agraria: Tierra seguro a todo productor.'
 21. *Barricada*, 16 July 1983, 'Diez mil manzanas a campesinos del sur.'
 22. Carmen Diana Deere, 'Agrarian Reform as Revolution and Counter-Revolution: Nicaragua and El Salvador', in Roger Burbach and Patricia Flynn, eds., *The Politics of Intervention: The United States in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984), p. 182.
 23. Deere et al., 'Agrarian Reform and the Transition in Nicaragua', pp. 28-29.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
 25. The other members of the regional commissions are the regional director of the Agrarian Reform, the regional director of MIDINRA, the regional delegate of the Presidency, and a member of the FSLN regional office.
 26. Interview with Roberto Laguna, UNAG regional co-ordinator, in *Estelí*, 16 January 1984.
 27. Interview in *Estelí*, 27 January 1984.
 28. The following overview draws on Philip Martinez, 'Five Years of Agrarian Reform in Nicaragua: The Case of Noel Gamez Co-operative', (M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1984), pp. 21-22.
 29. Interview with Roberta Laguna, 16 January 1984.
 30. Martinez, 'Five Years of Agrarian Reform', p. 21.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
 32. Interview with Roberto Laguna, February 1984.
 33. *Ibid.*
 34. Instituto Histórico Centroamericano (IHCA), 'Rural Co-operatives: Breaking New Ground', *Envío* (June, 1987), p. 16.
 35. *Ibid.*
 36. Luís Carribn, 'La Problemática del Campesinado y las Tareas de la UNAG', speech presented at the First National Peasant Congress of the UNAG, 25 April, 1986, p. 6.
 37. IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', p. 18.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 39. This periodization and the discussion on it that follows draws on *ibid.*, pp. 19-30.
 40. The Sandinistas' early approach to agrarian policy elevated technical and administrative mechanisms supposedly leading to 'economic efficiency' above the political necessity for a durable peasant-worker alliance to defend and advance the revolution and its social goals. This fundamental element of revolutionary strategy was dealt with in the 'Thesis on the Agrarian Question', drafted by Lenin and adopted by the Second Congress of the Communist

- International in 1920. Land must be distributed by the revolutionaries, Lenin said in support of this resolution, 'otherwise, the small peasant will see no difference' between the old social order and the new (Lenin, *Collected Works*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), p. 250.
41. Quoted in Joseph Collins, *What Difference Could a Revolution Make?* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982), p. 81.
 42. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 82.
 43. George Black, *Triumph of the People The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1981), p. 251.
 44. Quoted in IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', p. 25.
 45. IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', pp. 22-23.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 47. 'Discurso de Clausura del I Seminario de Cuadros para el Fortalecimiento de Bases del Movimiento Cooperativo', n.p., n.d., p. 9.
 48. Quoted in IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', p. 25.
 49. Quoted in *ibid.*
 50. Quoted in *ibid.*
 51. 'Discurso de Clausura del I Seminario de Cuadros', pp. 8-9.
 52. IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', p. 28.
 53. Carlos Vilas, 'War Sandinism, 1979-1986', *Against the Current* (January-February 1987), p. 16.
 54. See IHCA, 'The Nicaraguan Peasantry Gives New Direction to Agrarian Reform', *Envio* (September, 1985).
 55. Vilas, 'War Sandinism', p. 17.
 56. Quoted in IHCA, 'Rural Co-operatives', p. 28.
 57. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 30.
 58. Wheelock, 'Discurso de Clausura del I Seminario de Cuadros', p. 16.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 60. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
 61. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
 62. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
 63. Victor Tirado, 'Discurso de Inauguración del I Seminario de Cuadros para el Fortalecimiento de Bases del Movimiento Cooperativo', n.p., n.d., p. 2.
 64. Luis Carrión, 'La Problemática del Campesinado', p. 6.
 65. Tirado, 'Discurso de Inauguración del I Seminario de Cuadros', p. 3.
 66. UNAG. VI Region, 'Papel de la UNAG en el Proceso de Fortalecimiento de Base del Movimiento Cooperativo', *Matagalpa*, June 1987, p. 1.
 67. 'National Liberation, Popular Democracy and the Transition to Socialism', in Harris and Vila., *Nicaragua: A Revolution Under Siege* (London: Zed Press, 1985), p. 227.
 68. Quoted in Paul Le Blanc, *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua* (New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1984), p. 25.
 69. See, for example, the speech of Comandante Jaime Wheelock in the Constituent Assembly of the ATC, 20 and 21 December 1979; also MIDINRA, *Tres Años de reforma agraria* (Managua, 1982), p. 18, and the statements by Wheelock in *Barricada*, on 20 April and 25 June 1982, and in *El Nuevo Diario*, 15 August 1983. According to these repeated declarations, the state agricultural sector is not to represent more than 20 to 25 per cent of the arable land, the co-operative sector will account for 40 per cent, and the rest will correspond to individual peasant farmers and capitalist enterprises.
 70. Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria, *Estudio de las Cooperativas de Producción de Santa Lucía, Petacaltepe, Los Ebanos, Masaya, Santa Teresa* (Managua: CIERA, August 1985), p. 79.