

Bandits and blanket thieves, communists and terrorists: the politics of naming Sandinistas in Nicaragua, 1927–36 and 1979–90

MICHAEL J SCHROEDER

ABSTRACT This article examines the politics of naming Sandinistas in Nicaragua during two periods of intense political and military struggle: the era of the Sandinista Revolution and Contra War (1979–90) and the era of the Sandino rebellion against the US Marines and Nicaraguan National Guard (1927–36). Focusing principally on the rhetorical and narrative strategies used by the USA and its Nicaraguan allies, the article explores the delegitimising master narratives concocted by these dominant groups and the efforts of two generations of Sandinistas and their allies to challenge these narratives. It argues that the politics of naming was embedded within a larger politics of storytelling, and that effective challenges to dominant groups' epithets must be grounded in historically informed challenges to the larger narratives from which they spring.

In July 1985 US President Ronald Reagan denounced Nicaragua as part of a 'confederation of terrorist states' that had committed 'outright acts of war' against the USA. Prefiguring President George W Bush's 'Axis of evil' speech nearly two decades later, as well as Bush's cynical denunciation of Al-Qaeda's fight against the USA as driven by an obsessive abhorrence of the US way of life and a loathing of freedom, Reagan propounded a geopolitical paradigm that closely resonates with the one currently emanating from Washington:

Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba, Nicaragua—continents away, tens of thousands of miles apart, but the same goals and objectives. I submit to you that the growth in terrorism in recent years results from the increasing involvement of these states in terrorism in every region of the world. This is terrorism that is part of a pattern, the work of a confederation of terrorist state. . . And all of these states are united by one simple criminal phenomenon—their fanatical hatred of the United States, our people, our way of life, our international stature.¹

Michael J Schroeder can be contacted at 257 Collingwood Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48103, USA. Email: mjsch313@yahoo.com

At the time of Reagan's remarks, the current US Ambassador to Iraq, career diplomat John Negroponte, served as US Ambassador to Honduras. After the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution in 1979, Honduras had emerged as the principal US support base for the Contra war in neighbouring Nicaragua. From 1981 to 1985—the period of Negroponte's ambassadorial stint in Honduras—US military aid to that country skyrocketed from \$3.9 to \$77.4 million, while death squads linked to the Honduran military 'disappeared' or killed hundreds of alleged 'subversives'. According to a prize-winning series of investigative articles published in the *Baltimore Sun*, the most infamous of these death squads was Battalion 316, headed by Colonel Gustavo Alvarez Martínez, head of the Honduran military and *de facto* strongman of the country. Despite his close ties to the Honduran military, and despite hundreds of newspaper articles and numerous reports by reputable international agencies documenting human rights abuses, Ambassador Negroponte later denied any knowledge of human rights violations in Honduras.²

In 1997 Negroponte reflected on his experience in Honduras and his understanding of the geostrategic dynamics at work at the time:

I had no doubt that these [Central American] conflicts were being fueled by Cuba, and I think by implication by the Soviet Union . . . The experience of the late 1970s was for the United States, I think, a very sobering one. Indeed, as far as the Cold War is concerned, you have in particular two events: the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978, and the ensuing Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. So viewed in that context, what then started to happen in El Salvador and Nicaragua were I think of considerable concern to Washington: 'Well gee, is this all part of a pattern? And if it is, or if that appears to be the case, then we really have to do something about it'.

Harking back to an emotionally charged metaphor created during the Eisenhower presidency to justify what became the tragically misguided intervention in a civil war in Southeast Asia, Negroponte concluded, 'It was a Central American domino theory if you will'.³

Thus in the 1970s and 1980s the US government once again used the distorting lens of the Cold War to portray home-grown insurgencies in Central America as direct extensions of the Soviet drive for world communist domination. As the US diplomatic and military establishment painted revolutionaries and dissidents throughout Central America as Soviet puppets, US client states throughout the region eagerly adopted the same cold war rhetoric as a key weapon in the battle against forces that threatened to transform long-standing relations of extreme political and economic inequality. Trade unionists, community organisers, opposition leaders of diverse political stripes, as well as armed insurgents and guerrillas in city and countryside, all were tarred with the same broad brush, as elements in a vast communist conspiracy directed from inside the Kremlin. The human suffering and carnage that resulted from this broad-based offensive against reform and revolution remain incalculable.

Perhaps no case demonstrates this pattern more clearly than that of Nicaragua, for this small Central American nation long had been of special

interest to the USA. This article looks first at the politics of naming during the period of Sandinista rule (1979–90), then back at an earlier era of intense political struggle, contrasting the US rhetorical assault against the modern-day Sandinistas with the efforts of the USA and its allies to delegitimise the rebellion (1927–34) of Augusto C Sandino, the nationalist guerrilla leader who inspired their name.

Soviet puppets versus freedom fighters

In 1970s Nicaragua the Somoza dictatorship, following the lead of their US patrons, portrayed the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) as a Soviet and Cuban puppet, determined to create a Central American beachhead for their communist masters in Moscow and Havana. Shoehorning the FSLN's diverse tendencies and ideological strands into the one-size-fits-all 'communist' label, the Somoza regime did what US-supported Central American dictatorships conventionally had done during the cold war era: use a convenient tag to denounce, delegitimise and destroy organised opposition to their rule.

In fact, by the late 1970s the Sandinistas had articulated a coherent political programme which emphasised opposition to the Somoza dictatorship, national self-determination, political non-alignment, social justice for the country's impoverished majority, and which was built upon the foundations of nationalism, Christian liberation theology, and a Nicaraguanised variant of Marxism. Especially after the December 1972 earthquake that destroyed much of the capital city, Managua—after which Somoza and his cronies pocketed most of the millions of dollars of international aid that poured into the country—the unbridled avarice and corruption of the Somoza dynasty became transparent, effectively alienating a substantial segment of the country's small middle and upper classes. A divided elite, Somocista intransigence and the human rights policies of the Carter administration combined to provide the FSLN with a strategic political opening. In July 1979, with widespread popular support and in the wake of a long and bloody struggle, the Sandinistas ousted Somoza and seized state power.⁴

After the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, the newly elected Reagan administration dramatically intensified the US anti-communist rhetoric. Portraying Sandinista Nicaragua as a direct extension of the Soviet 'Evil Empire' and an abiding threat to US national security, it matched its words with deeds, initiating a range of policies designed to undermine the Sandinista regime and generate domestic support for its own anti-Sandinista offensive. These policies included funding, organising and training counter-revolutionary, or Contra, forces in Honduras, composed mainly of former Somocista National Guardsmen; mining Nicaraguan harbours; imposing a devastating trade embargo; and implementing a sophisticated 'perception management' programme at home.⁵

The Reagan administration's rhetorical approach to the conflict was epitomised by the president's memorable 1984 portrayal of the Contras as

'freedom fighters' against the evil Sandinista communists, as well as his declaration a year later that the Contras were 'the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers'.⁶ These malicious distortions, pronounced by an actor-turned-politician playing to a world-wide audience, became the conventional wisdom throughout much of the USA, while being rejected by relatively small numbers of mainly left-leaning academics and activists in the peace, justice and human rights communities. Outside the USA, many European and Latin American states and ngos rejected Reagan's rhetoric and advanced a far more realistic assessment of the Sandinistas as a home-grown national liberation movement and political party that, despite its flaws, represented the hopes and aspirations of Nicaragua's impoverished and oppressed majority. International aid from Scandinavia, Holland, Spain and elsewhere in Europe, as well as from Cuba and the USSR, poured into the country in an explicit rejection of the Reagan administration's cold war rhetoric.

The CIA's manual on 'Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare' (1984), distributed to Contra forces, clearly demonstrates the Reagan administration's strategy of creating a negative perception of the Sandinistas within Nicaragua, regardless of the truth. The manual instructed that:

The basic objective of a preconditioning campaign is to create a negative 'image' of the enemy, eg: Describe the managers of collective government entities as trying to treat the staff the way 'slave foremen' do. The police mistreat the people like the Communist 'Gestapo' does. The government officials of National Reconstruction are puppets of Russian-Cuban imperialism. . . The foreign advisors. . . are in reality 'interveners' in our homeland, who direct the exploitation of the nation in accordance with the objectives of Russian and Cuban imperialists, in order to turn our people into slaves of the hammer and sickle.⁷

That these misrepresentations bore no relation to reality was of no concern to the anonymous author(s) of the manual or to the architects of US policy in Washington.

Largely in consequence of the Reagan administration's multi-pronged diplomatic, military, economic and propaganda offensive, civil war and counter-revolution tore Nicaragua apart. The Contras violently attacked Sandinista agricultural co-operatives, schools, health care facilities, bridges, power lines and other infrastructure, while committing thousands of documented human rights abuses against the civilian population, especially in the northern departments along the Honduran border. Judging by their actions in the field, Reagan's 'freedom fighters' were much more aptly described as the 'terrorists' his administration denounced.⁸

Despite its blatant misrepresentation of the truth, the Reagan administration's delegitimising labels of 'communist' and 'terrorist' applied to the Sandinistas were generally potent and effective. They formed the most visible elements in an internally coherent and totalising narrative (or master narrative, or meta-story⁹) that allowed no room for compromise and contained within itself effective responses to every plausible critique. That the Sandinistas were puppets of their Soviet masters and stooges of Castro fit

into a world-view that saw all international events in dichotomous terms, as part of the death struggle between two contending superpowers. Yet, if the Cold War provided a convenient pretext for the US anti-Sandinista offensive, it also reflected a real geopolitical contest between two nuclear-armed empires who kept score, in part, by aligning and realigning the would-be 'non-aligned' nations. The same was true of the legitimising labels 'freedom fighters' and 'moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers', as applied to the Contras, which fundamentally distorted reality even as they resonated with the US Revolutionary War and the most revered foundational myths of the republic.

In this case, then, as in others, the politics of naming was integral to a larger struggle between the contending narratives of groups with vastly unequal access to material and cultural power. As so many who have tried to tell their own stories in their own terms have discovered, merely objecting to a particular name or epithet proves insufficient if the offending narrative remains intact. To displace or subvert the delegitimising names deployed by dominant actors requires turning the rhetorical tables: challenging the totalising narrative as a whole, from its underlying assumptions and epistemological underpinnings to its specific manifestations, and doing so from a position of deep historical understanding.

Consequently, effectively displacing the 'communist' label that the Reagan administration applied to the Sandinistas required a wholesale review of Nicaraguan and Central American history, especially the long and tangled history of US interventions; the social injustices generated during the Somoza years; the convoluted history of the Comintern and Soviet policies toward Latin America; and so on. Waging this discursive battle within and outside Nicaragua, the Sandinista government and its supporters developed a multi-layered media strategy intended to illuminate the hypocrisy and mendacity at the root of the Reagan administration's allegations and to promote their own counter-narrative. Telling their story to an international audience, the Sandinista regime garnered the diplomatic support of dozens of countries; arranged and promoted interviews in print, audio and visual media; issued press releases explaining their policies, goals and philosophy; encouraged foreign citizens to travel to Nicaragua; and cultivated alliances with sundry individuals and organisations in solidarity with the Revolution. Promoting their story among its own citizens, the regime and its non-governmental allies used newspapers, radio, television, music and song, wall murals and statuary, sports, popular theatre, museums, as well as government programmes like the Literacy Crusade and educational and health care initiatives. New names displaced the old: the airport became Sandino International Airport; the National Palace became the Museum of the Revolution; 40 square blocks in the heart of old Managua, destroyed in the 1972 earthquake, became the site of a new national recreational facility, the Luis Alfonso Velásquez Flores Park, named after a 10-year-old martyr of the struggle against Somoza.¹⁰ Neighbourhoods, streets, markets, buildings, schools, hospitals, parks, estates, these and other infrastructure were given new names to express and memorialise some part of the new Sandinista narrative. As a result of

these and many related efforts, for several years in the early and mid-1980s the Sandinista narrative became hegemonic across most of the country. But the crippling US trade embargo and the devastation wrought in the Contra war combined to make that hegemony short-lived, and by the late 1980s the Sandinista narrative was being eclipsed by competing narratives more aligned with that promoted by the US government.

During the 1980s organisations and individuals in the USA seeking to provide a broader context and challenge their government's totalising narrative typically lacked access to the dominant media and faced impatient and unreceptive audiences unfamiliar with Central America, past or present. Countering the Reagan administration's misrepresentations was, without doubt, an uphill battle. Yet that same 'communist' or 'terrorist' label also offered a wedge that under favourable circumstances could be used to pry open and displace the meta-story as a whole. The USA, after all, began its interventions in Nicaragua nearly a decade before the Bolshevik Revolution (or six decades before, if one considers the William Walker episode of the 1850s). The nation-states of Central America, like those of Southeast Asia, were not like dominoes. The metaphor of small blocks of wood lined up in a row was as misleading here as it had been in Vietnam. To tell a different story and advocate a different set of policies in Central America, church, academic, solidarity and peace and justice organisations sponsored demonstrations, marches, protests, rallies, vigils, speakers, lectures, meetings, discussion groups, film showings and letter-writing campaigns to major media outlets and members of Congress; the alternative and left print media, like *The Nation*, *The Progressive*, *Mother Jones* and others provided a robust and cogent counter to the administration's claims, as did a spate of books on the Nicaraguan Revolution and Sandinismo, like Margaret Randall's *Sandinista's Daughters*; Thomas W Walker's edited volumes; and many others.¹¹ Convincing US citizens how and why they needed to understand the specifics of the Nicaraguan situation, rather than merely adopt their government's simplistic anti-communist paradigm, proved daunting, frustrating but also possible.

To the victors go the stories

This recent cold war era history in the politics of naming in Central America is relatively well known. Less familiar are the battles over names and narratives in the antecedents to this struggle, the first Sandinista revolution of the 1920s and 1930s. From 1927 to 1934 in the mountains of northern Nicaragua, a region known as Las Segovias, the nationalist guerrilla chieftain Augusto Sandino led an armed *campesino* insurgency against the US invasion and occupation of his homeland. The roots of the conflict were complex, but as was the case throughout much of the Caribbean and Central America in the first decades of the 20th century, the USA was seeking to impose its version of 'order' and 'stability' on what it portrayed as a profoundly 'disorderly' and 'unstable' land.¹² For nearly six years the Sandinista rebels fought the Marines and National Guard to a stalemate. In January 1933 the

Marines withdrew from Nicaragua, and a year later, in the midst of peace talks, the founder of the Somoza dynasty, Anastasio Somoza García, ordered the assassination of Sandino and the annihilation of what remained of his rebel organisation. In subsequent years Somoza and his regime systematically distorted and caricatured Sandino's aims and actions, relegating the history of the rebel movement to the margins of its own master narrative. Two years after assassinating Sandino, Somoza published a landmark book denouncing the rebel chieftain as a maniacal sociopath and his followers as motivated only by mayhem, robbery and murder.

Somoza's book, *El verdadero Sandino, o el calvario de las Segovias* (*The True Sandino, or the Calvary of Las Segovias*, 1936), which some still regard as a reliable account of Sandino and his rebellion, represents a fascinating and revealing exercise in the politics of naming. The plot of Somoza's story is eloquently expressed in the iconography of violence on the book's cover: an oversized machete poised over a map of the central part of Central America, its cutting edge dripping torrents of blood across the northern half of Nicaragua. The map is white and blue, Nicaragua's national colours, suggesting normality and tradition, while the blood and Sandino's name appear in bright crimson. Literally from cover to cover, Somoza's book depicts Sandino and his followers as crazed killers whose only goals were to desecrate the national heritage and drown Nicaraguans in their own blood.¹³

A maliciously one-sided and inaccurate text, *El verdadero Sandino* remains a masterpiece in creating and projecting its own authority. Essentially a compendium of carefully selected and often deceptively edited captured Sandinista documents tied together by a one-dimensional and tendentious storyline, it uses a variety of techniques to convince the reader of its veracity. It includes selections from more than 200 captured Sandinista documents; more than two dozen individual and group photographs of Sandinistas; 25 photographs of alleged victims of Sandinista atrocities and their families (most at funerals); and 20 facsimiles of Sandino's correspondence, most of which include Sandino's signature over his Defending Army's official seal. Accompanying each facsimile is the formulaic reminder: 'We insert a photograph of the document just transcribed so that our readers will not doubt their authenticity'. The text reminds the reader no fewer than 15 times that 'the original documents are at the disposal of anyone who still doubts their authenticity, at the Operations Office of the Guardia Nacional'. Relentlessly hammering its single theme, the book only includes evidence buttressing its portrayal of the rebels as bloodthirsty bandits bent on destroying the nation.

In subsequent decades Somoza's story became the anchor of what can be called the Somocista narrative of Sandinismo, which built on and synthesised several storylines circulating within Nicaragua for most of the decade before its publication. One derived from the reports of the Marines and National Guard, which systematically portrayed Sandino and his rebels not as nationalists but as gangs of bandits and cut-throats lacking any motivating ideology beyond robbery and murder. Another can be traced to the newspapers of the traditional power centres of Managua, León and Granada

in the Pacific Coast region, which also portrayed the rebels as marauding bandits, their ostensible cause—Nicaraguan independence and expulsion of the Marines—admirable, but their means—organised banditry—deplorable. A third storyline derived from the derogatory labels applied to the rebels by their local enemies at the time—the townsfolk, landowners, coffee growers and political power holders of Las Segovias.¹⁴ The denunciatory stories circulating in each of these spheres both informed and were informed by the others, making efforts to disaggregate their relative potency or the intersecting lines of transmission among and between them difficult. Suffice it to say that their similarities far outweighed their differences and that all contributed to the totalising indictment of the rebel movement that Somoza and his allies fashioned and propagated after the war.

The leatherneck version

From the beginning of the US invasion of Las Segovias in mid-1927, the US Marines contrived a robustly delegitimising storyline that painted Sandino and his followers as ‘bandits’ and ‘outlaws’, ‘murderers’, ‘criminals’ and ‘marauders’ engaged in ‘robbery, pillage, rape and murder’ against the ‘defenceless people’ of the Segovian countryside. Their actions, shrouded behind Sandino’s ‘false standard of patriotism’, were inspired by no ideology or ‘cause’ beyond ‘pillage and loot’ and fostering ‘unrest’ and ‘disorder’ in the ‘bandit infested’ areas under their control. The ‘bandit hordes’ were like a ‘cancerous growth’, a ‘disease’, a ‘virus’ that had ‘invaded’ the Nicaraguan social body. ‘Exterminating bandits’, as one rids oneself of vermin and pests, thus became the Marines’ official *raison d’être* in the Segovian countryside.¹⁵

The semi-official Marine Corps publication *The Leatherneck* was replete with such imagery. Paradigmatic here was its account of the deaths of Lieutenant Thomas and Sergeant Dowell, whose plane the rebels shot down in October 1927. ‘Both were later surrounded by the murdering machete bearing bandits, followers of Sandino’, reported a ‘Plane Observer’, who likened the scene to the ‘black’ days of his own country’s past. ‘The English translation of the word Nicaragua is “black water”’, he fabricated imaginatively, and ‘Black it is indeed to fly over the charred remains of the crash and look away down there in a native banana patch on a little black spot where the skeleton of the battle plane reposes not unlike a covered wagon in the early pages of our country’s history possibly burned by some marauding band of Indians and rests there until the transpiration of the ages’. Invoking his country’s long history of anti-Black and anti-Indian racism, and the genocidal Indian wars concluded less than half a century before, this ‘Plane Observer’ made explicit what was more often implicit in the sterile language of official reports: Marine Corps representations of Sandino and his rebellion rested on a foundation of racist ideologies stretching back to the beginnings of US history.¹⁶

In the 1920s and 1930s the US Marine Corps was comprised exclusively of white males, many from the lower echelons of a society profoundly divided

by race and social class. It would be surprising indeed to find that some Marines were not deeply influenced by the racist cultural politics of the era. The private letters of Marine Private Emil Thomas to his fiancée offer a window on the extent to which racist attitudes permeated Marine Corps culture. Writing from the Sick Quarters in Quantico, VA in January 1928, Thomas expressed his desire to go to the Nicaraguan theatre. 'I'll bet I'd bring me back a couple of nigger's toes', he wrote, 'and they wouldn't be the kind that grow on nut trees either'. By March, after having learned from his returned comrades of the 'bad food...mud up to the waist, drunkenness, sickness, filth, and also blood thirstyness [sic]', he had changed his mind: 'All those fine white American boys being killed just so a few less niggers will be killed...what makes me mad is that those perfectly good white men should be sacrificed to save a few ignorant niggers'. Significantly, after some months in Nicaragua, Thomas's favoured racist epithet changed from 'nigger' to 'gook', suggesting that 'gook' was the racist term of choice among his comrade-in-arms; after being stationed in the northern town of Ocotal for a few months, he wrote that 'most of us are only to [sic] glad to have an excuse to bump off a few gooks'.¹⁷

Partly in consequence of this racism and cultural arrogance, Marine intelligence analysts in Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s profoundly misconstrued and misrepresented the nature of the enemy they confronted. Despite mounting evidence that they faced a nationalist insurgency by genuine patriots, the Marine intelligence apparatus systematically dismissed Sandino's oft-expressed motives for rebelling, which by early 1928 were being disseminated across Latin America via pamphlets and newspapers. 'Sandino is out for the money and nothing else', reported Marine Corps Major Floyd, who led the first ground assault against Sandino's forces in late 1927. A few months later Managua-based intelligence analyst Lieutenant Larson speculated on the reasons behind Sandino's organising successes: 'The life promised is one of banditry and looting, which is a means of existence for many persons'. Similar assessments were repeated hundreds of times in the coming months and years. Mid-level officers like Floyd, Larson and others both reproduced and amplified the conceptual and semantic framework formulated by their military and civilian superiors. If no official directive ordering intelligence or field officers to use this language of 'banditry' has been found, the consistency of such language strongly suggests that such a directive was being followed. At the same time, all the evidence indicates that virtually all Marines accepted this 'bandit' label as an accurate description of their adversaries.¹⁸

Emblematic of these racist cultural politics was Marine Corps Major Julian C Smith's officially commissioned *History of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua* (1933), which offered a patronising evaluation of the 'factors entering into and affecting the police mission' of which he was a prominent participant.¹⁹ He began by observing that:

The American officers of the Guardia Nacional were immediately confronted with the problem of personal adjustment to a situation requiring a sympathetic

understanding of a people who had originated from different racial strains and who had developed under entirely different conditions of environment and who were animated by different ideals. . . Each strain [Spanish, Indian, African] had its corresponding effect upon the psychology of the people.

Emphasising ‘the fundamental differences between Latin and Anglo-Saxon ideals and characteristics’, Smith quoted approvingly from 19th-century clergyman Henry Ward Beecher, an early proponent of Social Darwinism:

There are two dominant races in modern history; the Germanic and the Romanic races. The Germanic races tend to personal liberty, to a sturdy individualism, to civil and political liberty. The Romanic race tends to absolutism in government; it is clannish; it loves chieftains; it develops a people that crave strong and showy governments to support and plan for them.

Nicaraguans, in this schema, clearly dwelled on the ‘Romanic’ side of this racial divide. Hence their proclivity for civil war and authoritarianism, and animosity towards liberty as well as the Marine intervention. For Smith, who implicitly construed himself and the Marines as embodying ‘Germanic’ tendencies, coming to grips with the persistence of ‘organised banditry’ in Nicaragua despite ‘so many tactical defeats and indecisive actions’ required understanding the peculiar ‘racial psychology’ of ‘the poorer classes of Nicaraguans’:

Densely ignorant. . . little interested in principles. . . naturally brave and inured to hardships, of phlegmatic temperament, though capable of being aroused to acts of extreme violence, they have fought for one party or the other without considering causes since time immemorial. . . a state of war is to them a normal condition.

Like many other imperial ethnographers of his day, Smith naturalised, essentialised and dehistoricised the colonial Other, construing historically produced social and political conditions as natural and immutable realities. His assessments were echoed repeatedly by his superiors and subordinates. ‘[Sandino] has been routed from his selected region east of Chipote’, wrote Captain Reagan in April 1928, ‘and will probably drive farther into the wild fastnesses East of the Coco, said to be inhabited by Indians who are little removed from savagery’.²⁰ The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John Lejeune, writing in early 1928, observed that ‘The political situation there is very bitter, and that is really the cause of all the trouble in Nicaragua’. He tried to explain the intense passions driving these political struggles: ‘The people in Western Nicaragua have a great deal of Indian blood in them. Some families are pure Spanish descent, but the majority have Indian blood’, making them ‘a very courageous race of people; nothing cowardly about them’—‘courageous’ here a synonym for ‘violent’.²¹ Imagining Nicaraguans as fundamentally violent and inferior in consequence of their immutable racial heritage, the Marines legitimated their own extreme violence in their prosecution of the war.

After Sandino's return from Mexico in mid-1930, his Defending Army intensified its military and propaganda efforts and expanded its zones of operation. By this time the Marines and Guardia had abundant evidence that the Sandinistas represented not 'organised banditry' but a genuine national liberation movement inspired by nationalist and internationalist ideals. Yet the same language of 'banditry' continued to infuse their intelligence assessments. Such assessments were issued in weekly, bi-weekly, monthly 'Bn-2' (battalion-level), 'R-2' (regiment-level) and 'B-2' (brigade-level) reports—and after October 1930 the monthly 'GN-2' (Guardia Nacional) report—in which Managua-based analysts tried to synthesise all the strands of information coming in from different parts of the country to present a comprehensive portrait of the current state of intelligence on the rebels and the war effort. One requisite section of these reports, 'Enemy Probable Intentions', routinely described the rebels as intent on nothing more than banditry and murder. Typical was the Bn-2 Report of 22 June 1930. After speculating about what would happen if Sandino had indeed returned to Nicaragua, the analyst continued: 'If, on the other hand, Sandino is not in Nicaragua, the various jefes [chieftains] will continue as before, ambushing small patrols, robbing and murdering the defenseless natives in the outlying districts'.²² In September 1930 the author of the GN-2 report began the 'Enemy Probable Intentions' section as follows: 'From all reports it appears that Sandino is attempting to organize the various bandit forces along some military lines, to be known as the "Army Defending the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua"'. Remarkably, Sandino had founded his Defending Army in September 1927, three years before this report, a fact that the marine-guardia intelligence apparatus should have known, considering all the captured correspondence and published materials at their disposal. The analyst then expressed his view that 'the backbone of banditry is breaking and that Sandino's so-called army is crumbling'.²³ Events proved him wrong, as the Defending Army continued to grow in power. A month later the same analyst reported that 'the bandit prospects are not very bright... Sandino's army is a failure'—this after he noted in an earlier section of the report, entitled 'Enemy Strength', that 'Large groups are reported here and reported there and even if only a reasonable percentage of the numbers reported were considered and totaled, it would be surprising to note how the number of reported bandits increases each month instead of decreasing'.²⁴ That such contradictory assessments could be combined in the same intelligence report suggests the extent to which the Marines and Guardia had internalised their own disparaging epithets and narrative on the rebels.

This language of 'bandits' and 'banditry' continued unabated for the rest of the war. 'Thus the curtain falls on the attempt of the bandit robbers to gain a foot-hold in the departments of the west', reported Captain Carlson in January 1932 on the first sustained Defending Army movement into the more populated zones of Chinandega and León. A few months later, another Managua-based intelligence analyst acknowledged that, in the same area, 'the country people are practically 100% in sympathy with them'; that 'they have a system of espionage... that is highly efficient'; and that 'reports

received from all sources indicate that all people living in [that area] are very friendly to the bandits and helping them in all ways possible and state that they are ready at any time to join forces for whatever operations the bandit jefes may order'.²⁵ In October 1932, only three months before the final Marine withdrawal, another analyst predicted that 'the various bandit jefes and their groups...will unquestionably continue as per routine, to rob and collect contributions.'²⁶ Absent the conceptual blinders they insisted on retaining, the Marines–Guardia Nacional probably would have understood from the outset that their adversaries were far more than the 'bandit robbers' they imagined and represented them to be.

Patriotic plunder and retribution

Dominant groups' denunciatory narratives tend to exhibit a tenuous, distorted, de-contextualised connection to some aspect of the truth. In the case of Sandino's rebellion, the 'bandit' label had such a connection, rooted in the rebels' need to acquire the material resources for waging war, invariably an expensive proposition for any army. This rebellion's survival required food, clothing, medicine, horses, firearms and ammunition. Although the rebels enjoyed widespread support among the *campesinos* of Las Segovias, the crushing poverty of the region meant that most *campesinos* could only extend them food and labour power. Unlike the Sandinistas of the 1970s and 1980s (and unlike the 13 British American colonies two centuries earlier, for example), Sandino's rebels in the 1920s and 1930s garnered virtually no international material support. Without any state supporting them, with only a handful of non-Central Americans in their ranks, and with precious few elite Nicaraguan allies, the rebels had few options except to plunder the wealthy in order to finance their operations. They did so by systematically appropriating the moveable property of landowners, cattle ranchers, coffee growers and other elites and bartering these items, most often in the lucrative Honduran market, for the material necessities of war.²⁷

This was the aspect of reality in the 'bandit' epithet that permitted the Marines and Guardia to project this pejorative term as the single most accurate descriptor of the rebels. A similar dynamic was at work with respect to the 'murderer' label. With many civilian collaborators in their midst, and with betrayal a constant threat, the rebels did in fact attack and kill many Nicaraguan civilians. Careful analysis of the evidence indicates that most of their victims had in some way assisted the invading and occupying forces, by acting as informants, guides and in other capacities.²⁸ It was also true that, with a long history of firearms shortages, cutting weapons like *machetes* and *cutachas* had historically comprised the most important weapons in the Segovian countryside. For these reasons, most of the assaults and murders perpetrated by the rebels against other Nicaraguans were committed with these cutting weapons, in historically determined cultural ways. Thus the 'murderer' and 'cut-throat' labels, like 'bandit', contained elements of truth that in their adversaries' narratives became radically separated from their historical, cultural, political and military contexts.²⁹

All the while, within and outside the USA and antecedent to the solidarity movement of the 1980s, a small but vocal group of progressive journalists, academics, politicians, activists and others sought to counter this 'bandit' label by situating the Sandino rebellion within a broader anti-imperialist context. In 1928 the radical journalist Carleton Beals became the first foreign reporter to interview Sandino, his series of articles in *The Nation* providing a forum for Sandino and his followers to justify their rebellion as a legitimate nationalist response to years of US imperialist intervention. The All-American Anti-Imperialist League, the National Citizens Committee on Relations with Latin America, the Hands Off Nicaragua Committee and other organisations worked to galvanise international and US opposition to the US invasion and occupation, as did Senator William E Borah of Idaho and his allies in Congress, Sandino's half-brother Sócrates Sandino in his fund-raising efforts in New York, and others. Confronting head-on the lies and misrepresentations of the US military and diplomatic establishment, these and many other individuals and organisations' efforts to turn the rhetorical tables were important elements in the transformation of US policy from the late 1920s, which culminated in President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy after 1934.³⁰

Bandits Rob Merchandise! Demand Contributions!

Within Nicaragua the newspapers of the major urban centres of the Pacific Coast region portrayed the rebels in ways very similar to the representations of the Marines and Guardia. The 'news' these papers deigned to carry from Las Segovias was usually inaccurate, sensationalised and focused on the theme of rebel violence against property and persons. 'Bandits Rob Merchandise' announced the headline of a typical article in mid-1928, which went on to call for 'energetic action to guarantee commerce against those marauding on the roads'. 'They Are Demanding Contributions From the Principal Coffee Growers!' screamed the front page of one of Managua's leading newspapers in January 1931, accompanied by a lengthy article describing recent Sandinista 'outlaw' activities in the coffee districts of Jinotega and Matagalpa. Going to the heart of the politics of naming, a June 1931 headline in León's *El Centroamericano* posed the question: 'Is Sandino a Bandit or Patriot?' The answer was obvious. In the words of 'Professor Paul Lavalle, prominent man of science and French writer', interviewed for the story:

In more than twenty cities and towns that I have visited in Nicaragua, I have asked people what they thought of Sandino. Everyone invariably answered, 'Sandino is a bandit'... Sandino and his so-called 'Movement for the Defense of National Sovereignty' is not only dedicated to expelling the Marines, but has attacked, sacked, and burned towns and killed their inhabitants, most of them Nicaraguans.³¹

By his own account, 'Professor Lavalle' never ventured into the Segovian countryside, where he would have found widespread support for the rebels.

As the war progressed, the denunciations of Sandino and his followers in the urban press grew ever more vitriolic. Sandino worked tirelessly to counter these denunciations by issuing scores of manifestos and proclamations explaining and justifying his rebellion but, like the Marines and Guardia, the major Pacific Coast newspapers either ignored or ridiculed these efforts at self-legitimation.³² ‘The hordes of Sandino are made up of mercenaries and men without scruples’, opined one editorialist of Managua’s *La Prensa* on 2 April 1932.

I civilly reject...the ludicrous patriotism of Sandino and the horde of bandits who follow him...The true patriot attacks the enemy valiantly but he does not attack his brother or his co-patriots. He does not kill in a cowardly or traitorous manner, does not violate women, does not rob strong-boxes, does not burn their homes. To those who proceed in such a fashion I find only these dry and cold-blooded names: thieves, assassins, and incendiaries.

As these excerpts suggest, Sandinista violence against property and persons in Las Segovias provided property owners across the country with the raw materials they could use to fashion a coherent denunciatory narrative. To most such property owners the Sandinistas represented their worst nightmare: the spectre of social revolution from below, an overturning of existing social relations of extreme inequality, an unending spiral of violence, and loss of their lives and fortunes. No wonder the rebels proved unable to cultivate any organic links with middling or large property holders, or with any social class beyond the impoverished *campesinos* of Las Segovias. Brought together in an alliance of convenience by their shared fears of violent social revolution, property owners in Las Segovias and beyond soon came to form a relatively solid if internally heterogeneous anti-Sandinista front, allying with the Marines – Guardia and deploying the same delegitimising labels against their rebel foes.

They called us cow eaters, chicken eaters, blanket thieves

The extreme class divisions that characterised Nicaraguan and Segovian society meant that this language of ‘banditry’ also found an organic social basis independent of the Marines – Guardia and the urban press. Soon after the rebellion was launched, requests and petitions for Marine – Guardia protection against ‘the hordes of Sandino’ began pouring in from across the north. The refrain soon became familiar, epitomised in the following petition from the *municipio* of Mosonte of December 1930:

We the undersigned, of age, workers and natives of Mosonte...state as follows: That we are threatened by the bandits who remain in several parts of the department and who go around in the valleys and villages where we live, aided by the cover of night when no military unit can pursue them...these groups of bandits are composed of bad men...who continue killing peaceful and honest citizens...these bandits hate us because we are not their sympathisers, on the contrary we condemned their activities and criminal proceedings.³³

As the petition indicates, these enemies of the rebels had ‘condemned their activities’ to the military authorities. By the rebels’ lights, such ‘treasonous’ behaviour rendered these ‘citizens’ neither ‘peaceful’ nor ‘honest’ but active allies of the nation’s enemies, thereby legitimating the retribution served upon them.

Memories of the denunciatory epithets and narrative that emerged across Las Segovias in response to Sandino’s rebellion survived into the 1980s and after, as the Sandinistas themselves documented through oral history interviews. In 1983 70-year-old Cosme Andino, half a century earlier a soldier in Sandino’s ranks, began his oral testimony on the period of the rebellion by recalling the violence committed by the Marines and Guardia against his family: ‘We were persecuted by the Yankees. . .they burned my mother’s house, my brother’s house they burned too, and they shot my sister. Of my family only I remained, by God’s will, so I could tell the story, come what may.’ This broader context established, he turned to the pejorative labels pinned upon himself and other rebels by his fellow Segovianos: ‘And from there, well, the tragedy that we lived, the people, during our journeys, they called us bandits, they called us cow eaters, chicken eaters, blanket thieves’; his pain and bitterness at the injustice of such names were an almost palpable feature of his testimony.³⁴

Other ex-soldiers interviewed in the 1980s also framed their recollections around the contours of an implicit counter-narrative that denounced them as bandits and communists. Lizandro Ardón, for instance, denied that Sandino was a communist without ever being prompted to do so, insisting that Sandino fought ‘so that no foreign country would come and trample on our homeland; if the Russians had come, he would have fought against them just like he did the Yankees’. In a similar prolepsis, former rebel Francisco Centeno vigorously denied any link between Sandino and communism, despite the interviewer having never broached the topic: ‘He said he wanted a free homeland, a free Nicaragua, that there would be no intervention of any kind, that there would be a government put in by the people, this was the struggle. Speeches about communism, he never said anything, nothing, nothing, never did he speak of that. The Russians offered him help and he refused it! He didn’t receive anyone’s help, he fought all alone.’³⁵

Occasionally former rebels acknowledged that they robbed to acquire the material necessities of war. Tiburcio Zelaya was asked in 1983 how the Defending Army obtained medicines. ‘This was easy’, he replied. ‘We robbed the apothecaries in the towns, we’d arrive in the towns, the prescription clerk would pick out the medicines. We robbed because we had to rob.’ Sixto Hernández, another former rebel, was asked about the main difficulties the rebel army experienced. ‘The hunger!’ he responded. ‘You should have seen, naked, in rags, we arrived in the towns to rob, we had to rob, to take.’³⁶

In short, the rebels systematically plundered the properties in order to finance their rebellion and committed considerable violence against the invaders’ collaborators. Focusing exclusively on these two aspects of the war, their enemies concocted a totalising narrative that framed them and their

rebellion as pure and simple banditry, wedded seamlessly to murder, mayhem, and senseless outrage—a meta-story that wholly elided the larger reality that the Sandinista rebels were patriots fighting for national self-determination and social justice. Yet larger truths endured, in the whispered stories and clandestine songs sung in the wake of Somoza’s post-rebellion massacres, and re-emerged as a new generation listened to and learned from the stories and songs of the old.

‘What else did Sandino tell you about the struggle you were undertaking?’ the youthful interviewer asked 72-year-old former rebel soldier Joaquin Fajardo in 1984. ‘A great many things’, the old man responded.

like he told us: ‘Boys, most of the people of Nicaragua don’t want us; they persecute us and call us bandits and they sell us out with whatever words they want to use. Even though they don’t want us, in other parts, our name will shine like the stars in the sky.’ This he told us. . .

I am like a beacon that lights up the world
Showing its idea of redemption
And the people will break the filthy yoke
And will carry on with my idea of redemption

So said Sandino.³⁷

The politics of naming

Just as the Sandinistas of the 1970s and 1980s borrowed from and modified the discursive field that seemed to them the most empowering and emancipatory—the languages and concepts of nationalism, Marxism, liberation theology and non-alignment—so too did their predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s, who appropriated and recast the languages and concepts of national liberation, *campesino* autonomy, and social justice. In both cases more powerful foreign and domestic groups, whose interests were threatened by Sandinista visions of a more just and humane society, articulated coherent narratives that magnified aspects of Sandinista ideology and social practice and wholly effaced others. There were, of course, important differences between the two periods. Public discourse in the earlier era was shot through with explicitly racist, biologised language; public opinion played a less central role in shaping US policy; and the pejorative terms ‘bandits’ and ‘murderers’ effectively delimited Sandinismo as an exclusively local problem most effectively resolved by imposing ‘law and order’. In the later era, with racist and biologised discourse no longer acceptable in the public sphere, with more rapid and globalised communications networks, and with a local or national delimitation of the struggle no longer suiting their interests, dominant groups located the conflict within an equally convenient framework, ie the broader global context of the Cold War and the fight against rogue ‘terrorist’ regimes. These differences in world-historical time, public discursive boundaries and rhetorical strategies notwithstanding, in both cases dominant groups and their allies concocted a series of pejorative, delegitimising names and images, strung together into

totalising narratives, to legitimate their efforts to destroy emergent collectivities whose agendas ultimately threatened their own superior power.

The politics of naming Sandinistas in Nicaragua was thus embedded within a larger politics of storytelling. Whose story prevailed depended on a host of unpredictable political dynamics. From 1927 to 1934 two contending stories vied for supremacy. After 1934 Somoza's story carried the day, becoming hegemonic for several decades but unable wholly to extinguish its antithesis. In the 1970s the battle over stories reached another crescendo, and after 1979 a revised Sandinista story displaced its rival and itself became hegemonic. The Sandinistas told part of their revolutionary story in their party's battle hymn: 'We fight against the Yankee/ The enemy of humanity'. Turning the rhetorical tables to challenge directly the US projection of itself as the defender of freedom and justice, the fledgling regime deemed the US self-projection a monumental lie, not just for their own small country of three million people but for the entire planet. The USA refused to listen to the accusation, however. In Managua on 19 July 1980, the first anniversary of their overthrow of the Somoza regime, the Sandinista leadership led a crowd of thousands in singing their revolutionary battle hymn. Rather than hear their country disparaged as 'the enemy of humanity', the 11-member US delegation, led by the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Donald McHenry, walked out of the commemoration.³⁸

A few months after Ambassador McHenry's refusal to hear his country branded by this pejorative epithet, Ronald Reagan was elected president, and within the year Reagan named John Negroponte US Ambassador to Honduras. More than 20 years later George W Bush, the son of Reagan's vice-president, appointed Negroponte to McHenry's former post, as US Ambassador to the UN. In March 2003 Negroponte repeated McHenry's theatrics when he and the US delegation to the UN Security Council walked out of a meeting in which Iraq's Ambassador accused the USA and UK of 'criminal, barbaric' aggression 'that is killing women, children, and the elderly and destroys the life and future of the people of Iraq'.³⁹ A few months later Bush appointed Negroponte US Ambassador to a 'liberated' Iraq. In July 2004, soon after Honduras had withdrawn its small contingent of troops from Iraq, Negroponte stood before a mass grave near Hillah, Iraq, 'to reaffirm America's commitment to the cause of justice, freedom, and respect for human rights'—a self-portrayal that, coming in the midst of the Abu Ghraib prisoner torture revelations, was received with incredulity by much of the world.⁴⁰

Unlike their more powerful adversaries, subordinate groups struggling for self-determination, social justice and human rights historically have not had the luxury of ignoring or closing their ears to the names and narratives imposed upon them. Instead, these imposed names and narratives have a weight and power of their own, comprising crucial components in the efforts of dominant groups to retain their superior power. In the struggle for human emancipation in this age of global terror, global capitalism and global lies, the meta-stories of the dominant—and of subordinate groups like religious or nationalist extremists struggling not for social justice or human rights but for

national—ethnic purity, cataclysmic confrontation, or the destruction of secularism—need to be displaced by relentless chiseling at their very foundations. Academics, human rights activists and others committed to creating a more emancipatory future can most fruitfully contribute to this struggle over narratives and naming by conveying in print, visual and other media their understanding of context and complexity, by showing the sliver of truth in these meta-stories for what it is—a very small part of a much bigger truth. If the partly true stories told by the powerful or demagogic can be enormously persuasive, the stories told by those seeking a more just and humane world must be truer, wiser and more persuasive still.

Notes

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- ¹ President Reagan's Remarks at the Annual Convention of the American Bar Association, 8 July 1985, at www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/1985/70885a.htm. It is noteworthy that 'fanatical hatred' of the USA, its people, its way of life, or its international stature—or, for that matter, 'fanatical hatred' of anything when not linked to actual criminal behaviour—was not and is not defined as a crime in either US or international law, and that Reagan's remarks therefore contained smaller and more discrete lies embedded within his larger lies about a 'confederation of terrorist states'.
- ² See <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/554FAF3A-B267-427A-B9EC-54881BDE0A2E.htm>; and www.baltimoresun.com/news/local/bal-negroponte4,0,2326054.story.
- ³ See www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/18/interviews/negroponte/.
- ⁴ See C Vilas, *The Sandinista Revolution*, London: Monthly Review Press, 1986; and M Zimmermann, *Sandinista: Carlos Fonseca and the Nicaraguan Revolution*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- ⁵ T Walker (ed), *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, New York: Praeger, 1985; and T Walker (ed), *Nicaragua without Illusions*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997. The secret 'Presidential Finding' of 1 December 1981, whose 'Purpose' was to 'support and conduct paramilitary operations against...Nicaragua' and which officially authorized the CIA's Contra war against the Sandinistas, can be found at www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/usa/publications/nicaragua/nicadoc2.html.
- ⁶ 'Notes and comment on the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers', *The New Yorker*, 25 March 1985.
- ⁷ The full English-language text of the 'Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare' manual can be found at www.webcom.com/pinknoiz/covert/tacayantoc.html. That the Gestapo was a Nazi organization, and that the Nazis were dedicated to the extermination of communists and communism, was evidently of little moment to the manual's author(s).
- ⁸ R Brody, *Contra Terror in Nicaragua*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1985. See also the resources listed at www.library.utoronto.ca/robarts/microtext/collection/pages/nicaragu.html.
- ⁹ The concept of master narrative, totalising narrative or meta-story—terms used interchangeably here—derives mainly from scholarship inspired by the work of Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. See A Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence & Wishart 1971; and M Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, New York: Pantheon, 1972. See also EW Said, *Orientalism*, New York: Pantheon, 1978; and H White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Baltimore, MD: 1973.
- ¹⁰ See D Barndt, 'Popular education' and Elizabeth Dore, 'Culture', in Walker, *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, pp 317–346 and 413–422. See also V Miller, 'The Nicaraguan literacy crusade' and EA Wagner, 'Sport and revolution in Nicaragua', in TW Walker, *Nicaragua in Revolution*, New York: Praeger, 1982, pp 241–258 and 291–302.
- ¹¹ Among the most widely read English-language books on the Sandinista Revolution in the early and mid-1980s were M Randall, *Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle*, ed L Yanz, Vancouver: New Star Books, 1981; TW Walker's two edited volumes, *Nicaragua in Revolution* and *Nicaragua: The First Five Years*, as well as his monograph, *Nicaragua: The Land of Sandino*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1981; G Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua*, London: Zed Press, 1981; H Weber, *Nicaragua: The Sandinista Revolution*, London: Verso, 1981; JA Booth, *The End and the Beginning: The Nicaraguan Revolution*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1982; S Christian, *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family*, New York: Vintage, 1985; CM Vilas, *The Sandinista*

Revolution: National Liberation and Social Transformation in Central America, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986; P Rosset & J Vandermeer (eds), *Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution*, New York: Grove Press, 1986; P Davis, *Where Is Nicaragua?*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987; and P Kornbluh, *Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention*, Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987.

- ¹² From an expansive literature a superior general history of US intervention in Nicaragua remains K Bermann, *Under the Big Stick: Nicaragua and the United States Since 1848*, Boston, MA: South End Press, 1986.
- ¹³ A Somoza G, *El verdadero Sandino o el calvario de las Segovias*, Managua: Robelo, 1936.
- ¹⁴ For excellent treatments of comparable instances of popular patriotic struggles being rejected and dismissed by native elites as mere ‘banditry’, see F Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995; and GPC Thompson, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Pueblo Sierra*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999.
- ¹⁵ The phrase ‘robbery, pillage, rape, and murder’ is in Lt HR Huff, R-2 Report, 17 December 1929, US National Archives, Record Group 127, Entry 209, Box 1 (hereafter cited as RG127/[entry no.]/[box no.]). The phrase ‘false standard of patriotism’ is in JC Smith *et al.*, ‘A review of the organization and operations of the Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua’, unpublished manuscript, Personal Papers Collection, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC; the phrase ‘bandit hordes’ appears in *The Leatherneck*, January 1928, p 13; ‘cancerous growth’ is in General McDougal to Francis White, 10 October 1930, US Department of State, M633, reel 1; and ‘exterminating bandits’ is from Robert L Denig, Northern Area Commander, ‘Restriction for certain areas of Nueva Segovia, recommendation for’, 10 May 1930, RG127/202/17. Most of these terms are so diffuse throughout the material in RG127 and elsewhere that they require no citation.
- ¹⁶ *The Leatherneck*, January 1928, p 13.
- ¹⁷ Emil Thomas Papers, Box 2, Folder 23, 4 January 1928, Box 3, Folder 25, 11 March 1928 and Folder 31, 3 September 1928, Alden Library, Ohio University, Athens, OH. I am indebted to Thomas W Walker, Political Science Department, Ohio University, and especially to Doug McCabe, Archives and Special Collections, Alden Library, for their very kind assistance with this source.
- ¹⁸ Major O Floyd, Field Message No 11, San Albino, 6 August 1927, RG127/43A/6; and Lt Larson, B-2 Report, 4 March 1928, RG127/43A/3.
- ¹⁹ Smith *et al.*, ‘A review’, pp 2, 26, 50.
- ²⁰ R-2 Report, 15 April 1928, NA127/209/2.
- ²¹ *The Leatherneck*, April 1928, pp 10, 52.
- ²² Bn-2 Report, 22 June 1930, NA127/209/1.
- ²³ GN-2 Report, 1 September 1930, NA127/43A/29.
- ²⁴ GN-2 Report, 1 October 1930, NA127/209/1.
- ²⁵ GN-2 Reports of 1 January and 1 April 1932, RG127/43A/29.
- ²⁶ GN-2 Report, 1 October 1932, NA127/43A/29.
- ²⁷ See MJ Schroeder, ‘The Sandino rebellion revisited: civil war, imperialism, popular nationalism, and state formation muddled up together in the Segovias of Nicaragua, 1926–1934’, in GM Joseph, CC LeGrand & RD Salvatore (eds), *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of US–Latin American Relations*, Durham, NY: Duke University Press, 1998, pp 229–231.
- ²⁸ A comparison of the names of alleged victims of Sandinista attacks, as these appear in Somoza, *El verdadero Sandino*, and in the records of the US Marines and Nicaraguan National Guard, with the names of Nicaraguans who collaborated with the US invasion and occupation, as these appear in RG127—a comparison made possible by the author’s database of all names to appear in marine and Guardia intelligence, patrol and combat reports, in captured Sandinista correspondence, and other sources—reveals scores of instances in which the victims of rebel attacks had actively collaborated with the occupying forces. For example, Somoza, *El verdadero Sandino*, p 129, claims that in April 1929 Sandinistas murdered Juan Bautista Rivera of Somoto. In fact Rivera, who survived the attack, had acted as a guide, scout and recruiting agent for the Marines in the Somoto district from early 1928. See R-2 Report, 23 September 1928, NA127/209/1; R-2 Report, 12 February 1929, NA127/209/1 (‘Juan Bautista Rivera...is now reported to be...recruiting in the name of the Commanding Officer Somoto.’). See also the personal diary of Gen Robert L Denig, Northern Area Commander, ‘Diary of a Guardia Officer’, unpublished manuscript, US Marine Corps Historical Center, Personal Papers Collection, Denig Box, Vol I, p 89, which includes a letter from Rivera to Denig, dated 21 March 1930, in which Rivera informs Denig: ‘I have been working with the Marines for the last two years’. For another example, Somoza, *El verdadero Sandino*, p 192, claims that in December 1930 Sandinistas burned the farm of Emilio López near Yalí. A marine intelligence report of two years earlier indicates that the same Emilio López, owner of a farm near Yalí, gave the marines and guardia a list of 13 local men active in the rebel ranks. R-2 Report, 16 December 1928, NA127/209/1.

- ²⁹ On violence making in the Segovian past, see MJ Schroeder, 'Horse thieves to rebels to dogs: political gang violence and the state in the western Segovias, Nicaragua, in the time of Sandino, 1926–1934', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 28, 1996, pp 383–434.
- ³⁰ On C Beals, see his series 'With Sandino in Nicaragua', *The Nation*, 22 February–11 April 1928. See also Beals, *Banana Gold*, Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1932; and Beals, *Great Guerrilla Warriors*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970. On the US anti-imperialist movement in the 1920s and 1930s, see RV Salisbury, *Anti-Imperialism and International Competition in Central America, 1920–1929*, Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1989; and J Zwick (ed), *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898–1935*, at www.boondocksnet.com/ai/.
- ³¹ *El Centroamericano*, 21 June 1930 and 19 July 1928; and *Diario Moderno* (Managua), 23 January 1931.
- ³² The most comprehensive collection of Sandino's writings remains AC Sandino, *El pensamiento vivo*, ed Sergio Ramírez, 2 vols, Managua: Nueva Nicaragua, 1984. The best English-language collection is RL Conrad, *Sandino: The Testimony of a Nicaraguan Patriot, 1921–1934*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- ³³ Petition from 'workers and natives' of Mosonte to Jefe Director GN, 27 December 1930, NA127/202/2/2.3. Similar letters can be found in NA127/220/3 (La Concordia and Jinotega, 14 and 15 May 1929); NA127/43A/15 (Jalapa, 15 November 1928); and NA127/198/1 (Matagalpa, April 1930).
- ³⁴ Instituto de Estudio del Sandinismo, Managua (hereafter IES; these documents are currently housed in the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua, Universidad Centroamericana, Managua), Interview No 049, p 1.
- ³⁵ IES, nos 032, pp 13 and 066, pp 5–6.
- ³⁶ IES, nos 072, p 7 and 036, p 4.
- ³⁷ IES, no 100, p 4.
- ³⁸ Christian, *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family*, pp 191–194.
- ³⁹ 'US walks out of Iraq's address to UN', at www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/27/sprj.irq.us.un.walkout/.
- ⁴⁰ 'Negroponte visits mass graves site near Hillah, Iraq', at http://iraq.usembassy.gov/iraq/20040715_mass_graves_hilla.html.