Terror and indifference: The device paradigm and the Nicaraguan Contra War

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TERROR AND INDIFFERENCE:
THE DEVICE PARADIGM AND THE NICARAGUAN CONTRA WAR

by

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Terror and Indifference: The Device Paradigm and the Nicaraguan Contra War

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The substantive theory of technology argues that technology constitutes a new type of cultural system that radically restructures the social world as an object of control. The device paradigm modifies the substantive theory of technology by describing how technology transforms and deeply patterns everyday life and foreign affairs on the basis of human decisions or agreements. Using a "policy device," the Nicaraguan contra war is explained against a foreground of political disengagement and cultural indifference and a background of imperialism and a struggling socialism.

The foreground of a device is the commodity procured by the device. In the public foreground (the internal component), the U.S. government claimed it was attempting to procure greater political freedom inside Nicaragua. The background of a device (the external component) is its machinery. In the background of policy, the U.S. used terror, intimidation, contra forces and a variety of illegal methods to force a political shift to occur inside Nicaragua. The array of policy devices used by the U.S. government to injure Nicaragua and procure political damage were designed to be concealed, dependable, and unobtrusive to those designated internal. Within Nicaragua, the injuring was palpable and felt by human flesh. The U.S. received the comforting commodities, Nicaragua, the violent machinery of the policy device.

The political theory and ontological foundations of the policy device is developed and applied. The history and paradigmatic character of U.S.-Central American relations, captured primarily as imperialism, is examined. The Sandinista administration's failed attempts to guide Nicaragua toward socialism, politically marginalize the privileges of the elite and redirect technology toward the common good is explained. The structure and empirical consequences of the contra war is shown to be an outcome of historically designating Nicaragua an external element of the policy device. Failure of the Sandinistas at nationwide polls in 1990 and 1996 suggest the slow rise of the standard device paradigm and its indifference to strong social justice within Nicaragua. During the contra war we had terror and indifference. Now we have an even less tractable situation, peace and indifference.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the people, places and political ideals of Nicaragua that were destroyed or transformed by the contra war.
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What happened in Nicaragua during the contra war is still being both resisted and absorbed. A growing literature of historical accounts, political analyses, and on the ground reporting provide abundant facts that have passionately conveyed how policy and values are compressed by the crucible of combat. These accounts cast long shadows upon the U.S. as they are told and retold, subverting and loosening to many degrees the deep meanings and lessons they suggest. With all this uncovering, telling the untellable, a greater problem remains - severe wounding inflicted on a society lingers, like shrapnel lodged too deep to remove. Embedded shrapnel is a deep, nearly immutable memory of injury which links Nicaragua’s suffering to U.S. policy. Wounds and scars are carried forever.

The growing chaos and repression which spawned the National Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) and their ultimately successful revolution in 1979 are an example of chaos not averted, of change that was not incremental, controlled or glacial in pace. When authoritarian order and oneness falls apart, fall back positions are prepared. Contradictions are invented. United States official government thinking became obsessed with the use of polarities, with showing how different the U.S. and Nicaragua had become in such a short time span. It is as if no similarities could be perceived anymore. Nicaragua developed a counteridentity. This mechanistic thinking, built on the limited ideological parameters available or expressible on Capitol Hill, matured quickly into a firm, cold logic
that dehumanized and drove the contra war to its futile end.

Americans figure mainly in numerous forms of annihilation created in United States Central Intelligence Agency office space. Since there were no American dead seen in the landscape of our imagination, the sorrow of war was not heartfelt. The deeper internal events that solicit sympathy, care and emotional changes were largely absent. American popular response was captured mainly as indifference. There was, of course, dissent and reporting of events.

Implicit in the official U.S. government approach to Nicaragua during this period was that the establishment of socialism, a hostile social paradigm, would not be tolerated in this hemisphere. This essay will look at deeper meanings of the contra war and how the true purposes of U.S. activities in the contra war still need to be understood and culturally absorbed. I will show how resisting these truths led inevitably to indifference.

This is a tale about a power struggle, competing plots to capture the hearts and minds of the Nicaraguan people, a plot with many forces looking, no, glaring at each other. On the one side were the faces of the FSLN with its Marxist-Leninist roots, literary crusades, nationalization of industry, land reform, and the rapid bureaucratization of government functions. From the U.S. came trained counterrevolutionary guerrilla armies (contras), attacking health clinics, assassinating civilians, mining harbors and roads, blowing up bridges, forcing recruitment and destabilizing what little infrastructure was left after the insurrection of 1979.

Using the device paradigm as a policy device, I will attempt to disclose how and why the contra war gained momentum, complexity and injuring capacity amidst growing
indifference. The foreground of a device is the commodity procured by the device.\textsuperscript{1} In the public foreground, the U.S. government claimed that it was attempting to procure greater political freedom inside Nicaragua by defeating and disabling the Sandinista administration. The background of a device is its machinery. In the background of policy, the U.S. used terror, intimidation and a variety of other methods to cause a political shift to occur inside Nicaragua.

The array of devices used by the U.S. government to injure Nicaragua and procure political damage were designed to be concealed, dependable, and unobtrusive to life in the U.S. There was a bifurcation on the receiving end of these devices. Inside the U.S. we received policy, press releases, news, and information that could be quickly and easily digested as information or ignored. Within Nicaragua, the injuring was palpable and felt by human flesh. The U.S. got the comforting commodities, Nicaragua, the violent machinery of the policy device.

What is of central concern here is not so much documenting and reliving the atrocities of the contra war, but of breaking through the policy device which allowed it to happen. A historical approach is enticing and leads one down the road toward explanation, but the explanation takes on largely flat dimensions - this then that happened and so forth. What I hope to do is to turn the mirror of the policy device back onto ourselves, onto U.S. culture, in an attempt to explain cultural indifference. Indifference is a desensitization, a lack of feeling for and engagement with others. This is not meant to diminish or refute partisan political analyses, either from the left or right. What is crucial is that as efforts to build, train, and deploy, the contras grew, the bulk of citizens in this
country did nothing and remained indifferent.

Copious articles, books, interviews and television coverage provided ample opportunity to absorb this information, see the immense problems we were creating, and take some form of action to become involved in a humane solution. However, on the whole, the U.S. population did nearly nothing to halt the unnecessary injuries to the Nicaraguan population.

Although we are morally decent people and intellectually capable of understanding the role of the U.S. in Central America, there was inadequate follow through by U.S. citizens to change U.S. administrative policy. What happens is that we, the U.S. citizens, became implicated in political decisions as well as in the pace and patterns of everyday life. Decisions that rain down bullets in Nicaragua, in the name of the U.S. population, are easily made because of the great latitude granted to government, especially in foreign affairs.

First, the term "implication" is important and must be elucidated. Implication, as I will use it here, is how we have situated ourselves with respect to technology. We are all involved deeply and implicitly in a technological society. The inconspicuous pattern by which we live and orient ourselves has been described as a ruling paradigm, the device paradigm, a social paradigm so deeply entrenched it not only informs how we conduct ourselves from day to day, but it patterns the organizations, institutions and government functions we rely upon and criticize. The device paradigm is also an ontological paradigm, patterning our relation to the non-human world.

How has the device paradigm put its stamp on U.S.-Nicaraguan relations? How
can we traverse the scale and dimensions of everyday life in an extremely affluent, advanced industrial country toward the poverty, disease and war of a poor Central American country using the device paradigm as our guide?

The device paradigm insists that life is clearly patterned along the divide of work and leisure. Work is largely the constant servicing and expansion of the technological machinery, which creates the infinite stream of commodities, consumed in our leisure time. Work entails a deep embodiment in the patterns of life. The human creature at work is immersed in his interaction with the world, far too immersed to extract himself from it (he may die if he stops working), and thus almost without cessation he enacts a set of movements across the passing days and years.

Leisure time, or playtime, in contrast requires that the person be only half submerged in the world of activity, able to enter and exit freely. The playful activity, even if never engaged in before, can be started in seconds, or ended just as quickly. Consumption makes no demands of skill or discipline. The person in leisure or at play, protected by the separability of himself from his own activity, does not put himself at risk. At play he acts on the world outside his body with less intensity than the person at work does. If he sometimes puts that world at risk (the leisure world), it is because his own immunity from risk makes him inattentive to the forms of alteration he is bringing about. It is the very nature of work - as is dramatically visible in forms of physical labor and craft such as coal mining, farming, building or inventing - that the worker "works" to bring about severe alterations in the world (relocating a bridge, building a piano, road or a house where there was none), and only brings about those alterations by consenting to be himself altered
(that his muscles, posture and gate will be altered is certain, that he may undergo more
severe alteration or injury is at least risked). Work, of course, is a wide spectrum of
experience. The trend in a high-tech society such as ours, is that contact in the world of
work can be attenuated to the pushing of buttons and the monitoring of dials and
computers. The slow disappearance of drudgery and toil through work is not replaced in
the world of leisure.

U.S. citizens living in this pattern of work and play raise children, get involved in
numerous activities and busy themselves with ever more refined leisure activities. Not
being especially bad or ignorant, we have consented to create a culture patterned after the
device paradigm. The problem is that the great success of technology in attacking hunger,
disease, illiteracy, transportation, communication and education (in fulfilling the promise
of technology) has given way to an attempt to discover remaining burdens and seek and
welcome devices that will further disburden us from even these benign burdens. There
are terrible debilitating effects created by life under the device paradigm. The most
debilitating is the withdrawal from political life. The withdrawal of politics as real, as
meaningful, and worthy of attention and intervention is an abiding problem. Perhaps
political failure is the most fundamental type of human failure. By political failure, I mean
the failure to recognize and influence the social origins and consequences of political
decisions which affect society.

Our attention span, under the rule of the device paradigm, has thus been constricted
to the narrow sphere of work and the inconsequential sphere of consumption. Work and
leisure (especially leisure), in a technological society, are filled with imagination and
information that could cause something like world citizenship to occur. However, the contra war showed again what a callous disregard we have for people less fortunate than ourselves and affected directly by U.S. war making.

The activity of war is, viewed within the framework of this opposition (work/leisure), the most unceasingly radical and rigorous form of work. The soldier's survival is at stake not in the diffuse way it is for the worker who out of his labor creates his own sustenance and will, if he stops, eventually starve; it is more immediately and acutely at stake; it is another soldier's direct object to kill him, and his own work is a target for the other. The form of world alteration to which he devotes himself does not simply entail the possibility of injury but is itself injuring, and it is this form of self-alteration to which his own body is at every moment subject. He cannot will his entry and exit from the activity of war on a daily basis. There is not, as there is for most workers, a brief interval of exemption at the end of the day when he is permitted to enact a wholly different set of gestures, when the divide between work and leisure is crossed. The timing of his eventual exit from war will not be determined by his own will but by the end of the war, whether that comes in days, months or years, and there is of course a very high probability that even when the war ends he will never exit from it. The boy or man in war is, to an extent, found in almost no other form of work, inextricably bound up with the men and materials of his labor. He learns to perceive himself as he will be perceived by others, as indistinguishable from the men of his unit, regiment, division and above all national group. He is also inextricably bound up with the qualities and conditions - forest, field, rainforest, desert - of the ground over which he walks or runs or crawls and with
which he craves and attempts identification. In the camouflage clothing and the camouflage postures is his work, now running bent over parallel with the ground, now arching forward conforming the curve of the back to a companion boulder, now standing upright and still and narrow as the slender tree behind which he hides. He is the trees and the wind, he is a small piece of Nicaraguan terrain broken off and floating dangerously through the rain forest. He is a fragment of American earth wedged into a hillside near Estili. He is dark blue like the sea. He is light gray like the air through which he flies. He is sodden in the green shadows of earth.

The extreme difference in the degree of a person's separability from his own activity in work, leisure and in war is one manifestation of the distance that separates them. There is an estrangement between the military and mainstream society. We know that billions are spent on supporting the military. In the case of a covert war fought with proxy armies there is a major discrepancy in the scale of consequences. Given this discrepancy how do you make a war intelligible to a comfortable citizenry? You make war into a game or contest.

The comparison of a war and gaming is nearly obscene. This analogy either trivializes war or conversely attributes to gaming a weight and consequence it cannot bear. To flatly assert an equality, war is a game, games are war, imports attributes from one into the other's sphere. This transfer may occur in either direction. The hatred that in war grants nothing to an opponent (as the U.S. did to a Sandinista-led Nicaragua) is sometimes imported into descriptions of peacetime games and contents that now become in their competitive urge and obsession disguised forms of the passion to destroy others.
Nevertheless, an identification must be made because war is in its overall structure of action a contest.\textsuperscript{13}

The difficulty for U.S. citizens entrenched within the device paradigm is that movements and activities of the contestants of a covert contra war are largely unseen. The men described above as inextricably engulfed in the materials and labor of their task are moving across the land toward others who, equally engulfed, move toward them and like them, work to out-perform the other in their appointed labor. In the case of the contra war, the Sandinistas sought to make and preserve their new world while the contra army saw it as an opportunity to unmake the Sandinistas world. American troops were not directly involved in the contra war. The language of contest is critical because it registers the central fact of reciprocity. In order for the U.S. to show that the contest was at all even it had to remind us that we were fighting a U.S.S.R. backed communist regime, a formidable, well-funded, and worthy opponent. As I will later show in this essay, numerous national entities became involved in the massive planning, organizing, and financing; however, the overall contest can be crystallized and reduced to two discreet entities: contras (U.S.) versus Sandinistas (Nicaragua). The central activity of war is injuring.\textsuperscript{14} War in its formal structure is a contest. Another twist on this story is that the U.S. recruited largely Nicaraguans to fight their own people. Thus the U.S. fostered a civil war pitting brother against brother.

How can the device paradigm help us to understand the nature of war? Specifically, how can a nation drift effortlessly through history while at the same time destroying and creating history in another nation? In what way does living within the device paradigm
lead to desensitization? Perhaps the crucial institution that must be understood is that of
government. Government is the lynch-pin, the go-between, of citizens and their external
affairs. Political action in a technological society usually revolves around domestic affairs
and securing for all the benefits and virtues of a technological society. Citizens support
the government machinery through the payment of taxes. The machinery of government
has its paradigmatic inaccessibility, yet in some respects remains an open system.15 There
are votes, debates, access to records, lobbying. Policy experts weigh in on any substantive
debates, especially any concerning national security. However, citizen action is at a
deplorably low level; fewer than one half of all eligible voters typically cast a ballot.

Neither the foreground of our culture, the consumption of and movement through
commodities, nor the background, the political and economic conditions which secure a
peace in which raw materials are transformed into the hard invisible technological
machinery that ultimately delivers commodities, were touched at all by the contra war, nor
the Persian Gulf War for that matter. This bespeaks a tremendous stability of the
 technological order.16 The pace and texture of life in the U.S. during the contra war did
not change. Throughout the 1980's the economy expanded. There were, of course,
economic changes within the U.S., but the clear fact is that the contra war did not disrupt
American life. Some were moved to act in opposition to the war, but most were
unaffected and were probably uninterested and indifferent to what was happening to this
obscure country in Central America.

The policy device that sponsors war is an example of how the device paradigm can
pattern foreign affairs. The device paradigm is devoted to technological affluence. That
which supports the accumulation or concentration of wealth is supported, according to the theory of the device paradigm. In Nicaragua, however, the process of accumulation of wealth and widespread impoverishment were both promoted by the Somoza dictatorship which combined systematic electoral fraud with open repression. Evidence of the device paradigm within mainstream Nicaragua was thus largely absent during the Somoza era (1934-1979). Evidence of strong social justice within Nicaragua was also absent during this same period. The Sandinistas viewed the concentration of wealth as fundamentally in conflict with a just society. Inadequate attention to social justice will be examined as an unresolved and disturbing component of the device paradigm. By exploiting these major structural flaws in Nicaraguan society, the Sandinistas were able to form a large tactical alliance which overthrew the Somoza government. After the revolution the Sandinistas openly guided the nation toward socialism. I will show in chapter 2 that the unresolved part of the device paradigm is resolved in socialism in favor of social justice but to the detriment of the technological machinery and affluence, the Sandinista government of Nicaragua (1979-1990) being the case in point. Chapter 3 is an examination of the history of U.S.-Nicaragua relations under the guiding idea that imperialism, as an extreme form of the device paradigm, divides people into an internal and an external component. Where internal, people become workers and consumers (U.S.); where external, they become, partly due to fear of communism and of the possible priority of social justice, an exploitable resource (Nicaragua). The ontological foundations of technology using Heidegger will also be explained. Chapter 4 will show how making people into an external resource leads to terror and violence. The terrorist policies of the U.S.
government toward Nicaragua during the Contra War will be examined, as well as their consequences. Chapter 5 draws the conclusions; the defeat of the Sandinistas at the polls in 1990 and 1996 shows the rise of the standard device paradigm and its indifference to strong social justice within Nicaragua. Current social conditions inside Nicaragua will be assessed. Now there is peace and indifference rather than terror and indifference - a much preferable state, but one that is not morally encouraging. Because the device paradigm leads to political disengagement, the exploited will remain at the margins of awareness, power, and affluence.
Social conditions in Nicaragua were deplorable for the vast majority of citizens prior to the revolution. However, certain groups did benefit from the Somoza dictatorship, namely the Guardia and the economic elite. Somoza did not reinvest in the infrastructure, did not educate the children, and did not ensure that health care was provided. Poverty was, and unfortunately remains, the norm. The detailed mechanics of how and why Nicaragua became integrated into and dependent on the U.S. economy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Suffice it to say, that poverty is a human artifact produced by the exploitation of the many by the few. The latter who have traditionally ruled the country for their own selfish ends were joined and supported in this exploitative behavior by powerful foreign interests. The FSLN was able to theoretically address these problems to gain political support during their period of armed struggle and insurrection, 1961-1979.

Roughly, what developed over time in Nicaragua was a system that many scholars came to label as “dependency” or “neodependency.” Most who write on this subject agree that dependency is a complex political, economic and social phenomenon that serves to block human development of the majority in certain privilege-dominated Third World countries where the economies are heavily externally oriented. In such countries, one finds that even during periods of rapid economic growth the benefit of such growth fails to
“trickle down” in any but the most trivial way to the majority of people. Social stagnation of dependent countries is due, according to dependency theory, to the combination of income-concentrating, externally oriented, and externally conditioned form of capitalism with political systems controlled by those privileged minorities who benefit from such poorly distributed growth.

It is very important to note that in order for the dependency syndrome, with all of its negative human and ecological consequences, to exist, it is necessary for a country to have both an externally oriented economy and a socially irresponsible political elite. External economic orientation, though essential, is not enough in and of itself to cause the socially regressive dependency syndrome. Japan and South Korea have economies which are both heavily externally oriented. However, the political leadership in those two more tightly knit societies appears to have a greater sense of social responsibility than the elites of Latin America, and, hence, externally stimulated growth has led to a general rise in the standard of living. In these two countries, politicians supported private enterprise, infrastructure, human development and public health. The device paradigm is alive and well in those two countries, and many similar countries. The primary evidence of the device paradigm is in advanced capitalist countries. Evidence of the device paradigm in the Third World will grow only if middle class consumption increases in these areas.

Evidence of the device paradigm is manyfold and occurs on many levels. The device paradigm is the dominant way the promise of technology is fulfilled. The promise of technology is the way certain cultures have given form to the 18th century enlightenment ideals of liberty, equality and self-realization. In other words, the promise of technology
is of a piece with these root concepts of democracy. Technology promises to control
nature, liberate people from misery and toil, and to enrich our lives. Democracy needs
technology, to thrive. Where the device paradigm thrives, there is usually thought to be a
free and prosperous nation. To be more precise, there are several crucial features which
evidence the device paradigm: ubiquity of commodities, divided labor, political
disengagement, a secure nearly invisible infrastructure, large scale consumption, and
indifference to those at the margins of affluence. Where these features are absent, so is
the device paradigm. Measurement of the device paradigm is consumer spending,
indirectly measured by personal income and the gross domestic product. Marx
embraced the fruits of the device paradigm but saw problems with their distribution.

Toppling the dictatorial apparatus that the Somoza family created and expanded
over the years was the main goal of the FSLN. This was extremely difficult due to the
National Guard, or Guardia, which was created and run by the Somozas to keep a tight
reign over its operations and politics. Anastazio Somoza Garcia (Somoza I) commanded
the Guardia in 1934. The Guardia, over time, became a private army, the military wing of
the Liberal Party, which enforced the rules of the Somoza dictatorship. Dissolving the
Guardia was, of course, one plank in the Sandinista’s political platform.

Anastazio Somoza Garcia had two sons, Tachito and Luis. Tachito's brother Luis,
(Somoza II) died of a heart attack in April 1967. This event signaled the concentration of
political power and the entire family fortune in Tachito's (Somoza III's) hands. Estimates
of the Somoza's wealth at the time vary enormously; different sources at the time placed it
anywhere between $50 million and $300 million. In 1968 the Somoza family occupied
an area equal in size to the neighboring republic of El Salvador; they owned about half of all registered landholdings in Nicaragua, and a quarter of the nation's best arable soil. In the countryside they were administered by two firms, Compania Agropecuaria and Sucesores del General Somoza; in urban areas they were mainly registered in the name of Salvadora Debayle de Somoza, Tachito's mother. In his largest fincas Somoza produced the countries main export commodities: cotton, coffee, beef and also sugar, an important newcomer which was introduced in the Nicaraguan economy when the Somozas' anti-Castroism was rewarded by Washington with a sizable chunk of the old Cuban sugar quota. Other smaller units offered a staggering variety of produce: cocoa, tobacco, bananas, pineapples, maize, beans, rice, sorghum, sesame and all kinds of vegetables. A score of industrial and service companies completed the picture. The Somozas owned Mamenic (the Nicaraguan shipping line), Lanica (the country's airline), the cement plant, textile factories, sugar mills and the local concession of Mercedes Benz. By 1978, after two heart attacks and a nerve-racking absence out of the country for three months, Tachito Somoza Debayle returned to Nicaragua to preside over an emergency meeting where Tachito supposedly signed over his holding in the Somoza business empire to the rest of the family. For the first time, it was reported that a notarized statement listed the full extent of the family fortune. The most frequently mentioned figure was $600,000,000 for Tachito alone, and more than $1,000,000,000 if one took into account the joint holdings of all branches of the family, the Sevillas, Debayles, Sacasas, Pallais and their multiple permutations. An anonymous inventory of Somoza owned enterprises circulating at the time in Managua listed 346 companies covering every imaginable field of
activity: coffee, sugar, cotton, agriculture and commerce in general, textiles, shipping, customs agencies, travel agencies, fishing, meat packing, cattle ranching, warehouses, a harbor, air transport, construction, aluminum products, oil refining, match manufacturing, tobacco, publicity, recreation centers, banking, real estate, cement, consulting firms, auto sales, furniture, electrical appliances, dairy products, footwear, distilleries, publishing houses, radio, television, geothermal energy, pipelines, fertilizers, rice, shipbuilding, mining, recording, computing, laundromats, even exports of human blood and plasma.\(^{18}\) I list all these companies not to bore the reader, but to illustrate the greed and vast holdings of the Somoza family. Not only did Somoza exert extreme economic power through his land holdings and enterprises and payoffs, he directly appointed municipal officials and would quickly dispatch the Guardia anywhere in the country to quell political uprisings. Repression and poverty throughout the country actually grew and became intolerable. Over the decades various political organizations came into being and cracks began to form in the Somoza edifice.

Culturally, the difference between 1934-1979 (the Somoza era) in Nicaragua and the same period in the U.S., is that few of the critical features of the device paradigm were present in Nicaragua, while in the U.S. the device paradigm grew in strength and became a more fully entrenched lifestyle, even among the aspiring poor. The middle class continued to expand in the U.S. while in Nicaragua no such social change occurred. The device paradigm is devoted to the pursuit of technological affluence. Affluence is prosperity that is characteristic of technology and consists in the possession and consumption of the most numerous, refined and varied commodities.\(^{19}\) The goal of the affluent is to live now.
There is undeniable appeal in this rich imperial life that is the fulfillment of the promises of technology: liberation, enrichment and conquest.\textsuperscript{20} Affluence is defined by personal income. Therefore personal income determines one's standard of living in a technological society. The way equality is roughly measured in a technological society is by comparing the income levels of various social groups within the society.\textsuperscript{21} Social justice can be understood as an equal level of affluence.\textsuperscript{22} There were, perhaps, groups of people in Nicaragua during the late Somoza era which lived the affluent life, in the above sense. However, they were few and far between. In Nicaragua, there was very limited political liberty and practically no technological affluence. The social unrest in the 1950's and 1960's inside the U.S. taught us that there is a significant flaw in the pursuit of technological affluence, and that is the absence of strong social justice. However, the lack of social justice in the U.S. was moderated by a rising standard of living, social action and the courts; the situation was not as extreme as in Nicaragua where armed struggle was the only possible solution.

What the FSLN did, and by 1978 almost the entire country, was identify a ruling elite which controlled a huge portion of economic and political power and which used its own private army, the Guardia, to enforce this repressive social order. The socialists did not have a problem identifying a definite exploiting capitalist class. The FSLN, in alliance with progressive business sectors defeated Somoza and the Guardia in 1979.

The Somoza administration could be described as authoritarian and took the form of a military dictatorship. There was no clearly articulated ideology. Somoza's speeches are likely to be as good a guide as any. Somoza, to the end, defended himself negatively, as a
responsible alternative to communism. Authoritarianism is, in this sense, primarily
defensive. Authoritarianism is against change, against the inefficiency and corruption of a
parliamentary democracy. Authoritarianism gives the highest place among political values
to security: Hobbes’ first “law of nature” was to seek peace. Authoritarianism endorses
unlimited government, free from constitutional constraint and attaching no great
importance to the rule of law.

Castro, communism and strong social justice were seen as threats that seriously
menaced security. These threats were generated both internally and from outside. The
Somoza dictatorship was an example of technology that was admitted in pieces and parts,
but controlled by an oligarchy. As for military technology, it is clear that the Guardia was
an example of the use of technology against people in an attempt to crush liberty. To get
ahead under the Somoza regime you either had to (1) work for Somoza directly or
indirectly or (2) join the Guardia or agree to be a political appointee. The Sandinistas had
grand plans to erase political support for authoritarian rule and create a socialist society.

The Sandinistas draw heavily from Marx and Lenin in their ideology. They have also
attempted to turn Sandino into a Marxist even though Sandino focused on the removal of
the U.S. marines, not the bourgeoisie elite. Instead of Sandino’s ideas, the Sandinistas
adopted their hero’s symbols, his image, and his myth.

Neither the FSLN nor the revolutionary government formally labeled itself Marxist.
However, in numerous speeches and interviews, Sandinista leaders have acknowledged
their debt to Marxism.
"We, the founders and builders of the FSLN, prepared our strategy, our tactics and our program, on the basis of Marx's teachings,"

"I believe we are Marxists."

"[We] are guided by the scientific doctrine of revolution, by Marxism-Leninism."

The Sandinistas have treated Marxism as a body of insights that they could adapt to their own needs and Nicaraguan conditions. Marxism is the basic source of Sandinista thought. However, Sandinista leadership was suspicious of abstract theory. Fonseca warned the party leader of the dangers of "sterile dogmatism" and "pseudo-Marxist gobbledygook" and even suggested that Nicaraguan radicals were lucky to know so little about political theory. Their political innocence, he believed, saved them from political paralysis and internecine conflict.

Marx's intellectual legacy is subject to various interpretations. Any Marxist attempt to understand the world must come to grips with the historical schema Marx and his collaborator, Engels, first laid out in the 1848 Communist Manifesto. The Manifesto scenario forms the background against which the broad outline of Sandinista theory developed.

In the Manifesto and much of his subsequent work, Marx was concerned with the transitional periods that separate three great historical epochs: feudalism, capitalism, and socialism. Marx analyzed the sweeping economic transformation that undermined feudal society and the political revolutions that substituted the rule of the bourgeoisie - the modernizing class of merchants and industrialists who promoted economic change - for
that of the land-owning aristocracy. The capitalist order that arose out of feudalism freed the peasant masses from hereditary obligations of serfdom and created unprecedented material abundance.

But capitalism, Marx concluded, was a flawed system. As it matured, capitalist society was itself moving inexorably toward self-destruction. The wrenching boom-and-bust cycle of the capitalist economy demonstrated the inability of the system to manage its own explosive productivity. The proletariat - the class of urban wage earners created by capitalist growth - threatened the political stability of the bourgeois order. Exploited by their employers and victimized by periodic depressions, the workers were developing a consciousness of their own interests and a capacity for political organization which would allow them to challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie and assume the lead in the creation of a new, just, and rational society: socialism.

The parallel that Marx draws between the two transitions depends on an implicit theory of progressive classes. At a critical moment in history, the progressive class, by pursuing its own objectives, moves the entire society forward. The bourgeoisie played this role in the first transformation. The proletariat would do so in the second.

Marx was convinced that human consciousness advanced in tandem with the material aspects of society. Historically, as people extended their control of nature and learned to cooperate for purposes of production, they freed themselves from superstition and developed a more progressive social consciousness. His view suggests a long-term optimism about the capacity of people to remake themselves. But it also carries a qualifying, short-run pessimism. If consciousness is linked to material progress, it cannot
leap ahead of material development. Marx would not, for example, expect socialist ideas to prosper among feudal peasants or, for that matter, the peasants of contemporary Nicaragua: their backward material lives limited their political outlook.31

Marx was a brilliant sociologist. Much of what is known about the social bases of class consciousness depends on his insights. But he was obviously less successful as a prophet. The urban-based proletarian revolutions that he expected in advanced capitalist societies never came. Instead, the revolutionary upheavals of the twentieth century occurred in backward rural societies, like Russia, Mexico, and China. As social theorists and revolutionaries surveyed the failure, they raised questions about Marx’s work that would later be relevant to the development of Sandinismo.

One set of questions concerned the role of leadership. Do historical processes lead inevitably to revolution or do they require the efforts of radical intellectuals and professional revolutionaries like Marx and Lenin to unleash their potential? Another concerned the locus of revolution. If revolutions were not taking place in advanced capitalist societies, why not? Could a socialist revolution take place in a materially undeveloped society? A third set of questions revolved around the post-revolutionary situation. If socialist revolutionaries came to power in a backward society, could they immediately initiate socialist policies or would they have to promote capitalist development to achieve the level of material abundance that Marx required as a precondition of socialism? In either case, what should be the character of the post-revolutionary state? Decades of Marxist debate have swirled about these questions. No participant in the debate has been more influential than V.I. Lenin, whose ideas have
dominated Latin American thinking about Marx since the 1920's. Lenin's contribution centers on the vanguard party, imperialism and the revolutionary state.

Lenin's conception of a vanguard party did more than any other Marxist idea to shape the FSLN. Lenin contended that a vanguard organization of professional revolutionaries was a prerequisite to socialist revolution. Without the leadership of a vanguard party, the workers, however militant, could never advance beyond what Lenin called "trade union consciousness," the viewpoint that focuses on narrow economic issues - hours and wages in a given firm or industry - while ignoring the character of the larger society, its economic system. Lenin proposed that membership in the vanguard party be selective. Only the most able, dedicated, and politically sophisticated would be allowed to join. Members of the vanguard would have to be clandestine, disciplined, and centralized, while at the same time, they immersed themselves in the lives of workers and the activities of their unions and political organizations. The vanguard party exists to channel the "spontaneous" protests of the masses. "Unless the masses are organized, the proletariat is nothing;" Lenin wrote in 1905. "Organized - it is everything."32

Lenin, like Marx, characterized all states as inherently class based and coercive. "The state", he declared, "is nothing but a machine for the oppression of one class by another."33 Only primitive societies, or future socialist societies, in which class distinctions have been eliminated can escape the logic of their definition. Having no classes, they have no state.

Lenin explicitly rejected the notion that Western democratic states, based on universal suffrage, stand above classes. He regarded parliamentary democracy as the form
of class rule peculiar to capitalism, a convenient facade of abstract political equality to conceal the objective reality of economic oppression. Thus, he saw no prospect that socialism could evolve peacefully out of democracy.

If the state is inevitably coercive and class-bound, Lenin reasoned, the revolution must first smash the capitalist state and replace it with a proletarian state capable of constructing a socialist order over the resistance of the bourgeoisie - in Marx's words, "a dictatorship of the proletariat." The working class, wrote Lenin, must develop "undivided power directly backed by the armed force of the people. The overthrow of the bourgeoisie can be achieved only by the proletariat becoming the ruling class capable of crushing the inevitable and desperate resistance of the bourgeoisie, and of organizing the working and exploited people for the new economic system."35

Lenin conceived of the revolutionary movement as an alliance of urban workers and poor peasants organized by a vanguard party - "the teacher, the guide, the leader" of the people in their effort to "reorganize their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie."36 As this account implies, Lenin conceived the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitory historical phenomenon bridging capitalism and socialism. In the process of eliminating private ownership of the means of production - the economic basis of class differentiation - the revolutionary state abolishes social classes. By definition, there is no longer a role for the state. Lenin was convinced that the administration of common affairs, in the absence of class antagonism, would be a simple matter.

The Sandinistas deeply and radically internalized the idea of class conflict. Their ideology started from the Marxist premise that class conflict is inevitable and a source of
progress in human history. In a pamphlet directed at students in 1968, the FSLN declared, "Historical experience.... teaches that there can be no peace between millionaires and workers ... that there can be no situations other than the following: either the rich exploit the poor or the poor free themselves, eliminating the privileges of the millionaires."\textsuperscript{37}

The text, written by Fonseca, goes on to attack the "demagogic" notion propagated by Christian Democrats that there can be "conciliation of classes." A popular glossary of political terms issued in 1980 by Sandinista agricultural workers union and the Agricultural Ministry observes, "In the capitalist mode of production there are two fundamental classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, which have opposed interests."\textsuperscript{38}

This indicates that Sandinista leadership did not, or could not, see a continuum between the desires of the affluent and the desires and aspirations of the poor and oppressed whereas here in the U.S. there is a much different understanding of the way wealth and income are distributed. In the U.S. people openly strive for affluence. Most remain comfortably in the middle class while the lower and lowest economic classes strive to be middle class and the middle class desires to be upper middle, and so on. This dynamic prevents the formation of class consciousness and drives the development and maturing of the device paradigm. The Sandinistas never saw things this way and ultimately paid a huge political price because of it.

The Sandinista Front has consistently described its own ideology, historical role, objectives, strategy, friends, and enemies in class terms. The party's leaders frequently observed that Sandinista thought is "classist."\textsuperscript{39} The FSLN is the "leader of the class struggle" and seeks to change the "balance between classes in favor of the oppressed."\textsuperscript{40}
Formulations of the movement's friends and enemies have varied with political conditions, but the workers and peasants are virtually always counted as revolutionary allies (with somewhat stronger emphasis on the former) and leading sections of the bourgeoisie, in league with imperialism, are seen as opponents.

Sandinista leadership has always shown faith in Marxism. But Sandinista thinkers from Carlos Fonseca to the leadership of the 1980's have understood that classical Marxism did not fit Nicaraguan conditions very well. The economic and political system that the Sandinistas saw in their country was not the capitalism (or for that matter the feudalism) of the Communist Manifesto. Rather it was a distorted form of capitalist development that reflected the influence of "imperialism." Sandinista spokesmen loosely used the term imperialism to refer to the economic and political power of the advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States. In an imperialist world the capitalist powers "exercise a hegemonic power over other countries (their colonies), which they subjugate by strong links of political and economic dependency, and impede their economic growth." Development was distorted by an emphasis on the production of exports such as coffee and cotton, needed by the wealthy capitalist countries. "Our frustration", Sandinista agricultural minister Jaime Wheelock once observed, "was to grow sugar, cocoa, and coffee for the United States; we served dessert at the imperialist dinner table." Wheelock and other Sandinista analysts concluded that the Nicaraguan economy, because of its distorted character, was incapable of self-sustaining growth and unable to meet the basic material needs of its own people.

The working poor of Nicaragua knew they were oppressed but because of the
distortions of the Nicaraguan economy failed to develop a clear sense of class identity. Most of the salaried labor force in export agriculture worked seasonally and depended on subsistence agriculture or marginal urban employment between harvests. Nonetheless, the Sandinistas overcame the inadequacies of the proletariat by stretching the definition of the class base of the revolution and by emphasizing the vanguard role of the party. The FSLN came to conceive of itself as a leader of the "worker-peasant alliance." There was much maneuvering, within the FSLN during the long years prior to the revolution, over the appropriate class basis for the revolutionary movement.

The faction within the FSLN which ultimately was triumphant, called the Terceristas, called for broadening the revolutionary movement. In their 1977 Platform, the Terceristas leaders proposed a "triple bloc made up of the proletariat, the peasantry, and the petite bourgeoisie" as the "moving force of the revolution." The proletariat (defined to include both urban and rural wage earners) is the "fundamental force" of the revolution. The petite bourgeoisie is defined to include "artisans, professionals, shopkeepers, people involved in service activities, and revolutionary students and intellectuals." The anti-Somoza bourgeoisie were not regarded as part of the inner revolutionary "triple bloc" but as a partner in a Sandinista-dominated coalition. The coalition with the broad class of middle sectors of the economy was described as a "temporary and tactical alliance." The ultimate role of the middle sectors and even of the bourgeoisie remained nebulous in Sandinista thinking. The Sandinista party hoped to mobilize and serve the workers and peasants.

Nothing is so central to the Sandinistas conception of themselves and their place in
history as their definition of the FSLN as a revolutionary vanguard. The concept of 'vanguard' is among the most common and problematic ideas in the Sandinista lexicon. The Sandinistas owe this powerful idea to Lenin, who conceived of an elite party of ideologically motivated, disciplined professional revolutionaries capable of guiding a politically immature people through a process of radical social transformation. The vanguard party has a conscious, heroic link with history. They are history in the making. The Sandinista vanguard is not only a leader in the class struggle but also one of a passionate "few men and women who at a given moment in history seem to contain within themselves the dignity of all people."

The vanguard sets the example, they are the "standards" for all to see and compare themselves to. Through struggle, the people as a whole reclaim the strength and dignity shown by a few. The exploited need a vanguard to lead them to their "definitive liberation." In a Sandinista broadside, party strategy is mapped out:

The revolutionary party, by taking a firm class position, a scientific ideology, correct strategy and tactics, united in political principles, places itself at the forefront of all society and gathers in its bosom the political and military leadership of the revolutionary forces which struggle and work to bring the revolution towards bigger achievements.

To be on the edge, the forefront, the party must draw into itself "advanced" elements of the working class. In a sense, the party acts as a stand-in, or surrogate, for the proletariat masses. This is implicit in FSLN party declarations like, "the workers control power
through the FSLN" or "the working class is in power in Nicaragua."54

The FSLN, especially its revolutionary leadership, is the organization of working people that has returned power to the workers after seizing it from Somocismo. This thinking appears to equate the party with those it serves. It implies class representation not in a Western parliamentary sense but in the historic sense of Tellez's comment about a "few men and women."

The vanguard guards and leads. It guards its accomplishments and steers society through complex, never-ending revolutionary stages, all the while working on behalf of the formerly oppressed masses. Its goal is to carry through with a social revolution and a transformation of the political consciousness of the country. It is the bridge between the national liberation stage of the revolutionary process and the social revolution which follows.

The vanguard is fraught with difficulty and tension, especially after it has deposed the unpopular regime and assumed political power. The vanguard liberates and empowers yet at the same time controls and transforms. It is in a position to coerce those it purports to represent. What does the vanguard do if the masses resist its vision for the future or when the vanguard party asks for sacrifice in exchange for uncertain future benefits?

The vanguard may lose the sympathy of the workers but it retains the sympathy of history. Life consists of constant struggle and sacrifice that evoke worry and despair. A further problem of the vanguard is that it instructs its membership to learn from the masses as well as to educate and politically lead them. Thomas Borge, a co-founder of the FSLN and a ruling Sandinista commandante from 1979 to 1990, said in 1981 that "We must
can Borge be correct? is it possible for the vanguard to escape paternalism?
simply, no. I agree with Dennis Gilbert that the vanguard assumes power over the populace, much like a parent over a child. like a parent, it can only be successful if it prepares its charges for an independent existence and then relinquishes or shares power with them in the process. This is no easy matter judging by the behavior of ruling vanguard parties in this century.

as Stephen Kinzer points out with innumerable examples in Blood of Brothers, the Nicaraguan "masses" thought many Sandinista policies both oppressive and absurd and personally took great pains to either dodge the new rules or leave Nicaraguan soil completely. Kinzer notes that many rural people are fiercely independent and are very resistant to Sandinista initiatives in agrarian reform and trade. From Kinzer's perspective the FSLN failed because it heeded only one element of Borge's directive, LEAD. It did not learn to listen and abide by the diverse needs of its constituents. Kinzer's perspective has depth and resonance but is marred by its anecdotal character. Gilbert, a serious scholar, would not dispute many of Kinzer's assertions but takes the analysis several levels deeper than Kinzer. Gilbert finds and masters the historical documents which ground Sandinista policy and identity. He shows how the Sandinistas are organized and how they react to crisis. Gilbert then provides detailed accounts of how the Sandinista leadership recognized its mistakes and changed policy over the years on the issues of agrarian reform,
the business community, the church and the Yankees. Gilbert finds evidence that the Sandinistas were more than the simple control freaks as portrayed in many accounts and made substantial and sincere attempts to meet the needs of the rural and urban population, albeit sometimes unsuccessfully.

I can not dispute Kinzer's and Gilbert's findings that perhaps a majority chafed under FSLN leadership. There is widespread evidence, on an international scale, of discontent and revulsion with a Marxist approach to governance. Historically and politically Marxism has failed. The crucial elements of its failure perhaps lie in its conceptions of democracy and participation.

The FSLN's conception of democracy emphasizes results over process and popular "participation" over electoral institutions. Underlying and complexifying this is the party's vanguard status and its historic role of guiding the masses to the promised land. From the view of the vanguard, a party that represents the majority is, by definition, democratic. One that does not is undemocratic, even if it honestly maintains formal democratic procedures. Soon after gaining power in 1980, a Sandinista communiqué attacked "democratism" as a "liberal bourgeois ideology" that stresses abstract freedoms without regard to real content in a class society. Peasants, under Somoza, were deprived of their land and so were free to sell their labor. Capital, the communiqué goes on to say, was free to exploit the people any way it wished. Culture and information was freely manipulated to preserve the status quo. Somoza was free to crush any movement that defended the people. The Sandinistas accused their conservative opponents of reducing democracy to elections. Somoza, they remind listeners, regularly held elections in Nicaragua and
regularly won. To these "corrupted" models of democracy the Sandinistas oppose the concept of popular participation.

Democracy means "PARTICIPATION of the people" in the entire range of the nation's affairs. The broader the participation, the greater the democracy. Further, democracy neither begins nor ends with elections. "True democracy" starts in the economic order, as social inequalities decline and the living standards of workers and peasants rise. The point is that the previously silenced voice would be given a role in the shaping of national policy.

The concept of participation remained ill defined for the Sandinistas. The FSLN created many channels for citizen participation in the revolution, including Sandinista mass organizations and unions, political rallies and "face-the-people" meetings, at which citizens are invited to question leaders about governmental policies. The FSLN does not clearly distinguish participation from political mobilization. If the two are equated then participation is reduced to an activity whereby the party communicates its ideas to the people and the people either support or decline to support the FSLN. The assumption is that all worthy participation is for the revolutionary cause and not an alternative political party.

Kinzer, in Blood of Brothers, details the political oppression inside Nicaragua during the Sandinistas tenure. Freedom of the press was sporadic, and numerous political groups were marginalized through various means. It was not until 1990 that mayors and regional council membership were actually voted into office, rather than appointed by the FSLN. It is, however, important to note that the Sandinistas did direct considerable funds
toward social programs for the poor and did not routinely slaughter their own people like the death squad governments of "fledgling democracies" in El Salvador and Guatemala.

The FSLN has long conceived of its task in terms of a two-stage revolution, typically denoted as national and social liberation. The role of the vanguard party is key. The two-stage revolution is most explicitly described in the 1977 Platform and subsequently reaffirmed in many speeches and party documents. The Platform emphasizes the role of the vanguard in linking the two phases:

Breaking the chains of imperialist rule determines our national liberation process. Breaking the yoke of oppression and exploitation of the reactionary Nicaraguan classes determines our social revolution process. The two historic undertakings will be inseparably linked with the existence of a solid vanguard and a Marxist-Leninist cause to guide the process... Our country's backwardness and its dependent capitalist system determine the objective need to complete the revolutionary democratic state in order to assure the structural and superstructural (material and ideological) bases for the revolutionary process toward socialism.

The key objective of the new government would be "the neutralization of potential internal and external enemies while we accumulate the military and mass forces that guarantee the continuity of our (revolutionary) process." Concretely, this meant the creation of a new, revolutionary army committed to the FSLN and the political mobilization of the population through a large network of Sandinista mass organizations. While this was happening, the new government would carry out a social reform program to benefit the masses and win popular support. And it would begin to reorient the national economy, increasing state control, reducing foreign dependency, and encouraging growth.
The mass organization, the new education system, and even the army were to contribute to the development of a new political consciousness in the people, a critical prerequisite for the transformation of society. One purpose of the new education system was to "strip the system of exploitation naked before the eyes of the exploited and give them an instrument that will convert them into the actual subjects (agents) of their own history." Both within the military and without, officers and soldiers should be "transmitters of (political) consciousness."

The political and economic range of the first phase program suggests that the FSLN expected to control the new regime. But Sandinista theory did not anticipate a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat, rather the new government would be a broad based "popular democratic" regime. The continuing economic and political participation of the progressive bourgeoisie was especially important if two critical goals of the first phase program were to be attained - successfully resisting imperialism and building the material bases for a new society. The Sandinistas planned to maintain "hegemony" in the new government. The bourgeoisie were to be producers without political power. There was a definite tension between the party's plans for a broad based regime and its notions of its own role and class commitments.

"Socialism" is the goal of the second phase of the revolution, according to the repeated assertions of party documents and spokesmen. "Our great objective", wrote Fonseca in 1969, "is socialism." Two key internal documents, the 1977 Platform and the 1979 re-unification accord among Sandinista factions also take "socialism" as the final aim of the revolution. In numerous speeches delivered from 1983 to 1986 before
sympathetic audiences, National Directorate members reaffirmed this article of Sandinista faith.72

There appeared to be socialist consensus among leaders of the FSLN. However, the Sandinistas never clearly explained what they meant when they talked of socialism. Perhaps the following passage from a party document published in 1980 was meant as a definition:

The objectives of the Revolution are none other than to fight until it guarantees the well being of all the workers. Instead of the shack, decent and humane housing. Replace the floor with a bed to which the producer of social wealth has a right... this is the Sandinismo whose potential is contained in the economic and social project of the people, that today has its concentrated expression in the popular uses of the profits that the APP (People's Property Area, the state sector) is beginning to produce.73

Here the state sector (most significantly the large agro-export enterprises seized from Somoza and his associates) is seen as containing the germ of a new socialist society which will provide the worker a decent material standard of life.

Many Sandinistas were drawn into a vision of the future that promised more than material justice. Their brand of socialism is built around the concept of the “new man” who has overcome the self-serving values promoted by capitalism. In a 1979 speech, party member Carlos Tunnermann, then Minister of Education, observed:

The new Nicaragua also needs a new man who has stripped himself of selfishness and egotism, who places social interests before individual interests.... The individual (new man) is most fulfilled when he works within the collectivity.74

This vision seems to appeal most to Sandinistas whose beliefs are rooted in a radicalized
Christianity. The most explicit Sandinista endorsement of this concept is a 1983
government document establishing national education policy. The document describes
formation of the new man as the objective of Nicaraguan schools. The new man, product
of a "new education" will be patriotic, committed to the interests of the masses, anti-
imperialist, internationalist, the enemy of exploitation, racism and oppression. He will be
disciplined, creative, cooperative, hard working, fraternal, modest, self-sacrificing, and
persuaded that "individual interests should coincide with social interests." He would be
ready to defend the nation and the revolution. See Spot Run and The Cat in the Hat are
long gone, so to speak.

Not all Sandinistas bought into the concept of the new man. Humberto Ortega,
Head of the Armed Forces, offered a vision of the future in a 1981 speech to army
officers. He stressed ham and television sets.

(We want to) escape underdevelopment and create wealth so that the people will
be happy and not just further socialize our poverty. We want to see the day when
all our people can eat ham and they can have television sets and take vacations.
That's what we want. We're not going to promote a mentality that says we should
live like nuns or under socialism with a Christian character.

This is perhaps a crude articulation of a socialist vision. Adequate nutrition and wages, a
paid vacation and television in every home. There is little indication that Sandinistas
agreed about what socialism meant or how and when it might be achieved in Nicaragua.
Ideas about what socialism will be or should be in Nicaragua were still diffuse and not
very clear. This again shows that socialism is admittedly stronger in its critique of
capitalism than in its design of a coherent alternative.

In summary,
the central argument of Sandinismo is this: The historical scenario of Marx’s
*Communist Manifesto* is essentially correct, but the historical development of
Nicaraguan society has been decided by imperialism. Imperialist domination of
Nicaragua has meant a dependent economy, an underdeveloped state, an
incipient proletariat and a bourgeoisie incapable of playing its historic role.
Sandinista theory puts the historical train back on track by broadening the
definition of the class basis of revolution and emphasizing the vanguard role of
the revolutionary party.77

The distorted and immature nature of Nicaraguan society required a two-stage revolution.
This would be a gradual transition from the programs of national liberation toward a
socialist society through a complicated process of historical change. The vanguard party
will patriotically guide the people it leads through history in the making.

Once the FSLN established itself as the primary and really only significant party in
power, it followed through on many of these theoretical principles. This created immense
concern, conflict, and crisis within Nicaragua. The business owners, for good reasons,
saw the FSLN as a threat to the future of private enterprise and private property. What the
bourgeoisie regarded as a right, the Sandinistas saw as a privilege, subject to social
control.

In late 1983, government and private economists informally estimated private
participation in the economy at 55 to 60 percent of the GNP.78 But both business
representatives and Sandinistas officials recognized that such figures overestimated the
position of private enterprise in the mired economy.79 Government regulation had curbed
managerial freedom to set prices, lower or raise wages, fire workers, buy raw materials,
redeploy capital, obtain credit, or buy foreign exchange.80 By that time, the government
owned and controlled all banking and foreign exchanges within Nicaragua. Private
investment was shrinking. Most new investment was being made by the government. Government strongly supported many industries but still threatened to eliminate ownership and management of these same enterprises.\textsuperscript{81} Illegal or arbitrary confiscation of private property and the elimination of court appeals caused severe distress throughout the private sector.\textsuperscript{82} Clearly, the FSLN wanted business to accede to the interests and economic policies of the state. Similar problems occurred in the religious affairs of Nicaragua. The FSLN and the official Catholic Church regarded each other with deep suspicion from the beginning of the revolution. When the FSLN moved to consolidate its power, the church hierarchy sided with the bourgeoisie, as it had done for many decades. The church-revolution conflict escalated throughout the Sandinistas tenure.

Nonetheless, the Sandinistas did decisively win the 1984 elections. The FSLN did not think much of elections. "Neither bullets nor ballots will defeat this revolutionary power, this Sandinista power, this popular power!" said Daniel Ortega in 1983. Arturo Cruz was the leading opposition candidate in 1984. However, business and contra supporters ultimately did not officially field a candidate for the 1984 elections under U.S. pressure.\textsuperscript{83} Pre-election maneuvering completed the political transformation of the middle bourgeoisie. Wartime ally of the Sandinistas and partner in the national unity government, the middle bourgeoisie had become the core of the domestic political opposition and finally the political wing of the contra movement.\textsuperscript{84}

Even in the face of all these difficulties and flaws, it is necessary to show in more detail how the FSLN changed Nicaragua and opened up society strongly in favor of social justice. The revolutionary upsurge of the 1980s threw into action a wide variety of social
groups that in previous decades had lacked an identity of their own, or whose identity had been expressed in terms of subordination to other actors: women, indigenous people, residents of marginal settlements, religious groups. The 1980s saw the decisive advance of women’s organizations and movements, of poor neighborhoods, of human rights defense groups, etc. A civil society that until then had been marked by fragmentation and apparent passivity went through an explosive awakening.

The relationships between these new expressions of social discontent and the revolutionary organizations ran the gamut from subordination, through various degrees of autonomy and coordination, to outright antagonism. In Nicaragua, during the stage of struggle against the dictatorship but even more so during the decade of Sandinista government, the new social and labor organizations of the central and Pacific regions tended to accept strategic and operational subordination to the Sandinista Front and the state, while the ethnic groups of the Atlantic coast struck up a quick and violent antagonism with the revolutionary regime.85

Unions grew in strength and numbers. However, union demands and labor issues often had to take a back seat to politics and military struggle. The priority of the political over the strictly labor related was especially stark in Nicaragua; the Sandinistas’ multi-class “national unity” strategy, and later economic crisis, reinforced the tendency to turn the labor movement into an arm of the revolutionary state, more active in the implementing of overall policy than in promoting the immediate interests of its affiliates.86 Labor contracts became more common, but as the contra war intensified specific labor demands were set aside in favor of an emphasis on discipline, service in militias and
support for the military draft. The abdication of a specific labor agenda reduced the Sandinista unions' prestige among the working class. In 1988 the Sandinista government introduced a monetary adjustment strategy that further undermined workers' standard of living: a drastic reduction in real wages, a rise in unemployment rates and further deterioration of basic food supplies.

Sixty percent of Nicaragua's arable land changed hands under Sandinista agrarian reform, to the benefit of two-thirds of the country's peasant families; the lands in the hands of the large landowners shrank by 50 percent. At the same time, the fall in land values, a result at first of land reform and later of the economic crisis, made it easy to become a small to medium farmer at a relatively low cost. The Sandinista agrarian reform distributed land to some 138,000 Nicaraguan families, about two thirds of the total. Associative modes of production emerged and spread along with improved access to land. Almost 30 percent of agrarian reform lands in Nicaragua were under different kinds of cooperative production; in El Salvador, agrarian reform cooperatives received almost 40 percent of the redistributed land.

A permissive institutional climate in Nicaragua encouraged organization among small and medium farmers. By the end of the decade the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG) was the country's most active social organization, in a society that until well into the 1970s had been noted for its very low level of peasant organization. UNAG survived the change in government in 1990 and even has taken up the demands of peasants who had previously joined or collaborated with the contras.

There are no figures on income distribution in Nicaragua, but some indirect
indications suggest that, at least between 1980 and 1984, the combination of agrarian reform, expansion of social services and growth of subsidies to basic consumption favored a relative improvement in the income position of the popular sectors, a trend that was reversed with the policy shift and the broad deterioration of the economic picture after 1985. Throughout the zigzagging, the middle class urban groups that were most integrated into public-sector agencies appear to have been in the best position to improve their access to resources and income.

During the first half of the decade, the Sandinista regime's policies improved the standard of living of the masses and penalized the most recalcitrant sectors of the ruling class; in the second half, government policy did little to maintain these advances and, in the opinion of many observers, actively worked toward their reversal. Social deterioration has accelerated in recent years, and as of 1992, almost 69 percent of the Nicaraguan population lived below the poverty line.

The closing of the cycle of armed struggle and repression creates possibilities, as the political systems are rearranged, for social and labor organizations to progressively develop their bargaining power and political autonomy. These newly empowered organizations can then negotiate with traditional actors in the political system – parties, unions, bureaucracies – over policy and national projects so that they can be in charge of their own futures. Consequently, as we tally up the achievements of these decades of revolution, counterrevolution, repression and crisis, we must consider factors like consciousness, effectiveness and identity, and not just specific material achievements.

Even with all these changes and attempts to improve living conditions, and probably
because of them, two things happened, (1) The FSLN showed that it alone could not successfully regulate both the economy and social justice, although their strong suit was improving social justice, and subsequently (2) the FSLN was voted out of power in 1990 and 1996.

For the FSLN, what began as a successful project to identify and overthrow an exploiting capitalist class, ended with these same “classes” coming to power again in the 1990’s. Perhaps the Marxist political currency of class warfare, which was believable in 1978, became dramatically less so by 1990 and 1996. The problem, for the FSLN, was that at the beginning (i.e. post revolution 1979), the capitalists were at fault for everything and nothing much else was wrong. Accordingly, the FSLN took an instrumental view of technology; nothing is really wrong with technology except that it has been abused by the capitalists. The failed FSLN solution was to politically marginalize the privileges of the elite and attempt to redirect technology toward the common good. This was supposed to be an achievable task as the state took control over education, health, foreign exchange, labor unions, wage rates, certain industries and so forth, and the state, implicitly was beneficent and wise. As shown above, there were many positive effects in this regard, but the major and compelling negative was that there were no visible elements of the device paradigm present by 1990. The economy was a disaster and inflation was out of control. There were ideological changes, but the overall strategy of central control of the economy was a failure. Implicit is the assumption that people in Nicaragua want the device paradigm. Effects of the contra war, the U.S. economic embargo and other factors will be examined in later chapters.
The social strategies of the state to see elements of the economy as machine-like which could thus be owned and controlled through central planning was a failure because it misunderstands how the device paradigm works. In order for people to support you or your political party you must give them a stake in the machinery and fruits of the device paradigm. This machinery is the largely invisible support system of technological infrastructure that supplies the infinite stream of commodious devices. In this sense the device paradigm requires a populace involved in the expansion of technology in labor and leisure. There has to be a reliable delivery system to supply labor and consumer goods to the people. The socialist state was overly sure of itself as the entity that could identify and guide people’s aspirations and more importantly, their labor. In order for the device paradigm to take hold each citizen must be engaged individually in its expansion and entrenchment. Each person must have a stake in technology. This is, perhaps, too much to ask in a postrevolutionary setting which had more diffuse goals in mind. The FSLN, showing their true Marxist roots, tried to control technology as if it were a giant machine, with the FSLN as the brains and guidance system. The technological infrastructure, which the FSLN so desperately needed to control, fell into disrepair, and evidenced again, the failure of central planning, five year plans, and so forth.

The FSLN allowed and supported the conditions for political growth and social change. However, the splintering of political consciousness was not anticipated and was in direct contradiction to the FSLN’s project to unify political consciousness. Groups chafed under FSLN control. It was hard to know in advance that this would happen after the revolution. It is plausible, a priori, that central control of the economy could have
worked. However, by the time the Sandinistas attempted this undertaking many other socialist countries had tried and failed this approach. There simply is no bureaucracy in the world smart enough to pull it off, so it was arrogant to think the FSLN would succeed. In order for the machinery side of the device paradigm to grow and thrive a significant number of people have to have a stake in its success by way of private ownership. By politically marginalizing the petite bourgeoisie the FSLN alienated the one group that could have assisted them in planning and investment strategies. In order to transform the country politically and economically on a national scale some form of social capital is necessary to see people through the difficult times. Social capital are shared social convictions which are needed to carry people through from the external (worker) side of the device paradigm to the consumption side (internal). It proved very difficult just to maintain employment levels, let alone dramatically raise the standard of living. The Sandinistas tried to create social capital with their mass organizations, unions and fiery political leadership, but could not succeed in forging a strong abiding base of support which could generate the necessary social capital. The FSLN was well intentioned in many areas of social change, but national pride, sacrifice and anti-imperialism were not enough. The success or failure of various socialist policies was perhaps radically contingent on the specific conditions of its applications. That socialism did not and probably will not take hold in Nicaragua shows that material achievements are very important and that the path to improvements to Nicaraguan society will largely be determined by free market initiatives. Perhaps “imperialism” will not return to Nicaragua in the same form as under Somoza (I-III), but surely the pursuit of affluence will
eventually come to Nicaragua. Nicaragua remains in the impoverished world of things and has yet to transition into the world of devices.

Before the structure of the Contra War is sketched out it is necessary to look back in some detail at U.S. - Nicaraguan history. This glance into our historical rear view mirrors can help explain the Nicaraguan attempts at socialism and the predictable U.S. response to such attempts. The focus of Chapter three is an analysis of imperialism and foreign affairs through the lens of the device paradigm. Chapter four explains the structure and consequences of the Contra War and how it is a necessary outcome of this ontology.
Chapter 3
Imperialism and the Device Paradigm

Imperialism is the bridge that spans the history of U.S.-Central American relations. It is necessary to discuss imperialism in order to understand the roots of revolution and the future. In Chapter 2 imperialism was referred to as the economic and political power of the advanced capitalist countries, especially the United States. In this chapter the historical dimensions and paradigmatic character of imperialism will be examined.

The device paradigm typically characterizes how domestic affairs are tightly patterned and organized. My premise in this chapter is that foreign affairs and foreign economies can also be patterned according to the device paradigm issuing in a "policy device," and simultaneously organized according to the wishes of the ruling powers and against the common good. The policy device is the way that imperialism is maintained. Creation and implementation of a policy device, on this scale, requires long term planning and constant maintenance. Numerous governments, economic policies and military strategies are necessary for imperialism to operate efficiently. When local conditions change, new people are voted into office or wars break out, there are often sudden or perhaps subtle changes in the arrangements of neighboring countries. Imperialistic policies therefore need constant monitoring and adjustments to keep them running smoothly, just like the power supply or the water supply. In this sense they are similar to a device. People who set the terms of the policy device do not bear the burden of the violent
machinery of the device; the former are internal elements of the policy device and the latter its external elements. The huge problem, obviously, is that we are talking about forcing and convincing people on the machinery side of the device that these arrangements are reasonable and it is in their best interests to comply. Typically there is resistance and some type of intimidation, indoctrination or direct force is necessary to maintain the machinery of production in an imperialist setting. Workers have few rights and the politicians, for a variety of reasons, fail to improve conditions. Imperialism is based on large-scale coercion; so in the example of imperialism, the policy device is far from a neutral policy where both sides benefit equally.

There are deep historical roots to imperialistic policies in Central America. One would think that the effects of such policies would, by now, be part of the normal conversation in America, but such is not the case. As the device paradigm has emerged in America so has geopolitical ignorance. What is fascinating about U.S. imperialism is that it can be cloaked in numerous rhetorics, politics and fears. Because of the ignorance and indifference of the public, blatant imperialist policies can be dressed up and trotted out in the name of regional security, anti-communism or improved trade relations and investment opportunities, with little domestic resistance. These policies are often very complex and involve intergovernmental agreements, subsidies, loans and a military presence. The machinery of imperialism, like that of a device, has its paradigmatic inaccessibility. It is arranged and implemented silently by staff in Washington. It occurs on a large scale and over such huge time periods that it appears normal, and is thus rendered nearly invisible on the internal side of the divide.
Internal to the U.S. there are numerous effects of imperialism which primarily benefit U.S. corporations and U.S. society. A steady flow of cheap raw materials and manufactured goods from Central America flow into the U.S. that are quickly internalized into our economy. Our sea lanes and distribution networks are kept intact, free of outside influence, and U.S. political hegemony in the region is maintained. What I want to show in the remainder of this chapter is how and why this policy device, here called imperialism, has worked so effectively over time. It is my argument that the overall system that operates between the U.S. and Central America has characteristics of a device. The policy device does so by dividing people into an internal or external component. Where internal, people become workers and consumers (United States); where external, they become an exploitable resource (Nicaragua). Those assigned to the internal component of the policy device are expected to relentlessly pursue affluence. In this respect, imperialism strongly favors affluence. The policy device modulates the flow of capital and goods between the external and internal components through implementing various types of policies that I mentioned. This appears to be a mechanistic, divisive and dehumanizing way of categorizing and placing people in the overall scheme of things. The historical data will show this to be the case.

People of Central America assigned to the external side of this divide are cursed with lifetimes of poverty and struggle. Internal to a given Central American country there is more assigning and dividing taking place. Typically the ruling oligarchy or military assign themselves to be internal while the peasants and wage earners are designated external. Being ontological in character, the device paradigm will pattern our relations with the non-
human world also. If the environment is designated external, as it usually is, then it can be exploited and polluted at will. When the device paradigm takes hold in a country and more and more people are designated as internal, technology has true liberating potential. People are provided with decent educational options; roads and other infrastructure are built, repaired and maintained, basic health services are provided, infant mortality drops and the government begins to reinvest in its own people, rather than in the military. To Americans, who have been on the internal side of the paradigm for so long, these ideas are just common sense and not even debatable. However, the history of the region shows that governments can fall which pursue such policies and it is only with extreme strength, determination and often civil war that a people can begin the transition from the external to the internal side of the policy device. Sometimes elections alone can turn the tide, but usually some type of protracted social struggle is necessary.

The history of the region shows that the U.S. will align itself with whatever powers are necessary to maintain the divide. This position is softening a bit as the number of countries involved in North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) negotiations expands. However, NAFTA negotiations are usually with large vibrant economies like Brazil or Chile. It remains to be seen if Nicaragua will involve itself in or benefit from NAFTA. Nicaragua is a small, almost meaningless, economy compared to other more prosperous countries. NAFTA is a formal invitation to the internal side of the device paradigm.

Control of Central American geography and adjacent sea-lanes is vital for North American "security." Nearly two-thirds of all United States trade and oil imports as well
as many strategic materials depend on the Caribbean sea lanes bordered by the five Central American countries. Washington DC is closer to Nicaragua than to Los Angeles.

Central America is tightly integrated into the United States political-economic system. What is this "system," and how was it set up?

Central America is coming to the close of a thirty-year period of armed struggles. Many revolutionary movements have come and gone in this period. The United States countered these and prior revolutions with military force. Washington's recent policy in Central America, including the contra war on Nicaragua, is historically consistent for two reasons: North Americans have been staunchly antirevolutionary since Jefferson; and United States power has been the dominant external, and internal, force against which Central Americans have rebelled.2 The reason for the continual struggle between "the Shark and the Sardines," as former Guatemalan President Juan Jose Arevelo called it, lies embedded in the history of United States-Central American relations.3 These two themes, the United States' fear of revolution and the way the United States system of imperialism ironically helped cause revolutions in Central America, form the core of Walter LaFeber's book Inevitable Revolutions.

Early in U.S. history we became conscious of our powers, and of our "right" relationship with Central America. We understood ourselves to be the status quo power in the region. Let me be clear that by "we" I mean Washington bureaucrats that made and carried out policy with respect to Central America. These officials did not oppose radical change in Central America because of public pressure. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the overwhelming majority of Americans could not have located any of
the five Central American countries on a map, let alone ticked off the region's sins that
called for United States economic or military control. As I pointed out earlier, this
geopolitical ignorance is inexcusable and readily exploited by Washington.

In 1776, Jefferson provided the Western justification for revolution: a people can
"alter or abolish" any government that no longer derives its "Just powers from the consent
of the governed." Within a decade after he wrote the Declaration, Jefferson himself
recognized that principles of self-determination no longer necessarily served United States
interests. They even contradicted these interests because revolution in Latin America
would prevent the steady accumulation of a United States controlled isthmus. On the
mountaintop at Monticello, in 1813, Jefferson was confident that "in whatever
governments they (Central American nations) end, they will be American governments, no
longer involved in the never-ceasing broils of Europe. ...America has a hemisphere to
itself." America would marginalize European influence wherever it cropped up, and seek
to control the politics of the region. Thus was struck the eternal contradiction in United
States foreign policy between the principle of self-determination, which grounds our
constitution and whose value has been self-evident to the American mind, and the
continued and necessary expansion of American power, whose value was also important
and evident to certain North Americans. In order to carry through with this
schizophrenic mythos America needed a master plan to achieve political stability in the
region.

Washington feared revolutions because, they reasoned, exhausted and unwary
revolutionary governments might be susceptible to political subversion, "the outside
agitator." Revolution is unpredictable, irrational, not bound to the rules of the game. Revolutionary governments would resemble loose cannons on a sea-tossed ship and thus could threaten "interests" that America has considered essential to its safety, namely, the right to infuse the region with capitalism and technology, which it controlled, and to extract the goods we wanted. In other words, the policy goal was to convert Central America into a stable external element, part of the background of the device paradigm, to provide the invisible resources necessary to supply the commodities North Americans enjoy. Historically Central America was assigned the position of external component. A revolutionary government would seek changes unacceptable to U.S. long-term goals.

According to this schema, the populations of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama are considered to be in the U.S. sphere of influence, hence INSIDE. But it is exactly these others, who supposedly need protection from the OUTSIDE influence, that have revolted against United States policy and presence. What happened? Revolutionary peoples have seemingly denied the hegemony, the jurisdiction of the United States.

With a booming confidence in capitalism and the appropriations of the colonies of Louisiana from Spain (1803) and Texas from Mexico (1848), a dread of revolution and a ferocious appetite for military "solutions", the "System" was erected and mainstreamed. The ultimate goal of power relations between North and South was "stability" which makes possible a technological appropriation of resources and which provides a broad base of political support throughout the Isthmus. The United States has been, and still is, riveted to plans which secure and enhance our control over Central American nations.
Internal political battles directly threatened United States interests in the area. Since the United States had long ago decided that this was "our hemisphere," the outcomes of such battles were crucial.

In the 1870's and 1880's, the British and French had to be kept out. In 1870 France began building an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua. Yellow fever destroyed the enterprise, but not before President Hayes warned France of the dire consequences if it did not stop. United States troops landed at least seven times, during the nineteenth century in Panama, to ensure that the Canal Zone remained open and free from "rebellion." Britain was forced to return the Miskito coast to Nicaragua in 1895, thus conceding our vital strategic interest in any isthmian canal. In each of these examples, the United States sought political and military control over a disputed area. After 1900, the enemy was Germany. Only after WWII were these enemies replaced by the Soviet menace. Fencing out, or containing communism, preserved the region for North American strategic interests and profits. There must be eternal vigilance in perpetuating this divide. Military mobilization is required.

Direct day-to-day control was not necessary or desirable. The United States desired informed control over Central American nations, which they finally obtained through a policy device that can be described as "neodependency." Dependency theory is a way of looking at Latin American development as part of an international system in which the leading powers have used their economic strength to make Latin American development dependent on, and subordinate to, the interests of those leading powers. Neodependency has stunted Latin America's economic growth by forcing their economies
to rely upon one or two export crops, such as bananas or coffee, or on minerals which are shipped off to industrial nations for further transformation or direct consumption. These few export crops make a healthy domestic economy impossible, according to the theory, because their price depends on an international marketplace which the industrial powers, not Central America alone, can control. Such export crops also take up land (and concentrate it in the hands of the few) that should be used for growing food for local diets. Thus malnutrition, poverty, even starvation, grows with the profits of the relatively few producers of the export crops.

Dependency disfigures local politics as well. Key export crops are controlled by foreign investors or local elites who depend on foreigners for capital markets and protection. Foreign influences thus distort economic and political development without taking direct political control of the country. Dependency theory denies outright the fallacy of North American elites: that imperialism cloaked as investment and trade in Central America will result in a more prosperous and stable Central America. To the contrary, dependency theorists argue, aggressive application of the policy device has been pivotal in shaping those nations' histories until revolution appears to be the only "instrument" capable of breaking the hammerlock held by the local oligarchy and foreign capitalists. Latin America prosperity has not, and probably cannot be compatible with a policy device subordinate to United States economic and strategic interests. The policy device may be on its way out with the end of the cold war and the contra war, and the beginning of more socially beneficial conduits of trade and investment from North America.
LaFeber, in *Inevitable Revolutions*, illustrates and documents the historical record of how Central America became dependent on the United States. He acknowledges that mere economic power does not explain how the United States gained such control over the region. Other forms of power, political and military, accompanied the economic. If economic leverage proved incapable of reversing trends that American elites feared (social revolution), these same officials wasted no time in applying military force to exterminate these threats. The United States has intervened frequently, with troops, administrative support and covert operations, to ensure that the technological conduits of dependency remain intact. U.S warships occupied the waters of the Gulf of Fonseca in 1907, and again in 1910. U.S. Marines were stationed in Nicaragua from 1912-1934 in support of various governments and policies. Augusto Cesar Sandino fought an air and ground war with the U.S. marines from 1927-1934 before being assassinated by Somoza I in 1934. The U.S. created and forced the National Guard on Nicaragua, filling the political void left by the Marines. In the 1930's Somoza I dramatically strengthened the role and powers of the National Guard, as well as his own political power.

Nicaragua, during the 1960's, was incredibly "stable" due to the ruthlessness of the Somoza brothers. Political opponents were either shot, tortured or outmaneuvered. Kennedy's hopes for peaceful change were unrealistic. Political voices were often silenced in the "dungeon of the Presidential Palace where electrodes of the infamous Little Machine were attached to their genitals for long sessions of torture." The United States embassy was next to the President's palace, indicating the symbolic but real fact that the U.S. ambassador was the second most important person in Nicaragua. In any event, during the
Alliance for Progress, foreign aid skyrocketed. Between 1961 and 1967, the Alliance authorized loans to Nicaragua totaling $50 million. The Inter-American Development Bank injected another $50 million. Private enterprise did its part, as direct United States investment rose from $18 million to $75 million. The resulting economic growth was spectacular. The GNP grew 6.2% annually, during the decade. However this level of "prosperity" was experienced by only an elite few. As Alliance dollars poured in, agricultural exports streamed out, and no one, especially Washington officials, wanted to threaten "progress" by making the results more equitable. Cotton and coffee were the primary exports.

Cotton grew in its importance and so made the economy more vulnerable to market forces. It was devastating to the land and people, because the cotton boom evicted small farmers from their grain-producing lands and issued in another wave of technological power over nature. Each cotton crop required numerous applications of unregulated pesticides. The agricultural labor force actually shrunk due to mechanized cotton pickers. The country turned from a net exporter to a net importer of staple grains during this period. Those who could not find work in the cities tried to claim land for subsistence farming so they could have food in their bellies. By the mid-sixties, squatters occupied nearly 20% of all farmland. Nicaraguans lost their capacity to feed themselves due to the structure of the Alliance. During the mid-sixties the National Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) started to operate. They were especially strong in rural areas. The United States responded to this "threat" by increasing military aid and training to Nicaragua. Somoza already required all of his officers to spend one year at the School of the Americas in the
Canal Zone for proper indoctrination and training. Somoza did everything that the United States asked for.

Prior to the Sandinista Revolution of 1979 the Nicaraguan economy was controlled by mainly three groups, the Somoza family, Banco de America, and Banco Nicaraguense. These groups, with the Somoza group having political hegemony, secured for themselves the benefits of the country's role in international trade as well as by their intimate relations with transnational corporations operating inside Nicaragua. This was accomplished through their financial power and monopoly over the domestic trade apparatus. They were able to build up a chain linking the small producers of coffee, cotton, bananas, gold, silver etc. to the international markets for these products. Since the chain was monopolized, they were able to exploit the majority of the workers by forcing them to sell low to the banks that in turn sold high on the international market.

This system served two purposes: it reinforced and perpetuated the technological and financial power of the three groups while at the same time it contributed to the political domination of the majority by consolidating the hegemony of a small oligarchy, the point being that the technological apparatus of foreign trade (an element of the policy device) is far from a neutral apparatus or instrument, but a way in which the ruling elites can control and consolidate economic and political power. This trading system served to control and consolidate the assignment of who was to be internal (the traders and bankers) and who external (workers) to the device. Further, the profits from foreign trade were either sent abroad and invested, or used for the consumption of luxury items few could afford. In both cases, foreign trade earnings generated by the laboring people were not
applied toward the economic, social, or ecological development of Nicaragua. These trade groups were both the filter and the bridge between the U.S. and Central America. The U.S. got the comfortable commodities; Nicaragua got the violence of the policy device.

Perhaps the most dangerous and lasting outcome of the Somoza dynasty was the full transformation of Nicaragua into a perpetual external component of the regional economy. As indicated in the last chapter, the FSLN saw the exploitation occurring due to trade arrangements and quickly moved to nationalize the banking system, foreign exchange and numerous industries, thereby creating a just new foreign exchange system. The FSLN was able to bring about some social gains 1980-1985, however the vast majority of the population continued to register as externals locked in poverty. Nicaragua has yet to escape the neodependency syndrome through investment and a diversified economy. In fact, the war and debt crisis of the 1980’s has imposed harsh realities on Central America in the 1990’s.

Due to the collapse of regional economies in the 1980’s, governments could not generate the foreign exchange needed to pay their international debts or stimulate growth. In general, to obtain further international credit, governments are obligated to follow a combination of macroeconomic policies prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and the U.S. government. When they do, their debt payments are rescheduled and new loans are granted called “structural adjustment loans.” Countries are forced to choose from the structural adjustment menu of austerity measures, tax reform, monetary policies, export promotion and foreign investment. Unfortunately, the
social effects of structural adjustment fall most heavily on the shoulders of those who are least able to sustain it, the poor. Services of concern to the rich and powerful such as major hospitals, prestige development projects and the military have not borne a proportionate share of the cuts in public spending.\textsuperscript{24} The services which have been most radically pruned are health services, free primary education and food subsidies— the services on which the poor are most dependent and which they have the least opportunity to replace by private means. I consider anyone living below the poverty line to be assigned as an external component of the policy device. This continuing wrenching poverty, malnutrition and disease show again how difficult and burdensome it is to compete and operate in the global markets, and how improperly this burden falls on those assigned to the external side of the policy device. Many Nicaraguans now work in assembly industries, known as “maquiladoras”, where low wages, government tax breaks and a willingness to suspend labor and environmental regulations are common. The Nicaraguan economy remains highly dependent on foreign capital. Thus the technological ties of dependency again remain intact and as strong as ever. The high hopes of creating a relatively autonomous and just economy guided by a progressive caring government probably seem like a distant dream. No matter what economic strategies are chosen, they are all inherently political because they involve issues of power and choices about the distribution of resources in society and the world. Politics is subservient to technology. The policy device, which assigns people to external or internal status, seems to survive intact, independent of political trends. Even where the free play of market forces is demonstrably counter to the public interest, structural adjustment policies prevent the
government from strongly intervening. In conjunction with severe structural adjustment programs, the U.S. government has promoted a laissez-faire development scheme that stresses free trade, deregulation and privatization. These have become additional conditions that Central America nations have had to meet in order to get economic assistance from their traditionally most important source – the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Based on the exaggerated free market doctrines of some conservative economists, this “neoliberal” development scheme emphasizes relinquishing government authority and completely “liberalizing” or opening up domestic economies to foreign investment, then integrating them into a world economy in which global markets dictate a country’s economic future without any provision for local control, protection, or regulation. The U.S. has yet to reciprocate completely and open up its own markets to all Central American and Caribbean exports. Instead it has provided special access to “non-traditional” exports such as maquilla-assembled clothing and winter vegetables. There are many substantive critiques of these types of programs, most of which are critical. Many alternative models of development have been suggested, primarily by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Sustained progress in Central America will depend on governments and markets working in intelligent partnership with each other.

Assigning people to categories is fundamentally an ontological task. It has been called exploitation, oppression, imperialism, sexism, racism or other terms, but the significant event is ontological. The Being of the person is compressed and ordered against their will. While not exactly slavery, the lack of respect for people’s feelings,
rights and aspirations can easily allow a lesser ontological designation into the external category. In the case of slavery no notion of equal ontological or legal status is possible; people are property outright and can be bought and sold like cattle. Slavery is an extreme case, but I am sure many Central Americans thought of themselves as slaves to this system they had no control over. The device paradigm is so enticing and attractive because is promises an end to the toil, misery and ignorance of being on the external side of the policy device. What I have shown is that historically, the vast majority of Central Americans had no knowledge of the device paradigm because of their long-standing status as external components of an imperialistic policy device. The transition to becoming affluent enough to be a consumer (internal) comes only after long battles and the destruction of many forms of labor that only exist on the external side of the divide. This takes years of persistence and cultural change to adapt a culture to the device paradigm.

As indicated in the last chapter, some form of social capital is required to see people through this difficult transition. For many countries, including Nicaragua unfortunately, this transition may never come. Prior to assigning, dividing, and patterning a society according to the device paradigm many assumptions have already been internalized. It is these philosophical assumptions that are examined in the following section on the ontology of technology.

The substantive theory of technology argues that technology constitutes a new type of cultural system that restructures the social world as an object of control. The device paradigm modifies the substantive theory of technology in that it describes how technology transforms and deeply patterns everyday life and foreign affairs on the basis of
human decisions or agreements. In forming and choosing to build a culture along the lines of the device paradigm we are not only choosing to use machines but are allowing many profound cultural choices. Technology, in the form of the policy device, takes on more than a role of mere means but becomes an environment and way of life with a specific form and function; this is its substantive impact. While a machine may seem neutral, (it can be designed to do this or that), the web of human activities and ecological cycles surrounding the machine and its support structure show technology as something that can not be easily put into a separate compartment. Today there are prodigious volumes of rules regulating the integration of the machine into the social fabric, thus entrenching more and more the rule of the device paradigm. Technology can become safer, cleaner and more efficient by design, as it is regulated. Any obstacle to technology can be quickly dispatched through further research and development. The technocratic outlook creates a single-minded unambiguous view of progress, of problem-solving and social norms.

What Martin Heidegger did was uncover the primordial strength of this approach and illustrate its universal appeal and brute power, cogently and philosophically. He did this, not without flaws by outlining how the technological restructuring of society stems from the degradation of humans and Being to the level of mere objects. While I acknowledge that the history of western metaphysics has a substantial role in development of technology, human choice always played an equally important role. I believe that technology will continue on its course but will not culminate in the complete subjugation of humanity. Human beings can and will learn how to limit and attenuate the worst influences of the ontology of technology. Human intelligence is needed to operate and
maintain technology, so human conscience can always assert itself. Notions of “ought,” freedom, human rights, of moral deliberation are always and ever open. This aspect, the ethical, is minimized by Heidegger. However, Heidegger’s insights are valued because he shows how deeply entrenched the problems are. War is not an inevitable outcome of technology. This is exceedingly difficult to believe given the carnage of the twentieth century, and the absolute possibility of nuclear annihilation.

Heidegger correctly saw how technology would radically “en-frame” or limit social possibilities. The social structures supporting technology appear to be beyond any direct control. Nonetheless, determinate existence in a technological world, I believe, allows for human choice. Technology rips anything from its context and tries to “de-world” it, rendering it a lifeless object. What humans can bring to this process of “de-worlding” is social mediation, the democratic process, so that the natural and social origins of problems can be traced. The contra war illustrates the failure of America to see itself as the origin of war. The extremely easy attitude of simply allowing a war to progress without bothering to care, without “re-worlding” this gigantic machine describes elements of the device paradigm.

Neodependency theory presupposes a technological appropriation of the world. The ultimate goal of United States policy in Central America is to very slowly transform workers into consumers, then acquaint them via television with commodities they can afford. There is intense pressure on Nicaragua to accept its destiny as another satellite of American technology. With this acceptance comes the entire ontology of technology. The device paradigm is immanent. Since American technology has been at work in the
region since the 1800's, this reality of a technologically specified society along the lines of the device paradigm is not a foreign idea or concept to Central Americans. In fact, most of them would probably desire a more fully entrenched technological society. In Central America, technology in the form of the violent machinery of the external side of the device paradigm, exacerbates social problems since, as I have already shown, the levers of the machinery lie in the hands of a powerful oligarchichal-military elite, and mainly this class of people benefits from the system. Regular people service the machinery by working for the oligarchies as laborers, pickers, ranchers, etc., and most do not even have this much opportunity.

Built into the device paradigm, and thus the policy device, is an ontology of technology. Martin Heidegger has clarified this ontology in his essay “The Question Concerning Technology.” What Heidegger does in this essay is explode the mythos of technology as mere means to an end and show that technology is a way of revealing, of truth. Heidegger uncovers the deep roots of the modern age. He shows that technology infiltrates human existence and human knowing at a level more intimate than anything humans could create. This transformation of the human fundamentally distorts human actions and aspirations. Machines can run amok and create disastrous situations. The transformative power of technology manifests itself not only in its explosive productivity but also in the way it normalizes human thinking. For Heidegger modern technology is a revealing that challenges nature to yield energy that can be stored and transmitted. What does Heidegger mean by das Entbergen, the revealing?

The verb entbergen (to reveal) and the noun Entbergung (revealing) are unique to
Heidegger.\textsuperscript{27} *Entbergen* and *Entbergung* are formed from the verb *bergen* and the verbal prefix *ent-*. *Bergen* means to rescue, to secure, to harbor, to conceal. *Ent-* is used to connote a change from an existing condition; it can mean "forth" or "out" or can mean a change that is the negating of a former condition. *Entbergen* connotes an opening out from protective concealing, a harboring forth. The Greeks used the word *aletheia* for revealing. Romans translate this with *veritas*, which we refer to as "truth." What Heidegger is after is a decisive, cogent analysis of technology as a way of revealing reality, of opening up the "essence" of technology into full view.

"Technology" stems from the Greek *technikon*, which belongs to *techne*. *Techne* refers to artistic and poetic activity, it belongs to the process of "bringing into appearance and imagery," a way of bringing-forth, or *poiesis*. *Physis* also, the arising of something out of itself, is a bringing-forth, *poiesis*. What comes from out of unconcealment, or presences by means of *physis* is *poiesis* "in the highest sense."\textsuperscript{28} The bursting open of a seed pod, the cry of a newborn baby, "the bursting of a flower in bloom," an earthquake, are all spontaneous eruptions, examples of bringing-forth, *poiesis* from inside itself *en heautoi*. What is brought forth by the artist or craftsperson by way of *techne*, in contrast, involves the play of the fourfold modes of occasioning, (the four causes) which together bring-forth the work of art. *Techne*, for the Greeks, was closely linked to *espisteme* which means knowing "in the widest sense." To know, is to be at home in something, to understand it, to be expert in it. Such knowing provides the occasion for "an opening up" and as such is a revealing.

Heidegger begins his inquiry with the four Aristotelian causes: (1) *causa materialis*
the matter out of which things are made; (2) *causa formalis*, the form or shape into which the material enters; (3) *causa finalis*, the end that bounds and circumscribes the full realm of the thing that is being made, that which bounds or completes, in this sense, is typically called in Greek *telos*, which is usually translated as "aim" or "purpose"; (4) *causa efficiens*, the person responsible for integrating, or bringing about, the actual finished thing. The four causes are all "co-responsible" in the bringing-forth of the artwork, house, ship or sword. Each of the four causes, in this Greek sense, is responsible for bringing something into appearance; Heidegger, calls this Greek experience of responsibility the "occasioning" or *aitia*, the "essence" of causality as the Greeks thought it. Occasioning in this sense takes on a much richer and complex meaning than that of merely signifying that an event took place.

With the onset of modern science, the "occasioning" of the fourfold causality has been stripped down to a strict interpretation as instrumental rationality. Likewise, technology as a human activity, as a way of positing the ends and procuring the means to achieve them, has seemingly been reduced to something value-neutral and instrumental. As such, technology is simply an extension of human capacities through neutral artifacts. Armaments, roads and machines can thus be considered "value neutral". Technology, in this view, is the conflation of *causa materialis* and *causa finalis* made subservient to narrowly defined human needs and ends.

Technology as instrument necessitates a search for what or whom guides its expansion. What values or politics guide technology? With regard to Central America, I so far have shown that a policy device, organized in Washington, has historically assigned
Central America to the status of an external exploitable resource. According to the socialist critique, the ultimate ends that technology serves is the welfare of the ruling elite, which controls the policy device through various means, and the exploitation of the working class and the environment; social progress would depend on manipulating technology in the proper manner as means. Technology is something that the Sandinistas "took" control over, but in so doing supposedly attached a deep humanity to it. This is the socialist argument. Resources were often used locally, rather than exported. Exports and imports were minimized and many industries were nationalized. United States multinationals either left or were urged to consider the new Sandinista labor and environmental laws if they stayed on. Business wasn't the same anymore. The FSLN attempted to control the technological substrata to feed more people, educate them and keep them healthy. As shown in Chapter 2, this approach was partially wrong and thus unsuccessful in regulating the economy, in spurring private investment and in establishing social justice.

But prior to analyzing by whom or how instrumental technology is guided or managed, technology has already transformed our perceptions of what is real. The revealing that rules in modern technology is characterized as a challenging, Herausfordern. Herausfordern is composed of the verb fordern which means to demand, to summon or to challenge, and the adverbial prefixes her (hither) and aus (out). Together Herausfordern means to challenge, to call forth or summon to action, to demand positively, to provoke. Technology challenges or provokes "nature" (insert Nicaragua for nature) to supply energy that can be extracted and stored. "Nature" comes under the
sway of a setting-in-order that sets upon, *stellt*, nature in order for it to yield energy.

Agriculture is United Fruit banana plantations guarded by the military. *Stellen*, in this sense, is an aggressive "setting-upon" which is inherently a setting in place so as to supply.

This setting-upon that challenges forth the energies of nature is an expediting *Fördern*, and in two ways. It expedites in that it unlocks and exposes. Yet that expediting is always itself directed from the beginning toward furthering something else, i.e., toward driving on to the maximum yield at the minimum expense.\(^\text{31}\)

The earth no longer "stands" before us but is "ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand."\(^\text{32}\) Whatever energy concealed in nature is unlocked, exposed and immediately transformed. Genetic engineering is a decoding, an unlocking of the mysteries of hair color, height, dexterity, etc., but it is also an "engineering," for its intentions are to re-code and manipulate human fetuses, human potentials, for further ordering. The more engineering that is accomplished the further and deeper the revealing entrenches itself. Engineering research exposes its "own manifoldly interlocking paths"\(^\text{33}\) which are immediately seized upon by business and the academy as yielding potential profit or publication.

Whatever is on call for further ordering, like the Nicaraguan rainforest or the human genome, has a certain way of standing. Heidegger calls it the "standing-reserve."\(^\text{34}\) To be a standing-reserve (resource) is to be forever on call, in place or standing by, available for use as mere stock. Standing-reserve designates a way in which reality is present according to the challenging demanded by the revealing of technology. What is on standing-reserve
is no longer something which stands in its own right but is part of an ontology that already has plans for its transformation, distribution and control.

For Heidegger, Western culture has been decisively claimed by this way of revealing. Technology controls how the "real shows itself or withdraws." As technology is driven forward over every indigenous culture on earth, humans take part in the ordering and controlling of the other. This way of appropriating reality which has claimed the planet Heidegger calls Ge-stell, or enframing, the "essence" of technology.35

The framework or enframing, includes modern science and the entire industrial apparatus. Science entraps nature so as to exhibit it as a calculable coherence of forces in advance. Research orders experiments to be performed precisely for the purpose of asking, and verifying, how nature reveals itself when set up in this way.36 Engineers design apparatus, which exploit scientific findings. These findings create the possibility of new devices. Market forces distribute devices for consumption to the masses at maximum profit. In socialist countries the state takes over planning and distribution; the underlying ontology is the same.

"The way of unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never a human handiwork."37 When nature reveals itself according to the enframing, the person has been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges the person to approach, and appropriate, nature as an object of research. Nature as real, becomes standing-reserve, due to the way in which it shows itself. The enframing is a gathering-upon, which challenges us to reveal the real in the mode of ordering. Technological activity, such as building dams, assembling engines and so forth is a response to the challenging forth of the enframing.
All of nature and humanity must be managed. A group may think they are simply transforming neutral material in a technical fashion as means to an end. Prior to this physical transformation of nature into object and energy, the enframing, the controlling way of revealing the real has claimed the group.

For Heidegger, where the enframing reigns, there is danger in the highest sense, extreme danger—the danger being that the enframing will blot out or displace all other forms of truth, of revealing, of being claimed. All of technology, for Heidegger, is a danger. There are two crucial kinds of danger within technology. The “external” dangers of disease and starvation for those designated as external, and the “internal” danger of moral callousness, for the internal. Assigning people to the external or assigning oneself to the internal elements of the policy device is inherently injurious because either assigning fails to allow for freedom of allowing a group to organize itself and its relations with nature appropriately. Where the enframing reigns, nature and people are resources first, and beautiful and insightful only after much deliberate reflection. The stability and global spread of the device paradigm is a monumental social indicator of how deeply the enframing has been internalized. Without the enframing, the device paradigm, in either its external or internal component, would be unintelligible, unimaginable. The enframing, to the contrary, creates a rich field of possibility. In this century, with respect to Central America, this field of possibility took the form of exploitation and imperialism.

Indifference is an attitude in which the other simply does not matter and his or her suffering and joys are of absolutely no consequence. By assigning Nicaragua to the role of external resource, Nicaragua is disregarded as an equal. Indifference corresponds to the
internal side of the device paradigm. The ontological status of external resource allows for indifference. By introverting all attention upon projects that benefit U.S. interests alone, the presence of others is reduced to that of mere objects. The unique existence of the other is subordinated, minimized and objectified to the far greater concern of maintaining power relations and profit.

Since Thomas Jefferson, the U.S. has never given up on its desire to indirectly control the politics of Central America. In this sense the U.S. remains attached to Central America. On the other hand, the appropriation of Nicaragua as an external resource is inauthentic and thus allows for deep cultural indifference. The policy device, in this instance, is organized violence. The structure of the policy device allows those on the internal side of the device to reap the benefits of the device paradigm, they get a politics devoted to affluence. Individuals on the internal side of the device are not held accountable, but should be, for the organized violence of the external side of the device. Linkages between the two exist but are often legally sanctioned. In this manner the policy device desensitizes people on the internal side; it makes no demands to think morally but provides an infinite array of commodious devices that are quickly and easily consumed.

When the Sandinistas took power from Somoza in 1979, the U.S. reacted swiftly and violently. When people have historically been treated as objects, their manipulation and murder in times of war is easy. The following chapter shows how making people into an external resource of the device paradigm leads to violence, terror and war. Conflict can escalate to such an extent that one side or the other is decimated beyond repair. In this extreme situation war is incompatible with the smooth running of the technological
machinery. Since the U.S. desires to continue, in the long run, the technological appropriation of Nicaragua, the contra war was not carried to out to a cataclysmic extreme. Congressional oversight and votes on the house floor indicate that there were deep reservations, in certain quarters, about the direction and purpose of the contra war. The U.S. never invaded. However, the contra war was a disaster for Nicaragua, as the following chapter will show.

Before I go on to the structure of the contra war I need to comment on the policy device and how it is distinguished from the device paradigm. The policy device divides and assigns people according to ontological status. The policy device is permeated by local and regional politics and assigns people often for strategic or national interests. The structure and functions of a policy device indicates its philosophical and ontological assumptions. The political frameworks of the players who forge a policy device are critical. A policy device is politically open in this sense. Alternative development models, forms of aid and advice will differ according to the politics of the countries, which control and participate in the device. For example, Sweden sent technicians to Nicaragua during the contra war to help in agriculture and other areas. Wisconsin and Nicaragua are Sister States and have ongoing positive relations. These are examples of humane policy devices. Alternative conduits have always been present. It is just that the policy device I described completely overwhelmed any small-scale direct material aid or cultural exchange because of its scope and economic power.

The device paradigm describes a complete form of civilization. There is inequality in the cultures devoted to the device paradigm but little disagreement as to what
constitutes our aspirations as a people. Those on the lowest rungs of society can see the broad middle class and aspires to those standards. Development of the device paradigm is constrained by democratic processes, imperfect as they are. In cultures devoted to affluence, over the long term, there is a slight inclination toward social justice, in order for those designated internal to realize pieces of the promise of technology, and to grow in numbers. The device paradigm is an entrenched and socially vibrant phenomenon strong enough to undermine politics. The policy devices necessary to support the paradigm are only constrained by regional geopolitics and are thus variable between humane and oppressive, depending on the politics of the sponsoring country. The oppressive policy device of imperialism is only one small, but important, element of the U.S. device paradigm. The contra war is a logical extension of imperialism and, it too had characteristics of a device.
Chapter 4
Internal and External Elements of the Contra War

As stated in Chapter 1, there is a basic structure to war. In war, the shared activity is injuring, and the participants must work to out-injure each other. Both sides inflict injuries. The side that inflicts greater injury faster will be the winner, or to say it another way, the side that is more massively injured or believes itself to be so will be the loser. The qualification “believes itself” is an important one, for countries will differ in the level of injury that represents the borderline between tolerable and intolerable damage. Each side begins the war by perceiving physical damage as acceptable and ideological and territorial sacrifices as unacceptable. Through war each side tries to bring about in the other the fundamental perceptual reversal - damage as unacceptable, and sacrifices or ideological change as acceptable.1 The terms “out-injuring” or the phrase “each side works to out injure the other” means “each side works to bring the other side to the latter’s perceived level of intolerable injury faster than it is itself brought to its own level of intolerable injury.”2 It is the activity of injuring that is the substantive and determining act of war. Strategy, policy initiatives, diplomacy, medical and logistical needs all contribute to war and directly contribute to one side’s ability to out-injure the other side. These activities, however ingenious and cunning they may be, do not describe the determining activity of the contest. These support activities are all subsumed into massive, intense feats of out-injuring the other.
The flow of the United States funded arms and logistical/training support to Nicaraguan armies has a long and colorful history. What was crucial and intelligent about the Reagan administration's strategy was that U.S. troops never engaged in battle directly. The Reagan administration was able to get the better of the enemy with little loss of political capital. In other words, an extremely successful strategy is one in which the decision is brought about without a battle. A slightly less successful strategy, still very successful and what the Reagan administration actually did, is one in which the injuring occurs in only one direction. On the battlefield of course there was two-directional injuring. However, there were so many layers of command, management, government, and physical geography between our surrogate fighting force, the contras, and the U.S. populace that in reality the contra war was one-directional in this sense. Only their side, the Nicaraguan side, was injured.

The policy device that guided the contra war had discernible structures and purposes. Initiatives against the Sandinistas were multifaceted, and matured and changed over time and in response to congressional criticism; however the fact must not be forgotten that injuring of Nicaragua was the sole purpose of each facet. A device, following Borgmann, once designed and in use, does not engage or even permit engagement. On the external side (the receiving side), the contra war policy device procured for the U.S. terror, political intimidation, destruction and death: violence against people, violence against things and violence against ideology. On the internal side, the policy device procured only information, press releases and some political drama surrounding aid to the contras and the Iran-Contra hearings of 1987. This suggests that
engagement with the machinery of foreign affairs is unintended, its actual workings are rarely and reluctantly opened for public debate. It is interesting to note that the Iran-Contra hearings focused on the illegalities of the internal side of the policy device and not the injuring which occurred in the external element.

There were two significant differences between the policy devices of imperialism and of the contra war. Under imperialism, Somoza's political and economic clout and the Guardia were necessary, but not sufficient conditions, to create and maintain a neodependent economy and an oppressed workforce. U.S. markets, U.S. military and economic aid, and U.S. political guidance were also necessary for imperialistic policies to flourish over time. Under imperialism there has to be a national government willing to act in a broad but concerted fashion as the local wing of the internal component of the device while also ensuring that the external component of the device was under control. With the fall of Somoza and the dissolution of the Guardia, the local national component of the internal side of the divide also seemingly vanished. The loss of the Guardia and its vast network of informers created a huge political void and much anxiety both within and outside Nicaragua. Almost immediately, ex-Guardia regrouped in Honduras and began planning to overthrow the new government. The contra war was an attempt to recreate a new national component of the internal side of the policy device. Imperialism relies on the maintenance of historic centers of power. The contras and their supporters were tapped by the U.S. to re-assume that role. The Sandinistas were not allowed to be that power base because of their untested and dubious loyalty to the inhuman mechanisms of a neodependent state. The second crucial difference was that imperialism requires a routine
and predictable, although cruel, method of extracting and trading goods and raw materials for the purpose of economic control whereas in the strategies of the contra war the purpose was to radically disrupt the extraction and distribution of goods and raw materials, and the movement of people, until a new regime could assume power. The U.S. felt so strongly that the FSLN could not function as either their internal national partner, or as a controllable external component, that only a multifaceted terror campaign could set things right again.

There were five basic elements to the implementation of the contra war, as far as one can tell from the literature: (1) A contra fighting force was armed and trained and sent into Nicaragua on a regular basis to fight Sandinista troops. (2) FSLN social programs and infrastructure were targeted by the contras such as health clinics, cooperatives and schools, and important bridges. (3) Civilians and Sandinista officials were assassinated, threatened, kidnapped and tortured. (4) The Nicaraguan economy was disrupted by the war, a U.S. embargo (1985-1990) and pressure on international lending agencies not to extend credit to Nicaragua. (5) There was an ongoing “disinformation” campaign (i.e. official lying) regarding Nicaragua. Contras were consistently referred to as “democrats,” “the moral equivalents of our founding fathers,” and “Freedom Fighters,” by Ronald Reagan, in direct contradiction to their actual conduct in the field. These are examples of renaming injuring, and thus rendering invisible, the true purpose of war. Unfocussed attacks on Nicaragua such as the mining of harbors and the strategic placement of landmines in rural areas, along footpaths and in roads, also occurred. There were many initiatives to subvert the Sandinistas, but most fall into these five broad categories. In its
totality, the contra war was a terrorist attack on Nicaragua inflicted under U.S. guidance and funding. It was clear, as determined by the world court and other third parties, that most of these activities were illegal and broke numerous national and international laws and applicable laws of war. Still, the U.S. pressed on.

Earlier I described war as an intense form of work focused on injuring the enemy. Later on I spoke about war as a contest seeking ideological and political changes. The contra war intimately contained both of these aspects and one more - the proxy fighting force. The political changes sought through injury and contest took place only in the external domain of the policy device. Internal elements designed and waged war easily and unobtrusively due to their political, historical and geographical status in the region. The U.S., since it was operating a clandestine operation outside Nicaragua and the law, never had to have its policies formally authorized by internal Nicaraguan political groups or the Nicaraguan legislature. Components of this policy device were thus freefloating, untethered to moral or judicial constraint. Since local political approval was not necessary, it was also unconnected, and therefore uncommitted, to any specific geographical region. It had no popular political base in Nicaragua. Violence waged was calculated and focused. To the recipients (external domain) it appeared random, irrational yet blatantly politically motivated. In America, no injuring occurred directly, it was only reported. The U.S. consolidated and focused its immense political, financial and military prowess to fight a war few Americans believed in or understood. Their spear carrier was a proxy army composed of counterrevolutionaries, or contras, who not only cushioned the U.S. from injury but added political legitimacy to the U.S. cause because the contra war could be
portrayed as a "civil" war, largely motivated and controlled by internal political pressure and not from without. There was political support for the contras within Nicaragua.

It is interesting to note that during the contra war Nicaragua openly embraced a deluge of aid from numerous governments and NGOs. In particular, members and staff from American NGOs who worked in Nicaragua at the time were not merely tolerated, but publicly welcomed. This shows that the FSLN itself could also assign and divide according to the device paradigm. People, groups and governments that provided empathy, or material, financial and administrative support to the people of Nicaragua were viewed as in solidarity with their struggle and thus designated as external. It was common to hear Nicaraguans plead with visiting Americans to help stop the war. The FSLN, and many Nicaraguans, instead of blaming the visitors, divided American citizenry from its own government and thus disburdened them from direct responsibility and guilt for U.S. actions. There was no attempt to exact revenge on Americans. The old saw was: we like you, but not your government. However, this neglects the deep connections between people and their governments. Visiting Americans had the good fortune to transfer from the war zones to America (external to internal element) with relative ease just as they crossed the invisible boundary between work and leisure. Returning Americans who spoke out against the contra war were often labeled as biased, soft, and politically naive. Fellow internals, especially yuppies (this was the decade of greed and excess) were incredulous at the protesters and simply wished them out existence. There was money to be made, no time for reflection. Further, the U.S. government, for almost the entire war, prohibited Sandinista officials and Nicaraguan cultural groups from visiting the U.S. to
speak directly with politicians or citizens. Thus the voices of the external element were easily overwhelmed by the internal element which bombarded the press and public with almost daily press releases, reports and sanctions from the bully pulpit of the highest office in the land. Because of their continued status as external components of the policy device and their refusal to bend to U.S. demands, Nicaraguans were pummeled into submission or in the words of Ronald Reagan, forced to “cry uncle.”

The Reagan administration justified its hostile policies toward the Sandinista revolution with four claims: (1) that Nicaragua’s military buildup jeopardized the security of its neighbors, (2) that the political regime the Sandinistas were creating was undemocratic, (3) that Nicaragua was an ally of Cuba and the Soviet Union, and therefore, a threat to the United States, and (4) that Nicaragua was actively supporting revolutionary movements in neighboring countries.

The first two were clearly pseudo-issues, after the fact rationalizations for American policy. The Sandinista military, initially modest, grew in direct response to contra attacks and remained, in the words of a classified CIA report, “primarily defense oriented.” Nicaragua has minimal capacity to project force outside its own borders. The U.S. attitude toward the 1984 elections, in which the U.S. pressured Contra spokesman Arturo Cruz to withdraw, suggested that the administration was more interested in defeating the Sandinistas than in building democracy. The third and fourth issues form the real core of U.S. concerns in Nicaragua and deserve closer examination.

The Sandinista had warm relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union since the beginning of the revolution. But the Contra policy and American efforts to isolate
Nicaragua economically pushed the country into greater dependence on Soviet-bloc military and economic aid. Initially, the Soviet Union and its East European allies became Nicaragua's arms suppliers because the U.S. pressured its own allies not to sell arms to the Sandinistas. Pentagon data indicated that Soviet-bloc deliveries were relatively small through 1981, but surged as the covert war escalated in 1982 and thereafter. In 1984, the Soviet-bloc supplied $250 million in munitions to Nicaragua, up from only $5 million in 1979 and $7 million in 1980. There were 300 to 500 Soviet and Cuban military advisors in the country in 1987, along with 700 non-military advisors. As Western development credits were cut off, Soviet-bloc financing of the Nicaraguan economy expanded from 25 percent of external financing in 1981 to 85 percent in 1984.

Since the beginning of the revolution the Cubans generously supported Sandinista social programs. Cuba sent over 1,000 educators to help with the 1980 Literacy Crusade, modeled on the 1961 Cuban experience. By 1982, there were about 2,000 Cuban teachers in Nicaragua, many of them working in remote areas and nearly 1,000 doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel. Cuba built a 150-bed hospital in Managua and provided advanced training on the island for Nicaraguan doctors in such areas as public health. The Cubans also provided economic and technical aid in areas where they had expertise, including road construction, fishing, mining, poultry rearing, and sugar production. It must be made clear that there were limits to the Soviets' and Cubans' willingness to back the Sandinistas. Soviet oil flow was temporarily suspended in 1987. The Soviets, Cubans, and Americans all understood that the Cubans and Soviets would not come to Nicaragua's defense in the event of an American invasion.
U.S. complaints about the growth of the Sandinista military and the Soviet-bloc presence in Nicaragua is perhaps secondary to the U.S. concern about the Sandinistas alleged “export” of revolution to neighboring countries. The National Directorate’s decision to support the Salvadoran rebel’s ill-fated January 1981 offensive was, in fact, taken reluctantly and under extraordinary conditions. The Salvadorans approached the Sandinista leadership for help in mid-1980 when the military and associated death squads in their country were murdering hundreds of people of quite varied political complexions every month. In March, Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador, who had denounced the killings, was gunned down as he was saying Mass. In desperation, political moderates were joining the armed resistance, and El Salvador seemed to be heading for the sort of popular insurrection that had finally toppled the Somoza dictatorship. The Sandinistas had received help from moderate governments in Costa Rica and Venezuela under similar circumstances, but now the Nicaraguans were worried about compromising their relations with the United States if they helped the Salvadoran insurrection.

After some hesitation, the National Directorate agreed to help, but several months passed before the arms began to flow from Nicaragua to El Salvador in significant quantities. The change came with the election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980 on a platform that suggested rolling back the revolutions in Nicaragua and elsewhere. At this point, the Sandinistas felt they had little to lose and might enhance their own imperiled security by helping to bring a friendly regime to power.

After the collapse of the January 1981 offensive in El Salvador, Nicaraguan assistance was apparently halted when the Sandinistas thought they had an understanding
with the Reagan administration about restarting U.S. aid. There is no evidence that the flow of arms later resumed. At the time, Salvadoran guerillas did not need outside supplies to survive. The rebels relied largely on munitions captured or illegally purchased from Salvadoran government sources.

All four issues outlined above were discussed openly and in high level diplomatic talks between the U.S. and Nicaragua throughout the 1980’s. The fact is that the U.S. throughout the contra war outright rejected all Nicaraguan peace proposals. The injuring had to continue. Since Nicaragua was an external resource, and a socialist one at that, its ideas were never given equal weight and consideration. Brutality and indifference to brutality reigned.

The early contra war relied upon a three-sided arrangement, “La Tripartita.” The U.S. supplied directions and money, Argentina provided training and cover, and Honduras was the main base of operations. Following the March 1981 Presidential finding on Central America, State Department ambassador-at-large Vernon “Dick” Walters (later UN Ambassador) was dispatched to negotiate agreements with the contras and the Argentineans. Walters, a retired lieutenant general who speaks eight languages including Spanish, has a long career in covert operations involving him in such affairs as the 1953 overthrow of the Mossadegh government in Iran, the 1964 overthrow of the Goulart government in Brazil, and the 1973 overthrow of the Allende government in Chile.13

Walters personally negotiated the merger of the September 15th Legion and the UDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Union) into a new organization called the Fuerza Democratica Nigaraguense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force, or by its Spanish acronym,
At that time, the ex-National Guardsmen were divided into several small bands operating along the Nicaragua-Honduras border. The largest and most deadly band was the September 15th Legion. These bands were poorly equipped and unorganized. They were not an effective fighting force. The UDN was a moderate group headed by José Francisco "Chicano" Cardenal.

According to Edgar Chamorro, a contra official, Cardenal and the UDN initially opposed any linkage with the guardsmen. The CIA and high-ranking U.S. officials insisted on the merge with the Guardsmen. The UDN was well aware of the crimes committed by the Guardsmen against the Nicaraguan people while in the service of President Somoza. However, the UDN recognized that without help from the U.S. government, there was no chance of removing the Sandinistas from power. So the UDN eventually acceded to the CIA and General Walters' insistence that it join forces with the Guardsmen. Walters himself arranged for all the bands to be incorporated into the September 15th Legion and for the military government of Argentina to send several army officers as advisors and trainers.¹⁵

Edgar Chamorro described the merger of the September 15th Legion and the UDN:

....on August 10, 1981 it was accomplished ... at a meeting in Guatemala City, Guatemala, where the formal documents were signed. The meeting was arranged and the documents prepared by the CIA. The new organization was called Fuenza Democratic Nicaraguense (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) or, by its Spanish acronym F.D.N. It was to be headed by a political junta consisting of Cardenal, Arestides Sanchez (a politician loyal to General Somoza and closely associated with Bermudez) and Mariano Mendoza, formerly a labor leader in Nicaragua. The political junta soon established itself in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, taking up residence in a house rented for it by the CIA. Bermudez was assigned to head the
military general staff and it too was based in Honduras. The name of the organization, the members of the political junta, and the members of the general staff were all chosen or approved by the CIA. Soon after the merger, the FDN began to receive a substantial and steady flow of financial, military, and other assistance from the CIA. Former National Guardsmen who had sought exile in El Salvador, Guatemala, and the United States were recruited to enlarge the military component of the organization. They were offered regular salaries, the funds for which were supplied by the CIA. Training was provided by Argentinean military officers, two of whom Col. Oswaldo Ribeiro and Col. Santiago Villejas I got to know quite well. The Argentineans were paid by the CIA. A special unit was created for sabotage, especially demolitions. It was trained directly by CIA personnel at Lepaterique, near Tegucigalpa. Arms, ammunitions, equipment, and food were supplied by the CIA. Our first combat units were sent into Nicaragua territory in December 1981.16

A command structure was established with formal direction from the CIA. Funds and expertise from prior covert actions were funneled into the contra cause. Reagan signed a National Security Decision Directive on November 23, 1981 authorizing the CIA to “Work with foreign governments as appropriate” to conduct political and “paramilitary” operations “against (the) Cuban presence and Cuban-Sandinista support infrastructure in Nicaragua and elsewhere in Central America.”17 The CIA was allocated $19.95 million to build a 500-man force in Honduras that would complement a 1,000-man force being trained in Argentina.18 Washington reportedly paid Argentina $50 million to provide the training.19

When presenting the finding to the Intelligence Committees, administration officials emphasized arms interdiction. Casey said the United States was “buying in” to an existing Argentine operation to train Nicaraguan exiles. By one account, “the impression left with some members of the Intelligence Committees was of crack teams of commandos hitting
arms caches, ammunition dumps, Cuban military patrols, and a couple of key bridges along the arms supply route in the dead of night and withdrawing unseen from Nicaragua to their Honduran bases."20

Illegal shipments of arms from Miami to Honduras continued unimpeded. General advice on how to smuggle weapons out of Miami was provided by CIA officials. The aim of administrative policy was to draw the line in El Salvador and redraw it in Nicaragua. The press was, at the time, told that the U.S. was supporting only political “moderates” and that “no support would be given to followers of General Somoza.”21

In March of 1982, two key bridges were destroyed by contras. The Sandinistas reacted by declaring a state of emergency that mandated prior censorship of military information, restricted the right to strike, and limited freedom of movement in the war zones. The armed forces were put on full alert. U.S. officials denounced the state of emergency they had provoked as a sign of Nicaraguan totalitarianism. There were no reminders that every government, no matter how democratic, employs extraordinary measures in times of war including the U.S. In May of 1982, CIA officials confirmed U.S. involvement in the plot to blow up the bridges.22 This effected no objection from the House Intelligence Committee as the bridges were thought to support illicit arms traffic from Nicaragua to the guerillas in El Salvador. “We had to do that,” one member said.

Throughout 1982 the contra war expanded in scope and sophistication. Mercenaries from throughout the world were recruited for missions in Central America.23 Contra forces assassinated many minor Nicaraguan government officials.24 A customs warehouse was burned. From March 14 to June 21, 1982, there were at least 106 insurgent incidents
(by contra forces) within Nicaragua. Buildings were destroyed, crops were burned, and health officials killed. The U.S. held numerous exercises with warships off the Nicaraguan coasts. U.S. spy planes often flew over Nicaragua in violation of Nicaraguan airspace. Airstrips were enlarged in Honduras and Costa Rica.

As former contra spokesman Edgar Chamorro explained to the World Court,

1982 was a year of transition for the FDN ... from a collection of small, disorganized and ineffectual bands of ex-National guardsmen, the FDN grew into a well-organized, well-armed, well-equipped, and well-trained fighting force of approximately 4,000 men capable of inflicting great harm on Nicaragua. This was due entirely to the CIA which organized, armed, equipped, trained, and supplied us...After the initial recruitment of ex-Guardsmen from throughout the region (to serve as officers or commanders of military units), efforts were made to recruit ‘foot soldiers’ for the force from inside Nicaragua. Some Nicaraguans joined the force voluntarily, either because of dissatisfaction with the Nicaraguan government, family ties with leaders of the force, promises of food, clothing, boots, and weapons or a combination of these reasons. Many other members of the force were recruited forcibly. FDN units would arrive at an undefended village, assemble all the residents in the town square and then proceed to kill, in full view of the others, all persons suspected of working for the Nicaraguan government or the FSLN, including police, local militia members, party members, health workers, teachers, and farmers from government-sponsored cooperatives. In this atmosphere, it was not difficult to persuade those able-bodied men left alive to return with the FDN units to their base camps in Honduras and enlist in the force. This was, unfortunately, a widespread practice that accounted for many recruits.

In Tinotega, there was a contra commander known as “El Tigrillo” (little tiger). “He had a reputation of being a rapist, recruiting people by force ... a very abusive person. There were other commanders who had the reputation of intimidating people - ‘if you don’t join, we kill you.’” There was one more group of recruits, they were just “adventurers that join anything that goes by and promises a new, better life ... or some are just bored with life ...
or they see an opportunity to leave their wife with children like they’ve done before."27 The contras reportedly also recruited unemployed Hondurans.

In July of 1981, Eden Pastora, a prominent Sandinista war hero, resigned his post as Nicaraguan National Chief of the People’s Militia and Deputy Minister of Defense and went underground. He emerged in April of 1982, denouncing the Sandinista leadership and vowing to overthrow them. By July 1982, he was on the CIA payroll and in charge of the southern front.28 Pastora did not fit well within the FDN hierarchy. Contra leaders, Bermudez and Lau, stationed in Honduras, wanted him dead. The Nicaraguan people condemned Pastora and held large rallies in Managua portraying him as a traitor to the people and the revolution with no concern for the national sovereignty of Nicaragua.

The war between the British and the Argentines severed the Argentine-Contra connection when the U.S. publicly backed the British. The war ended June 14, 1982 with a British military victory. In the wake of defeat, the Argentine military dictatorship gave way to an elected government. The Argentine military withdrew their contra advisers.

The FDN amassed a long record of atrocities against Nicaraguan citizens and little public support inside or outside Nicaragua. Like death swooping down, the contra killed and intimidated the Nicaraguan populace with U.S. supplied arms. There are numerous books on this topic which are well researched, notably Contra Terror In Nicaragua: Report of a Fact-finding Mission: September 1984-January 1985, by Reed Brody, a U.S. lawyer who documents hundreds of contra attacks.29 Many of the 145 legally sufficient affidavits Brody obtained were independently verified by news sources like The New York Times, Americas Watch and CBS Evening News. Christopher Dickey, a journalist, lived
and traveled with the contras throughout 1983, and later published a brilliant and
penetrating account, *With The Contras: A Reporter in the Wilds of Nicaragua.*
Other first hand sources are *Blood of The Innocent: Victims of the Contras' War in Nicaragua*
by Toefilo Cabestrero, a Spanish Priest and journalist, and *The Contras: Interviews with Anti-Sandinistas* authored by Dieter Eich, a German engineer and sociologist and Carlos Rinchon, humanities scholar.

The F.D.N. command structure was dominated by ex-Guardia. Advice and direction came from the CIA. “There were always two tracks” a CIA official explained, “the publicly stated CIA objective of interdicting weapons to the Salvadoran guerillas and the overthrow of the Sandinista government.” “It would have defied logic for anyone to think that the sole purpose of the anti-Sandinista soldier was to intercept arms traveling down a trail.”

By 1983, there were numerous documented assassinations by contra forces and the CIA felt compelled to commission a manual on *Psychological Operations in Guerilla Warfare.* The cover story was falling apart and Congress was getting testy. The business of this manual was to convince the fighters that what they did was noble and their cause worthwhile. The problem with the manual is that it condoned the killing and kidnapping of non-combatants and went on to explain how to rationalize the killings. The manual suggested slogans to help people appreciate contra weapons and promises to return the people to a true democracy. Given that the system before the revolution was a dictatorship and that it was well known that top contra commanders and some field personnel were ex-Guardia, it was hardly surprising that few Nicaraguans were inspired by
these empty phrases. Armed propaganda was outlined: Destroy military or police installations, remove survivors to a public place, set up ambushes, cut communication lines, humiliate "personnel symbols" of the government, reduce the influence of individuals in tune with the regime and take them out of town. The manual also outlined how to develop and control a front organization in urban areas. Criminals should be hired to carry out some of the FDN’s dirty work.

The story of the manual broke in 1984, just before Reagan and Mondale were to debate foreign policy. Congress acted appalled. What was important in the legalistic minds of the Capitol was that the manual seemed a direct contravention of a presidential directive explicitly barring the CIA from getting involved in assassinations. “No person employed by or acting on behalf of the U.S. Government should engage in or conspire to engage in assassinations.”

Staff from the CIA was flabbergasted. They though that this was a war. Back in 1983, secret CIA briefings already admitted that “Sandinista officials in the provinces, as well as heads of cooperatives, nurses, doctors, and judges” had been killed by contra rebels. Duane Clarrige, head of the CIA’s Latin American divisio, said “these events don’t constitute assassinations because as far as we are concerned, assassinations are only those of heads of state.”37 One CIA agent in Honduras said, “let’s face it, our people are teaching people (contras) how to kill people, how to set up ambushes, how to set up a Claymore (landmine) so it can kill the most people.” Another CIA veteran suggested that it wasn’t the manual that made killers of the FDN’s commanders. Most in the CIA thought the manual flap would quickly blow over. However, the manual epitomized in the
eyes of Congress the clumsiness and dubious morality of the covert program and led to a freeze of U.S. contra funding in the fall of 1984.

The CIA also produced a second manual called *The Freedom Fighters Manual*, which was written in comic book style. The emphasis in this short book was on sabotage techniques ranging from petty acts to life threatening violence. The manual reads like textbook monkey wrenching. Its explicit aim was to be a guide to "liberate Nicaragua from oppression and misery by paralyzing the military-industrial complex of the traitorous Marxist state without having to use special tools and with minimal risk for the combatant." "Don't do maintenance work. Hide and damage tools ... arrive late to work ... call in sick to work ... leave lights on ... leave water taps on ... plant flowers on State farms ... hoard and steal food ... drop typewriters ... paint anti-Sandinista slogans ... pour water in gas tanks ... put dirt in the carburetor ... take an ice pick to the gas tank, tires, and radiators ... put nails on roads and highways ... make a molotov cocktail" (the illustration shows a man throwing it at a police station), and so forth.

Even with all the CIA training and funding, the contra army virtually disintegrated under fire out in the bush. Commanders were making fools of themselves. There were numerous failures. The contras employed inhuman field practices and they showed themselves to be incompetent also. The CIA was falling into an old pattern; American military was failing.

"If the FDN and Pastora's people can't really do things that hurt, then it's got to be worked out another way," is the way, one senior intelligence official recalls the attitude during that period. "There was a push to have some kind of success in Nicaragua,
something that would quell congressional criticism." Large scale violent injuring is necessary to win both the war and congressional support. When the contras couldn’t do the job alone, more violent machinery was brought in to fill the gap.

In high-tech operations, for obvious reasons of discipline and skill, the CIA preferred to use its own people. "Unilaterally controlled Latino assets" it called the men it contracted from Ecuador and various other South American countries. In September and October of 1983, a series of attacks on Nicaragua's port facilities were begun.41 Before dawn on October 10, 1983, millions of gallons of fuel erupted into flames on the Corinto waterfront. The FDN claimed responsibility, but no Nicaraguan had anything to do with the attack. "Latino assets" using speedboats to work from a CIA mother ship anchored several miles out at sea had carried it out.42

The CIA and the U.S. were feeling more potency after they had easily taken over the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada. On January 2, 1984, an assistant woke contra spokesman Edgar Chamorro and gave him a press statement. The FDN had mined Nicaragua's harbors, it said. Telegrams were to be sent to Lloyd's of London so that insurance rates would rise. The FDN dutifully claimed credit. But the FDN had not done any part of that job either or other mining operations that followed. The CIA's men, working off a mother ship again, had planted the small explosive devices in the harbors.43 The idea was to squeeze the Sandinistas economy as the contra forces themselves were never able to do. The effort failed. Most ships continued to come in, despite some damage. Exxon announced that it would no longer send its tankers into Nicaraguan ports, but - in a now familiar pattern - the Soviet Union soon moved to fill the gaps with its own
ships.

The first reports of all this went largely unremarked in Washington. But when the French offered to clear the ports and other American allies began to protest the operation, Congress started to take note.\textsuperscript{44} The Senate felt it had been deceived. Nicaragua took the matter of the mining and the entire secret war to the World Court, won, and the Reagan administration had to disavow the court's jurisdiction.\textsuperscript{45} The pretense of legality for the operation against Nicaragua was being stripped away along with its secrecy.

In the wake of the temporary loss of U.S. Congressional support for the Contras, numerous international networks were set up to funnel expertise, money, and guns to the contra cause. In clear violation of numerous laws and the Boland amendment, deals were struck with South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, South Korea, Israel, China, and Iran as well as with numerous private organizations.\textsuperscript{46} Illegal air support systems were established throughout the contra war, resulting in the infamous Hasenfus capture.\textsuperscript{47} Reagan suffered some political fallout from these activities when the Iran-Contra hearings were broadcast live nationwide in 1987.

In 1985, Reagan declared an embargo on Nicaragua which remained firmly in place until 1990 when UNO candidate Violeta Chamorro was elected president and the Sandinistas were voted out of power by their own people. Throughout the 1980's the U.S. was successful in discouraging and prohibiting Nicaragua from receiving badly needed loans and aid from the International Monetary Fund.\textsuperscript{48}

Let me be clear that my attempt in this chapter was to briefly outline the general strategies of the contra war. This is not an exhaustive account and is only intended to
provide a glimpse into the various facets, dimensions, and levels of terror perpetrated on Nicaragua by the U.S. during the contra war. There is much more to this sordid tale which is available in references. The contra war wound down in the late 1980’s as peace accords and cease-fires began to take hold. A program of amnesty and demilitarization of the contras, in conjunction with a radical downsizing of the Nicaraguan military was agreed upon. In the next several sections the empirical consequences of the contra war are outlined, with an emphasis on the period 1980-1985.

By May 1986, a total of 4,429 war related deaths had been reported in Nicaragua. The dead included at least 210 persons under 12 years of age, 274 high school or college students, and 76 technicians or professionals. Nearly a third of all deaths occurred among civilians. The rate of war related deaths among Nicaraguans exceeds that of the United States during the Viet Nam War or World War II. By the end of 1985, over 100 rural communities had been attacked, 345 vehicles had been ambushed, and 51 assassinations of local leaders by contras had been reported.

Among survivors of contra attacks, the predominant wound site is the lower extremities as a result of fragmentation and explosion caused by mines and mortars. Contra leaders had made a strategic decision to expand such attacks with materials and guidance supplied through United States congressional appropriations. The methods of the contras had remained the same throughout the 1980's. During the 18 month (March 1988 to November 1989) unilateral cease fire, contras killed 736, wounded 1,153 and kidnapped 1,481. The total killed in the contra war was over 30,000 as of March 1, 1990.
In four major wars of the twentieth century, a minority of all casualties became fatalities.\textsuperscript{57} In contrast, among Nicaraguan casualties since 1982, close to half were fatalities.\textsuperscript{58} This appears to result from the particular nature of the contra attacks: mining of rural roads, mortar attacks on isolated villages, and ambushing vehicles. Contra military strategies have resulted in a high number of casualties among health personnel.

By December 1985, 42 salaried health workers were reported to have been killed by contras, 31 others were kidnapped, and 11 more were reported to have been wounded.\textsuperscript{59} Some of the medical victims, such as Dr. Gustavo Sequira, Vice Dean of the Managua Medical School, and Dr. Myrna Cunningham, Governor of the Northern Zelaya province, were well-known members of the Nicaraguan medical establishment. Most victims, however, were young health professionals who worked in isolated rural communities.\textsuperscript{60}

"Low Intensity Conflict" targeted the civilian population for hostilities. Doctors, nurses and patients were frequent victims. It goes without saying that this violated customary and statutory international law regarding the neutrality of health personnel in situations of war.

Contra actions led to the destruction of 300 work centers and 58 schools and the closing of 502 more, and the destruction of 2,100 homes and 11 social welfare centers as of early 1986.\textsuperscript{61} This has reportedly affected 7% of elementary students and 6% of adult education students.\textsuperscript{62} Sixty-five health facilities, including four large clinics and one hospital, were reported to have been completely or partially destroyed.\textsuperscript{63} In addition, 37 health units in war zones were abandoned by the government. The loss in available facilities coincided with an increased need for medical and social services. The war
created a large group of disabled young adults needing rehabilitative care and equipment. About nine thousand orphans resulted from death to adults. The Nicaraguan government estimates that close to 10% of the country's inhabitants lost access to health services because of war.

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Health estimated that a total of $25 million in damage to the health system was sustained. The economic value of destruction to the health system was only a small part of the estimated $2 billion worth of losses sustained by the country as a result of the war through 1985.

Contra attacks, lack of supplies, and war related economic instability forced about 250,000 Nicaraguans from their homes. About half of the displaced resettled in some 80 new communities established by the government in areas near their original homes. Most of the displaced fled to major cities. This migration was a severe strain on the social and health infrastructure of the country. Emergency services were established for new relocation settlements. Setting up these emergency services was a severe drain on the country's economy, since defense and reconstruction consumed most of the national budget.

During the period of January 1983 to April 1985, the number of malaria cases detected in the war zones was 17% greater than the monthly average during the previous eight years. War-related population movements, the inability to carry out timely disease control activities, and shortages of health personnel in the war zones are likely responsible for the inability to reduce malaria transmission in these areas. Underreporting of malaria cases in areas of conflict underestimates the differences in malaria incidence in the war and
non-war zones.\textsuperscript{71} Malaria moves from the war zones into the rest of the country. An investigation of positive cases in three of the eight non-war provinces during the first six months of 1984 showed that 78\% of all slide-verified cases were imported from war zones.\textsuperscript{72} The risk of contracting and reporting a case from these areas was 7.6 times greater than the rest of the country.

A measles epidemic in 1985-86 appeared to be intimately related to the war. Coverage of children under five years of age with measles vaccine had risen to above 50\% for the first time in Nicaragua in 1982. Successive community health campaigns and immunizations provided through the primary health system further raised coverage in ensuing years. This was associated with the reporting of 200 to 75 cases per year in a declining trend during 1981-84. With the growth of the war in 1983, coverage with measles vaccines declined in war Regions One and Six. More importantly, many isolated rural communities went wholly unvaccinated because of the danger posed by the war to health volunteers and medical professionals. This lack of coverage continued through 1985, creating a large pool of susceptibles under five years of age. By July of 1985, an epidemic was noted in Region Six. By February 1986, the epidemic had spread to Region One. During the first nine months of 1986, Regions One and Six registered 51\% of the 2,021 measles cases reported in Nicaragua. No cases of polio have been reported since 1981. Promotion of maternal immunization since 1983 has brought a gradual reduction in the number of reported cases of neonatal tetanus, from 132 in 1981 to 76 in 1985. The decline in neonatal tetanus cases would likely have been greater if the war had not disrupted efforts to train and supply rural midwives.\textsuperscript{73}
Estimated infant mortality levels have remained stable since 1983 at 76 per 1,000 births. This follows rapid improvements in Nicaragua's mortality profile from 1979 to 1983. A survey of 10,000 homes in 1986 found a more rapid decline in infant mortality in outlying regions than was expected. There is evidence, however, of a rise in infant mortality rates in Managua during the period of 1985-87. This rise may be the result of a rapid influx of people from the war zones.

When the Sandinistas ousted the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the United States shifted its most stable geopolitical "home base" northward to Honduras, which shares borders with Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. This vigorous Honduran role in Central America is causing a series of environmental problems. A high ranking official from the Honduran Ecological Association recently told a member of EPOCA, the Environmental Project on Central America, that "although we are very grateful to U.S.-AID for its support for our environmental programs," this support is "overwhelmed by U.S. military spending." Honduras and the United States staged nearly continuous joint military maneuvers from 1980 to 1985. United States military aid increased nearly fifty-fold since 1979, topping $190 million in 1984. The United States armed forces have used the maneuvers to build numerous military bases, roads, port facilities, warehouse sites and airfields. Nine military air bases have been built in Honduras since the Reagan administration took office. The United States has also built, housed, armed and trained the Contra army of over 10,000 men.

Although the environmental impact of these activities is difficult to assess, some
evidence is beginning to emerge. The main impact has been the destruction of forests. A document produced by Honduras' State Forestry Corporation claimed that the United States-Honduran joint maneuvers known as Cabanas-86 destroyed 10% of the country's pine forests on the savanna near the Nicaraguan border. The military conflict has a ripple effect throughout the ecology of the region. The contra war created war-related movement of people and animals. A confidential report to the President of Honduras by a number of government agencies asserts that the contra war threatened their second most important export base, namely, forests. According to newspaper accounts "Nicaraguan refugees and contras have generated a wave of destruction in Honduran forests." While Salvadoran refugees were kept in camps surrounded by soldiers, some 20,000 Nicaraguan refugees, according to the report, were subject to little control. The resultant environmental destruction included deforestation for subsistence agriculture, land clearing to establish contra bases, black market export of parrots, and illegal exploitation of tree species including mahogany, cedar and pine.

The United States, true to form, ignored the environmental impact of its activities in Honduras and Nicaragua. Joseph G. Hanley, spokesman for the United States National Guard, which actively participated in United States military projects in Honduras, told the Washington Post that engineering projects in Honduras are "less environmentally constrained" than in the United States. "If you're building a road," he said, "you don't have to worry about the width of the culverts, about the Environmental Protection Agency or about the environmentalists. Those are not concerns down here." The Honduran Ecological Association (HEC) disagreed with Mr. Hanley.
According to one of its leaders, "we are very concerned about these roads. They are causing significant erosion and sedimentation in our aquifers." The HEC claimed that United States soldiers were shooting Honduran wildlife for sport. The United States troops also brought live parrots home with them as souvenirs of their tour of duty.\textsuperscript{79} The United States-backed contra army based on Honduras' southern border with Nicaragua increased pressure on diminishing forest animal populations by eating them. According to Adolfo Calero, a Contra leader, "most of our people have to feed themselves on wildlife."\textsuperscript{80}

In addition to causing ecological destruction in their host countries of Honduras and Costa Rica, the United States-backed contras targeted environmentalists and their programs in the war to overthrow Nicaragua's Sandinista government. The contras attack environmentalism as part of a coordinated strategy to disrupt government programs and separate the general population from the Sandinistas by making it clear that government programs - health, education, agriculture and environment - were contra targets.

Within Nicaragua, contras directly attacked environmentalists and their projects in the field. In the years 1985-87 the contras burned reforested areas, destroyed tree nurseries, jeeps and offices. Nicaragua's environmental agency, DIRENA, closed the country's only tropical rain forest national reserve, the Salaya National Park, in 1983, when contras kidnapped the park's administrator and two rangers.\textsuperscript{81}

The program and staff of DIRENA (formerly IRENA) was decimated by a series of budget cuts in 1989 which slashed all government programs - from defense to environment - by 40% to 70%. Previously an autonomous agency, DIRENA has been
subsumed under the Ministry of Agriculture (MIDINRA) and is now reduced primarily to serving the more immediate priority of supporting the food production system. Many of DIRENA’s ambitious wildlands and reforestation projects begun in the late 1980’s were shelved due to the exigencies of Nicaragua’s survival economy. The official inflation rate in 1988 in Nicaragua was 1300%.

Some of the more toxic pesticides that the Sandinista government banned in 1980 (like DDT, aldrin and dieldrin) are being used again because there are no alternatives. Despite a historical commitment to worker safety and environmental protection MIDINRA is constrained now to provide resources to maximize food production, which means distributing leftover pesticides donated by foreign governments or pulling banned chemicals out of storage.\(^2\) The soft path is quickly abandoned in favor of a harsh technologically specified solution. War abruptly pushes hard technology to the surface when progressive alternatives are no longer sustainable.

Lake Managua is now one of the most polluted lakes in the world. This tragedy is due to industrial contamination with mercury and silting, which results from deforestation.\(^3\) Raw sewage from Managua flows into Lake Managua; it is abhorrent that even by 1990 there was not even primary treatment of Managua’s municipal wastewater. DDT was also used in pre-Revolutionary Nicaragua to control malarial misquitos. The people of Nicaragua now have among the highest concentrations of DDT in human fluids, like breast milk, of any country in the world.\(^4\)

Chemicals, poisons and pesticides created significant health problems among workers. By 1979, each cotton crop was sprayed an average of 28 times with chemical
pesticides. Few workers were taught to practice safety measures when handling these pesticides. The situation is better now, Spanish precaution labels appear on containers, (they used to be in English) and most people can read.

The point of United States sponsored contra intervention in Nicaragua was injury and terror, not military victory. The attitude of U.S. planners was that the resulting morbidity and mortality rates were an acceptable price to pay. That Nicaraguans suffered to accomplish U.S. strategic and ideological goals seems to have been studiously ignored. In summary, the contra war was palpable inside Nicaragua. In the U.S. there were very few, if any, direct consequences either politically or economically. Nicaragua is such a small economy even under the best of situations that any economic effects of the contra war inside the U.S. did not even register. As stated earlier, the policy device procured only limited political drama and several congressional reports on the internal side of the divide. Even when the “secret war” became well known, there was limited social action on the internal side of the divide. The U.S. government frowned upon individuals and groups, which sought to directly engage the “enemy,” thus step outside its assigned role of silent passive consumer. Many were moved to simply fly down to Nicaragua and check it out. There were numerous, and still are, work brigades, Spanish intensive workshops and independent fact finding missions to Nicaragua. The most moving accounts of the contra war came from first hand observation and reporting. Witness for Peace had North American volunteers living in the war zones and in Managua throughout the 1980’s. There were also numerous protest rallies throughout the United States and abroad in opposition to the contra war. The war was generally well covered by the press. The basic
structure of the contra war was evident if one scratched even a little below the surface of
official policy statements. However, due to its relative hiddenness and an indifferent
public, the contra war continued unabated throughout the 1980's.

The contra war had its paradigmatic inaccessibility and an underlying structure
similar to the long-standing policy devices described in Chapter 3. Nicaragua, throughout
the twentieth century, and specifically during the contra war, was assigned the role of
external component of the policy device. Workers and leaders who successfully revolted
against Somoza unsuccessfully attempted socialism. Socialism proved to be unworkable
just as the authoritarian regime was. In both cases the people never rose above the
ontological status of external component of the policy device. The system that “allowed”
people to be obedient poor workers exacted a high price when these same workers tried to
assert their sovereignty and autonomy. Since the local side of the policy device, which
during “peacetime” was the Somoza dictatorship, was no longer present (its base of power
dissolved), another wing of the device had to be created in nearby “host” countries of
Honduras and Costa Rica. The U.S. tried to unify militarily and ideologically contra
forces on two fronts. By basically paying thousands of people this was accomplished. On
a short term, instrumental level, contra attacks were extremely successful in causing injury
to bodies and cultural artifacts. Although the contras were not militarily successful against
the Sandinista Army, the contra war (and economic mismanagement) resulted in a new
government and a return to power of some of the same groups that lost power in 1979.
Chapter 5

Conclusions

The role of the U.S. government during the contra war as planners rather than killers mirrors a similar division in U.S. culture. Absorbed in fantasies of consumption, American culture easily conceals from itself its culpability abroad. By not seeing through the policy device to its dark external underside, cultural indifference reigns. People in the U.S. fail to see themselves as a seamless extension of the internal component of the policy device. Technology and indifference, it appears, are one and the same. One does not cause the other, yet neither exists independently. Where the strong hand of technology is near, indifference reigns.

Political choices of 1990 and 1996 within Nicaragua indicate that, in the main, Nicaragua has rejected the extreme authoritarianism of Somoza and the socialism of the Sandinistas. These election results show the rise of the standard version of the device paradigm and its indifference to strong social justice within Nicaragua. The conversion of Nicaragua’s citizens from external to internal members of the device paradigm will come only after periods of extreme poverty and strong political and economic integration with the world economy. Voting patterns, and changes within Sandinista ideology and strategy, indicate this direction of social change.

Looking back, when a revolutionary process reaches political power, any cost can be justified. The joy of victory gives meaning to the bitter passages of the past, especially in
the first days after the overthrow of a repressive regime. Success justifies, in the popular imagination and in the discourses of the new political rulers, the sacrifices that have been made. In failure, on the other hand, judgment tends to be implacable, and a balanced analysis is rare. The thoroughness of defeat rules out any appeal to original intentions and factors that came into play afterwards.

Did revolution fail in Central America, then, or did it succeed? The easiest answer is that it failed: it failed to take power in El Salvador and Guatemala, and in Nicaragua it lost power in less time that it took to win it. This is the common currency in the international press. It carries an undeniable finger-shaking value: if the revolutionary strategy failed and Central America is back in the hands of those who ruled it all along, surely there is no point in trying anything so crazy again. Besides, as shown in Chapter Four, Nicaragua emerged from a decade of war with its economy destroyed and in the midst of a crisis whose weight has fallen disproportionately on the very social groups that heeded the revolutionaries’ siren call. During the 1980’s the gross domestic product per person fell by 41 percent in Nicaragua, 18 percent in Guatemala and 15 percent in El Salvador.1

Turning the same logic in a different direction, however, one could easily blame the damage on the resistance of ruling groups to social change, their insistence on holding on to their social privilege, their commitment to authoritarianism. If the ruling groups had been less intransigent, in short, things might have been different. Faced with electoral failure and the continual defeat of reforms in the 1960s and 1970s, many in Central America concluded that there was nothing left but to accept the appeal of revolution, or at least collaborate with it, to have a chance at political success and a minimum of personal
Was that a mistake? Should people have gone on accepting poverty and exploitation, repression and bloodshed? Should they have accepted electoral fraud and abuse as inevitable? These questions go far beyond the Central American case alone. They are part of the always-open question whether to resist oppression. When legal routes are closed off, must one be resigned to it? Who can be sure that, if the Nicaraguan people had accepted the Somoza dictatorship or the triumphant return of the contras or if Guatemalans and Salvadorans had resigned themselves to repression, exploitation and fraud, they would be better off today.

The Central American social revolutionary project, like any other, sought to control government in order to “democratize” political power, change socioeconomic conditions, improve workers’ access to resources – land, work, food, education, health – and reclaim national sovereignty. Our verdict on that project, therefore, cannot be reduced to the question of government or the state, even though that is one of its basic elements. As shown in Chapter 3, revolutionary mobilization by itself, opened the way for some social transformations and the emergence of new actors who have contributed to changing certain aspects of their respective communities and societies. The struggle to transform those designated external (workers) into the internal component of the device paradigm (consumers) will be a difficult and treacherous path, but one, that needs to be taken nonetheless.

As for the Sandinista program some general conclusions can be drawn. The organizational structure and internal procedures of the revolutionary party are important...
and need to be fluid and change when external conditions change. In wartime the structure tends to be rigid, hierarchical and clandestine. In peace time the structure and "party line" must be more open to substantive discussion and criticism. Content, results and publicly accountable internal processes must replace vague proposals to change the world.

What was difficult for the Sandinistas to understand was that their programs were sandwiched between promises of liberty and prosperity and the more mundane tasks of securing genuine technological accomplishments. The former come from advanced industrial countries and are broadcast via television and advertisements, the latter are the trench work of eliminating disease, hunger, illiteracy and landlessness. There was insufficient progress in the latter and regression in the former. All a Nicaraguan had to do was turn on television to see the disparity between what they desired and what Sandinista slogans promised. When it became obvious that a socialist approach could make almost no progress on either front (commodities or machineries), the Sandinistas were quickly and consistently voted out of top national offices. They remain a formidable political force but no longer have universal appeal. The socialist idea that the population has to be protected from the outside world no longer holds sway.

Thus Nicaragua and much of the third world are caught between the glamour and appeal of technological life and the mundane politics devoted to new roads, upgrading schools and clinics and teaching people to read and write. Obviously, in a country where in 1997 40% of the population makes about 1 U.S. dollar per day, any improvement in material conditions would be welcomed. Lasting material and cultural improvement will
come for Nicaragua only when government and business cooperate to liberate people from
toil and starvation while also strictly respecting human rights.

A guerrilla organization does not have to spell out its program of struggle in any
great detail. A political party, on the other hand, must offer voters as complete a platform
as possible. When a guerrilla organization molts into a political party, it must flesh out
specific proposals to address and resolve people's problems surrounding core issues like
security, work, health, food and education. Political slogans will no longer suffice. War
allows a large number of economic and social questions to wait until "later." Through the
contra war new social programs, which could not wait, were physically attacked to ensure
failure. The factors that set off revolutionary processes ricochet through history setting
into motion a wide array of social actions. Could the Sandinistas have foreseen the depth
and U.S. support for a counterrevolutionary army?

As a guerrilla movement matures into a political party expectations will rise. A
former guerrilla organization will often win more votes than expected in its first electoral
outing as the Sandinistas did in 1984. They promise to get things done and change the
system. But good intentions quickly bog down in bureaucracy; parliamentary majorities
can block (or reverse) reforms, and people begin to notice that the guerrillas have
gradually grown into the style and appearance of old political professionals. The elections
of 1990 and 1996 in Nicaragua showed that the populace will not sit idly by while the
FSLN learns to act as a political party.

The installation of contra forces as a legitimate political force inside Nicaragua was
an unsuccessful attempt by the U.S. to create a new local, controllable, element of the
policy device. When the Somoza government and Guardia dissolved in 1979, the smooth functioning of the local element of an imperialistic policy device shattered. The contras, with support from farmers nationwide, indigenous groups from the Atlantic coast, the Catholic church, numerous internal fronts, the middle bourgeoisie, and the U.S., were to be ushered into power. But ultimately the middle bourgeoisie returned to power, and the contras disarmed and disbanded as did most of the Sandinista Army.

Although the size and importance of the Nicaraguan economy did not appear to justify outfitting a counterrevolutionary army, deep ideological and security concerns dominated this sordid enterprise. Politics within the internal side of the device (U.S.) fueled the engine of contra war policy. An indifferent public, the large mass of people that compose the internal group, is paralyzed by a moral callousness consistent with the dangers of technology described in Chapter 2. As the Sandinistas tried to exert control over concerns that were external to the policy device, such as literacy, environment, health and agrarian reform, there was a coincident and forbidding problem of apolitical mass consumption within the internal population. Social indifference created the large political opening necessary for the Reagan administration to finance, plan and implement the contra war.

As imperialism wrested North America from the Indian tribes, significant benefits accrued to immigrants and the government. Vast resources were obtained to provide food, housing, energy and land for a growing nation. The contra war was different; there were no direct tangible benefits for the U.S. populace. Gas and oil prices were not at stake. We did not need Nicaraguan coffee, sugar, beef or cotton to survive. The U.S.
economic embargo (1985-1990) had no effect on the U.S. economy. Only the external side, the Nicaraguan side, felt the loss of trade and foreign exchange. The only payback to the U.S. taxpayers, who helped finance the contra war, is that certain expropriated properties were returned, and U.S. trade and investment is marginally growing.

The best I can hope for is atonement and forgiveness, some attempt to dress the wound and feel the shrapnel buried deep inside. Rewriting history along the lines of neoliberal trade policies will never adequately address the horror and injuries. At best, capitalism can stabilize and lower interest rates and inflation, and allow for intelligent, compassionate investment. However, even this “utopia” would ignore the deeper and more troubling problem of how technology tends to eviscerate human thought and engagement with the world. During the contra war we had terror and indifference. Today we have an even less tractable situation, peace and indifference.
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