



Nahuel
Moreno

Sandinism and the Nicaraguan Revolution

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Sandinism and the Nicaraguan Revolution

Foreword

A few months before his death, Nahuel Moreno received a letter from one of the greatest Argentine intellectuals, the writer, playwright, actor, and psychotherapist Eduardo Pavlovsky. In this letter important concerns are reflected about role of the Sandinistas and Castro in the Central American revolution. We believe useful to publish this letter and Moreno's response, considering that in them are expressed important debates. It was published in *Correo Internacional*, Year III, No. 28, May 1987.

THE EDITORS

Eduardo Pavlovsky's letter

Dear comrade Moreno,

I read with great interest your book; I have found it extremely enlightening and helpful. In addition to a very didactic level very operational for training youth — with clear, well defined positions — so necessary at this time where political ambiguity seems to be the prevailing assumption in this curious “democracy” we are facing. Still, I would like to ask two specific questions in the tone of two comrades fighting for the same causes towards socialism and with the same final and definitive future security.

1) In your discussion with Mandel you suggest that certain political conditions give no possibility of total freedom for workers' democracy and if the workers take power, they will be *immediately and relentlessly* attacked by imperialism (mine emphasis).

Regarding Nicaragua, you say the Sandinista government did not convene a Constituent Assembly or expropriated the bourgeoisie — as it should have done — but rather it called for elections in the bourgeois style and left bourgeois property intact. However, imperialism attacks it by all means. The question: if the Sandinistas had expropriated, would they have been more radically revolutionary? Would imperialism have not invaded? Are not the most radical revolutionary lines in Latin America determined by the concrete presence of imperialism?

Is a good diagnosis of imperialism made when calling the Sandinistas to more revolution, if with the little they did they are being checkmated economically and politically, to the

brink of invasion by imperialism? What other more current examples that the first months of the Russian revolution give an answer? Is not there something utopian in advocating expropriation without taking into account imperialism?

2) You say Castro pushes the leadership of the guerrillas to negotiate with the bourgeoisie and the Yankees and does not even dream of making a new Cuba of El Salvador.

This thought makes me raise a question: if Castro pacts with the bourgeoisie and imperialism (or orders to pact), Castro is “betraying” the revolution in Latin America— or the development of revolutionary movements. But, which revolutionary movement also says so? Do the Salvadorans say it? Or are Salvadorans naïve and do not perceive Castro as an imposter? Why manifestos against Castro do not arise from the guerrilla movements or are there some and I do not know them due to lack of information? I do not think there are naïve people. Castro cannot fool the comrades from El Salvador. If he deceives them, these should have denounced him as counter-revolutionary. But if there is something written about this betrayal of Castro, I’d like to read it.

Finally, I want to point out again that agreeing and discussing, as party democracy demands, inspire me to respect the trajectory of your line of thought and action.

I congratulate you, to victory!

Pavlovsky

Moreno replies to Pavlovsky

Buenos Aires, 11 September 1986

My dear comrade Pavlovsky,

I answer with some delay, since an old English friend, Peter Freyer, author of a wonderful book on Hungary, came to visit which kept me away somewhat from preparing my answer to your letter, or rather, your two questions.

Leaving aside the assessment of Fidel as an out of the box politician, I will just give a concise answer to your questions about “which movement” repudiates Fidel, whether this betrays as we say and whether “Salvadorans are naïve and do not perceive Castro as an impostor”. I begin by attaching to this letter photocopies of various articles on the Carpio scandal dealing directly with El Salvador and the widespread opposition to the policies of the Salvadoran CP, oriented and advised by Fidel. If necessary, we could expand at your pleasure with a little time, since we don’t have our files here in the country on direct or indirect criticisms of Fidel similar to the previous one.

The best of the Salvadoran guerrillas who followed their undisputed leader Carpio, as well as of the Central American (the Guatemalan of Yong Sosa, two of the three currents that led the FSLN in Nicaragua, besides of the one of Carpio in El Salvador) have disagreed or severely criticised Fidel’s policy. The matter is even more serious because even the great friends of the FSLN and Castro, the current leadership of the FMLN, stated in the June 1984 issue of *Newsweek* their fear that “they will betray us in the negotiations”. Of the seven or eight existing Colombian guerrillas, except for two — mainly the FARC which agreed with President Betancur with Fidel’s blessing — they are opposed to him. Although I do not know Ecuador well, I understand the same is true of the Ecuadorian guerrilla and, at the time the Brazilian guerrillas in their vast majority repudiated or disowned Fidel. *Sendero Luminoso* [Shining Path] repudiates Fidel. There is a profound logic in this since we should not forget the unconditional political support Fidel gave to Betancur against the guerrillas which had kidnapped his brother, sending an affectionate letter to that genocidal president.

Nor should we forget, let alone you, Fidel played into the hands of the Videla government, supporting it indirectly and I don't know whether directly.

We can say then that, except for the FARC, another Colombian guerrilla group and the current Salvadoran guerrillas, which as the FARC are led by Communist Parties (not the historical one led by Carpio), there is no guerrilla group which has not or is not opposed to Castro. But your question about Fidel should not be limited to the current Salvadoran guerrilla front but should refer to the mass movement. Fidel supported the adjustment packets of Siles Suazo in Bolivia ordered by the IMF and he opposed the general strike against Siles Suazo. He fully supported and continues to support Felipe and the King of Spain, who are beginning to break the record of three million unemployed. He nonchalantly says Kennedy and Carter were great guys. Do not forget that Kennedy was the one who invaded Cuba in Bay of Pigs. Fidel is a leader much criticised and questioned in whom few believe today in the far left. The best examples are the trade union and political meetings Fidel convened in Havana this year. Although organisations and individuals were selected and invited by him, a good percentage of the delegates present fought hard his policy of adviser and collaborator of imperialism. We have recordings and you can read some of the summaries of these speeches in our press. None of this means Fidel is an agent of imperialism, nor is the FSLN. On the contrary, they have the extraordinary merit of being independent of imperialism. His misfortune is he believes in coexistence with it and that behaving well they will get to improve their situation even more. His philosophy is: "leave imperialism in peace and they will also leave us in peace to build and develop our economy and society." We believe this philosophy and policy is completely and utterly wrong since imperialism leaves no one alone until it completely dominates them.

As for prestige, the same is not true with the Sandinistas and Shafik Handal, the current leader of the Salvadoran CP and the Farabundo Marti Front, since many of the ultra-left militants regard them with great enthusiasm and even as their leaders or examples. So I will dwell on your question about the Sandinistas. I would better say, in your questions, which are synthesised in the last one you ask me: "Is not there something utopian in advocating expropriation without regard to imperialism?"

I. Nicaragua 1986, after seven years of "realistic" politics

First of all, let's see how Nicaragua is today after seven years of Sandinista government, with its policy of collaboration with imperialism, the landowners, and the bourgeoisie. Only this vision will allow us to confirm the degree of utopia of different programs and policies. Let's go sector by sector based on direct or indirect quotations of the Sandinista movement.

1. Economic situation

Vice President Sergio Ramirez pointed out "we are going through the worst times since the triumph of the Sandinista revolution, a crisis so deep that even the supply of food is very difficult" (*The New York Times*, 28 June 1986).

"The economic losses from the war totalled between 1981 and 1984 US\$ 1,342 million, 77 percent of export earnings during those years" (Miranda, Bonifacio, *La revolución en la encrucijada* [The revolution at the crossroads], Notebook No. 3 of *El Socialista*, organ of the *Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores* [Revolutionary Workers Party] of Nicaragua, official section of the International Workers' League, July 1986).

The growth in 1985 was negative by 3.5 percent. Taking 1977 as base 100, the GDP per capita declined in 1985 to 56. Exports, which in the first year of the revolution were US\$ 616 million, in 1985 fell to less than half. The trade balance, which in 1979 yielded a surplus of US\$ 227 million, had a deficit of US\$ 545 million in 1985. The foreign debt, which in 1979 was US\$ 1,348 million, came to US\$ 4.466 billion in 1985" (quoted by Bonifacio Miranda, op. cit.).

El Nuevo Diario on 27 and 30 June this year reported three facts: declining cattle herd of Estelí region to almost half, due to the abandonment of the owners to pursue other more lucrative activities; enrichment of legal and illegal traders who speculate by selling grain at much higher prices than those authorised; and the case of the directors of a company recently taken over by the government, which was being undercapitalised, handing commissions and evading taxes.

The “foreign capital” is not far behind. According to *Barricada* (1 July 1986), the refineries Essogas and Tropigas refuse to deliver the gas needed for cooking twice a day, so as not to pay more to the workers. Meanwhile, children and housewives make endless queues in neighbourhoods.

2. Standard of living of the working class

“According to official statistics, taking the year 1977 of the Somoza era as base 100, the salary is now 34. The current price of the family shopping basket is 79,367 cordobas, while the minimum wage is 10,650 cordobas. Seventy percent of workers earn this salary. Taking the price of the black dollar in November 1985 — 900 cordobas — the minimum wage would be US\$ 11.80” (quoted by Bonifacio Miranda, op. cit.).

“Moreover, according to official figures, the prices of the four basic food staples (beans, cooking oil, milk, rice), have increased by 1,616 percent from July 1984 to July 1986 (taking official prices and not the huge black market prices), while the wages for the lowest category has increased only 626 percent” (Ibid.).

Barricada (15 June 1986) quoted a worker who said: “the worker lives 15 days a month from his work... the other 15 days he lives from the wind” and he concluded, “we need to be clearer in the defence of the working class”.

El Nuevo Diario, unofficial organ of the FSLN, on June 18, noted the situation of workers of 71 coffee farms in the Third region, which were catalogued by the Ministry of Labour as “workplaces with inhumane conditions as have never been seen in the country” because “the workers sleep in precarious situations, have no latrines and are given bad food, among other abnormalities”.

3. The state of public health

But the premier index is health. According to a doctor specialising in respiratory diseases since 1979 tuberculosis is no longer the exclusive privilege of the poor because “it is emerging among college students, housewives, teachers and even among individuals who have dedicated themselves to work as traders” (José María Morales Urbina, interview in *El Socialista*, Managua, No 61, May 1986).

In its editions of the last seven days in June, *El Nuevo Diario* reported that in two municipalities of Managua where malaria presents its highest rate, the disease grew 50 percent since last year; classes at all schools in Managua were suspended for a week due to an epidemic outbreak of meningitis; thousands of gastroenteritis cases appeared across the country, causing the death of two children per day in recent weeks; diarrhoea is becoming a major problem. The Health Minister spoke of hundreds of cases of malaria, whooping cough, and rubella in recent months and she attributed them, besides war, to “water, overcrowding, and the general hygienic status of Managua”.

But the worst, according to the same minister, is that healthcare spending — about US\$ 40 million annually, as much as revenues from the export of cotton — is impossible to sustain. Therefore, she recommended to all Nicaraguans to grown in their home garden at least ten plants to meet simple discomforts and avoid buying drugs (*Barricada*, 21 May 1986).

4. The Contras got stronger because the agrarian revolution had not been made

“The fundamental fact which allowed the advance of the Contras was peasant discontent, who didn’t receive the coveted land for which they fought in 1979. In 1983-84, the *gusanos*¹ penetrated the fields, gained mobility and created serious problems for the government, encouraged by the complicity, neutrality, or indifference of unhappy peasants sectors” (Miranda, B., op. cit.).

“At this time were formed the so-called Regional Commands, i.e., the counter-revolution left behind the stage of constant mobility to settle and operate in certain territories. This was made possible not only by the military and economic support of imperialism but fundamentally because they won over large sections of the peasantry who had seen no improvement in their financial situation since July 1979” (Miranda, B., op. cit.).

5. The agrarian revolution erupts and begins to succeed against the Sandinista will

The peasants’ indignation because they were not given land and this remained in the hands of landlords led to a mobilisation of labourers and peasants against the landlords and the government. The Sandinista press itself was forced to acknowledge this process and adapt to it making concessions to the agricultural workers.

The peasants organised themselves in over 200 committees. The demonstrations were headed by the slogans: “Who has the land? The bourgeoisie! Who wants the land? The people! We do not want the land in the hands of capitalists! We want the land to work it!” One peasant said: “We lived under the boot of the landlords. Now we will not live under anybody’s boots. Now, it’s us who give the orders” (*Perspectiva Mundial*, 22 July 1985).

Masaya is a categorical example. Last year the government had to deliver the publicly owned farms and 23 private farms. The Sandinistas negotiated compensation with landlords, but Enrique “Churrucó” Bolaños, President of COSEP² declined. The peasants reacted shouting “We want the land of Churrucó Bolaños”. The government offered Bolaños double the lands elsewhere in the country, but he refused. Meanwhile, the peasants were demanding: “People power! People Power! Long live land reform! Long live the revolution!”

6. The Contras are defeated by the agrarian revolution and the workers mobilisation

This bleak panorama is offset by a colossal, almost unbelievable victory of the Nicaraguan workers: the defeat of the Contras. Rather, the crushing by a demolition of the same. It is the most pleasant news we, the Latin American revolutionary socialists, have had. This victory happened because the peasants bullied the Sandinista government to abandon its policy of respect and collaboration with the landlords and the heroism of the workers’ movement that enlisted massively to go to the front.

The New York Times itself on 9 March 1986 recognises this defeat: “... the insurgent army languishes in Honduras, and apparently unable to now face the Sandinista troops [...] It might take the rebels up to two years to turn into an effective force”. Jaime Chamorro, the Contras leader and former owner of *La Prensa*, said “the counter-revolution is in a state of ruin”.

The Sandinistas, against their will and to counter the Contras that gave the peasants their land, were forced to start from 1983 to notarize the lands claimed by the peasants. As Bonifacio Miranda says: “During 1984 and 1985 this process was extended massively, and the government had to give farmers over 50 percent of state-owned land expropriated

1 **Gusanos** (worm) derogatory name given to the counter-revolutionaries.

2 **COSEP** (Superior Council of Private Enterprise) is the bosses’ union. This organisation is the axis of the “contra”, i.e., the bourgeois and pro-imperialist opposition of Nicaragua.

from Somoza. In addition, in 1985 it had to change the agrarian reform law making it more progressive, but without completely abolishing the landed property and keeping compensation to the oligarchy”.

This fact — Miranda points out — allowed “creating the political conditions for developing the military offensive of the Sandinista People’s Army. Thousands of peasants (who fought alongside the Contras) surrendered their weapons and took up the amnesty law”.

As Carmen Carrasco comments in our theoretical magazine: “It was confirmed, therefore, what Lenin said: ‘The military might of a peasant country whose land is in the hands of peasant committees is superior to that of a country whose land is in the hands of landowners’ (Lenin, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, 1977, Moscow, Volume 25, page 364). In Nicaragua, indeed, the Contras advanced while the landed property remained untouched; when peasants saw the Sandinista government legalising the land they occupied, the Contras were defeated.

“This does not mean that the large landowner property has been done with. Among many others, the San Antonio sugar mill, the largest in the country, for example, remains in private hands. This is so because the masses, not the Sandinistas, are the vanguard of the agrarian revolution. The Sandinistas tail-end, and grudgingly, the peasant mobilisation” (*Correo Internacional*, No. 23).

7. The wealthy and sacristy Catholics do not get conscripted or go to war

According to *El Nuevo Diario* (1 June 1986), a tanned by the sun worker expressed his disappointment there is no “law that is fulfilled without exceptions” so that all young fit to defend the country go to the battlefields. “We see every day the pretty boys strolling peacefully in Masaya, while the children of the workers and peasants are fighting against the aggressors, and that’s not fair”.

In another open council, according to *Barricada* (9 June 1986): “Why, if every citizen has the right to defend the country, as it says here (in the Constitution) only we the poor are fighting and not the rich?” Another producer added: “If you count how many sons of bourgeois are in the border... we don’t find even one” (*El Nuevo Diario*, 10 June 1986).

El Nuevo Diario (10 June 1986) reports that the mother of a hero and martyr, Olimpia Colindres, said: “Patriotic Military Service (SMP) must be met not only by the proletariat but also the children of the bourgeoisie”.

On the other hand, the Sandinista government accepts that sacristy Catholics be not conscripted or sent to the front.

8. Bureaucratic regime in the mass movement

El Nuevo Diario (11 November 1985) said: “in recent months the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDS) had stagnated and their activities were colourless, odourless, and insipid [...]. The CDS member was seen as a fair or poor ‘politician’ in his ‘*chagüite*’ [banana plantation] without neighbours watching, in most cases, practical results of his work [!]. The fact sometimes the general secretary of the CDS was imposed from above by its political membership, it lessened its representativeness and frustrated its capacity for democratic election [...] In other cases, people with a not very transparent past self-imposed themselves [...] The unhealthy practice of trying to make everyone think like their leader... and that by not very persuasive methods the neighbours comply with surveillance, contributed to a shift away from sectors of the population who rejected that taxing work style.”

El Nuevo Diario (11 June 1986) reproduced the criticism from some union leaders: “The workers feel blocked. When we arrive looking for certain directors, we are told they are not in their area, to get back, as if they were afraid to discuss with us the problems.

Workers in this country have to take responsibility and consider specific tasks to raise the political consciousness of the rank and file, production, and productivity tasks.”

Barricada (9 June 1986) reported on other open councils held in various regions of the country. Small producers demanded a permanent monitoring of the companies in the Area of People’s Property, and that this should be entered as a constitutional right, also training and technical assistance to the peasantry, the allocation of large estates, and the existence of private property “only to benefit the vast majority”. One woman explained “in many companies is almost a crime for a worker to see when they prepare the economic plan”, and then she demanded that “our participation be clearly regulated”.

Again *Barricada* (27 February 1986) described how, in another open council, the construction workers complained “subcontractors take their good share”, and insisted on the need to control them and demanded wage increases.

According to *Barricada* (11 May 1986), in one of those open councils, a worker summed up the general discontent when he asked “how long are we going to put up with the crooks and play ‘me the sinner’. We the workers no longer need explanations, but answers”.

“We exercise the power and share its responsibilities for which we should be more involved in the management, planning and economic control of enterprises” (report of the official Sandinista organ on another open Council).

9. Status of working women

Beginning with Marx and Engels, who in this followed one of the utopian socialists, the condition of a society is measured by the status of women. We Marxists determine even more when we add “the working woman”.

Let’s look at these conditions in Sandinista Nicaragua and what the Sandinistas demand from working women.

“Recognition as a family to those nuclei where a woman or a man alone has raised children; priority medical, social, and professional care for pregnant women” (*Barricada*, 13 June 1986).

In another open council, Sara Sánchez demanded: “we women be included in whatever is defence, alongside men without distinction of any kind” (*Barricada*, 9 June 1986).

“The women asked for the removal of outdated and unfair barriers to divorce, the rape of women be considered a public and not a private crime, the legalisation of abortion, domestic responsibilities be shared between men and women, natural children to have equal rights as legitimate ones, respect for the physical integrity of persons to be extended to women and children, they sought land for women whose husbands have died or have been abandoned because of the war” *El Nuevo Diario*, 11 and 13 June 1986).

Now a question, comrade, what is the difference between these demands and those made of the most reactionary regimes in the world regarding women?

This question does not hide the goal of insinuating that Ortega and his FSLN comrades are reactionaries. On the contrary, I have the impression they are of progressive opinion regarding working women, but they do nothing about it because they want to get along with the Church and the exploiters. Incidentally, I will say personally I believe otherwise regarding Castro and the homosexuals. I have the impression he really hates them and thinks they are sick, asocial, and dangerous and therefore he persecutes them relentlessly. But they are all assumptions, only justified in a fraternal letter.

10. Managua, worldwide centre for ultra-right organisations

As you must find this an exaggeration or directly a falsification, I limit myself to attach a photocopy of the Sandinista newspaper *El Nuevo Diario* of Sunday, 8 June this year on page 7. Logically the Sandinistas criticise the extreme right, but they let them function

and allow them, in fact, to be their guests. They thus continue their policy of friendship and cooperation with the worst, with Reaganites, to see if they civilize them and achieve good relations with them.

11. Human losses in Nicaragua and Central America

Human losses — according to Daniel Ortega—reached 16,925 Contras and 14,260 Nicaraguans (*Clarín*, Buenos Aires, 20 July 1986). I will not give quotes of loss of life in El Salvador because they are public knowledge: 50,000. The policy of coexistence with imperialism, the landowners and the capitalists, has led to the loss of 60,000 workers.

12. Honduras, a Yankee aircraft carrier

When the Sandinista revolution triumphed, Honduras and El Salvador were on the verge of collapse and in a deep revolutionary process. Thousands of Hondurans and Salvadorans refugees thought to use Nicaragua to overthrow their genocidal governments. There was not a single armed Contra, not a soldier or airstrip of the Pentagon, or anything like that. Honduras was kilometres away from what is today, the centre of operations of the Contras, the CIA, and the Pentagon. From Honduras war is made to Nicaragua and the Sandinista government. Today is one of the most important Yankees terrestrial carriers, like Japan or Israel. In addition, it is an aircraft carrier aiming and firing against Nicaragua today and tomorrow will fire against any new Nicaragua.

In seven years of Sandinista rule, the situation in the area has changed drastically for much worse: before there was no carrier. Today it not only exists but it increasingly gets stronger.

13. The Contadora Agreement

I don't want to dwell on this issue because we have dealt with it extensively in many of our publications. It is a decisive point of confrontation we have with all the left, the Church, Stalinism, Maoism, the current Chinese government, social democracy and the Second International, and to top it off with all Latin American governments, Kissinger and most of the politicians, Yankees and of the entire world, who are rabid defenders of Contadora, including the Sandinistas.

For us, the Contadora agreement and the ultra-reactionary governments that promote it, work for imperialism. There is a division of tasks. The Contras attack with weapons and the Contadora group with diplomatic papers which sometimes are worse than guns.

The Contadora agreement is summarised in the following points:

First: Panama ceases to be a Central American country (therefore, it neither signs nor is bound by the treaty) and can be armed to the teeth and leave the Yankee base on its territory to act against Nicaragua or whoever.

Second: Nicaragua has to disarm to the level of one of the Central American countries (for example, it should have the armament of Costa Rica or El Salvador, but no more). Militarily this means that Nicaragua faces with or may have to face a war against forces 10 to 20 times superior to its own: Panama, the US base in Panama, and the four other Central American countries. It means being defenceless against their sworn enemies.

Third: Nicaragua must respect and to uphold to the end all the dictatorships of the area (it may not even allow the publication of a flyer against a genocidal government of the area and it must defend it if the people want to oust it).

So we define as imbeciles or scoundrels those who support Contadora. This does not mean the Sandinistas have no right to sign the Contadora or another similar horrific treaty. The Sandinistas have the right to capitulate if they are defeated in a war and to cede some of their territories to an invading army, as Lenin did. What they cannot do is say: "Long live

the capitulation!" or "How fantastic we got beaten and forced to deliver half the country". This is what we criticise of all who support Contadora, they say this is awesome, this is how to defeat imperialism. Contadora is shit, not beef stroganoff, although maybe the Sandinistas are forced to eat it because there is nothing else to eat because of their policy of concessions to the exploiters. And anyone who says it is beef stroganoff helps imperialism.

II. The culprits of the bankruptcy

It is obvious the objective culprits for the bankruptcy are Yankee imperialism, its international and national allies (the Nicaraguan exploiters). As obvious as if playing a football game in which we lost 10-0 we then say: the culprit is the other team that kicked 10 goals and overwhelmed us. But this is half the truth because it fails to account for the subjective culpability. In the case of the losing team, how the players acted and what instructions the coach gave. In any outcome of a struggle are synthesised the objective and subjective factors.

For us, the main culprits of the bankruptcy Nicaragua lives have been the Russians, Fidel and mainly the Sandinistas who applied to the letter the slogan that "Nicaragua will not be a new Cuba". In other words, in Nicaragua they had to achieve an affair with the landlords, capitalists and imperialism and these should not be attacked or expropriated as it had been done in Cuba. We have to recognise in all of them their political "honesty" because they have done everything to carry out this slogan. Here are a few quotes to not extend too much this letter.

1. Regarding the landlords and the agrarian reform

Commander Wheelock, responsible for this area, declared and fulfilled on 9 August 1979 "we rarely distribute land in small parcels"; "where it has been distributed prior to our arrival, we will go and talk with the comrades to explain they are wrong"; "the remaining large producers" will have "protection" (*Oposición*, organ of the Mexican Communist Party, 9 August 1979).

2. Regarding the bourgeoisie

The government expropriated the Somoza assets but protected with tooth and nail the property and profits of the capitalists. Government statistics proudly pointed out 60 percent of the economy was in private hands, 81 percent of agricultural production, 75 percent of manufacturing and 80 percent in wholesale trade. The government gave dollars to the capitalists and as a result, earnings rose faster than wages (Cuello, HF and Maza, J., *Nicaragua: La revolución congelada* [Nicaragua: The frozen revolution], Bogota, 1982).

An editorial in *Barricada*, on 10 August 1979, said they had to "avoid by all means hindering the production process" ... "farmers, traders, and manufacturers must be able to work without worry, confident that nobody will come to take away their production".

3. Regarding the banks

The Sandinistas expropriated the banks to save the bankers from ruin, as they were paid large sums of compensation. As stated by *Le Monde* on 12 October 1979, it was nationalised "a liability: therefore, the measure provoked among the 'victims' more relief than gnashing of teeth". Fidel Castro told, in Havana's *Bohemia* magazine, issue No 31, 3 August 1979, that Alfonso Robelo had told him "we were in need, as one of the first steps, to nationalise the banks, among other things, to protect depositors from ruin because the banks were bankrupt and no one could answer for the savings". In other words, because they were bankrupt we pay the big capitalists large sums of money for their worthless shares.

4. The foreign debt

The Sandinistas agreed to pay Somoza's debts and they pawned the country to the hilt with imperialism.

From 19 July 1979 until 4 May 1982, it received US\$1,495 million, most of them from the United States. Imperialism thus paid favours received, as the tango says. The indebtedness went on and on.

5. The workers' and peasants' rights

Instead of a quote in this section, I will start with a question: if you read a decree of the government of a bourgeois country that prohibits the right to strike, that no disorders will be tolerated "same as illegal strikes, or acts to prevent the output of finished products from the factories. It shall not be tolerated in any way the redistribution of land, farms, and haciendas, or interruption in the production of the same". What opinion does it deserve? Would you not get the impression you are reading legislation by Videla or Pinochet?

I will clarify the mystery: the text is a decree of the Sandinista government on 3 October 1980.

6. The Simon Bolivar Brigade

We were expelled, tortured, censored, and imprisoned in Nicaragua, and other party of the ultra-left too, for a simple reason: we denounced that the "realistic" Sandinista policy of getting along with the bourgeoisie, the landowners, and imperialism would be fatal to the Nicaraguan people and even much more serious they forming government with the big bourgeoisie. Our alternative policy was simple: to deepen the revolution in Nicaragua and extend it to all Central American countries who suffered cruel dictatorships. Even assuming we were wrong, we should have been treated democratically.

7. Summary of the Sandinista policy

I will not dwell in quotations; I will confine myself to just two. Tomas Borge told *El Nuevo Diario*, Lima, on 30 July 1980: "don't you go interpreting we have already decided to suppress the bourgeoisie in Nicaragua! For now we are trying to civilize it." Which is the same as saying: "for now we are trying to teach a cockroach to speak or Hitler to love Jews and Communists". Civilizing the bourgeoisie?? You have to be cheeky, to call yourself Marxist and propose this task.

But Borge is Durruti or Bakunin next to Bayardo Arce who told *La Vanguardia* of Barcelona on 31 July 1984, the Sandinistas would give the first example in history of "building socialism with capitalism dollars". This is like trying to teach amoebas to speak or to convince Reagan of the advantages of socialism.

8. The Sandinista movement, firefighter of the Honduran and Salvadoran revolution

Who is to blame for Honduras being the centre of Contras operations? With no doubt, the FSLN and Fidel Castro. As soon as it triumphed, the FSLN could extend their revolution to overthrow the dictatorships of Honduras and El Salvador, making two new Nicaraguas. The FSLN refused. In the case of El Salvador, it supported the genocidal military junta together with Fidel Castro. In the case of Honduras, its very own Daniel Ortega said shamelessly, "Honduras has been quiet during these years since we took power. We have not given a base to the thousands of opponents of the Honduran government; we could easily have done so..." (*The New York Times*, 4 October 1983). We all know how imperialism returned the favour.

9. Ungrateful imperialism

Imperialism well knows what they accomplished and what they want to achieve out of the Sandinistas, taking advantage of their petty-bourgeois, reformist hesitations. The first thing they wanted to achieve was to prevent the outbreak of other revolutions like the Sandinista in other countries ruled by dictatorships. So they lured these petty-bourgeois into believing they would build socialism with its imperialist dollars and they would support them provided the dictatorships did not fall. Frightened by the Sandinista revolution, they whitewashed these dictatorships calling elections to give them a democratic facade. Once they succeeded in this, halting the Central American revolution, they went on to a second stage: mastering the FSLN and Nicaragua, which were and wanted to remain independent, despite the error of their policy of seeking this independence through an agreement with the exploiters. This stage is what we are living.

Both Reagan and the best bourgeois commentators see, like us, the Sandinistas as firefighters of the Central American revolution. *The Economist* quotes Reagan saying recently: "when we got to Washington [in 1981] the question on everyone's lips was: will El Salvador fall into Communist hands? Today's question is: will democracy [read: us] win in Nicaragua?"

The Economist, on 30 November 1985, celebrated the imperialist victory thanks to the support of the Yankees to the Sandinistas saying "the expansion of the revolutionary fire that began in Nicaragua in 1979 and at one point threatened to burn El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and singe Mexico. This firefighting has been a great success".

To finally dominate Nicaragua, they use economic blockade, permanent blackmail, Contadora to get them to disarm and the Contras. This has led to the terrible situation which I have tried to describe in my first chapter.

10. A confession as substitute for evidence

What better proof it was a wrong, utopian policy, than what the very same Sandinistas say of their "realistic" policy? Let's see.

Jaime Wheelock acknowledged "we are living the worst days of the Sandinista revolution" and "we have not carried out a coherent conception of the revolution to the economy" (*Barricada*, 2 June 1986).

Tomas Borge said "to have not made the transfer of the land at the right time" was a "subjective error". "An error in good faith, but mistaken conception after all" (*El Porteño*, Buenos Aires, July 1986).

Daniel Ortega assures us that "in the name of political pluralism... they try to create a home front for the terrorist policies of the United States" and that this wants "through the Contadora Peace Act for Nicaragua to disarm".

And finally, Borge assures us that after seven hard, terrible years of "realistic" policy, if this continues "there is no longer the danger of direct intervention because 'the Yankees' can kill us with pinches" (*El Porteño*, Buenos Aires, July 1986).

III. An ironclad dilemma: Cuba or Nicaragua

I think I have proved to you to tedium the Sandinista policy of collaboration with imperialism was fatal to Nicaragua. So catastrophic even the Sandinista leaders themselves recognise it. Two last questions to answer before the end of my letter: Was there a better policy, more realistic? If so who raised it?

You, to justify the Sandinistas, compared Nicaragua with the USSR: "What another more current example that the first months of the Russian revolution...?" First of all, the Russian Revolution in its early months was uncompromising, hard, and inflexible; it

expropriated from the landlords to the bourgeoisie and imperialism, ignoring debts, even though its situation was a hundred times more severe than that of Nicaragua when the Sandinistas triumphed. Lenin and Trotsky, after taking power, fought a fierce civil war, supported by the entire capitalist world. Thanks to their drastic, hard-hitting measures against the exploiters, they managed to succeed.

It is possible I am unfair and you referred to the Brest Litovsk treaty. There, indeed, Lenin made a tremendous concession to German imperialism handing over part of Russia. We believe he was right to do so because he had no choice, the German army was giving them a beating and there was no other way out, as the peasant-soldiers demanded peace.

But the Sandinistas did not face any similar situation when they took power. Instead of a possible imperialist capitalist invasion, they had the support of the most important countries in the area and all workers in the Caribbean and Central America. Imperialism was tied by hand and foot, could not intervene at all due to the Vietnam syndrome and to Iran. The relationship of forces was completely favourable to the Sandinistas: Carter could not move half a finger against anyone, as shown with the Iranian hostages.

In other words, a true Marxist policy takes the relationship of forces between the classes and acts accordingly. The Sandinistas faced no immediate danger on behalf of Yankee imperialism. On the contrary, it was imperialism and the dictatorships of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala which were on the defensive and were at risk of falling. In military terms, they were in full retreat.

All Central American and American masses were with the Sandinistas: I already gave you the quote where the Sandinistas themselves acknowledge they could have helped to liquidate the Honduran genocidal government but they chose to let them continue existing. The same happened in El Salvador. A few weeks after the fall of Somoza, the Salvadoran dictator fell to a mass movement similar to that of Nicaragua but more of the workers. To save the potatoes, a military regime supported by Fidel, the Sandinistas, the guerrillas and the CP was imposed. If the FSLN had supported the revolutionary process the military junta would have inevitably fell. It did the opposite; it refused to create a brigade of 15 or 20 thousand fighters to help oust the dictatorships in the area and supported them or let them live. The Salvadoran military junta, supported by all, Sandinistas and Cubans, was the famous genocidal junta that killed 50,000 Salvadorans.

They did the same at the national level: persecuted the left to death and negotiated *ad nauseum* with the bourgeoisie, landowners and imperialism. And so they fared.

Your comparison with the USSR is mistaken because you should have compared Nicaragua with Cuba and the FSLN with Castro. This did the opposite of the FSLN with imperialism in its heyday, 20 times stronger than the FSLN faced. At the slightest hit from the exploiters and imperialism, he responded with much harder hits, until reaching the expropriation of the bourgeoisie in a few months. Conclusion: seven years after taking power the state of health, living standards, and the Cuban economy were directly opposed to those of Nicaragua. Many years ago, about 20 I think, *Life* magazine published an article similar to what Mother Teresa said: in Cuba there are no more problems of health, poverty of any kind. Progress had been colossal.

Who was more utopian? Fidel or Ortega? For me, no doubt, Ortega. Fidel treated imperialism and the exploiters with the only known way to defeat them: fighting them mercilessly.

Our current held the only realistic policy, which was to recapture Che's old slogan and make of Nicaragua a new Cuba and of each Central American country a new Nicaragua (Che would say Vietnam). Only fighting to death imperialism, the landowners, and the bourgeoisie in Nicaragua and Central America they could progress. It was better to risk 10,000 or 15,000 volunteers in support to the fight against genocidal dictatorships, as we proposed from the Simon Bolivar Brigade than to wait for imperialism to slowly kill 50,000 or 100,000 of us militarily and one million through famine and disease. For raising these

positions we got kicked out of Nicaragua. We predicted then all that would happen. And unfortunately, it happened.

The same prediction we made in a lesser issue, the colossal suck up of the Sandinistas to radicalism and Alfonsín (they officially went to the Velez Stadium rally of radicalism to support Alfonsin). We predicted he would inevitably betray them because he was in the Yankees' pocket. Said and done: at the last meeting of the nonaligned, Alfonsín was the leader, the centre of all operations against Nicaragua. So the exploiters always pay.

I think I have fulfilled the promise my letter would be soporific and full of quotes. I hope at least it helps you in your beautiful craft to define some archetypes. Enough to make them say, "I want to civilize the bourgeoisie" or "build socialism with dollars that capitalism will give me" for any listener to know what to expect, he is facing an idiot, a scoundrel or a traitor.

With the most fraternal greetings,

Nahuel Moreno

PS: I will send the photocopies in a few days. Among them, a new article on *The Economist* which is precious. §