Duet for Peasant and Socialist Revolutionary, with Obbligato Feminism: Lessons of the Nicaraguan Case

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In 1795, Beethoven wrote a short piece with the whimsical title, "Duet for Viola, Cello, and Two Obbligato Eyeglasses." "Obbligato" denotes "a part which must not be omitted," a part which is "essential to the structure, or at least to the effect."[1] This essay is about another duet: between the peasantry and the socialist revolutionaries of Nicaragua's Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN). The duet was, unfortunately, much less harmonious than those created by Beethoven. After losing power in 1990, many Sandinista leaders concluded that relations with the peasantry had been one of the great failures of the revolutionary process.[2]

The first three sections of this paper will examine the problems of this duet. The first of these argues that the Sandinistas came to power influenced by an orthodox Marxism that led them to a particular interpretation of the Nicaraguan countryside. In the second, I argue that this interpretation, along with other factors, led the FSLN to promote an initial project of statist modernization in the countryside. The third section reviews the crisis of this project, a crisis which came to threaten the revolution when it became clear

that the peasantry was providing the United States with the human resources it needed to wage its contra war.

Clearly something was missing from the duet between peasant and socialist revolutionary, something which, while absent, was *obbligato*. That missing something was perhaps the simple feminist insight that gender divides class, and that one should not assume that male and female peasants have similar interests. In the fourth section, I will offer some brief reflections on the "path not chosen" by the Nicaraguan revolution. This path would have involved reaching out to rural women as potential partners in a project of rural transformation. This section points to the possibility that "socialism has failed because those who have tried to put it into practice have not been feminists," as my friend Roxanne Murrell puts it. These reflections are brief and tentative, but are nonetheless "essential to the structure, or at least to the effect," of my argument.

Of course what some feel "must not be omitted," others are quite willing to dispense with: "Unfortunately, the term *obbligato* has come to mean the opposite, i.e. an accompanying part which may be omitted if so desired."[3] I will argue in the conclusion that the FSLN's self-critique of its relations with the peasantry has yet to raise the question of gender, and that this has led the Sandinistas to an overly simplistic understanding of what went wrong in the countryside. While the FSLN has slowly become more willing to discuss its positions on women in general terms, it does not yet believe that a gender analysis is *obbligato* — in the first sense — if it is to understand its own society.

The Sandinista leadership's initial ideological orientation

The Sandinista leadership came to power shaped by a Marxism much more orthodox than has been recognized or admitted by many observers.[4] Despite their flexibility once in power, this initial orientation had a great influence on their initial policy choices, which in turn influenced the entire course of the Sandinista decade. Though it may appear so to conservative or liberal readers, to say that the Sandinistas entered power as orthodox Marxists, or as "Marxist-Leninists," is not an *accusation*. Rather, it corresponds to many

of the leadership's statements on its own ideological background. By "orthodox Marxism" I mean the orthodoxy traditionally promoted by the Soviet Union, and periodically codified in such manuals as the various editions of *Political Economy* issued by Progress Publishers. This orthodoxy is often termed "Marxist-Leninism," though its relation to the actual thought of Marx or Lenin has been the subject of endless debate. It is characterized as much by its form as its content: the systematization of the manuals tends to erase tensions in the original thought of Marx or Lenin. One could say that, as catechisms are to the Bible, so the orthodox manuals are to the Marxist "classics."

Orthodox Marxism has historically been taught to thousands of cadres and millions of students throughout the world. For many, it is the only Marxism they have ever known. As John Saul notes, it has been influential for Third World socialism, "disseminated by the 'eastern allies' of the young socialisms through numerous manuals, teachers and ideological advisors."[5]

To say, then, that the Sandinista leaders were influenced by orthodox Marxism is to say that they received cadre training based upon the standard manuals, generally in Cuba, and that this training "took" to some degree. Prior to 1979, most Sandinista leaders had extended stays in Cuba.[6] As National Directorate member Bayardo Arce later put it, Cuba "was the only secure land where the Sandinista leaders could heal their wounds in order to continue the battle."[7] Many Sandinistas received military and political training there. National Directorate member Humberto Ortega would later comment that the Sandinista leadership was trained in the manuals "from very early on," and that "We had great respect for those manuals."[8]

To say that the Sandinistas were influenced by orthodox Marxism does not mean that they did not demonstrate flexibility. In fact, the Sandinista leaders demonstrated a remarkable capacity to reflect upon their fundamental project and modify it on the fly. But flexibility must always *start* from somewhere: it is not enough to say that FSLN leaders were flexible, one must also identify the framework within which that flexibility operated. Just as the position of a moving

object depends upon the direction and speed of its movement as well as its starting position, so too did Sandinista ideology at any given moment reflect not only its "movement" or flexibility, but also its starting point.

In more recent years, Sandinista leaders have been willing to discuss this struggle between flexibility and their original ideological framework. In a 1988 interview, Tomás Borge, member of the National Directorate and sole surviving founder of the FSLN, commented that "I'm fighting against my own orthodoxy."[9] Similarly, in an interview with an Italian paper, Borge commented that "for a long time our outlook was orthodox... Yes, we considered ourselves Marxist-Leninists and had in mind a communist society. We did not like the social democracies..."[10] After the 1990 election defeat, former Vice-President Sergio Ramírez would describe the FSLN in power as

> trying to get away from theoretical schemes and prejudices, away from the self-proclaimed, eternal truths; struggling to abandon models and create our own path.[11]

Even in 1991, it appears that this struggle was continuing. Speaking to the FSLN's first party congress, in July 1991, Humberto Ortega commented that:

> It is more difficult to be a revolutionary... when it is necessary to come together, to find common ground with the classes and social sectors that the Marxist manuals — with which we were trained from very early on — said must be crushed. We had great respect for those manuals, and we were guided by them in the past, but now they are being subordinated to the real dynamic of practice, and obligated to find new positions, and we can no longer, therefore, be mechanically or rigidly guided by them.[12]

Given their training in orthodox Marxism, the Sandinistas came to power influenced by certain central themes of orthodoxy. One theme that would be of particular importance for their relations with the peasantry was the belief that human history is a fairly linear progression from more "backward" to more "progressive" forms of production and culture.[13] This progression, which must

culminate in socialism,[14] was guaranteed, because "history has no reverse gear," as Sandinista leaders were wont to declare.[15]

The Sandinista leadership felt that Nicaragua and its people were located at a "backward" point in this historical progression. As National Directorate member Victor Tirado commented in 1980, "The slogan 'power to the workers and peasants' will be just a phrase so long as they live in the midst of spiritual backwardness."[16] Certain categories of Nicaraguans, in particular the Miskito people of the Atlantic Coast[17] and the peasantry throughout the country, were particularly marked by backwardness.

A second important ideological theme was that of class reductionism, the view that a person's identity is decisively determined by class, and that class cleavages are the only important ones in a society. FSLN leaders occasionally offered statements of class reductionism straight out of the Marxist "classics."[18] Class reductionism influenced the leadership's interpretation of the ethnic minorities of the Atlantic Coast. Sandinista leaders initially saw the Miskito people as one more group of exploited and backward Nicaraguans. On various occasions, for example, FSLN leader Daniel Ortega commented that the indigenous groups of the Atlantic Coast were just the same as all other workers: they had been exploited as workers, not as natives.[19] Similarly, on those occasions when the leaders spoke of gender oppression, they tended to treat it as an effect of class oppression. As National Directorate member Henry Ruiz put it in 1981:

> The problem of the exploitation of women is the problem of the exploitation of men, and it is not resolved by adopting *"machista"* or "feminist" positions, but rather struggling against the scandalous structures of the past.[20]

How did the Sandinistas' initial ideological framework affect their approach to the countryside? Ideology influences what we want. It also influences what we "see." It is common-place to observe that human perception is limited, that everyone sees some things and neglects others. It is also common to note that our limited perception is not random, that our perception is structured by our prior assumptions,

many of which are not fully conscious[21], and by our "pragmatic" interests.[22]

Ideology can play an important role in this structuring of perception, focusing our attention on some phenomena and blinding us to others. This is partly an effect of the general pragmatism of perception. In so far as one's ideology orients one towards "what is to be done," it correspondingly orients one's perception. In addition, ideologies, like Kuhn's paradigms, may contain tacit assumptions about which types of phenomena exist in the social world and which do not.[23]

What has been said of individuals applies with perhaps greater force to organizations. There, pragmatic interests and pre-suppositions will be built into the very structure and standard practices of the organization. As Simon argues, organizations will seek through training to give the individual member a "frame of reference for his thinking," and will seek, through a division of labour, to focus attention upon matters pertaining to this member's particular task.[24] Focusing in particular on the leadership, one can say the information the leaders perceive directly may be minimal in relation to that which they acquire through "organizational sensors."[25] They are thus dependent on information filtered at various points by the pragmatic interests and pre-suppositions — both organizational and personal — of subordinates.

Using this simple conceptual framework, we may inquire of the information that the Sandinista leaders did and did not possess when they made policy decisions. When the Sandinista leaders "gazed out" upon the countryside, what did they see and what did they fail to see? They certainly saw a countryside divided by class antagonisms. Moreover, their ideological outlook led them to view rural class relations as *simply* antagonistic rather than antagonistic yet functional. Thus, rural merchants were viewed by the Sandinistas as super-exploiters of the peasantry. It would become clear over time that these merchants had in fact linked the peasantry with urban markets in a much more complex and satisfactory way than originally believed. The peasantry, in fact, never lost its preference for dealing with private rather than state merchants.

The Sandinistas also saw a countryside marked by backwardness. They shared that hidden lust for modernization held by many leftist critics of modernization theory. Thus we will see below that they believed that state farms and cooperatives would serve as agents of both technical modernization *and* of the ideological or cultural modernization of the peasantry.

These two perceptions combined to give the Sandinistas a particularly negative view of so-called "pre-capitalist" social relations. Thus the 1981 agrarian reform law made non-monetary rental arrangements a grounds for expropriation. Because of this, many peasants lost access to land they had worked under these "pre-capitalist" arrangements, and felt themselves worse off for the loss.

Thus, I believe that their initial ideological framework influenced what the Sandinistas "saw" when they looked at the countryside. In a later section, we will examine what their ideology helped prevent them from seeing. First, we must examine how the Sandinistas' outlook influenced specific agrarian policies.

The initial orientation of Sandinista land policy The Sandinista leadership's Marxist orthodoxy influenced their initial agrarian reform policies. Beginning from a position that emphasized state production, the FSLN would gradually be forced by political factors to accept the growth of productive forms that they considered "lower" and more "backward." Throughout, their policy would reflect the tensions that have historically marked Marxian socialist thinking on the peasant question.

Marx insisted that the perpetuation of small-hold agriculture implied the perpetuation of "universal mediocrity."[26] As early as 1844 Marx warned against land parcelling.[27] His arguments against peasant agriculture were based partly on productivity grounds. Marx argued that

> Proprietorship of land parcels by its very nature excludes the development of social productive forces of labour, social forms of labour, social concentration of capital, large-scale cattle farming, and the progressive application of science.[28]

And he wrote to Engels that, without socialization of the land, "Father Malthus would prove to be right."[29]

But Marx's view of peasant agriculture also reflected his vision of socialism as the realm of "directly social" labour. "Small landed property," he wrote, presupposes "that not social, but isolated labour predominates." Hence "small landed property creates a class of barbarians standing halfway outside of society, a class combining all the crudeness of primitive forms of society with the anguish and misery of civilised countries."[30]

The political dilemma arising from this position is clear: how can a socialist revolution triumph if it is opposed to a property form in which much of the population has traditionally placed its hopes? Marx at some point might have hoped that capitalist development would solve the problem by eliminating the peasantry before a socialist revolution became a possibility,[31] but his studies of France *circa* 1848 suggested to him that this might not be the case, and that the peasantry could play an important role in frustrating proletarian aspirations.

Shortly before his death, Engels stated the political problem clearly. "Small production," he confidently declared, "is irretrievably going to rack and ruin." He went on to note, however, that "in the meantime," a workers' party could not take power without a base of support in the countryside. Yet this base must be established "without violating the basic principles of the general socialist programme."[32] Socialists ever since have sought to square this circle.

Like other socialist movements, the FSLN promised peasants an extensive agrarian reform. The party's 1969 program stated that the revolutionary government would "freely transfer land to the peasants in accordance with the principle that the land should belong to those who work it."[33] Smallhold production would be respected, though the voluntary formation of cooperatives would be encouraged. A 1978 program ratified this commitment, promising that all lands expropriated from the Somoza family and its allies would be given to "landless peasant families and all those who wish to go work the land."[34] Upon coming to power, the FSLN did expropriate the lands belonging to the Somoza family

and its allies, but they did not keep their promises to transfer land ownership until they were pressured by political factors into doing so. The initial strategy was to retain these lands, representing over a fifth of Nicaragua's agricultural land, under state control. This strategy was affected by the same views that had influenced other socialist revolutions. There was, first, a belief within the Sandinista leadership that large state farms would be more efficient and that economies of scale outweighed diseconomies at almost any level of production.[35] For National Directorate member and agrarian reform minister Jaime Wheelock, state production was more efficient than both peasant and large private agriculture:

> [I]n underdeveloped societies the scale of production of a local owner can never permit the same possibilities for development, for mechanization, for intensive use of technology as exist in a firm managed by the state.[36]

The quest for extensive state control over the economy also created a bias for large-scale production. As an official of the Ministry of Internal Trade told me in 1983, it was much easier to control the rice market, in which forty farms produce 80 percent of output, than the bean market, with its 250,000 producers. In this respect, large private farms had an advantage over peasant production, since the former could be "submitted to some planning mechanisms," while small production permitted at best "indicative planning."[37]

The leadership saw yet another benefit of large-scale production: its salutary impact upon the peasantry, which was held to suffer from what Jaime Wheelock termed "cultural or ideological weakness."[38] Handing out individual plots, Wheelock argued, ran the risk of returning to the "narrow, rudimentary and primitive" peasant state those who had already reached the "higher historical stage" of the proletariat.[39] On the other hand, Wheelock argued, the peasant's participation in "higher forms" of production was part of the process of becoming a "new man."[40] Thus, Wheelock felt that the revolution should eventually abolish both large *and* small private farms.[41]

These comments indicate a great distance between the Sandinista leadership at the moment of taking power and

the "actually existing" peasantry. This distance reflected the social origin and guerrilla experience of the leadership. None of the nine FSLN leaders shared the peasant background of much of Nicaragua's population, nor did the peasantry ever participate directly in the movement to the same extent as other social classes.[42]

FSLN founder Carlos Fonseca originally followed Guevara in believing that peasants would make up the bulk of the guerrilla forces.[43] After peasant desertions from the Pancasán guerrilla column in 1967, however, Fonseca concluded that peasants should not participate in regular guerrilla columns.[44] Peasant participation was thereafter generally limited to logistical support.[45] Tomás Borge would later comment that before 1979 the FSLN "drew only some sectors of the peasantry into the struggle," adding that peasants "are not yet — nor do I think they ever will be — the principal force in Nicaragua's revolutionary changes."[46]

Thus, the peasantry penetrated neither the movement's leadership nor its lower levels. Hence, the leaders were naturally unable to understand the experience of the peasantry "from the inside," and integrate it with their Marxism. After the triumph they would essentially relate to the peasantry "from the outside." Thus it is not surprising that relations with the peasantry proved one of the most serious problems for the revolution. After losing power, Daniel Ortega commented that "To lose something, you have to have it, and the truth is that we didn't lose the *campesinos*, simply because we never had them."[47]

This distance between the FSLN and the peasantry created an interesting convergence between the Sandinistas and their opponents on the peasant question. After 1979, the Ministry of Agriculture would promote the physical relocation and concentrations of peasants. This resettlement process, accelerated by the military situation, was seen as promoting "high levels of socialization."[48] Thus, the resettlements were a means of overcoming peasant isolation and backwardness.

The conservative opposition, however, *also* favoured resettlement projects. A 1980 statement of the Democratic Conservative Party declared that such projects would allow rural dwellers to "benefit from the advances of civilization and

raise their standard of living."[49] Even though the peasantry had displayed much resistance to such projects throughout the 1980s, the opposition's platform for the 1990 electoral campaign promoted the physical concentration of peasants, in order to bring them "the benefits of civilization."[50] This convergence suggests an affinity between aspects of Marxist and non-Marxist modernization tendencies.

Thus, upon coming to power the FSLN contemplated no "peasant solution" to the problem of landlessness. In a speech to the FSLN-led Rural Workers' Union in December 1979, Jaime Wheelock implied two alternatives for the landless. One was to work on state farms, where each worker was a "Free Person," because the state was not a "new boss," but a "state of the workers and producers." The other was to move to a remote part of the country. Nicaragua did not lack unused land, Wheelock proclaimed, hence agrarian reform should be, not a "distribution of land," but a "distribution of people and an adventure of colonization."[51] Wheelock here came perilously close to identifying the new government's policy with that of the ousted Somoza regime.[52]

Initially, the reluctance to distribute expropriated land extended to cooperatives.[53] Upon meeting a worker who asked that a farm be made into a cooperative rather than a state farm, Jaime Wheelock answered: "The state has revolutionary plans that will increase production in a spectacular fashion, and no-one but the state can globally direct these plans."[54] By mid-1980 only 6.7 percent of the reformed sector was made up of cooperatives, the rest being state farms.[55]

Though the FSLN's views on the disposition of expropriated land have been examined here as an effect of Sandinista ideology, other factors also came into play. Since landless labourers had traditionally been a key source of seasonal labour for the agro-export sector, plans to reactivate that sector could have been frustrated by an extensive transfer of land to the peasantry. Thus, Jaime Wheelock declared that "handing over land without planning, without a vision of our reality and of our future, would abolish our export economy."[56] One could also make the case that turning expropriated agro-export farms over to peasant cooperatives might have led to part or all of those farms being diverted

to domestic crop production, at least in the short term. Failing that, agro-export cooperatives may have generated a new rural elite.[57]

Whatever the specific mix of reasons for the FSLN's initial policy on expropriated land, it is striking that the leadership, normally so attuned to the political implications of economic decisions, viewed the land question solely in terms of its economic ramifications, and tended to give little importance to the peasantry's demand for individual land ownership. The Sandinista preference for state farms was pursued to the extent of forcing cooperatives, formed by landless peasants who immediately prior to the triumph had seized farms belonging to *Somocistas*, to be turned over to the state.[58] Only several years later, when the contra war was at its height, did the government begin explicitly to use the distribution of land to individuals and cooperatives as a key means of weakening the contras' rural support.

The evolution of agrarian reform policy We have seen that the Sandinistas' initial agrarian policy included no explicit provision for addressing peasant land hunger. Rather, it was hoped that employment on state farms, perhaps in conjunction with some colonization projects in marginal areas, would attenuate land hunger without fostering the "historical regression" of peasant production.

Peasant land seizures throughout 1980-81 were in part a response to the Sandinista strategy, a response at times even encouraged by members of the FSLN's Rural Workers' Union. The government reacted to these seizures in statist fashion: land seized was generally incorporated into the state sector. This had the effect, observers have noted, of discouraging further land seizures without returning land to private owners towards whom peasants often felt great animosity.[59]

As land seizures continued, the FSLN promised in July 1980 that an agrarian reform law to nationalize all idle lands and address peasant land hunger was imminent.[60] The decree was finally issued in mid-1981. The 1981 agrarian reform law has been termed "anti-feudal," as opposed to anti-capitalist.[61] Article 1 declared that "This Law guarantees the landed property of all those who work it productively and

efficiently." The decree thus provided for expropriation of land that was idle, underused, or abandoned. Except in cases where the land was abandoned, no person owning less than a total of 350 hectares in the more advanced agricultural departments of the country, or less than 700 hectares elsewhere, was to be affected. No ceiling was placed upon the amount of land an individual could own, so long as that land was worked efficiently.[62]

The central provisions of the law were in fact strikingly close to those of the agrarian reform law of 1963, which provided for expropriation of lands "which do not fulfil their social function because they are idle or uncultivated, or because they are not exploited in an efficient manner, or because the owner does not make use of them."[63] Thus, in large part the Sandinistas' agrarian reform law simply called for the enforcement of a law from the era of the Alliance for Progress.

Land titles acquired under the agrarian reform law were not alienable, and were indivisible for inheritance purposes. Thus, the government sought to withdraw agrarian reform land from the land market. The law gave priority in the granting of land to peasants organized in production cooperatives, although some provision was made for the granting of titles to individual producers. More than a transfer of land from the modern to the peasant pole of a "bimodal" countryside,[64] then, the agrarian reform law sought to adjust ownership within the advanced pole, and prevent the "regression" of land to the peasant pole. It was believed that cooperatives could be subjected to central control almost as completely as state farms. In fact, the cooperatives "were initially included in the material balances of the state plans."[65] As Marvin Ortega notes, the state tried to force cooperatives

> to sow the products it stipulated, to use the technology it stipulated, to sell at official prices in controlled markets, [and to adopt] the system of organization that it stipulated, independently of the wishes of cooperative members.[66]

Ironically, Ortega notes, the cooperatives that were most successful in the long-run were those that managed to escape state verticalism.[67]

While the agrarian reform law thus sought to limit the retreat from the Sandinistas' initial statist vision, it appears that officials within the Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA) were slow to accept even this partial retreat. As Gilbert notes, "the state sector continued to dominate the ministry's budget, consuming resources which might have gone into organizing and supporting the cooperatives."[68] For two years after the declaration of the agrarian reform law, reform proceeded at a snail's pace. By the end of 1982, a mere 1.6 percent of Nicaragua's agricultural land had been transferred. Of this, over 80 percent had been used to form production cooperatives. MIDINRA seemed much more adept at expropriating land than at transferring it to peasants: by mid-1982, five times as much had been expropriated under the agrarian reform law as had been transferred.[69] Those with more patience than landless peasants argued that such things take time, that all must be done scientifically: the land transfer was proceeding slowly, Jaime Wheelock insisted, only because the government was "carefully seeking out the best land" to transfer to peasants.

MIDINRA apparently had little intention of modifying this approach. Salvador Mayorga, MIDINRA Vice-Minister in charge of the reform, announced in January 1983 that the coming year would see the transfer of 140,000 hectares — about 2.5 percent of all agricultural land — to cooperatives. Mayorga added that during 1983 MIDINRA's attention would be focused upon a "selected group of cooperatives," which would receive special technical assistance, training in accounting, etc.[70] Jaime Wheelock declared in a 1983 interview that "we have achieved a rather acceptable process of transformation," and held that the agrarian reform would now enter a phase of "consolidation and rationalization of that which has been achieved."[71]

But politics imposed an abandonment of this gradualist approach to the agrarian reform. I believe that the United States invasion of Grenada in late October 1983 marked the point of inflection in the reform process. Contra attacks had

been stepped up, key oil storage facilities had been destroyed on both coasts, and many believed there would be a decisive attempt to overthrow the Sandinistas before Christmas. Up to this point, the reform process was following the rhythm predicted by Mayorga in early 1983. But just two days after the invasion, Jaime Wheelock announced that 160,000 hectares would be transferred before year's end.[72] In addition, the government began to transform *de facto* possession of land into legal title for thousands of peasants.[73]

Thus, as noted in early 1984, "30 percent of the land given to *campesinos* since October 1981 was granted in the last 41 days of 1983."[74] For 1984, MIDINRA planned to either transfer or give legal title to some 490,000 hectares of land. As Jaime Wheelock noted at the end of 1984, "political conditions" forced a near-doubling of this pace.[75]

This represented more than merely a quantitative acceleration in the agrarian reform. Land was now being transferred at a pace that would inevitably undermine MIDINRA's vision of an agrarian reform dominated by modern, well-organized cooperatives maintaining close links with the state. For the first time, the FSLN was accepting that the survival of the revolution would require at least a partial abandonment of the vision of a state-dominated countryside, as well as a "regression" of some land to the "primitive" pole of the bipolar agricultural economy.

Nevertheless, government resistance to the transfer of land to individuals continued. Though the transformation of *de facto* possession into legal title represented a significant support for small-hold production, by the end of 1984 only 8 percent of actually transferred land had been granted to individuals. In addition, some peasants had lost access to the land that they had previously worked.[76]

The peasantry was not enamoured of this strategy. As one observer put it, the production cooperatives represented "an unwelcome toll necessary to gain access to land."[77] Officials of both the FSLN and its association of agricultural producers (UNAG) attributed the resistance to enter cooperatives to ideological backwardness. Victor Tirado noted in late 1981 that

> It is not easy to eliminate from the minds of many *compañero* peasants the established system of individually working the land. We must all fight against that system. We have to eliminate from our minds the individualistic ideas because it has been proven that collective exploitation of land favors peasants more than individual work in a plot which perhaps will never get him out of misery and backwardness.[78]

But peasants could legitimately argue that the cooperatives were more trouble than they were worth. Many cooperatives suffered from serious problems of internal organization. In some cooperatives, small groups of members — often belonging to one extended family — tried to force out other members, thus reducing the number of members among whom profits would be shared. Such ousted members would be replaced by salaried workers. The war gave the peasantry another reason to resist production cooperatives, which were a favoured target of contra terrorism. In late 1983, the government reported that nearly 400 cooperative members had been killed by the contras.[79]

The FSLN's duet with the peasantry would have unfolded in a very different way had it not been for the contra war. By 1984-1985, the Sandinista leadership had come to the conclusion that the relation with the peasantry had become a serious political problem. The leadership was slowly realizing that, whatever the "objective class nature" of the contras' overall project, the peasantry had become the contras' effective social base. While members of the bourgeoisie might root for the contras from Managua, or join the contra leadership in Miami, those who fought and died with the contras were, by and large, peasants. This does not mean that the peasantry had gone over to the contras *en bloc*. But enough peasants had turned to the contras to give the United States the basic human resources it needed to wage its war against the Sandinistas. Apart from the fact that the agrarian reform was forcing peasants into cooperatives, and ending "pre-capitalist" rental relationships that had been the only access to land for many peasants, other government policies contributed to peasant alienation: the state was trying to force peasants to sell their output at low prices, rural trade had been disarticulated, and MIDINRA was focusing its energy on large

modern projects rather than peasant-oriented extension services. These factors help explain the willingness of many peasants to participate in, or collaborate with, the contras.

It was difficult for the FSLN leadership to understand the roots of peasant disaffection. Jaime Wheelock commented in 1983 that "If the revolution has benefitted any social sector in the country, that sector is the peasantry."[80] The leadership could point to the tremendous increase in credit granted to peasants, and to the extension of health and education services in the countryside. It could also point to the same agrarian reform that had frustrated so many peasants: the reform, after all, was reducing the concentration of land ownership, even if cooperative ownership was not the first choice of many peasants. Unable or unwilling to identify the material roots of peasant alienation, the leadership took refuge in its long-held concept of "peasant backwardness." The contras were directing their propaganda towards the peasantry, National Directorate member Luís Carrión argued in 1983, because the peasantry has an "almost fanatic religious mentality."[81]

Despite its belief in peasant backwardness and its tendency to underestimate the peasantry's grievances, however, the FSLN was able to change course from 1985 on. The state relaxed its controls on the selling of peasant products, and the agrarian reform strategy retreated yet again, recognizing the political need to give land to individual peasants. The shift in the agrarian reform was triggered by large-scale peasant land seizures in various parts of the country in mid-1985. Some 100,000 hectares were transferred to individual peasants in 1985, almost fourteen times the original plan.[82] Nearly all of the transfers to individuals occurred after the mid-year land seizures.

The acceptance of the need to transfer land to individual peasants represented a further sacrifice of modern agriculture to the goal of "strengthening the alliance with the Revolution in the countryside," as an internal FSLN document put it.[83] The same document noted that the government had yet to find the correct "technical-economic structuring" to accompany changes that had been dictated by political objectives. There was thus great concern that the "alliance with the

peasantry" was being purchased at the expense of long-term economic stagnation.

The agrarian reform's weakening of the modern pole of rural production also had implications for the project of a state-dominated economy. The explosion of cooperatives not closely linked with MIDINRA from 1984 on, and the 1985 increase in land transfers to individual peasants made the types of rural economic relations originally pursued increasingly unrealistic. Jaime Wheelock would later comment that it was the growing role of the peasant economy, more than the survival of capitalist enterprise, that pushed the FSLN towards a "commodity economy, away from centralized planning."[84] Thus, while the shift in the agrarian reform strategy was believed successful in weakening the contras' social base in Nicaragua, it was not without cost. Indeed, the agrarian reform shift and various other policy changes seemed to leave the Sandinistas of the late 1980s without a clear sense of the *raison d'être* of their revolution.

A path not chosen? Could the story have had a different ending? We must recognize first that the crisis of the Sandinista revolution reflected *both* an external factor — the intense hostility of the Reagan régime — *and* various internal tensions. Although many of the latter were, of course, intensified by pressure from the United States, the internal difficulties of the Sandinista revolution are worth examining in and of themselves. Thus, we will examine here whether the Sandinista strategy could not have been pursued at lower internal cost, leaving aside the question of relations with the United States. We will begin this search for the path not chosen by returning to Sandinista ideology.

We have seen how that ideology influenced what the Sandinistas saw when they looked at the countryside. But another question must be asked: what did the Sandinistas *fail* to see in the countryside? They certainly did *not* see a peasantry differentiated by gender. This blindness may have had an important impact upon the Sandinista project. It is important to ask, for example, whether the costs and benefits of strategies of modernization such as cooperativization and villagization might be skewed by gender. Such a question requires

some change of focus from the sphere of "production" to that of "reproduction," or domestic work.[85] Here we find an extreme concentration of work in female hands: a 1984 study estimated that the average peasant woman spent 9.5 hours a day on household work, while her daughters contributed another 6.5 hours. By comparison, her husband and sons *together* spent less than an hour on domestic work.[86] Modernization strategies that sought to reduce the physical isolation of the peasant family could have a significant impact upon the domestic workload. A study of the women's work day, for example, commented that

> creeping deforestation means that an increasing amount of time is spent hauling water and collecting wood. Daily walks of between five and eight kilometres in search of these resources are not uncommon nowadays.[87]

Thus, the alleviation of this task through village electrification and potable water projects would have been an important attraction for women. As those primarily responsible for the care of children, women might also have been more interested in the educational and health services that accompanied the cooperativization process.

In fact, when rural Nicaraguan women were able to articulate their demands, many of these involved a socialization of reproductive tasks. A 1983 meeting of rural women workers called for day care centres,[88] and a survey of 800 waged women working in export agriculture found that 80 percent would place their children in day care, were it available.[89] Rural women also called for other mechanisms to socialize domestic tasks, such as collective laundries,[90] and the provision of potable water.[91]

Hence, the rural modernization promoted by the Sandinistas might have had a more obviously beneficial impact upon the sphere of reproduction than the sphere of production. Thus, one can argue that cooperativization and/or villagization could do more to meet the "practical gender needs" of women than of men.[92] One could therefore hypothesize that there was a potential basis of support in the countryside for some of the changes that the Sandinistas sought to promote.

But there is a jump from recognizing that certain aspects of a socialist modernization strategy could reduce women's workload to showing that this strategy could therefore gain the support of those women. This hypothesis is politically sensitive, since it is redolent of the traditional Marxist conception of "objective interests," with all of its authoritarian possibilities. While this category needs to be critiqued, it is all too easy to throw the whole problem of the objectivity of interests out the window and conclude that interests are infinitely malleable and are determined only within political struggle.

This is the route taken by Laclau and Mouffe, who set up a stark choice: either objective interests "can be determined from the very beginning," prior to political struggle, or else the whole concept "becomes meaningless."[93] This choice leads them to argue that "there are no privileged points for the unleashing of a socialist political practice."[94] That is, there is no basis for believing, prior to political action, that this or that social group is more likely to be attracted to socialism. Interests are constituted exclusively "within the political practice."[95]

But this radical indeterminacy abandons one of the vital qualities of Marxist thought. Pre-Marxist socialist thinkers paid great attention to the question "what is to be done?"; Marx added the question "and who is to do it?" Although Marx and Engels exaggerated the precision with which they could answer this question (and hence exaggerated also the distance between "utopian" and "scientific" socialism), the very posing of the question is a crucial advance.

It is this advance which is abandoned when one asserts that political practice is entirely unconstrained in its constitution of "interests." This seems a rather untenable position: if one asserts that no social group has a "privileged" connection to a socialist project, is one also willing to assert that women have no "privileged" connection to a feminist project?[96] The problem is the false choice which forms the starting point of the Laclau-Mouffe argument: is it really true that the notion of objective interests is "meaningless" merely because such interests cannot be fully and precisely identified prior to political action? (Ironically, the "post-modern" Laclau

and Mouffe are wielding an almost positivistic conception of meaning here.)

We may confront this false choice by borrowing Weber's category of "objective possibility." Weber used the concept to overcome another false choice, according to which history must be governed by necessity or by mere chance.[97] Adapting the conception to our needs, one can argue that the analysis of society and its members can identify, not "objective" interests, but "objectively possible" interests. That is, analysis can identify possible interests which might be embraced by specific constituencies. The "objectivity" of these interests comes from the quality of the analysis: that is, possible interests are not identified in a merely arbitrary form. Nevertheless, the analysis can only identify possibilities. "The category of 'possibility' is thus not used in its *negative* form. It is, in other words, not an expression of our ignorance or incomplete knowledge."[98] Rather, objective analysis reveals only possibilities because of the very nature of the matter under consideration: people remain free to respond or not to respond to appeals constructed around their possible interests. The validity of the identification of possible interests must then be "tested" through political practice.

Thus, the hypothesis that rural women constituted a potential basis of support for a project of rural transformation might have been tested through different strategies of political interpellation and mobilization. Imagine, for example, that the Sandinistas had made greater effort to integrate rural women into their ranks, and in particular into their leadership structure, and had allowed their organization to be transformed through this integration. Imagine that they had encouraged the development of a relatively autonomous rural women's movement, a movement that could interpellate women as women.[99]

The outcome of such a strategy is not predictable: a vibrant rural women's movement would hopefully have gone beyond questions of "practical gender needs" to address issues related to "strategic gender needs."[100] That is, such a movement would have pushed the Sandinistas to address contradictions of gender alongside those of class. The very autonomy required to make a rural women's movement capable

of interpellating women as women would have posed a range of challenges to the leadership. Thus, had a rural women's movement broken in on the duet between peasant and socialist revolutionary, it would probably have both changed the Sandinista project and given that project greater chances of success, by rooting the demand for change within the countryside itself.

But this remains an untested hypothesis, as the Sandinistas walked down the same path that many other socialist movements had walked: they oriented their appeal to the peasantry around the question of land, though they knew they could not resolve the land question in the way that the peasantry hoped it would be resolved. Production was paramount; reproduction was irrelevant. The potential interests of peasant women were never explored, as the appeal to the peasantry was resolutely male-oriented. Omar Cabezas, author of the classic work on the Sandinistas' rural guerrilla experience, wrote that

> the farm animals, the wife, the children, and the land constitute one element, it is a unit for the peasant, his indivisible universe. That's why I say that the peasant without land is an incomplete man, a man without a soul.[101]

A political language that lumped "the wife" together with "the farm animals" and the land corresponded to a political practice that sought to work within rural patriarchal structures, rather than question them.[102] After taking power, the implementation of various rural policies reflected this same willingness to treat the rural household as an undifferentiated whole of which the eldest male — where one was present — was the automatic head. A 1984 study found that women represented only 6 percent of cooperative members,

> despite the fact that women make up the majority of the workforce on many cooperatives. Most women continue to work as seasonal labourers. Although they now receive the same pay as men for the work they do, they lose the benefits of full membership: they cannot take part in the decision-making process nor receive a share of the profits.[103]

The standard assumption was that "wherever there is a man in the house, he is the head of the family, and by extension the cooperative member."[104] By the same logic, only 8 percent of land titles granted by the agrarian reform to individual farmers were held by women.[105] Apart from male resistance, women were also blocked from a fuller participation in the agrarian reform by their absorption in (unsocialized) reproductive tasks, which therefore helped marginalize them politically while exhausting them physically.[106]

It is important to recognize, of course, that many factors kept the Sandinistas from seeing rural women as potential partners in a transformation of the countryside, and not all of these factors derived from their socialist ideological framework. At various points in their memoirs, Sandinistas reveal sexist and "urbanist" attitudes towards rural women.[107] This raises the question of what independent causal status one should attribute to the Sandinista leaders' ideology: could one not argue that they were simply drawn to an ideology that privileges contradictions of class over those of gender because they were men, and that their attitudes would not have been much different in the absence of this ideology?

But an ideological framework can either strengthen or challenge biases. It is helpful to keep in mind, for example, that Marx often displayed, particularly in his early writings, elitist attitudes towards workers, who were "barbarous," in a state of "bestial savagery." Nevertheless, this class, precisely because of its "radical chains," had the potential to turn society on its head.[108] Similarly, exposure to a different ideological framework would have helped the Sandinista leadership to glimpse the radical potential of rural women.[109]

Conclusions Alfred Schutz argues that, just as our pragmatic interests structure our perception, they determine whether we find a particular "thing or event" worthy of a separate name:[110] a cat-lover has many more words with which to classify domestic felines than I do; the Queen of England no doubt has a rich vocabulary to describe the subtle distinctions between types of forks.

Socialists like to speak of "the peasantry." Where this group has been broken down into sub-categories, these have

tended to carry names like "small," "medium," "landless," and so on. These names all refer to varying degrees of access to means of production. Such variations are believed to be decisive for distinguishing between the political potentials of various types of peasants. If socialists have not coined names to distinguish between male and female peasants, it is because this distinction has not been seen as politically important.

What has been missing from socialist discussions of "the peasant question" is the simple feminist insight that gender divides class. "Bourgeois" feminists have been criticized for ignoring the fact that class divides gender, that women of different classes have different material situations and political interests. The obvious counterpart to bourgeois feminism might be termed "male socialism," which fails to see that gender divides class as profoundly as class divides gender. It is obvious that the failure to grasp this point can mean that a socialist project will not benefit women as much as it might. It is less obvious that it can threaten the entire socialist project, by ignoring a vital potential protagonist of that project.

At least two different readings of the failure of the duet between the Nicaraguan peasantry and the FSLN are possible, and the difference between these readings is precisely the insight that the peasantry is a class divided by gender. The first reading has become the "official" one, part of the profound Sandinista "auto-critique" undertaken since the loss of the 1990 election. By this reading, the whole socialist modernization project was a mistake from the start. "The peasantry" did not want it, and the FSLN should have accepted what "the peasantry" wanted. Thus, in its report to the FSLN's first party congress, in 1991, the National Directorate paid great attention to perceived errors in the relation with the peasantry. The most important of these was the "tendency to distribute lands primarily in the form of state farms and cooperatives."[111] Good relations with the peasantry apparently require that socialists abandon their hopes of transcending the form of individual land ownership.

The second reading, which I have proposed here, begins from the suggestion that one should avoid speaking of what

"the peasantry" wants, since it is a gender-divided group. Given the differing material situations of peasant men and women, one should not be surprised by a gender-divided response to the peasantry's "traditions" and to projects of socialist modernization. This reading leads to the hypothesis that the project of transforming the peasantry's material situation requires the constitution of a vibrant peasant women's movement.

This hypothesis is easily misunderstood. I am not arguing that the Sandinistas could have benefitted simply from seeing peasant women as another base of support for a pre-determined political project. Rather, I am arguing that the Sandinista project could have been both modified and strengthened by encouraging rural women to organize in function of their own interests, and to share in the determination of the FSLN's overall strategy. Similarly, I am not arguing that one can formulate any old modernization project and hope that women will support it. Strategies of change formulated without insight into the logic of the peasant economy can easily alienate both men and women.[112]

Finally, I am not arguing that the Sandinistas should simply have "provided" better services for rural women. The Sandinistas did in fact seek to do much for rural dwellers, both female and male.[113] But this did not change the fact that the FSLN was generally perceived as an alien force in the countryside. Weber's comment that "every policy that ever banked on political gratitude has failed" comes to mind here.[114] The Sandinista project required, not that rural women feel "grateful" towards that project, but that they identify with it. Such an identification would not come about merely through the provision of services by a benevolent external force, but by the organization of rural women to demand the transformation of structures of production and reproduction. Such organization, unlike the simple provision of services, could have changed the political stance of the peasantry as a whole, by rooting the demand for change within each family.

At least two readings of the failure of the peasant-FSLN duet are possible. How is one to choose between these readings? Various questions must be asked of the "official" reading:

if one takes "the peasantry's" desire for individual land ownership as an immutable given, if one abandons the goal of a socialist transformation of the countryside, just what is left of one's overall project? What form of socialism is compatible with the enthronement of small-hold agriculture? Can a developing nation foster such property relations and remain economically viable in today's world economy?

If a workable Third World socialism requires a socialist transformation of the countryside, and if this transformation can only find extensive rural support through the organization of rural women, then it is possible that a significant dose of feminism is *obbligato* for socialism.

Notes

1. Denis Arnold, *The New Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Just where the eyeglasses fit in is not clear: "The point of the joke," one commentator notes, "remains a mystery." High Fidelity, *The Recordings of Beethoven as Viewed by the Critics from High Fidelity* (Great Barrington: Wyeth, 1971).
2. See, for example, Sergio Ramírez, "Nicaragua: Confession of Love," *This Magazine* (May 1991), p. 23; and Dirección Nacional [del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional], *Informe Central* (Managua: n.p, 1991), p. 18.
3. Arnold, *The New Oxford Companion...*
4. The following analysis focuses on the nine man (sic) National Directorate, the FSLN's top decision-making body. I present a more extensive analysis of Sandinista ideology and relations with the peasantry in *The Fall and Rise of the Market in Sandinista Nicaragua* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, forthcoming).
5. John Saul, "El Papel de la Ideología en la Transición al Socialismo," in José Luis Corragio and Carmen Diana Deere (eds.), *La Transición Difícil: La Autodeterminación de los Pequeños Países Periféricos* (Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 1986), p. 147.
6. See, *Barricada* August 13, 1979; David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, Florida: Institute of Interamerican Studies, 1984), p. 34; *El Nuevo Diario* October 24, 1987; Carlos Fonseca, *Obras*, 3d ed. (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985), pp. 1:262, 1:271; Guillermo Rothschuh, *Los Guerrilleros Vencen a los Generales* (Managua: Ediciones Distribuidora Cultural, 1983), p. 33; Tomás Borge, *La Paciente Impaciencia* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1989), pp. 153, 194.
7. *Barricada* January 7, 1984.
8. Humberto Ortega, "Es Más Difícil Ser Revolucionario en las Actuales Circunstancias," *N.Y. Transfer News Service* August 7, 1991.
9. *The Wall Street Journal* May 16, 1988.

10. Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS], *Daily report: Latin America* February 26, 1988.
11. Ramírez, "Nicaragua: Confession of Love," p. 25.
12. Humberto Ortega, "Es Más Difícil..."
13. See, for example, Tomás Borge, "The New Education in the New Nicaragua," in Bruce Marcus (ed.), *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1985); Humberto Ortega, Jaime Wheelock, and Bayardo Arce, *Sandinistas* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1986), p. 22.
14. See, for example, Victor Tirado, *La Primera Gran Conquista: La Toma del Poder Político* (Managua: C.S.T, 1985), p. 60.
15. See, for example, Carlos Núñez in*Barricada* October 26, 1979; Tomás Borge, *El Axioma de la Esperanza* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), pp. 90, 154.
16. *Barricada* August 29, 1980.
17. The Miskito people, Tomás Borge commented in 1982, were "still the victims of their own backwardness." FBIS, February 24, 1982.
18. E.g.: "We cannot forget for a moment that 'the history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle'." Bayardo Arce, *Sandinismo y Política Imperialista* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1985), p. 85.
19. *Barricada* October 21, 1979; *Barricada* March 1, 1981; Daniel Ortega *et al.*, "De Cara al Pueblo" [meeting of the government cabinet with representatives of FSLN and opposition organizations], Managua: author's notes, August 5, 1983.
20. Cited in Beth Woroniuk, *Women's Oppression and Revolution: The Nicaraguan Debate*, CUSO Occasional Paper (Ottawa: CUSO Latin America Program, 1987), p. 8.
21. As Michael Polanyi notes, we are not focally aware of the pre-suppositions that form the ground of our knowledge and perception: "The curious thing is that we have no clear knowledge of what our pre-suppositions are and when we try to formulate them they appear quite unconvincing." *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 59.
22. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann put it, everyday consciousness "is dominated by the pragmatic motive," that is, attention "is mainly determined by what I am doing, have done or plan to do." *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), p. 22. See also Alfred Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 75. This pragmatic approach to perception and knowledge is captured nicely in Nietzsche's aphorism that people "do not flee from being deceived as much as from being damaged by deception." *The Portable Nietzsche (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 45. Even the scientific theory*, as Michael Polanyi argues, has a pragmatic grounding. *Personal Knowledge*, p. 3.
23. Thus, a neoclassical ideology may lead one to assume that exploitation *cannot exist* in a voluntary market relation. Similarly, a Marxist ideology may lead one to assume that mutual satisfaction *cannot exist* in a relation between members of opposing classes. On the "quasi-metaphysical commitments" of paradigms, see Thomas Kuhn, *The*

Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 41.

24. Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, 2d ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1965), pp. 16, 102.
25. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1971), p. 67.
26. Cited in Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, vol. 2 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 318.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
28. Karl Marx,*Capital*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959), p. 807.
29. Cited in Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, p. 407.
30. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 813.
31. This possibility is implied, for example, in Marx's "Comments on Bakunin's Book *Statehood and Anarchy*," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969), p. 2:411.
32. Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 3:458ff.
33. FSLN, *Programa Histórico del FSLN* (Managua: DEPEP, 1981), p. 21.
34. FSLN-Insurrectional tendency, "Programa sandinista," in Gabriel García Márquez (ed.), *Los Sandinistas* (Bogotá: Editorial La Oveja Negra, 1979), p. 246. Throughout much of the late 1970s, the FSLN was divided into three tendencies, each of which would eventually supply three members of the joint National Directorate formed in early 1979. The 1978 program was issued by the "Insurrectional" or "Third" tendency, led by Daniel and Humberto Ortega. This tendency, the FSLN's largest, formulated the insurrectional strategy which brought the Sandinistas to power in July 1979.
35. Daniel Ortega commented in late 1979 that "It is more profitable for 10,000 peasants to work in a large *hacienda* than for each one to work separately." *Barricada* October 25, 1979.
36. Jaime Wheelock, *El Gran Desafío* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1983), p. 93.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
38. *Barricada* March 6, 1980.
39. Jaime Wheelock, *Marco Estratégico de la Reforma Agraria* (Managua: DEPEP, 1981). Though Wheelock tended to be more explicit in this view of the peasantry, there is no evidence that other members of the National Directorate differed markedly from his view. This view of the peasantry was not easily reconciled with the view that it was one of the "fundamental classes" of the revolution. The contradiction led to some interesting formulations, as when Tomás Borge argued that "Peasants constitute an objectively revolutionary social force, though because of their relations with production and because of concrete historical elements they are more backward than factory workers and the agrarian proletariat." *Barricada* August 28, 1984. Note the confusion here: in Marxist thought production relations are usually the key determinant of "objective" class position. Thus Borge is in essence saying that peasants are "objectively" both revolutionary and backward.
40. Jaime Wheelock, "Balance y Perspectivas de las Polítcas de la Revolución en el Campo," in *La Dirección Nacional y la Organi-*

zación Campesina (Managua: Ediciones Tierra Arada, 1986), p. 47. Similarly, Henry Ruiz noted the importance of the political consciousness-raising that takes place on the state farms (*Barricada* April 20, 1980), and a *Barricada* editorial of July 17, 1980 promoted cooperatives for their capacity to overcome the "traditional individualism of the peasant," because they foster "the consolidation of the spirit of mutual cooperation amongst members; the development of consciousness and political motivation; the raising of the peasant's cultural level, and of his living and working conditions."

41. *Barricada* August 19, 1979.
42. This point has been obscured by various commentators on the revolution. George Black, for example, gives a section of his *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1981) the title "Pancasán 1967: The Peasants Take Up Arms," though in fact the section states that "Many peasants deserted or had to be dismissed, and a number even turned informers. The urban or student cadre by contrast had greater staying power." Similarly, Joseph Collins entitles a chapter of his *What Difference Could a Revolution Make?* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1982) "The Peasant's Victory," though nothing in the chapter justifies the title.
43. Fonseca, *Obras*, p. 1:118; Ernesto Guevara, *Obras Escogidas: 1957-1967* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1985), p. 1:63.
44. Fonseca, *Obras*, p. 1:163.
45. An exception to this was the Zinica guerrilla column of 1970. Humberto Ortega, *50 Años de Lucha Sandinista* (Managua: Ministerio del Interior, 1979), p. 107.
46. Tomás Borge, "Tomás Borge on the Nicaraguan Revolution," *New Left Review* no. 164 (July-August 1987), p. 60.
47. Daniel Ortega, "Interview with *Barricada Internacional*," *N.Y. Nicaragua Weekly Update* no. 76 (July 14, 1991).
48. Jaime Wheelock, "Discurso de Jaime Wheelock ante el Consejo Superior de MIDINRA," in *MIDINRA: Plan de Trabajo, Balance y Perspectivas* (Managua: MIDINRA, 1985), pp. 90f.
49. *La Prensa* March 9, 1980.
50. Unión Nacional Opositora, *Programa de Gobierno* (Managua: UNO, 1989).
51. *Barricada* December 22, 1979.
52. Jaime Biderman notes that the agrarian reform law passed in 1963 during the Somoza dynasty's mildly reformist phase led in effect to "a few colonization projects and the provision of land titles in these and other remote areas to which [peasants] migrated." "The Development of Capitalism in Nicaragua: A Political Economic History," *Latin American Perspectives* 10/1 (Winter 1983), p. 21. Ironically, in a 1990 book, Wheelock would criticize the Somoza regime for this focus on colonization, and claim that the FSLN knew "from the beginning" that such an approach was unacceptable. *La Reforma Agraria Sandinista* (Managua: Editorial Vanguardia, 1990), p. 49f.
53. Both proponents and opponents of socialist cooperatives can invoke authoritative support. On the negative side there is Marx's view that "To give up the soil to the hands of associated rural labourers, would be to surrender society to one exclusive class of producers." Marx

and Engels, *Selected Works*, p. 2:290. On the other hand, Lenin's late article on cooperatives was quite favourable, arguing that "for us the mere growth of cooperatives... is identical with the growth of socialism." *Lenin on Politics and Revolution*, edited by James E. Conner (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968), p. 358. One could argue that Marx was considering ideal socialist arrangements, while Lenin's remarks reflect his pragmatic orientation during the NEP period. In any case, it should be noted that Lenin's endorsement of cooperatives assumed that "the land on which they are situated and the means of production belong to the state."

54. *Barricada* January 15, 1980.
55. David Kaimowitz and Joseph R. Thome, "Nicaragua's Agrarian Reform: The First Year," in Thomas Walker (ed.), *Nicaragua in Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 230.
56. *Barricada* 20 May 1980. Wheelock elsewhere commented that "someone who is not sufficiently adapted as a farm worker, a farm wage earner, tends to seek a way to utilize his time better as a peasant than as a farm worker." This "deals us a harsh blow, creating a social and economic problem which may deal a harsh blow to the export economy." Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS], *Latin America Report* no. 76378. One might say that the Sandinistas adopted the view of E.G. Wakefield, cited by Marx, that "where every one who so pleases can easily obtain a piece of land for himself, not only is labour very dear... but the difficulty is to obtain combined labour at any price." Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1954), p. 719.
57. The experience of Peru during the Velasco era would support this concern. Alfred Stepan, *The State and Society: Peru in Comparative Perspective* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 217ff.
58. Marvin Ortega, "Las Cooperativas Sandinistas: Entre la Democracia y el Verticalismo," in Raúl Ruben and J.P. De Groot (eds.), *El Debate sobre la Reforma Agraria en Nicaragua* (Managua: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1989), p. 207.
59. Colburn argues that the incorporation into the state sector of land seized by peasants discouraged further seizures because peasants generally did not see much advantage in working for the state as opposed to a private owner. Forrest D. Colburn, *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua: State, Class and the Dilemmas of Agrarian Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 113.
60. *Barricada* July 20, 1980.
61. José Luís Medal commented that the law was more Schumpeterian than Marxist-Leninist in inspiration, in that it penalized, not capitalist exploitation, but the failure of land owners to fulfil their entrepreneurial function. *La Revolución Nicaragüense: Balance Económico y Alternativas Futuras* (Managua: Ediciones Nicaragua Hoy, 1985), p. 28.
62. Junta de Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional, *Decretos-Leyes para Gobierno de un País*, 15 vols., edited by Rolando Lacayo and Martha Lacayo de Arauz (Managua: Editorial Unión, 1979-1988), Decree 782.

63. José Antonio Tijerino Medrano and Mario Palma Ibarra, *A Statement of the Laws of Nicaragua in Matters Affecting Business*, 4th ed. (Washington: OAS, 1978), p. 172.
64. B.F. Johnston and P. Kilby, *Agriculture and Structural Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
65. David Kaimowitz, "La Planificación Agropecuaria en Nicaragua: De un Proceso de Acumulación Basado en el Estado a la Alianza Estratégica con el Campesinado," in Ruben and De Groot (eds.), *El Debate sobre la Reforma...*, p. 71. "In practice," Kaimowitz adds, "the State had little capacity to ensure fulfilment of these plans."
66. Marvin Ortega, "Las Cooperativas Sandinistas...," p. 200.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
68. Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 93.
69. *Barricada* June 15, 1982.
70. *Barricada* January 30, 1983; FBIS, February 8, 1983.
71. Wheelock, *El Gran Desafío* pp. 85, 88.
72. *Barricada* October 28, 1983. Without specifically mentioning Grenada, both Borge and Wheelock recognized that the acceleration of the reform was a response to United States aggression. Tomás Borge, "[Interview by Iosu Perales]," in *Nicaragua: Valientamente libre* (Madrid: Editorial Revolución, 1984), p. 159; Wheelock, "Discurso...," p. 90; Wheelock, *La Reforma Agraria...*, p. 72.
73. This generally affected those who had settled on idle national lands along the agricultural frontier. Under the Somoza regime, such *precaristas* had often been displaced by the export agriculture booms.
74. [Phil Ryan], "Nicaragua's Agrarian Reform," *Central American Historical Institute Update* 3/2 (January 13, 1984).
75. Wheelock, "Discurso...," p. 21.
76. The 1981 agrarian reform law called for the expropriation of all lands involved in non-monetary renting, such as share-cropping. CIERA, MIDINRA's main research centre, condemned such rental arrangements as "proper to the Middle Ages." CIERA, "Agrarian Reform in Nicaragua: The First Three Years," *International Journal of Sociology* 13/2 (Summer 1983), p. 41. While share-cropping relations are often highly exploitative, the assumption that they are necessarily so is problematic. In the Nicaraguan context, peasants who received access to a plot of land and a modest working capital in exchange for half of their crop (*mediería*) might have been no worse off than many who were paying a money rent and relying on usurers for working capital. In any case, they certainly did not feel themselves worse off than those who had no access to land at all. But under the terms of the agrarian reform law, peasants could find themselves "liberated" from their exploitative share-cropping arrangements, only to find that they now had no access to land at all, unless they were willing to join a production cooperative.
77. *Envío* no. 72 (June 1987).
78. JPRS 79359.
79. *Barricada* November 24, 1983. Marvin Ortega states that 61 percent of those killed in the war up to 1987 were cooperative members. He adds that peasants also stayed away from the cooperatives as they

were seen as a prime site of recruitment for the Sandinista Popular Army. "Las Cooperativas Sandinistas...," p. 204.

80. Wheelock, *El Gran Desafío*, p. 92.
81. Cited in Gilbert, *Sandinistas*, p. 97.
82. Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario y Reforma Agraria [MIDINRA], *Plan de Trabajo: Balance y Perspectivas, 1986* (Managua: MIDINRA, 1986).
83. Dirección Nacional y Asamblea Sandinista del Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, "Producción y Abastecimiento" (Managua: unpublished, 1986). Land transfers to individuals represented 47 percent of all transfers in the 1985-1987 period, up from just 18 percent in the 1981-1984 period. Ivan Gutiérrez, "La Polítca de Tierras de la Reforma Agraria Sandinista," in Ruben and De Groot (eds.), *El Debate sobre la Reforma...*, p. 119.
84. Wheelock, *La Reforma Agraria..*, p. 18.
85. The term "reproduction" is used here despite its inherent ambiguity. Michele Barrett, *Women's Oppression Today* (London: Verso, 1980), p. 19ff.
86. Cited in Woroniuk, *Women's Oppression and Revolution...*, p. 30. These figures are *broadly* consistent with those gathered in other Latin American societies. United Nations, *The World's Women, 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics* (New York: The United Nations, 1991), p. 101.
87. Helen Collinson (ed.), *Women and Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1990), p. 37.
88. Primer Encuentro de Obreras Agrícolas ATC-AMNLAE, "Conclusiones" (April 1983, mimeo).
89. CIERA, CETRA-MITRAB, and ATC, "La Feminización de la Fuerza de Trababo Asalariada en el Agro y sus Implicacciones en la Producción y la Organización Sindical" (mimeo, October 1985).
90. Oficina Gubernamental de la Mujer, "Reivindicaciones Planteadas por las Mujeres Nicaraguenses: Síntesis" (Managua, mimeo, 1987).
91. Ana Criquillón and Clara M. Martínez, "Conquistar la Igualdad," *Barricada* October 5, 1985; and "Cual es la Situación de la Mujer Rural en Nicaragua," *Barricada*, September 1, 1986.
92. Caroline Moser defines practical gender needs as "those needs which are formulated from the concrete conditions women experience, in their engendered position within the sexual division of labour." See "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Needs," in Rebecca Grant and Kathleen Newland (eds.), *Gender and International Relations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 90. Thus, while one may argue from an abstract perspective that potable water is not a "women's issue," because both men and women *should* be responsible for the water supply, in practical terms easy access to clean water will be of more importance for those who actually *do* obtain that water, under the prevailing gender division of labour. Nothing in this discussion should be taken to suggest that Nicaraguan rural women were exclusively concerned with reproductive tasks, while men were in charge of "production." In fact, women's "directly" productive role had always been significant, and increased during the Sandinista decade, as many men shifted from production to defence tasks. The argument is rather that, being directly respon-

sible for the reproductive sphere, women would be more directly affected by changes in this sphere than men.

93. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 84.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
96. Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism?," *New Left Review* no. 163 (May-June 1987), p. 81.
97. Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences,*, edited by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Glencoe, 1949), pp. 164ff.
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-74.
99. There were efforts to organize rural women in the 1980s, but these developed after relations with the peasantry had reached a point of crisis, and remained a relatively marginal component of Sandinista strategy.
100. Moser defines these as "needs which are formulated from the analysis of women's subordination to men, and deriving out of this the strategic gender interest identified for an alternative, more equal and satisfactory organization of society." "Gender Planning in the Third World..." Thus, while the identification of practical gender needs takes the gender division of labour as a given, the identification of strategic needs calls that division of labour into question. This does not mean that there is a necessary contradiction between the pursuit of practical and strategic gender interests. Just as Marx saw trade unions as a "preparation for the overthrow of the whole old society" (cited in Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, p. 95), the self-organization of women in response to their practical needs can nurture the capacity to identify and mobilize around their strategic needs.
101. Omar Cabezas, *La Montaña Es Algo Más Que Una Inmensa Estepa Verde*, 2d ed. (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1982), p. 242.
102. Thus, Cabezas explained the Sandinista strategy of beginning the search for rural supporters with the most respected peasant families: "The Córdoba family was the most respected in the valley, and the fact that they introduced me helped other people be less afraid, because if the Córdobas, the sons of Don Leandro, were involved, then it was all right for the others to be involved." *La Montaña...*, p. 238. Within these families, the eldest son was the starting point: "the eldest son of Don Leandro was Moíses, and in the countryside this meant he was the heir; so we were convinced that we had to stick close to Moíses, to raise his awareness." *Idem*, *Canción de Amor para los Hombres* (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1988), p. 24. The eldest son, Cabezas argued, was "the goose that would lay the golden eggs." (p. 25).
103. Collinson, *Women and Revolution in Nicaragua*, p. 51.
104. CIERA, *La Vida Cotidiana de la Mujer Campesina* (Managua: CIERA, 1989), p. 168.
105. Martha Luz Padilla *et al.*, "Impact of the Sandinista Agrarian Reform on Rural Women's Subordination," in Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena León (eds.), *Rural Women and State Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), p. 128.

106. ATC, "Revolución y Mujeres del Campo," (Managua: ATC, 1985)
107. Thus, Tomás Borge writes that when Gladys Baez, the only woman in his guerrilla column, hid a package of sensitive documents under her shirt, "she looked like she was pregnant. This was a perfect disguise, since this was the natural state of peasant women." *La Paciente Impaciencia*, p. 309. Omar Cabezas relates how, upon entering the mountain, their squadron leader would shame them by telling them, among other things, that they were "little women." *La Montaña...*, p. 112. Elsewhere, Cabezas recounts a long conversation with a rural woman, the main point of which seems to be to display the woman's ignorance. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
108. Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. T.B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 123, 169, 58.
109. It might also have helped ensure that the eventual make-up of the FSLN leadership displayed some gender balance.
110. Schutz, *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, p. 117.
111. Dirección Nacional, *Informe Central*, p. 18.
112. In 1984 I worked with peasant families that had been displaced by the Victoria de Julio sugar project and moved into a new village 40 kilometres north-east of Managua. The families complained that the close placement of the houses left them no space to keep their chickens and pigs. With the care of small animals usually assigned to women, the failure to consult the peasants on their space requirements undermined one of the women's traditional economic resources. The degree to which this modernization showpiece had been imposed on the peasants from above is exemplified by the project coordinator's comment to me: "Some people say we have robbed them of their culture, but the only culture they ever had was a culture of misery."
113. On efforts to improve rural social services, for example, see Phil Ryan, "Nicaragua's Economy: The Dilemmas of a Revolution at War," *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 11/22 (1986).
114. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 1391.