AUGUSTO C. SANDINO
SERGIO RAMIREZ
ROBERT EDGAR CONRAD

Sandino

The Testimony of a Nicaraguan Patriot, 1921-1934

PRINCETON LEGACY LIBRARY

SANDINO

SANDINO

THE TESTIMONY OF A NICARAGUAN PATRIOT 1921–1934

Compiled and Edited by Sergio Ramírez

Edited and Translated with an Introduction and Additional Selections by

Robert Edgar Conrad

•

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by Princeton University Press, 41 William Street,
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, Oxford

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sandino, the testimony of a Nicaraguan patriot: 1921–1934 / compiled and edited by Sergio Ramírez; translated and edited, with an introduction and additional selections by Robert Edgar Conrad.
p. cm.
"Based on the expanded 1984 edition of Sandino's writings assembled and edited by Sergio Ramírez and published in Managua in two volumes under the title El pensamiento vivo."
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-691-07848-3 (alk. paper)—ISBN 0-691-02319-0 (pbk.: alk. paper)
1. Sandino, Augusto César, 1895–1934. 2. Nicaragua—Politics and government—1909–1937. 3. Nicaragua—History—Revolution, 1926–1929. 4. Revolutionists—Nicaragua—Biography. 5. Sandino, Augusto César, 1895–1934. Pensamiento vivo. I. Ramírez, Sergio, 1942– . II. Conrad, Robert Edgar, 1928– .
F1526.3.S24S28 1990
972.8505'1—dc20 89-48567

This book has been composed in Linotron Sabon and Gill Sans

Princeton University Press books are printed on acid-free paper, and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity of the Council on Library Resources

Printed in the United States of America by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
(Pbk.) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed by Laury A. Egan

CONTENTS

• 1930 •

• 1931 •

• 1932 •

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations follow p. 516.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to call attention, as Sergio Ramírez did in the 1984 edition, to the participation of Flor de María Monterrey, director of the Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo (IES), and other researchers at that institution, in the expansion and improvement of that edition, and consequently of this one. I also wish to thank the following people who made important contributions: Mr. Sanford G. Thatcher, formerly of Princeton University Press, for his help in getting me started on this project; my wife Ursula for her work on the illustrations; Diane Didier of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for drawing the maps; and Julie Marvin of Princeton University Press for her fine editing. My thanks go as well to *The Nation* magazine/The Nation Company, Inc., for allowing me to publish parts of Carleton Beals's articles on Sandino: "With Sandino in Nicaragua: Sandino Himself," "Send the Bill to Mr. Coolidge," and "Sandino—Bandit or Patriot," all copyright 1928. And finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Sergio Ramírez, distinguished novelist, historian, literary critic, and vice-president of Nicaragua, for granting me permission to translate these writings by his country's national hero.

NOTE ON THE ORGANIZATION AND EDITING OF THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDITION

The collection of documents presented in this volume is based on the expanded 1984 edition of Sandino's writings assembled and edited by Sergio Ramírez and published in two volumes in Managua under the title *El pensamiento vivo*. This work has not only gone through many Spanish editions (the first published in San José, Costa Rica, in 1974), but has also appeared in several foreign languages, including German, Italian, and Swedish. A number of Sandino's writings have been published in English, but this is the first attempt to offer a comprehensive English-language edition.

In order to provide a more accessible single-volume edition, it was necessary to delete many items from the 1984 edition. However, this has been done, I believe, wihout eliminating anything vital for understanding Sandino and his times. In the 1984 edition two long accounts of the Constitutionalist War (1926–1927) and events leading to Sandino's rebellion were published in an appendix. Their inclusion in the body of the work (Documents 8 and 9) has enabled me to remove several items (Documents 7, 9, 10, and 15 of the 1984 edition), which were, in fact, excerpts from those two narratives.

Elsewhere I have been able to shorten some documents, especially when they contained material not written by Sandino. This was true, for example, of the old Document 241 (my Document 184). Document 242 of the 1984 edition (my Document 185) also contains some material that appears elsewhere in the 1984 edition, and therefore these sections have been removed from that longer selection. For the record, others deleted from the 1984 edition are old Documents 8, 12, 13, 23, 32, 40, 46, 51, 55, 56, 58, 62, 65, 70, 71, 72, 81, 85, 87, 91, 101, 103, 108, 113, 114, 115, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 128, 129, 130, 133, 141, 145, 146, 147, 148, 150, 151, 153, 156, 157, 158, 162, 165, 167, 177, 179, 182, 183, 187, 188, 193, 201, 202, 214, 217, 218, 223, 225, 253, 254, 256, 257, and 261. Also omitted from this volume are Sergio Ramírez's introductory essay, "El Muchacho de Niquinohomo," his analytical article, "Sandino: Clase e ideología," his chronology of events, his biographical index, and three brief introductory notes to earlier editions. When making

abridgments I have been guided by a desire to avoid repetition and to include as much of Sandino's thought as possible within the limits of a single volume.

Where necessary, I have added explanatory footnotes, attaching the initials RC to distinguish my notes from those written by Sergio Ramírez. His practice of placing source notes after the documents has been retained. The numbers in these notes refer to the numbered sources in the List of Sources. These include some basic studies of Sandino and Nicaragua and are supplemented by a selected bibliography. Ellipsis points have been placed in brackets to indicate editorial abridgment; if they are not in brackets they appear in the 1984 edition.

In order to round out certain aspects of Sandino's life, I have added a few documents not in the 1984 edition. These include a letter addressed to the All-America Anti-Imperialist League published in English in *The New York Times* (Document 70); an eyewitness account of the events leading to Sandino's assassination, carried out by members of the National Guard under orders of the Guard commander and later dictator, General Anastasio Somoza (Document 200); and several excerpts from José Román's *Maldito país*, a book written in 1933 and published at last in 1979. The latter selections (Documents 2, 29, 58, 120, 179, and 201) deal with Sandino's childhood, his second journey to Mexico, and aspects of his military struggle and its aftermath. Document 201, the final item in this collection, is introspective and reveals Sandino's hopes and fears in the last year of his life.

Finally, the title of this edition reflects what I regard as Sandino's basic motivation during his long struggle: the great love he felt for his country and his constant wish to see it sovereign and free.

MAPS

NICARAGUA

SANDINO'S AREA OF OPERATIONS

SANDINO

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Since 1979, the year the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) won its military victory over the Nicaraguan National Guard and the Somoza family dictatorship, Nicaragua has achieved a prominence in world affairs not normally attained by a small country of some two and a half million people. Few of the world's nations have been the object of more conflict and debate during those ten years than this poor, underdeveloped land, which for most of its history as an independent country has experienced more than its share of oppression, war, and foreign domination. Few governments have been more criticized by sectors of American society than the Sandinista regime, and few have aroused more sympathy among large segments of the world's population than this same government of scholars, writers, priests, poets, and dedicated revolutionaries.

Despite this worldwide interest—which had its counterpart in the 1920s and 1930s—many people in Western countries are still little acquainted with the background of the current Nicaraguan revolution. Many remain unaware, for example, of the deep and direct economic, political, and military involvement of the United States in Nicaragua's affairs in this century, and perhaps even fewer are conscious of the damage inflicted upon the Nicaraguan people by decades of U.S. domination. Few people outside Nicaragua know, for example, that, beginning in 1909, the year the Taft administration helped foment a pro-business revolution on the east coast of Nicaragua, the United States installed a whole series of unpopular Nicaraguan regimes, meanwhile imposing unwanted treaties and other burdensome relationships upon that country, aided by those same governments of its own creation. Indeed, few citizens of the United States know that from 1927 until 1933 U.S. armed forces were engaged in a bitter jungle war in Nicaragua, much like that fought in Vietnam, against an army of Nicaraguan and Latin American patriots led by one Augusto C. Sandino, a man whose name and acts have since inspired generations of his fellow-citizens.

Clearly Nicaragua's tragic story is not sufficiently known, and for the general public many questions remain unanswered. What are the causes of the current Nicaraguan revolutionary phenomenon? What events in their history impelled the Nicaraguan people toward revolution, and what has given their small country the strength and determination to re-

sist the economic, diplomatic, and military pressure imposed upon them during the eight years of the Reagan administration? Going back in time, who were the Sandinistas of the 1920s and 1930s, and who was Augusto C. Sandino, the man who gave the Nicaraguan Revolution its name? What induced him and a small band of followers to initiate a guerrilla struggle against powerful U.S. armed forces and their Nicaraguan allies and to continue this unequal conflict for nearly six years?

The answers to these questions lie in the history of Nicaragua's relations with the United States in this century.[1] By its very presence, the United States has helped to determine the course of events in every Latin American country, but toward such countries as Cuba, Haiti, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Nicaragua (all to be found, as some would say, "in America's own backyard"), the United States has often pursued policies of direct and prolonged intervention. In the case of Nicaragua this has taken many forms, including conspiracies to topple governments, military and diplomatic threats, direct involvement in civil wars, establishment of so-called neutral zones by U.S. armed forces in order to frustrate the plans of political groups not favored by the United States, the establishment of American-trained and -equipped military forces, imposition of onerous treaties and economic and administrative controls that in effect all but nullified the nation's sovereignty, and, perhaps most intolerable to Augusto Sandino and other Nicaraguan patriots, outright occupation by U.S. armed forces.

A brief review of the turbulent history of Nicaragua from 1909 until 1927—the year Sandino began his personal crusade against one more large-scale military intrusion—will uncover the roots of the conflicts that have racked that country and, more relevantly, will prepare the reader to understand the documents contained in this book—documents which reveal one man's uncompromising responses to foreign domination of his native land.

•

After the revolution for independence against Spain and the failure of efforts to unite Central America early in the nineteenth century, political affairs in Nicaragua were of the Liberal-versus-Conservative kind that consumed the energies of Latin American countries well into the twentieth century.[2] In 1909, however, a new and dynamic force entered the Nic-

[1] "One has to study history and to find in history . . . the elements of this revolution," wrote Humberto Ortega, brother of President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and a leading member of the Sandinista government. Cited by Donald C. Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Austin, Texas, 1986), 195.

[2] For accounts of the political and economic history of Nicaragua and Central America see Thomas L. Karnes, *The Failure of Union: Central America, 1824-1960* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1961); Miles L. Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America, 1680–1840*

araguan political arena, upsetting traditional alignments and permanently changing the nature of the political contest. In that year the Liberal president of Nicaragua, José Santos Zelaya, was overthrown by a Conservative rebellion with the undisguised support of the U.S. government, in the first of a series of American interventions that would end only in the 1930s with the establishment of the American-trained and -financed National Guard under the leadership of General Anastasio Somoza.

From its beginning, the Conservative revolt of 1909 enjoyed the moral and financial support of U.S. business interests in Nicaragua, as well as that of the State Department under the direction of President Taft's secretary of state, Philander C. Knox. On October 7 the U.S. consul at Bluefields on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, Thomas F. Moffat, revealing his own close association with the conspirators, predicted in a cable to the State Department "that a revolution will start in Bluefields on the 8th." The following day, Emiliano Chamorro, a Conservative Party general, Juan Estrada, the co-opted Liberal governor of the province who was promised the presidency of his country in exchange for his cooperation, and Adolfo Díaz, an employee of the nearby U.S.-owned La Luz and Los Angeles Mining Company, began the predicted revolt with the help of the local garrison under Estrada's command. On October 12, Moffat, who enjoyed the confidence of the rebel leaders, sent one more optimistic cable to the State Department to announce that "foreign business interests are enthusiastic," that "immediate reduction of the tariff was assured," and that all concessions not owned by foreigners had been annulled.[3] According to undisputed assertions from Liberal Party sources, three weeks after this revolt began, Adolfo Díaz, who would soon become president of Nicaragua, personally made loans to the rebels totaling $600,000, although his mining-company salary at that time was not more than $1,000 per year.[4] On December 1, 1909, Secretary of State Knox, who was also a legal consultant to the La Luz and Los Angeles Mining Company and a major stockholder in that same firm, withdrew U.S. recognition of the

(New York, 1982); and Jaime Wheelock Román, *Imperialismo y dictadura*, 5th ed. (Mexico, D.F., 1980).

[3] U. S. Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1909* (hereafter *Foreign Relations* with dates), 452; Harold Norman Denny, *Dollars for Bullets: The Story of American Rule in Nicaragua* (New York, 1929), 74–76; Richard Millett, *Guardians of the Dynasty* (Maryknoll, New York, 1977), 23–24. The tariff Moffat referred to was a tax on exports, and the annulled concessions were large grants of territory held by Nicaraguans, including President Zelaya himself, which until then had blocked the expansion of foreign agricultural, lumbering, and mining interests in the vast eastern zone of Nicaragua. See T. Lane Carter, "The Gold Mining Industry in Nicaragua," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, 17 December 1910, 1204.

[4] Denny, *Dollars for Bullets*, 78; Amy Woods, "Nicaragua and the United States," *Congressional Record, 1928*, 7615. Sandino, who was interested in all aspects of the U.S. intervention, put this figure at $800,000. See Doc. 79.

Zelaya government in a diplomatic note that has been described as "a virtual declaration of war."[5]

Expressing the hope that his fall from power might bring peace to Nicaragua and "above all, the suspension of the hostility manifested by the American government," President Zelaya resigned his office on December 17, 1909, naming as president another Liberal, José Madriz, a prestigious lawyer and member of the Central American Court of Justice, who did not, however, receive diplomatic recognition from the Taft administration. The war continued, and by May 1910, President Madriz's Liberal forces were demanding the surrender of the rebels at the port of Bluefields, a development that led to direct U.S. military intervention. On May 16, 1910, the American commander of the warship *Paducah* declared the town and port of Bluefields a "neutral zone," thwarting a Liberal victory. American marines were quickly landed at Bluefields "to protect American lives and property," and during the following weeks, the United States supplied arms to the Conservative forces while insisting that customs duties at Bluefields be paid to the Conservative faction. The result was President Madriz's resignation after nearly a year of civil war and the entry of Estrada's army into Managua on August 27, 1910.[6]

Many causes for these intrusions into Nicaragua's internal affairs have been proposed. Zelaya had canceled or threatened to cancel certain U.S. concessions in Nicaragua, including that held by the La Luz and Los Angeles Mining Company. U.S. businessmen had complained that the Nicaraguan president had kept Central America in a state of turmoil, a situation allegedly prejudicial to U.S. interests in Panama. Zelaya, moreover, had negotiated a large loan in London, a bold display of independence in the face of the policy of "dollar diplomacy," which sought to discourage European investments in strategic areas of Latin America. And finally, the Nicaraguan president, who had refused to grant the United States the right to build an interoceanic canal across Nicaragua, was said to be ready to offer that privilege to Germany or Japan. As was soon apparent, the United States was in fact clearly interested in acquiring the exclusive right to build a Nicaraguan canal, both to forestall potential competitors and, if warranted, to construct such a canal for the economic and strategic advantages it might offer.[7]

[5] Mario Ribas, "A Central American Indictment of the United States," in *Current History*, September 1927, 919; Woods, "Nicaragua," 7615; Gregorio Selser, *Sandino* (New York, 1981), 27; Hodges, *Intellectual Foundations*, 120; Millett, *Guardians*, 25–26. For Knox's note, see *Foreign Relations, 1909*, 455–57.

[6] *Foreign Relations, 1909*, 458–59; Rafael de Nogales, *The Looting of Nicaragua* (New York, 1928), 8; Denny, *Dollars for Bullets*, 84–90.

[7] Sergio Ramírez, "Sandino: Clase e ideología," in Augusto C. Sandino, *El pensamiento vivo* (Managua, 1984), 2:424–25; Wheelock Román, *Imperialismo y dictadura*, 107–8; Woods, "Nicaragua," 7615; Neill Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair* (Chicago, 1967), 23; Selser, *Sandino*, 26; Millett, *Guardians*, 20–23.

But events following the Conservative military victory of 1910 offer more concrete evidence of the aims of the United States in Nicaragua. Thomas G. Dawson, U.S. minister to Panama and a member of Knox's law firm, went to Managua soon after the Conservative regime took power, there inducing Estrada and his associates to agree to certain conditions prior to U.S. diplomatic recognition. These conditions were contained in the so-called Dawson Agreements, which provided for the election of a new Constituent Assembly that would adopt a constitution intended to guarantee the rights of foreigners. A claims commission was to be set up to rehabilitate the public finances, and the good offices of the United States were to be solicited by the Nicaraguan government for negotiation of a loan to be guaranteed by a certain percentage of the customs receipts of the Republic. It was also stipulated that the newly established Constituent Assembly would elect Juan Estrada and Adolfo Díaz as president and vice president respectively.[8]

To carry out the loan provision of the Dawson Agreements, the Knox-Castrillo Treaty was signed in June 1911. This pact provided for aid in securing a loan of $15,000,000 from U.S. bankers, and for the appointment of a collector general of customs (the nation's most important source of funds) to be named by the bankers and appointed by the Nicaraguan president subject to State Department approval. The refusal of the U.S. Senate to ratify the Knox-Castrillo Treaty did not prevent the interested parties from implementing some of its provisions. On the strength of the proposed treaty alone, the Estrada government signed contracts with the New York banking firms of Brown Brothers and Company and J. and W. Seligman. An advance of $1,500,000 (a tenth of the proposed loan) was arranged, to be secured by the customs revenues of Nicaragua, assuring the lenders "timely repayment of principal and interest." Moreover, as stipulated in the unratified Knox-Castrillo Treaty, a collector general of customs was appointed—not a Nicaraguan, but a U.S. citizen named Clifford D. Ham who held the position until 1928. The amenable Nicaraguan government never received the bulk of the loan, but the stock of a new Nicaraguan bank and of the National Railway was also turned over to the bankers "in lieu of other security."[9] Furthermore, with the change of government there was new optimism among U.S. citizens in the

[8] U.S. Department of State, *A Brief History of the Relations between the United States and Nicaragua, 1909–1928* (Washington, D.C., 1928), 6; John A. Booth, *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution* (Boulder, Colorado, 1982), 32; Denny, *Dollars for Bullets*, 92–93; Woods, "Nicaragua," 7615.

[9] For these and later complex dealings of this kind, see U.S. Department of State, *A Brief History*, 11–17; for an analysis of the financial and other economic advantages attained by the American bankers in Nicaragua through these proceedings, and their effects on Nicaragua's economy, see Nogales, *The Looting of Nicaragua*, 21–25; and especially Booth, *The End and the Beginning*, 32–34.

gold-mining districts of eastern Nicaragua. "The first act of the Estrada revolutionists," wrote the mining expert, T. Lane Carter, "was to reduce the outrageous tariff imposed by Ex-President Zelaya," which was "of great assistance to the miners." Large tracts of land formerly held by Nicaraguan concessionaires would soon be opened to gold prospectors, Carter predicted, and U.S. firms would have more incentive to establish themselves in Nicaragua.[10]

By 1911, then, the purposes of the intervention—or at least its results—were reasonably clear. U.S. companies had acquired new opportunities and new advantages in mining, agriculture, and lumber. U.S. citizens had taken control of the National Railway, customs revenues, the National Bank, and the Claims Commission. A former member of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders was reorganizing the Nicaraguan armed forces, and the American minister in Managua was advising the Conservative government. Thus, considering the ever-present threat of a new military intervention, Nicaragua had become a ward of U.S. business, if not of the U.S. government itself. Sergio Ramírez sums up the situation: "There did not remain a single strategic sector of that wholly backward economy that was not under American power, so that the oligarchic Conservative faction that returned to government in [1910] was nothing more than a bureaucratic intermediary of the American occupation."[11]

•

Under these circumstances, resistance to the Conservative government was inevitable. In 1912, the newly elected and surprisingly independent Constituent Assembly adopted a new constitution, parts of which seemed intended to defend the nation's independence. Article 2, for example, declared that sovereignty "is one, inalienable and imprescriptible, and resides essentially in the people," and therefore no treaties were to be agreed to that would be "contrary to the independence and the integrity of the nation, or which in any way affect its sovereignty, except such as may look toward union with one or more republics of Central America." And article 55 gave the Congress alone the power to "authorize loans and levy direct or indirect taxes."[12]

Adolfo Díaz, who had succeeded Estrada to the presidency, dissolved the Assembly soon after it promulgated the new constitution, and in response, General Luis Mena, who had himself taken part in the 1909 re-

[10] T. Lane Carter, "Mining in Nicaragua in 1910," *The Engineering and Mining Journal*, 7 January 1911, 74. Noteworthy was his remark: "Great interest was taken [in 1910] in La Leonesa Mine which is being developed under the direction of H. C. Hoover." This, of course, was Herbert Clark Hoover, the mining engineer who later as president continued President Coolidge's military intervention in Nicaragua for almost his entire four years in office.

[11] Millet, *Guardians*, 30–31; Ramírez, "Sandino," 425–26.

[12] Cited in Nogales, *The Looting of Nicaragua*, 17.

volt against Zelaya, established an anti-Díaz government in the town of Masaya twenty miles southeast of Managua. Civil war broke out anew, with Liberal forces led by General Benjamín Zeledón besieging the capital. Díaz repeated an earlier appeal for a treaty allowing U.S. intervention in Nicaraguan affairs, and during the first weeks of August 1912, American sailors landed at the ports of Corinto and Bluefields and 354 marines moved eastward along the rail line to Managua, relieving the beleaguered Conservatives in the capital. By the end of the summer more than 2,700 sailors and marines had taken up positions on Nicaraguan soil in support of the unpopular government of Adolfo Díaz.[13]

U.S. forces quickly went into action, capturing rebel ships, threatening the city of Granada, and forcing the surrender of General Mena. Marine artillery next shelled the rebel stronghold of Masaya and the nearby volcanic fortress of Coyotepe. After a brief but bloody battle, U.S. forces captured Coyotepe, eliminating Zeledón and setting the stage for the capture of Masaya by Conservative forces. American marines then occupied León, the last major position under Liberal control, bringing the war to an end and assuring the supremacy of Adolfo Díaz.[14] With American sailors and marines keeping the peace, with the U.S. government supporting Díaz for the presidency and discouraging the candidacy of General Emiliano Chamorro, and with the Conservatives in charge of the electoral machinery and even denying Liberals the right to vote, Adolfo Díaz was "unanimously" elected president late in 1912, receiving three or four thousand votes from a population of some 700,000. To compensate for his political sacrifice, General Chamorro was given the coveted post of Nicaraguan minister to the United States.[15]

Thus the stage was set for the next major event in U.S.-Nicaraguan relations: the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. Signed in Washington on August 5, 1914, by Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and General Chamorro, this remarkable treaty granted "in perpetuity to the Government of the United States, forever free from all taxation or other public charge, the exclusive proprietary rights necessary and convenient for the construction, operation and maintenance of an interoceanic canal by way of the San Juan River and the great Lake of Nicaragua or by way of any route over Nicaraguan territory." For protection of this acquisition, the Nicaraguan government agreed to lease to the United States, for a term of ninety-nine years, the Caribbean Corn Islands, while it granted the United States the right to establish a naval base on the Gulf of Fonseca to

[13] Ibid., 18–20; Bernard C. Nalty, *The United States Marines in Nicaragua* (Washington, D.C., 1968), 7; Selser, *Sandino*, 35; Rafael Ramírez Delgado, *Jornada Libertaria de 1912 en Nicaragua* (Tegucigalpa, 1951), 31–36.

[14] *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1913*, 38; Nalty, *United States Marines*, 9; Millett, *Guardians*, 31–33; Wheelock Román, *Imperialismo e dictadura*, 110–11.

[15] Nalty, *United States Marines*, 9–10; Denny, *Dollars for Bullets*, 122–23.

be "subject exclusively to the laws and sovereign authority of the United States," these provisions to be renewable by the United States for an additional ninety-nine years.

In exchange, the United States agreed to pay $3,000,000 to the Nicaraguan government, to be deposited in the bank or banks "as the Government of the United States may determine" and to be applied to the Nicaraguan debt "or other public purposes . . . , all such disbursements to be made by orders drawn by the Minister of Finance and approved by the Secretary of State of the United States or by such person as he may designate." This token sum, for which Nicaragua, contrary to its constitution, had not only ceded specific national territories, but any part of the national territory that the United States might find useful for its purposes, was not even to be entrusted outright to the Nicaraguan government, but was to be held instead in U.S. banks and disbursed only with State Department approval.[16]

•

In the years following this agreement, the Conservative Party ruled in Nicaragua, its power resting, in the words of a Marine Corps historian, "on the presence of a strong Marine detachment at the Managua legation," which remained in Nicaragua after the 1912 intervention.[17] General Chamorro succeeded Adolfo Díaz to the presidency as a result of the "election" of 1916, allegedly because Díaz prevented the would-be Liberal candidate, Julián Irías, from returning from exile to campaign, and because the United States itself imposed unacceptable conditions upon Irías.[18] General Chamorro in turn was succeeded by his uncle, Diego Manuel Chamorro, whose election was assured by his nephew's control of the electoral machinery.

In the elections of 1924, however, in part as a result of an U.S.-inspired electoral reform, a Liberal-Conservative coalition opposed to the ruling Díaz-Chamorro faction was victorious. Carlos Solórzano, a moderate Conservative, and Dr. Juan Bautista Sacasa, a Liberal, were elected president and vice president respectively by a nearly two-to-one majority in what was then regarded as the fairest election ever held in Nicaragua.[19] On January 1, 1925, Solórzano and Sacasa took office, and in August the U.S. Marines were at last withdrawn.

Nevertheless, the interference of Díaz and Chamorro and the involvement of the United States in Nicaragua's internal affairs were far from finished. Just weeks after the marine withdrawal, followers of Chamorro

[16] For this treaty see U.S. Department of State, *A Brief History*, 75–77.

[17] Nalty, *United States Marines*, 9–10. Despite the marine guard, however, no fewer than ten incidents of rebellion occurred between 1912 and 1924 in opposition to the Conservative governments. See Wheelock Román, *Imperialismo y dictadura*, 112.

[18] Nalty, *United States Marines*, 10; Selser, *Sandino*, 46.

[19] U.S. Department of State, *A Brief History*, 21–26; Woods, "Nicaragua," 7617.

and Díaz seized La Loma Fortress, which dominated Managua, forcing Solórzano to replace Liberal members of his cabinet and to make other concessions leading to Chamorro's assumption of full power. Vice President Sacasa, the Liberal vice president, was compelled to leave the country, and soon after, Chamorro forced President Solórzano himself to resign, then had himself named president by a Congress packed with his own supporters. Reversing its former policy toward Chamorro, the State Department refused to recognize his illegal government, though U.S. officials in Managua continued to deal with him.[20] Furthermore, on flimsy constitutional grounds, Washington withheld recognition of Sacasa, who, as vice president, was claiming the presidency from outside the country.

At this point, the events of 1909 seemed to repeat themselves. In May 1926, a revolt broke out on the Caribbean coast, with the Liberals this time seizing the port of Bluefields. The inevitable warship arrived "to protect American lives and property," and predictably its commander declared Bluefields a "neutral zone." Not long afterward the Nicaraguan Congress, packed with Chamorro supporters, elected Adolfo Díaz president of Nicaragua. Thus the old State Department favorite, an accomplice in Chamorro's 1924 coup d'état, had again risen to power with State Department support, and three days later his government was recognized by the Coolidge administration.[21]

In the weeks that followed, civil war spread throughout the country, culminating in December 1926 with Juan Sacasa's establishment of a "Constitutionalist Government" at the Caribbean town of Puerto Cabezas. U.S. forces soon landed there and at other strategic points along the coast, establishing "neutral zones," isolating Sacasa's government, and even denying him the right to possess weapons, some of which the Americans tossed into the sea.[22] Then early in January and February 1927, in response to a request for military support from Adolfo Díaz, U.S. armed forces returned to Nicaragua, occupying the nation's railroads, ports, and major cities, establishing neutral zones, and, wherever possible, blocking the progress of Sacasa's Liberal forces. A prominent Nicaraguan historian and labor leader, Sofonías Salvatierra, described the arrival of the U.S.

[20] U.S. Department of State, *A Brief History*, 28–30; Booth, *The End and the Beginning*, 38; Marvin Goldwert, *The Constabulary in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua: Progeny and Legacy of United States Intervention* (Gainesville, Florida, 1962), 27; Woods, "Nicaragua," 7617. Major Calvin B. Carter, the American head of a newly established Nicaraguan constabulary (forerunner of the National Guard), was supplied with weapons by Chamorro during this period of nonrecognition and took part in fighting against the Liberals. See C. B. Carter, "The Kentucky Feud in Nicaragua: Why Civil War Has Become Her National Sport," *The World's Work* 54 (1927), 320; Millet, *Guardians*, 47–48.

[21] Woods, "Nicaragua," 7617–18; Millett, *Guardians*, 49–50.

[22] For Sacasa's own description of the establishment of "neutral zones" at his provisional capital and elsewhere along the Caribbean coast, see *The New York Times*, 31 December 1926.

forces in Managua on January 6, 1927: "The war elements that they transported were so numerous that they spent the entire night of the 6th to the 7th moving them from the railroad station to the Campo de Marte, which was where the North American forces always quartered themselves when they were in Nicaragua. A little later they took possession of the Tiscapa fortress, and on February 23 the stars and stripes were seen waving over that stronghold."[23]

Against a barrage of criticism President Coolidge defended this latest U.S. intervention, reminding the world of "the proprietary rights of the United States in the Nicaraguan canal route" and "the obligation flowing from the investment of all classes of our citizens in Nicaragua." A week earlier, in fact, Undersecretary of State Robert Olds had justified U.S. support of Díaz on the grounds that Central America and Panama together constituted "a legitimate sphere of influence for the United States." The United States controlled the destiny of Central America, Olds asserted, because this was essential to American interests. "Until now," he claimed, "Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power, while those which we do not recognize and support fall. Nicaragua has become a test case. It is difficult to see how we can afford to be defeated."[24] Despite such arguments, however, and despite U.S. military aid to the Díaz government, Liberal forces led by General José María Moncada marched westward from the Caribbean coast and by April 1927, had crossed the central mountains and were threatening the cities of the western highlands, including Managua itself.[25]

In that month, President Coolidge asked Major Henry L. Stimson, a former secretary of war, to undertake a mission to Nicaragua to investigate the situation, to report his views to the U.S. government, and, if possible, "to straighten the matter out." Stimson surveyed the conditions of the war-torn country and, after conferring with U.S. military and diplomatic officials, with Díaz and his cabinet, and with Conservative and Liberal party leaders, quickly agreed with Díaz on terms to be offered the nearly victorious Liberals. These included an immediate end to the war, simultaneous delivery of weapons by both armies into U.S. custody, a general amnesty and return of exiles, Liberal participation in the Díaz cabinet, organization of a constabulary or National Guard to be commanded by U.S. citizens, supervision of the 1928 election and subsequent

[23] *Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1927*, 7–8; Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair*, 28–29; Carroll Binder, "On the Nicaraguan Front: How the American Intervention Looks to an Eye-Witness," *The New Republic*, 16 March 1927, 87–90; Sofonías Salvatierra, *Sandino o la tragedia de un pueblo* (Madrid, 1934), 40.

[24] U.S. Congress, "Conditions in Nicaragua and Mexico, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs" (House of Representatives, 69th Cong., 2d session. [1927]), 9.

[25] Macaulay, *The Sandino Affair*, 28–29; *Foreign Relations 1927*, 3:328.

elections by Americans, and the stationing of marines in the country to enforce the agreement. Stimson then traveled to the town of Tipitapa just east of Managua where, "under a large blackthorn tree near the dry river bed," as he described the site, he met with General Moncada and a delegation of Liberals representing the Constitutionalist president, Dr. Juan Sacasa.[26]

Sofonías Salvatierra describes this fateful meeting:

> Colonel Stimson announced to the Constitutionalist delegates that Coolidge's policy naturally could not be allowed to fail because of the prestige of the United States government, and that the disarming of the two armies, that is, the total disarming of the Republic, was a condition sine qua non of peace; that Mr. Díaz would have to complete the constitutional term of Mr. Solórzano; that future elections would be supervised by the American government; and that if this was not accepted the armed forces of the United States would in fact impose it. The three delegates of the Constitutionalist government declared that they did not have instructions to accept those conditions for peace. Then Colonel Stimson and General Moncada, separating themselves from the other three, spoke together alone, and the result of this was that, without agreeing to anything with the delegates, they all went to Managua, including General Moncada. By force of logic everything indicated that he [Moncada] had arranged the peace with Stimson with the understanding that he would be the future president.[27]

Moncada had, in fact, accepted Stimson's demands at Tipitapa, though as Sacasa's subordinate he had no authority to make an agreement with a foreign representative, particularly an agreement to disband the Liberal army and to allow Adolfo Díaz to retain the presidency.[28] None of this, however, prevented Stimson, Moncada, and Díaz from implementing the "Peace of Espino Negro."[29] To speed up disarmament, Stimson and Díaz had previously agreed that each soldier of either army who surrendered a weapon to the U.S. forces would receive a bounty of ten U.S. dollars, a large sum of money for the peasant soldiers of Nicaragua who, in the

[26] Henry L. Stimson, *American Policy in Nicaragua* (New York, 1927), 42–77.

[27] Salvatierra, *Sandino*, 50–51. Sandino and other Nicaraguans believed that Moncada had been offered the presidency at Tipitapa in exchange for his army's capitulation. See Booth, *The End and the Beginning*, 41. For an expression of this opinion in Sandino's writings, see Doc. 8.

[28] Already on April 7 it had been decided in Washington that U.S. recognition of Diaz would not be a subject for negotiation with Nicaraguan Liberals. See Lejeune Cummins, *Quijote on a Burro: Sandino and the Marines, a Study in the Formulation of Foreign Policy* (Mexico, D.F., 1958), 16.

[29] In Nicaragua the agreement made between Stimson and Moncada at Tipitapa is known as the "la Paz del Espino Negro" (the Peace of the Blackthorn Tree).

words of one Marine Corps officer, "have worked a lifetime and never seen ten dollars."[30] With this inducement, and with a promise from Díaz to appoint Liberal governors in six departments (positions later held by several of Moncada's former generals), Moncada informed his ragged soldiers that their efforts to win freedom and honor "had been annulled in the final hour by order of the Government of the United States and by its army, one of the largest in the world," that it was not humanly possible to oppose the marines, and that therefore "we should be able to bow to force and give up our weapons, but not our dignity and self-respect. . . . It may be," he added prophetically, "that someday justice will prevail."[31]

All of Moncada's generals but one, Augusto Sandino, accepted the Tipitapa agreement and surrendered their weapons. Within a week more than nine thousand rifles, 296 machine guns, and nearly six million rounds of ammunition had been surrendered to the Marine Corps from both sides, and many more weapons were collected later in remote parts of the country.[32] In public statements Sacasa strongly protested against the Stimson-Moncada agreement and the disarming of his soldiers, but on May 20, 1927, he and twenty-six of his followers abandoned their provisional capital at Puerto Cabezas and departed for Costa Rica.[33] Probably as a reward for his easy compliance with Stimson's demands, General Moncada became president of Nicaragua in January 1929, through an election supervised by U.S. Marines, and in accordance with the Tipitapa agreement, the Marine Corps began to organize and train Stimson's new and "impartial" National Guard. This force soon joined U.S. soldiers in a long and costly campaign against Augusto Sandino and his small army of peasants, workers, and foreign volunteers, which the marines and the National Guard never defeated in almost six years of jungle warfare.

•

The people of the United States and their representatives in Congress did not allow these events to occur without opposition and protest. In fact,

[30] "More Letters from Nicaragua," *Outlook*, 6 July 1927, 317.

[31] Stimson, *American Policy*, 80, 82; José María Moncada, *Estados Unidos en Nicaragua* (Managua, 1942), 12–14.

[32] Stimson, *American Policy*, 84; Cummins, *Quijote on a Burro*, 19.

[33] *The New York Herald Tribune*, 10, 15, 17 May 1927. In rejecting the Stimson plan, Sacasa stated publicly:

> Mr. Stimson, instead of investigating the real situation and doing justice to the Nicaraguan people, seems to have been sent for the express purpose of ramming down their throats the presidency of Díaz, the same Díaz who, with Chamorro, plotted the coup d'état which violated the constitution. . . . I do not believe, as Mr. Stimson has said, that the retention of Díaz in the Presidency is still to the honor and prestige of the United States; on the contrary, my belief is that a great nation acquires honor and prestige by respect for the sovereignty of small and weak countries instead of the oppression of those which struggle for the security of their institutions.

both before and after Sandino's rise to prominence, members of Congress and elements of the press often criticized or condemned the Nicaraguan policies of Presidents Coolidge and Hoover, and those of Taft before them. To better understand the gravity of these events, and to make Sandino's writings and his rebellion more comprehensible, it will be useful to quote members of Congress whose condemnations of U.S. policies were sometimes as vituperative as those of Sandino himself.

In January 1927, for example, as U.S. armed forces again moved into Nicaragua, Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana used these words to describe that country's plight:

> The State Department has literally gutted Nicaragua. . . . Its sovereignty is a ghastly mockery. . . . The country in its every aspect is absolutely under the merciless heel of the State Department and the New York bankers. Every strategic post, fiscal and military, is in the hands of appointees of the State Department. Nicaragua is this moment in the bitterest bondage in which any free people ever found themselves.[34]

On March 3, 1927, some two months before the onset of Sandino's rebellion, Senator Lynn J. Frazier of North Dakota declared:

> Every well-informed Senator on this floor knows that from first to last our dealings with Nicaragua have been of such a character that they have earned the world-wide designation of "dollar diplomacy." . . . In regard to Nicaragua, the Department of State not only has acted as a debt collector but as a bond broker. . . . Two great firms of international bankers—Brown Bros. and W. & J. Seligman, of New York City—have wound their financial tentacles about the unfortunate Nicaraguan Nation and are sucking it dry. . . . it is a curious coincidence, to say the least, that for a long period of time the Department of State always has seen fit to invoke the might of the American marines to put down the Liberals, whose policy is to develop Nicaragua for the Nicaraguans, and never yet has deposed one of these dictators who have betrayed their country to the American banking interests.[35]

Concerning the Knox-Castrillo and Bryan-Chamorro treaties, Senator William E. Borah, Republican Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committe, stated in 1927:

> Mr. President, we made the loan treaty and we made the canal treaty with ourselves. Díaz . . . owed his political life, if not his physical life, to the presence of the force supplied by the United States; and while

[34] *Congressional Record*, 69th Cong., 2d sess., 1927, 68, pt. 2:2290.
[35] Ibid., 68, pt. 5:5523–24.

> that force was there we made a loan which he approved, and we made a canal treaty. Mr. President, that transaction is as pronounced and unconscionable an act of imperialism as ever disgraced the records of any nation. It was a violation of the most primary precepts of international decency.[36]

In an article published in the *Congressional Record*, Senator Wheeler alluded to some unsavory Dickens characters to illustrate "the useful function" performed by Díaz for the American bankers and the State Department. "Those of you who have read Oliver Twist," he wrote,

> will recall old Fagin and his training school for juvenile burglars. Bill Sykes and other kindred spirits used the graduates of this school by putting them through windows too small for a man to enter. It was then the business of the little burglar to unlock the door so the big burglar could get in and get the stuff. . . . [Díaz] is an agile little Nicaraguan who has been thrust through the little window of the presidency several times to unlock the house of Nicaragua to certain American bankers and their faithful servant, our State Department.[37]

As Sandino's rebellion attracted growing world attention, some members of Congress expressed sympathy for the Nicaraguan people and even praise for Sandino himself. In March 1928, Senator J. Thomas Heflin of Alabama, a frequent critic of the administration's Nicaraguan policies, likened Sandino to the American founding fathers. "Sandino crying for liberty," he said,

> begging for the deliverance of his country from the invader, sounds like the cries our fathers made in the days of the Revolution when they were asking that the British forces be withdrawn. They asked him [Sandino] upon what conditions he would surrender. Here is his reply: "I demand the immediate withdrawal of the [American] invading troops. I shall never recognize a government imposed by a foreign power." That is good American doctrine. . . . We are seeking this man out to kill him for fighting for principles that we fought for in 1776.[38]

•

Sandino's rebellion began in May 1927, in direct response to the Stimson-Moncada agreement. That rebellion, however—and the many letters, manifestoes, proclamations, battle reports, interviews, and other documents that he wrote or dictated during the next seven years, many of which are included in this book—can only be understood in light of the

[36] Ibid., 68, pt. 2:1557.
[37] Ibid., 68, pt. 5:5794.
[38] Ibid., 70th Cong., 1st sess., 1928, 69, pt. 5:5037–38.

events that had plagued his country since his childhood. Motivated by intense patriotism and obsessed with Nicaragua's plight, Sandino had witnessed memorable events: the sight of Benjamín Zeledón, hero of the Mena War of 1912, tossed over the back of a horse and paraded to his grave; the arrest of his father for protesting the Bryan-Chamorro treaty; the landing of American naval forces at Puerto Cabezas in December 1926 and their seizure of Sacasa's arsenal; the costly battles of the Constitutionalist War of 1926–1927 in which he had himself played a commanding role; and, finally, the humiliating decision at Tipitapa, which had halted the Liberal army's advance on Managua, denying a Liberal victory and the hoped-for restoration of Nicaraguan sovereignty and self-respect.

During the first weeks after Tipitapa, as Sandino's army dwindled to a handful of followers, he perhaps envisioned only a brief display of defiant patriotism almost certain to end in death and intended to prove that some Nicaraguans at least would fight and die for their country. A broader mission soon crystallized, however, and seeking support he made it known to the world. His grievances, we learn from his writings, encompassed the entire spectrum of abuses committed since 1909 by "the traitors and invaders" of Nicaragua, but his attention also reached out to such areas of human concern as worker organization and legislation, the rights of women and children, the protection and development of Nicaragua's Indians, Central American unification, construction of a Nicaraguan canal for the benefit of Nicaraguans and the world in general, Indo-Hispanic cooperation for defense and the common welfare, and land reform and the establishment of peasant cooperatives—little of which is surprising considering the hard experiences of his childhood and youth as a member of the American peasant class and a migrant worker in Mexico and other Central American countries.

Despite such widespread interests, the essential purpose of Sandino's rebellion was to defend Nicaragua's basic right to exist as a free and independent country, a goal he expressed with the slogan, *Patria y Libertad* (fatherland and freedom), and with the name he chose for his columns of ragged soldiers: "the Army in Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua."[39] Throughout his revolt, in fact, Sandino insisted upon only two

[39] In *Intellectual Foundations of the Nicaraguan Revolution*, Donald C. Hodges alleges that Sandino was a conspiratorial "anarcho-communist" who disguised the real aims of his movement "behind a bizarre and mysterious symbolism that even the Sandinistas have failed to decipher" (xi). However, it is in his writings that we must search for the true Sandino. Nowhere in those writings does he mention such revolutionary leaders as the Mexican Ricardo Flores Magón, who, according to Hodges, made a lasting impression on him (5), and nowhere does he refer to such anarchist or communist thinkers as Mikhail Bakunin, Pierre Proudhon, Leon Trotsky, or even the martyrs of the era, Sacco and Vanzetti. In fact, the men he looked up to and even imitated were not anarchists or contemporary radical or revolutionary leaders. They were the heroes of the independence movement, of Latin Amer-

basic conditions for disbanding his army and retiring to private life: total withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from Nicaragua and the establishment of a constitutional government free of foreign domination, essentially the same demands mentioned by Senator Heflin in 1928. In spite of ever-changing circumstances, Sandino reiterated these positions again and again, until in February 1933, a month after the marines withdrew and Dr. Juan B. Sacasa was inaugurated constitutional president of Nicaragua, he made peace with the newly elected Liberal government and brought his war to an end.

The documents that follow tell Sandino's story in great detail, but additional comments are needed. Sandino's writings constitute much more, I believe, than one man's protest against tyrannical government and foreign intervention. Often eloquent and inspirational, poetic or picaresque, sometimes cruel or impertinent, at times mystical, but always defiant and motivated by a deep love of country, his writings have inspired a generation of Nicaraguan leaders and, with their victory in 1979, a nation in search of progress and independence. Sandino's thought, to quote Sergio Ramírez,

> is not a theoretical proposition, but the consequence of experience. Those who would hope to find in Sandino clear ordered statements about the means of production or class struggle will fail, because Sandino was not a theoretician, but rather a man of action who as a result of that action translated his war experience, his revolutionary experience, his political experience, into words. And even in those writings we do not find the thought of a man who is scientifically prepared, but rather that of a "well-read artisan," as we would say in good Nicaraguan, that of a peasant who transformed himself into a politician during the struggle and in the midst of the struggle discovered the forms of his political expression, which were based upon his fundamental class interest; because it is necessary to see whose side he was on and whom he was against to define his true position.[40]

Taken as a whole, I would add, Sandino's writings make a memorable self-portrait, the spontaneous autobiography of one of the most unusual personalities in the history of Latin America, whose physical life ended

---

ıcan liberalısm, and of Central American unity, such as Simón Bolívar, Father Hidalgo, Francisco Morazán, and Benito Juárez. Merely to list possible radical influences in Mexico or elsewhere on the assumption that Sandino "could not have escaped" them is highly speculative unless proven by facts. Therefore we must continue to accept the opinions of most scholars who have studied Sandino: that his philosophy combined patriotic and anti-imperialist tenets directed mainly against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua with a deep concern for the lot of the Latin American peasant and working classes, both tendencies affected by strong spiritist overtones. See Booth, *The End and the Beginning*, 236–37, n. 26.

[40] Ramírez, "Sandino," 433–34.

with his assassination at the hands of those he fought, but whose message is still relevant today. Equally important, this is a detailed first-hand account of a long and destructive war told from the point of view of one of its principal combatants—a war that, though little known to the people of the United States, is almost as relevant to them today as it is to Nicaraguans, not only because citizens of the United States fought and died in that war, but because when a nation knows what it did in the past it may have the power to change the future. One of the best lessons to be taken from this book was expressed in a letter that Sandino wrote to President Hoover at the start of his term in 1929: "As long as you continue the policies of Coolidge and Kellogg," he warned the new American president, "*you will continue to encounter Sandinos.*"

DOCUMENTS

· CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH ·

I. LETTER TO THE HONDURAN POET FROYLÁN TURCIOS, APRIL 1, 1928

In view of the interest that our independent brothers of the Americas have shown in learning something accurate about the life of the soldier, Augusto C. Sandino, and obligated by the slanderous campaign that cowardly sellouts have unleashed against me in my own country, which I am seeking to liberate while accepting every sacrifice, I take this opportunity to send you in brief form some facts about my early life, which you may use as you see fit.

I was born at four o'clock in the morning on the 18th of May, 1895, in the town of Victoria, department of Masaya, Nicaragua. Two youngsters less than eighteen years of age were my parents. I studied my first letters in the public schools opened by General J. S. Zelaya, the constitutional president of that period.

At the age of twelve I left my parents and set off in search of adventure. I traveled through the principal cities of Central and North America, as well as in the most important industrial centers, remaining the longest time in Mexico.

I have in my possession many letters of recommendation offering proof of my honorable conduct from the companies for which I worked. The profession of mechanic was the one in which I distinguished myself.

During my long absence from my country there was never any tranquility in my soul, because when I got to know a place, I longed to find myself in a better one, everywhere suffering disappointment by imagining myself superior to the reality that I was beginning to know. Likewise I confess that in our profane world I never found happiness, and for this reason, and because I was in search of spiritual consolation, I read mythological books and searched for teachers of religion, the last one of which was the honorable gentleman, Justino Barbiaux, who lives in Álamo, Veracruz, Mexico.

I have always been inclined to read everything that in my opinion is moral and instructive. One of the things I have concluded, according to my latest observations and way of thinking, is that the men to whom God has granted great minds often become conceited, and I can't figure out why they forget that they are mortal human beings, falling into the unpardonable crime of trafficking with justice and human flesh as if people

were a herd of pigs. In this way the degradation of ninety-five percent of my fellow citizens has come about.

I have also realized that good doctrines are both condemned and invoked by unscrupulous men, merely to achieve advantages, without a true regard for Humanity or for God.

In short, from the knowledge I have acquired I have concluded that humanity can never live in dignity as long as it deviates from sound reason and the laws that honor requires.

Thus, seeing that the United States of North America, with the sole right granted by brute force, would deprive us of our Fatherland and our Freedom, I have accepted the unjustified challenge that tends to throw our sovereignty to the ground, imposing upon my acts my responsibility before History. To remain inactive or indifferent, like most of my fellow citizens, would be to add myself to the rude crowd of mercenary assassins of their own country.

Thus my acts will justify me, since my ideal feeds upon a broad horizon of international opinion.

I love Justice and for it I will sacrifice myself. Material treasures do not exercise any power over my person; the treasures I long to possess are spiritual.

[12, vol. 4, no. 65 (May 1928), 1213]

2. THE BOY FROM NIQUINOHOMO: SANDINO'S CHILDHOOD AS TOLD TO JOSÉ ROMÁN IN 1933[1]

Socially the Sandino family occupies one of the most prominent places, perhaps the most prominent, in Niquinohomo and in the history of the town going far back into the past.

A certain Señor Sandino arrived in Nicaragua from Spain, and he belonged to the same family as two other Sandinos who had also emigrated from Spain, one to Colombia and the other to Campeche, in Mexico. The one who came to Nicaragua managed to make some money, got married, and had several children, among them: José María, Ofreciano, and Santiago. This last in turn married a pure Indian girl named Agustina Múñoz, with whom he had the following children: the girls Asunción, Cayetana, and Isabel, and the boys Pedro, Cleto, and Gregorio, who was my father. My father was born on March 12, 1869, in Niquinohomo, in the hereditary family home, where the family has resided until this day. He inherited some money, coffee farms, and houses, and he is still the richest man in the place.

My father is short and strong. In him predominates the blood of his mother, because he is markedly of the Indo-Hispanic type and a man of good manners and sober behavior. From early youth he dedicated himself to the cultivation of his inherited property, and he married Doña América Tiffer, with whom he had the following children: Asunción, América, and Sócrates, who is the oldest and was born in October 1898. As can be seen, I am not the son of that marriage, but rather I was born four years earlier, in 1894.[2]

My mother's name is Margarita Calderón, and she was a worker on one of of my father's farms. I am, then, Román, the son of love, in other words a bastard, according to social conventions. After I came into the world my father forgot the woman who was the mother of his first child, because she was a farm worker, and he married Doña América Tiffer, a member of the provincial bourgeoisie.

And so I opened my eyes in misery and was brought up in misery, without even a child's necessities, and while my mother picked coffee I was left to myself. From the time I could walk I did so on the coffee plantations, helping my mother to fill her basket in order to earn a few centavos.

I was badly dressed and fed even worse in those cold cordilleras. That was how I grew up, and maybe that was why I didn't grow. When it wasn't coffee they sent us out to harvest, it was wheat, corn, or other cereals, with wages so minimal and the work so hard that living was sorrow for us, true sorrow! And, yet, to be permitted to work we had to get registrations—which my mother and I never stopped paying for. And, aside from that, keep in mind that my mother often gave birth, which further aggravated our situation. Believe me, it's terrible to remember all that, but it's the simple truth.

There were times when just to eat we had to hock some trinket for a few centavos. And there were days, many days, very many days, in fact, when, with my mother completely disabled, I had to go out at night to steal on the plantations so that I wouldn't have to let her die of hunger. And this is how I grew toward manhood, standing up to a cruel and merciless life and the will of destiny by means of a fierce and tenacious effort. Fortunately, nature endowed me with thought and willpower. Very early I began to understand the great tragedy of my life, which gnawed at my innermost self with my recognition of my awful misery. Misery and powerlessness at my tender age. I didn't depend at all on my father, and it was I myself who had to take care of my mother.

When once, by chance, my half brother Sócrates met me on the street, he gave me an old piece of clothing that I exchanged for my rags. When I compared my brother's situation with my own, I was infuriated by the injustices of life. Even though I was such a hard worker, what could a creature less than ten years old earn in a place where even adults' wages were only a few centavos a day? I was at a period in life when I needed—not, let's say, the most basic things for the comfort of the body—but rather what was even more essential, the warmth of a home for spiritual peace and the formation of character and personality. I lacked both of these, and the worst of it was that I was entirely conscious of my situation.

Now, Román, I'm going to relate a specific detail I'll never forget. Something terrible happened that made my life even worse. My mother and I worked on a farm that belonged to the village mayor, my father being the judge. She had received an advance payment of a few pesos, but since she got an offer of better pay on another coffee plantation, she decided to accept that offer, to be able to pay her debt back even sooner, but the mayor, fearing he would lose his advance, ordered her arrested. And so one fine afternoon some soldiers appeared and put us in the local jail. My mother's grief and the cruel mistreatment she had received caused her to abort, which brought on a copious hemorrhage that nearly killed her. And it was left to me, all by myself, to care for her. All by myself! In that cold dirty village prison. As biological secrets, which were unknown to me until then, since I was hardly nine years old, were revealed to me,

my mother's groans and the fact that she was near death restrained my anger. And though I was only a child, with my mother already asleep and I unable to sleep, I lay down beside her on that bloody floor and thought of a thousand atrocious and fierce acts of revenge. I clearly remember how, as I understood my own lack of power, I began to ponder over things with my childish philosophy.

Why would God act like this? Why do people claim that authority is the right arm of the law? And what kind of law is that? If, as the priest says, law is the voice of God intended to protect the people, why is it that authority, instead of helping us poor people, favors society's drones? Why does God love Sócrates more than he loves me, if I have to work and he doesn't? Then God damn it, I thought to myself, God and life are pure shit. It's only us poor people who are getting screwed!

Soon after that my mother went off with a man to Granada and I refused to follow her. Since I've always been a person with a decisive character, I went to live with my maternal grandmother, who was extremely poor and did any kind of work she could get.

Alone I continued my hand-to-mouth struggle with life. Knowing that my mother was far away with a string of children and that my father, on the other hand, was married to a woman who couldn't even see me, with my childish reasoning and my sentimental heart, I began to think that life didn't make any sense, that I had no reason to exist, because the same people who had brought me into the world treated me like this, and I wasn't in any way to blame. [. . .]

What's certain is that when I might have become a vagabond or a criminal, I decided to make myself into somebody. The fact is that one day, hungry, dressed in rags and carrying some packages in order to earn a few centavos, I met my father on the street entirely by chance. I put the packages down on the ground, walked up to him and, crying but with spirit, asked him, "Listen, sir, am I your son or am I not?"

And my father answered, "Yes, son, I am your father."

Then I replied: "Sir, if I'm your son, why don't you treat me the way you treat Sócrates?"

Tears appeared in the old man's eyes. He took me into his arms. He kissed me and hugged me hard and long. And he took me to his house. I was almost eleven at the time.

Despite my young age, by hard work and good behavior I made myself indispensable in my paternal home. They sent me to school, but instead of attending regularly, Sócrates and I and some other boys went off to play war. With stones, lemons, and green oranges. And if it happened that we were surprised by the police, because in the period when General Zelaya was president education was compulsory, we had even more fun annoying them and making fun of them and then running for safety inside the school. I was a very bad student, because I spent almost all my time

making wax soldiers with which we fought real battles in miniature, which were witnessed by neighborhood friends. Since my ignorance was well known in the entire school and since there was a little girl whom I had settled my eyes on, one day when leaving class she came up to me with a book in her hand and, as a way to torment me, asked me to read it to her. My first impulse was to admit my ignorance, but I made up some excuse and saved myself from shame.

When I got home I decided I would never again find myself in such a situation, and I devoted myself to study with a stubborn tenacity, though I didn't boast about it. Soon I was one of the most diligent students in the school. I remained studious, and as I grew older I assisted my father more with the management of his business. I was even able to establish a little business of my own, dealing in grains. With my help my father eventually controlled the bean business in that whole region, and he doubled his capital. [. . .]

The first trip I ever made was on foot to Costa Rica. I worked as a mechanic's assistant in the Ceilán hacienda near the border, which was the property of a relative of yours, Don Pablo Jiménez Román, a great gentleman who treated me with affection and decency. When I arrived there I deposited a large sum of money with Don Pablo, and during the four months I worked for him, I didn't touch a penny of my wages, so that I was able to increase what I'd brought with me. I left Ceilán for Rivas and Rivas for San Juan del Sur. There, in that port, I signed onto a ship, also as a mechanic's assistant. I wandered for a long time, changing ships, and I learned the machinist's trade. I traveled to many countries, indeed half the world. I saved my money, and then I returned to Niquinohomo near the end of 1919. My cousin Mercedes attracted me like a magnet. Not for a single day had I stopped thinking about her, although she of course didn't know that.

In Niquinohomo I went into the grain business, independently of my family. I traded with the villages and with Managua and Granada. Because I didn't have any vices and practiced orderly habits, my small capital grew constantly. And, aside from that, the people I did business with soon put their trust in me.

At last, after a long romantic history, in 1921, a month before I was to marry my cousin Mercedes, I experienced an incident of great importance to my life, since it sent my destiny in another direction. Dagoberto Rivas was an individual of my same village with whom I had always had a good friendship and even some business dealings. One day Dagoberto heard that a sister of his, a widow, appeared to be involved with me in an amorous relationship, or at least it was popularly rumored that she was. A neighbor of Dagoberto, a man who liked to make trouble, was the person who spread this bit of gossip. One Sunday in June, without any knowledge of any of this, when I arrived for mass unfortunately I sat down on

a bench behind Dagoberto and several of his friends. When they noticed my arrival, Rivas and his friends began to whisper various personal insults at me, while all the time I remained impassive. Interpreting my calm manner as cowardliness, Rivas got more and more upset, and at the very moment that the priest began to elevate the host, Rivas turned halfway around and struck at my face, which, though I was able to deflect it, resulted in a blow to my forehead. In a spontaneous and thoughtless act, I took out my revolver and shot him, fortunately only wounding him in the leg.

Naturally, Román, as you can imagine, this was a scandal of the kind that epic tales are made of in a village like Niquinohomo. Bullets in the church during mass and at the moment of the elevation of the host! To avoid a trial and other undesirable results, despite being about to get married, I left at once for the Atlantic coast, taking only the money I had in cash. I spent a month on the coast, using another name, and from there I left for La Ceiba, Honduras, where I worked at the Montecristo sugar plantation. In La Ceiba, in the hotel where I was staying, another Nicaraguan also lived, a young man named Montenegro, with whom I developed a very good friendship. Years later, wandering about in life, Montenegro joined the United States Marine Corps and it was his fate to come to fight against me in Nicaragua, and he was wounded. I was always a good friend of Montenegro.

[7, 35–40, 46–48]

1. Sandino gave this account of his early life to the young poet and reporter Jose Román in 1933, soon after the signing of the peace treaty with President Sacasa that ended the military struggle. RC

2. In the previous document and elsewhere Sandino claims to have been born in 1895. RC

3. LETTER TO MARÍA SANDINO, JULY 1921[1]

Señorita Mariíta S. Sandino
Niquinohomo

My never-forgotten Mariíta,

I think that by this time you should know that I am leaving the place where I am now, because I don't want to lose time.

My love, I was very upset about your note, to the point that I wanted to go to speak with all of you personally and explain my motives and ask you to forgive me and to tell you that you were right about me, but today I feel differently about things because, according to what Fernando tells me, I didn't understand your note correctly, and if that is true, then my heart has been made a bit more tranquil.

I want to tell you about the difficulties I had on the day I went to see you and couldn't. I left from the place where I was at six o'clock, by a road called El Negro, and I reached Masaya at eight. I passed through the edge of town and left by way of San Sebastián, and after walking for a while I found myself on a corner with three policemen, but I went by them so fast that when they tried to look at me I had already passed out of the light and into the darkness. At last I reached the Catarina road and when I managed to get pretty far away from Masaya, I felt happy, because in just a few minutes I would see you again.

But all my happiness was in vain. I reached Catarina and was surprised by a group of people who were out walking on the occasion of the feast of Saint Peter. I changed streets and there was no lack of people there, but they said nothing to me. I arrived at my beloved Niquinohomo and left my mule at the place that seemed best to me, and I went into Braulia's coffee estate on foot to where my mother was, and Fernando was waiting for me. I asked if you expected me, and he said yes, that he had been told that you did. But on the street a music band was marching and I couldn't go through there, but instead through Luisa Blanco's place. I entered the woods by way of the Alvarado spring, and I went through with a thousand difficulties, because, though I knew the woods so well, I lost my way because it was so dark. I walked for about half an hour without knowing where I was, but at last I was able to get out of the woods, and I took the

road I wanted, which is the one leading to the house of Victoriano Campos, to his orchard. Later I hoped to pass that house, but some dogs came out that wanted to bite me or at least seemed to know that I was there. I turned back and went into the woods through a little pasture, and when I reached my aunt's well I was happy, because the hour was near when I could greet you and your family.

Finally I approached the fence of your house, lifting myself up over the wire, not feeling how damp I was, but thinking only that the moment was near when all my sacrifices would be repaid. I made out your gloomy house, the animals whinnied as if to greet me, and at last I approached quickly and tapped on the door, softly, then harder, but nothing happened; again and again I knocked, but nothing happened. I felt sad. I wasn't happy anymore, and I considered myself a wretch. I'm not much for feeling sorry for myself, but I felt a knot in my throat when I realized that the doors of the house where the mistress of my heart lives had been closed to me. I went out onto the street, and while passing in front of your window, I remembered the place where you sleep and gave you a kiss.

I reached the plaza and found myself among a small cluster of people and greeted them, and they didn't say anything to me, and so I left. I reached the place where my father was and left him after a long conversation. It was 1:30, all was calm, and I felt no fear of any kind. The moon was already casting its light, but opaque, and as I looked at the town at that dark hour it seemed like a church, and its houses mausoleums.

I left at 2:30 and reached the place where I was staying at 6:05 in the morning, sad and grieved.

But when Fernando arrived, my life was already different.

Accept the sincerity of my heart.

A.C.S.

Greetings to my forever-remembered Don Mateo and Doña Beatriz, to Doña María and the other members of the family.

[20, 3 pp.]

1. María or Mariíta Sandino and Mercedes Sandino are clearly the same person, that is, Sandino's cousin and fiancée, who remained in Niquinohomo and never married. This letter is an account of Sandino's movements immediately after the incident with Dagoberto Rivas described in the previous document. RC