Beyond the Barricades

The Sandinista Press in Transition, 1979 – 1991

Adam Jones

Department of Political Science

McGill University, Montreal

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Abstract

A stereotype exists of party- and state-affiliated media as little more than passive reflections of the mobilizing agendas of their sponsors. In analyzing the evolution of *Barricada*, the former official organ of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the thesis argues that alongside the paper's mobilizing function, there has evolved a professional function with its roots in core principles of journalistic craft. Transformations at *Barricada* since the Sandinistas' 1990 electoral defeat — in the areas of party/paper relations, editorial strategy, and business management — primarily reflect staffmembers' longstanding professional aspirations, as well as the newly-salient economic pressures that now confront the paper. The broader significance of the findings is suggested via a comparison with Central and Eastern European media systems. It is argued that an understanding of the impact of political transition on media organs is vital to comprehending press behaviour in transition situations.

Résumé

Le médium affilié au parti ou à l'État est souvent conçu comme un porte-voix passif de programmes mobilisateurs. Ce mémoire analyse l'évolution de *Barricada*, ancien organe officiel du Front sandiniste de libération nationale (FSLN), et soutient qu'une fonction professionnelle, issue de principes journalistiques essentiels, y accompagna toute fonction mobilisatrice. Ce professionalisme enraciné s'allie aux nouvelles réalités économiques pour expliquer les changements chez *Barricada*, depuis la défaite électorale des Sandinistes en 1990, au niveau des relations avec le parti, de la stratégie éditoriale, et de l'administration. Ces conclusions sont mises en lumière par une comparaison avec les systèmes médiatiques d'Europe centrale et orientale, suggérant ainsi que le comportement des médias en époque de transition politique est profondément affecté par l'impact de cette transition envers leurs structures.

Acknowledgments

This project is based on three months of fieldwork in Managua, March through May 1991. The research would not have been possible without the co-operation of its subjects in the Sandinista press. My greatest debt is to Carlos Fernando Chamorro and Sofía Montenegro at *Barricada*. Despite their prohibitively busy schedules, both of these central figures in the drama sat down with me often and extensively for interviews — some 40 hours of conversation in all.* Carlos Fernando also granted me unlimited access to the *Barricada* library: a vital primary resource, and an oasis of air-conditioned comfort throughout a scorching Managua dry season.

Daniel Flakoll Alegría at *Barricada Internacional* was perennially hospitable and encouraging, even when I swiped his *New York Times* before he could get to it. He and the staff of *BI* took me into their lives and quarters for ten weeks. Among other things, this gave me unlimited computer time for transcribing interviews. (A further acknowledgment here to Olivetti for its second-hand "Splendid 33" typewriter, a low-tech workhorse that took up the slack.) Hanging around the *BI* offices also exposed me to a wide range of stimulating background conversation. Thanks to Toby Mailman and Diane Chomsky in particular, and to Irene Selser, who discussed with me her ongoing research into revolutionary and counter-revolutionary radio under the Sandinistas.

My Spanish, while adequate for investigation into written sources, was not up to the twists and turns of rapid-fire spoken Nicaraguan. I was fortunate in that several key figures not only spoke English, but were willing to be interviewed in that language. For the remainder, the services of my translator, Jane Curschmann, were invaluable. Pinning Nicaraguans down for interviews is sometimes like chasing drops of mercury, and a translator necessarily suffers through her own share of late

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* I have edited the conversations with Sofía, which ranged far beyond the immediate context of *Barricada*, into separate manuscript form: *"A Woman and A Rebel": Sofía Montenegro and the Sandinista Revolution*.

arrivers and outright no-shows. The silver lining to this cloud was the extra time I had to interrogate Jane herself, and benefit from her four years of experience in Nicaragua. Apart from interview material, all translations in this text are my own, unless otherwise specified.

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The debt I owe my parents, Jo and David Jones, deserves a chapter all its own. I dedicate this work to them, with love and gratitude.

— Adam Jones

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

On 30 January 1991, *Barricada*, the "Official Organ of the Sandinista Front" from the first days of the revolutionary era in Nicaragua, unveiled a new and in some ways radically revamped version of itself. Gone was the insurrectionary logo alongside the masthead: a guerrilla crouched behind a barricade of paving stones, taking aim with a rifle. Gone, too, were the broad swaths of red-and-black — the banner of nationalist hero Augusto César Sandino. (The *rojo y negro* was still present, but by inference: *Barricada*'s masthead was in black, with a demure red line running underneath.) Most striking of all was the change in the paper's slogan, altered to read, "In the National Interest." As if to emphasize the move away from official party-paper status, a new logo also appeared: Sandino's trademark cowboy hat, emblazoned over a Nicaraguan flag. Even this, though, was soon deemed too partisan. A few days after the first edition of the new *Barricada* appeared, the hat and the flag were separated.

The first edition of the new *Barricada* featured a lengthy article by Bayardo Arce, the FSLN National Directorate's representative to *Barricada* since 1984 and the only Directorate member on the paper's Editorial Council, created a few months earlier. Arce wrote that the paper's reorientation was evidence not only of the new political reality in Nicaragua, but of a "pluralistic inclination" in the publication itself — an inclination which "for some time now" had sought expression in "an opening toward all the sectors."[1]

Three weeks after the formal change in profile, *Barricada*'s director, 35-year-old Carlos Fernando Chamorro, defended his paper's reorientation, which he conceded had elicited "a deluge of letters, telephone calls, and a wide variety of suggestions." Chamorro defined the new *Barricada* as "a Sandinista medium which aspires to ... respond to the demands of a broader and hetereogeneous public." This

goal, he said, could "never be attained by a sectarian journalism, one which seeks only to preach to the converted."[2]

The reasons for change at *Barricada* are a complex combination of the practical, the professional, and the political. One would expect changes in a former official organ to reflect the transformed political agenda of the sponsoring party or state, in turn shaped by a broader correlation of social forces. Unsurprisingly, the Sandinista Front's official agenda for political opposition in the post-1990 environment has powerfully influenced *Barricada*'s self-conception of its national mission — to wage "the struggle for the political depolarization of society and the channelling of conflicts into democratic forums," in Bayardo Arce's words.[3] From the first days of *Barricada*'s existence, the FSLN's agenda for state-building and national defense — and today for democratization, depolarization, and *concertación*[4] — has decisively shaped what we will call here the paper's *mobilizing function*. This refers to the traditional role of the party press in pre-revolutionary situations, and under regimes where left-revolutionary power has been established. The mobilizing role is Leninist in its primary philosophical orientation, though it may reflect other mobilizing traditions as well. The press exists primarily to disseminate the party vanguard's ideological "line," generated elsewhere and by others. In a post-revolutionary environment, it strives to mobilize popular energies behind the vanguard's revolutionary agenda, and to rally the population against the counter-revolutionary opposition which left-revolutionary regimes almost invariably encounter.

It is the central contention of this thesis, however, that another function is evident in *Barricada*'s operations from the early days of the paper's existence. It will be argued, too, that in the wake of recent developments, this function now vies with the paper's traditional mobilizing role to determine *Barricada*'s editorial policy and business strategy — in the broadest sense, the paper's "professional functioning." Accordingly, the analysis will use the term *professional function* to refer to a set of aspirations, strategies, and influences (both philosophical and material) distinct from those characterizing and determining the paper's mobilizing function. It will be contended that the professional function may exist, and indeed develop, even when

constantly overshadowed or overwhelmed by the exigencies of the mobilizing function.

Self-perceptions of the professional function seem drawn largely from western models of press functioning, but it is important to be clear about what this does and does not imply. The liberal-democratic press of the 19th century, as the world's first "mass media," established and inculcated a hegemonic model of press functioning. That model did not appear in a vacuum, however. Apart from its philosophical roots in Enlightenment thinking, it was shaped and constrained by a range of material factors and constraints. Understanding the pressures and limitations which influenced the development of western mass media will enable us to avoid viewing *Barricada*'s evolution, particularly its most recent stages, as simply imitative of foreign models or strategies — although the importance of implanted western (mainly U.S.) cultural patterns ought not to be understated.

To articulate, then, a central analytical premise of the present work: Elements inherent in the exercise of journalism as a craft, and in the functioning of media as market enterprises, objectively contribute to and constrain a media organ's professional function. Key ideological premises such as objectivity, critical distance, and human interest reflect not just the western philosophical tradition, but logical and predictable responses to more basic economic pressures and transformations which first arose in a western context. Those pressures are common to many societies and media systems. The responses to existing constraints, particularly those arising in situations of political transition, also appear to reveal significant similarities which merit comparative study — something denied them so far.

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However striking the evidence of a professional function at *Barricada* during the FSLN's years in power, there can be little doubt that it was the environment created by the Sandinista election defeat of 1990 that made the paper's sweeping restructuring both possible and necessary. This reorientation has worked to increase the salience of the professional function, and diminished the salience of *Barricada*'s mobilizing role in the paper's editorial agenda.[5]

A central feature of *Barricada*'s present operating environment is the new

salience of material and economic factors. In the wake of the FSLN's shocking defeat in the 1990 elections, *Barricada*'s situation differs little from that of other "Sandinista" institutions and organizations. All such bodies — those, at least, that survived the initial trauma and dislocation — have been forced to cope with an environment in which they are no longer privileged, often para-statal actors, enjoying formal or de facto support from the party in power. The constraints this imposes on *Barricada*'s functioning act as a key influence on the paper's present professional function. But the new environment also works to increase the institutional autonomy of an enterprise like *Barricada*. It decreases the control and vigilance of the party leadership, which now finds itself confronted by a sharp decline in ideological and bureaucratic coherence, access to material resources, and that most nebulous but most valuable of political commodities — legitimacy.

These are the broad parameters for an evaluation of *Barricada*'s present orientation in the ongoing process of political transition in Nicaragua.[6] The Chamorro government's accession was accompanied by a negotiated transformation of authority in the state sphere which left the FSLN with control over military and state-security forces, a continuing presence in the state bureaucracy, a consultative role in government decisions, and a provisional veto over certain areas of government policy. However, the manner in which this continuing revolutionary presence should be exploited, and the ends to which it should be directed, are topics which have spawned considerable controversy among self-identified Sandinistas. The internal structure of the revolutionary movement, and relations between the party vanguard and the mass constituency, are other areas increasingly under scrutiny as the FSLN adjusts to its role in the political opposition.

In the process of re-evaluation, self-examination, and regeneration now underway among Sandinista ranks, *Barricada* seeks to position itself as a "public-opinion leader" — capable of contributing to both a new Sandinista consensus and the dissemination of that political perspective and mobilizing strategy to the Nicaraguan population as a whole. As a forum for newly diverse viewpoints (not all of them pro-Sandinista), it seeks to encourage wide-ranging discussion concerning the future of the revolutionary movement.

This new mobilizing function is clearly a less rigid, more formative one than existed (and predominated) under Sandinista rule. As an editorial agenda, furthermore, it reduces the former inherent dissonance between *Barricada*'s professional and mobilizing functions. Central elements of journalism *as a profession* — consultation of diverse sources, separation of fact and opinion, emphasis on human-interest as a principal "filter" for the news agenda — blend well with a more tentative and exploratory approach to the political arena; indeed, the two features are self-reinforcing. In addition, and centrally, the Sandinistas' shift to the political opposition opens political space for the expansion of the professional function. Maintenance of critical distance from ruling authorities is (at least on the rhetorical or strategic level) a hallmark of press functioning in liberal-democratic societies; any other stance is viewed, with reason, as incompatible with principles of professionalism and objectivity. For a media organ that has not renounced its "Sandinista" status, the FSLN's retreat from government opens possibilities for criticism of government authorities that were, at best, muted under Sandinista rule.

Organization of the Thesis

Barricada's present self-conception of its role in political transition reflects not only the transformed environment of the paper's operations, but the degree of *institutional autonomy* which the paper established and developed over the course of the Sandinistas' ten years in power. From this longer-term perspective, the most recent bureaucratic transformations in party-paper relations can be seen as only the latest in a long line of measures — all resulting from initiatives by *Barricada* staffmembers — aimed at carving out and expanding a space for the paper's autonomous professional functioning. The growth of this professional function testifies to the existence and influence of philosophical/ideological considerations distinct from those underpinning *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. And it reflects the greatly-increased salience of economic and material constraints in *Barricada*'s operations — both those related to the generalized economic crisis in Nicaragua and those associated directly with the Sandinista fall from power.

Accordingly, the heart of the present analysis is the existence and evolution

of *Barricada*'s professional function, as this can be distinguished from (and seems in many respects contrary to) the mobilizing role of the official party organ. To exaggerate the nature of the dissonance between these two functions during the FSLN years in power is a temptation this work will seek to resist. It would be a simple matter to isolate and emphasize differences or tensions between the paper's staff and the FSLN leadership. But *Barricada* writers remain, almost without exception, dedicated revolutionaries and strong, if often critical, supporters of the Sandinista Front. As the analysis of *Barricada*'s war-reportage will show (Chapter 3), for most of the 1980s the submersion of the professional function by mobilizing considerations was viewed by *Barricada* staffers as an inevitability — more precisely, as an acceptable compromise given the exigencies of revolutionary survival and national defense. It would be equally easy, however, to accept the stereotype of official media and thereby overlook the fact that distinct functions can exist, *did* and *do* exist, and that dissonance between them is evident — not only in the abstract philosophical sense, but in the day-to-day practice of journalism at *Barricada* during the revolutionary decade.

Our examination of the philosophical, ideological, and material roots of *Barricada*'s mobilizing and professional functions will establish the prominence of the mass media in a diversity of theoretical frameworks, from 19th-century philosophies of liberal-democracy and left-revolutionism, through to post-World War II developmentalism, underdevelopmentalism, and popular-communications strategies. Much of the discussion in the remainder of this introduction, by contrast, will stress the essential *absence* of this dimension from the prominent theoretical school which has emerged in recent years to address the phenomena of democratization and political transition.

Thereafter, the thesis turns to a close examination of the mobilizing and professional functions. Chapters 2 and 3 depart from the philosophical and theoretical influences on each function, as well as the practical considerations which operate in situations of underdevelopment and in the specific Nicaraguan context. The theoretical discussion is intended both to establish the influences on *Barricada* staffers' self-conceptions, and to bolster the contention that media functioning has

been a key consideration for diverse schools, further highlighting the gap in recent literature on democratization and transition.

The discussion of the mobilizing function in Chapter 2 will provide an overview of Nicaraguan political history and developments from 1979 to 1990. The Sandinista Front's agenda for revolutionary state-building and national defence will be examined, since it is this agenda which decisively influenced *Barricada*'s functioning during the Sandinista years in power. An extension of the discussion will consider the FSLN leadership's stated conception of the mass media's role in revolutionary transformation. (An appendix to the thesis fleshes out this element of Sandinista policy by considering state-media relations and media legislation during the revolutionary decade.)

Chapter 3 lays out the core of the argument. The task is to establish the existence of a professional function, distinct from its mobilizing counterpart, in *Barricada*'s operations during the 1980s, and to suggest that this function evolved and entrenched itself over the course of the revolutionary decade. The discussion will draw extensively on interviews conducted after the most recent transformation in the professional function, to show that the current salience of that function is not simply a product of the transition situation.

Important elements of the professional function's development are conveyed by analyzing the broader Nicaraguan context. This part of the discussion will focus on underdevelopment as it affects and afflicts press functioning throughout Latin America and the Third World. More importantly, Nicaragua's *local press tradition* will be considered as a decisive influence on *Barricada*'s professional function. *Barricada*'s self-definition vis-à-vis the domestic press tradition also serves as one of the best available gauges of the professional function's presence, at a time when broader contextual factors (war, economic crisis, extreme internal polarization) might otherwise be held to have submerged professional considerations entirely.

The transformation at *Barricada* since the FSLN election defeat in 1990 is addressed in Chapter 4. Examination of the evolution (and decline in salience) of the mobilizing function will be accompanied by consideration of the sweeping changes to the nature and salience of the paper's professional agenda. Detailed

attention will be paid to changes in *Barricada*'s business orientation — marketing and advertising — since these now assume a much greater presence in the paper's professional function.

The Conclusion attempts to conceptualize graphically the evolution of the mobilizing and professional functions. It then turns to consider the present study's broader relevance and implications. A preliminary comparison will be drawn between the *Barricada* experience and recent developments in the state- and party-affiliated media of the former Soviet bloc. The thesis closes with some suggestions for future research building on the limited but promising findings presented herein.

The Media, Democratization, and Political Transition: A Theoretical Overview

The modern wave of "democratizing" political transitions began on the Iberian peninsula in the 1970s, gathered force with the return to civilian rule in many former military dictatorships during the 1980s (principally in Latin America), and entered a third stage with the astounding events in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989-90.[7] In seeking to come to terms with these large-scale political upheavals, scholars have sought to identify actors and institutions both within and outside societies which contribute to processes of transition and democratization. They have worked, additionally, to isolate vital micro-processes of transition such as "pact-negotiation" among competing social and political actors.

With the exception of sporadic and limited case-study treatment, however, democratization theorists have paid strikingly little attention to the role of mass media. This is surprising, not only because modern political transitions take place in a world increasingly predicated on mass communication, but because diverse schools of political thought have historically accorded a high degree of centrality to the media, as the theoretical introductions to Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis will demonstrate.

For the most part, democratization theorists have credited the press with a role only in the pre-transition stage. By fending off state censorship and repression and by highlighting regime failings, abuses, and corruption, the press acts to decrease the legitimacy of the rulers and helps set the stage for the regime's retreat from

power. But mass media all but disappear from the picture from this point on. Even the role of opposition media in the transition process is largely ignored; media organs affiliated with the ruling regime or state structure receive scarcely a word.[8]

The oversight is evident, for example, in the seminal (1986) text on democratization by Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter,[9] which mentions the role of the media only in passing, in the context of the "resurrection of civil society." The authors' analysis gives little or no consideration to the variety of media that may exist in a given society undergoing a transition from authoritarian rule, the roles they may play, and the range of pressures, constraints, and responses which transition imposes upon these important institutions.

Nor is acknowledgment made of the extent to which even state- or party-affiliated media may exist *or emerge* as distinct institutions — not only vis-à-vis the outgoing authoritarian systems which sponsored or subsidized them, but vis-à-vis the ascendant democratic institutions born from civil society in transition situations. Given that the relative autonomy of the press is a hallmark of the classic liberal-democratic conception of the press, one might expect to see greater media autonomy developing (even, or particularly, in state- and party-affiliated media) where societies are moving in a cautiously or classically liberal-democratic direction. With the recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe, it is clear that political transition is likely to move formerly statist societies in the direction of greater market freedom. Evidence suggests that this development may force formerly-subsidized media to adapt to the new market environment, and encourage them to define their relationship to an emerging civil society in material as well as political or philosophical terms — with the members of civil society serving as potential sources of readership, and thus of revenue (including indirectly via advertising). Such an orientation might have important and discernible implications for both the political and professional realms, as Chapter 4 of this thesis will suggest.

O'Donnell and Schmitter's inattention to the multiplicity of roles mass media might play in transition situations is particularly glaring in their discussion of processes of "pact-negotiation," which the authors consider a regular and often indispensable feature of democratic transitions. O'Donnell and Schmitter define a

pact as "an explicit, but not always publicly explicated or justified, agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define (or, better, to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the 'vital interests' of those entering into it."[10] They note further that

> the general scenario for negotiating a pact is fairly clear: it is a situation in which conflicting or competing groups are interdependent, in that they can neither do without each other nor unilaterally impose their preferred solution on each other if they are to satisfy their respective divergent interests.[11]

On the face of it, it would seem mass media, particularly those affiliated with other (party or state) institutions, are ideally suited to a role in pact-negotiation. For example, to the extent that pacts *are* "publicly explicated or justified," it is the media that will be an obvious means of explication and justification. And the articulation or clarification of "respective divergent interests" is likely to be expressed through mass media perhaps more than any other mechanism, outside of formal in-camera negotiations.[12]

Elsewhere in the *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* series edited by O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead,[13] there is an occasional mention of the relaxing of press censorship as a feature of early stages of democratic transition (see, e.g., Alfred Stepan's contribution[14]), but no systematic exposition of the media's role. This is a particularly striking omission in Stepan's case, given the important part played by the giant TV Globo in the transition to civilian rule in Brazil (a role which has received case-study attention elsewhere, as noted below).[15]

Alain Rouquié's contribution briefly mentions the role of *El Mercurio* in Chile as "spokesman for the moderates (*blandos*) and partisan of a limited opening [to civil society]," but carries the analysis no further.[16] This is again surprising, given *El Mercurio*'s important role in the CIA-sponsored destabilization campaign which eventually overthrew the Allende regime in 1973. If the media are often viewed as effective agents of destabilization via the dissemination of "black" propaganda, then why not consider their potential or actual importance to the *reverse* process — of stabilization — in transitions to democracy?[17]

Another major recent project on democratization, undertaken by Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset in their edited series on *Democracy in Developing Countries*, represents a qualitative advance in that the

media are for the first time isolated as important institutional actors in the transition process.[18] The discussion is limited to a couple of paragraphs in the introduction to one of the volumes, however, and serves mainly to point up the lack of systematic investigation into media processes made by the various case-study contributors. In their introduction to the volume on Latin American transitions, Diamond and Linz correctly note that "Both logic and theory should warn us against neglecting the role of the mass media in shaping the democratic prospect." They add:

> As an important source of political values and information, and a potential check on state power, we would expect the mass media, and perhaps especially the print media, to contribute to the emergence and maintenance of democracy to the extent they are autonomous, pluralistic, vigorous and democratic in editorial orientation. ... But our case studies tell us little about the historical process by which free and independent media emerge, and about the particular and sometimes more subtle components of journalistic ownership structure, editorializing, and reportage that contribute to the strength of democracy. ... We lack, in the social sciences, a good understanding of how a democratic press develops over time and articulates with other social and political institutions.[19]

These observations are commendable in that they 1) acknowledge the prominence of media functioning to a diversity of philosophical and theoretical schools; 2) note the emergence of free and independent media in transition situations as an important area of investigation; 3) recognize the significance of ownership structure (and, by implication, other material factors) in shaping and constraining the media in transition; and 4) point out that these subjects have so far received strikingly little attention from theorists of democratization and political transition. Nonetheless, Diamond and Linz wisely do not claim that the *Democracy in Developing Countries* project manages in any way to fill the gap.

As with O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Whitehead's work, the analytical framework employed in *Democracy in Developing Countries* offers some space for mention of the press as an index of democratization. Diamond, Linz and Lipset follows the conditions outlined by Robert Dahl in *Polyarchy* for "real-world" democracies. Thus they list "civil and political liberties," including freedom of the press, as a defining characteristic of democratic society. Beyond this, though, the editors neglect the role of the media even in contexts where one might expect it to spring readily to mind. For example, the editors acknowledge the importance of "associational life," an analysis that proceeds *pace* de Tocqueville, without attending

to the role of the press as a vital "lubricant" in this respect, an integral part of de Tocqueville's argument (see Chapter 3).

The attention paid to the media's role by individual contributors to the *Democracy in Developing Countries* series is limited and unsystematic. In standard fashion, it stresses press repression as an index of authoritarianism. A lack or lifting of constraints serves, correspondingly, as an indicator of increasing political freedom. But the deeper impact of transition on media functioning, and the role diverse media seek to play in the transition process, is nowhere explored.

The contributor to devote the greatest attention to the role of the press is Diamond, in his chapter on Nigeria.[20] Still, and typically, the analysis here is mostly limited to the role of the press *under* authoritarianism. While touching on different Nigerian regimes' relations with the media,[21] Diamond refers only to the press's role in "relentlessly exposing corruption, mismanagement, and abuse of power, and in warning, forcefully and repeatedly, of the dangers of political violence, intolerance, and misconduct."

Diamond argues further that the press "kept alive the commitment to democracy and ... sought to establish some kind of accountability during periods of authoritarian rule"; the present "enormous pluralism in the print media" he cites as "one of the most favourable *conditions* for democracy" (emphasis added).[22] Clearly, the Nigerian press is highly differentiated. One might, then, expect separate media institutions to play distinct roles in any transition situation — and to experience different constraints and incentives in the transition process. But there is no nuanced analysis of these variables' potential weight and significance.

Christian Coulon's contribution similarly mentions a "proliferation of political journals" as a symbol of the "adventure in democracy" in Senegal.[23] Coulon, though, explores the issue no further. Masipula Sithole's analysis of Zimbabwe acknowledges that "democracy is ... commonly associated with a free press," briefly outlines press pluralism in the country, and concludes that this "augurs well for democracy"[24] — the standard, and pat, framework. John D. Holm's examination of democracy in Botswana, meanwhile, is notable for its passing reference to economic factors as a constraint on press functioning.[25] While the official

Botswanian press benefits by government subsidies, limited access to advertising and subscription revenue limits the influence of opposition media. Still, the Botswanian example is a somewhat static one, representing a longstanding "paternalistic democracy" in Holm's words; he provides no observations on the press's role in democratic transition, since no such transition in the accepted sense has taken place.

Diamond, Linz and Lipset's edited volume on democracy in Asia features only the most scattered and fragmentary references to the press, again purely in a context of state repression of mass media, or the press's role in highlighting deficiencies of authoritarian regimes.[26] Turning to the Latin American case studies, Daniel Levy's analysis of Mexico notes an inverse relationship between the degree of vigour and contestation in press discussions, and the size of the intended audience.[27] In general, argues Levy, "smooth state-media relations reflect overlapping elite interests." His only further (and rather vague) comment is that tentative steps by the Mexican press toward increasing their level of critical coverage "contribute to a new era of democratic challenge." Arturo Valenzuela's appraisal of Chilean democracy has next to nothing on the press. As with Rouiqué's analysis in the O'Donnell/Schmitter volume, the oversight is surprising, given the important role played in the downfall of the Allende regime by the newspaper *El Mercurio*, and considering the extremely vocal and diverse media which have arisen with the Chilean opening to democracy.[28]

Bolívar Lamounier's analysis of Brazilian democratization makes brief reference to the press as part of the "democratic half" of the state/democratic institutions "diarchy." But he attends no further to the role played, for example, by TV Globo, whose power and influence arguably exceeds all but a very few of the formal political parties and movements on which he concentrates.[29] Only Cynthia McClintock's discussion of Peruvian democratization includes a full paragraph on the press as "an asset in the democratization effort," reflecting McClintock's rare case-study analysis published elsewhere (see below); her comments here are limited and superficial.[30]

Elsewhere in the literature on democratization and transition one finds a rare exception to the trend away from study of the media in transition situations. The

role of TV Globo in Brazil, one of the world's largest media conglomerates, has received case-study attention from several scholars. In his analysis of the conglomerate's functioning, Joseph D. Straubhaar notes that the enterprise "is atypical of Third World mass media in the enormous power it has amassed vis-à-vis the state"; it "has been increasingly able to pursue its own agenda and interests." Those interests are, of course, not divorced from the broader economic and political context. Straubhaar views TV Globo's decision to throw its enormous weight behind the civilian opposition campaign in 1984 as one governed by fear of losing the mass audience, which was highly supportive of the campaign. He also sees broader elite fragmentation as having facilitated the transition to support for opposition forces. Nonetheless, "TV Globo followed its own interests as well as a shift in the underlying consensus," and "seems to have gone beyond merely following the elite coalition"[31] — important evidence that the media may advance their own institutional interests in transition situations, rather than merely reflecting other actors' agendas. Other scholars have emphasized the broadly elitist orientation of TV Globo and its role in legitimizing the "limited" opening in Brazilian politics in the late 1970s. However, they still concede TV Globo's extraordinary power as a political actor.[32]

Another rare case-study, this one by Cynthia McClintock on "The Media and Re-Democratization in Peru," appears promising at first glance.[33] Peru offers an example, unique in the Latin American context, of expropriation of the media by a leftwing military government, their parcelling out to various popular interest groups, and their eventual return to previous owners in 1980. McClintock makes a useful distinction between the aspirations of journalists, which tend in the direction of greater professionalism, and owners, concerned for the most part with advancement of their own political agenda. She offers several interesting examples of clashes between journalists "who had hoped for a more professional media ... [and] wanted to be able to criticize the government freely," and owners who imposed rigid political constraints.[34] Nonetheless, the title of McClintock's article is in some respects a misnomer. She concludes that the role played by the media in Peru's redemocratization process was, in fact, minimal:

> ... the media could have been a major political asset in the consolidation of Peruvian democracy under the Belaúnde government [1980-85], but ... it was not. Political and economic elites abused media power and alienated audiences. Newspaper circulation declined and television news ratings fell. ... If the Belaúnde administration had taken steps to encourage a more independent media that to a greater extent reflected citizens' political proclivities, the media might have played a much more important role in strengthening democratic convictions as [*sic*] Peru.[35]

Some recent analyses of democratization have devoted attention to the process of "diffusion of government transitions," as Harvey Starr phrases it. Starr notes that communications analysis enables us to better understand

> how diffusion of 'democratic innovation' could occur through general demonstration effects: constant and increasing information being electronically communicated on the nature of international society which acts to strengthen a conception of 'society' and increase awareness of interdependence.[36]

Diffusion analysis, however, concentrates mainly on inter-state processes. The role of media and communications may be no less important to democratization processes *within* a single state — which may be a promising avenue of investigation for diffusion analysts to consider.

In his recent book, *To Craft Democracies*, Giuseppe Di Palma also addresses the "demonstration effect," noting that "external promotion [of democracy] is a constant."[37] Unlike Starr, though, Di Palma entirely ignores the role that communications media might play in this process, even in the *inter*-state context; he limits the means of "external promotion" mainly to applications of a diplomatic carrot-and-stick policy. Similarly, there is no mention of the media, state or opposition, in the contest of "state/institutional actors."[38] Even his discussion of liberalizing measures and democratic reforms as a prelude to free elections makes no reference to increased freedom of the press and the multiplicity of new roles opened up to the media by processes of transition.[39] The discussion of consolidation and legitimacy in Chapter 7 similarly ignores the role, or potential role, of the media in reinforcing society's democratic habits and forging stable, enduring pacts.

One of the few specific analysis of the media's role in Third World transitions from authoritarianism is Sanford J. Ungar's essay, "The Role of a Free Press in Strengthening Democracy."[40] Ungar recognizes that

> A free press may, in fact, be more effective than an opposition party in achieving change in an oppressive system ... Even when a free press does not lead to the establishment of other parallel institutions, it inevitably reinforces democratic ideals.[41]

Nonetheless, his analysis is conventional in its emphasis on the press's role as 1) provider of accurate information (thereby facilitating interest-group formation), 2) exposer of corruption and mismanagement (thereby casting authoritarian rule into disrepute), and 3) a passive "safety valve" for authoritarian leaders seeking to ease passage to social modernization or greater political pluralism. Absent once again is any conception of the media, or certain media outlets, as *actors* with their own identity, self-definition, and institutional self-interests; absent too is a specific concentration on how the democratization process affects these institutions.

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The research presented in this thesis does not seek to fill the existing gap in scholarship on democratic transitions by proposing a definite range of roles for various media in diverse transition situations. It does, however, argue that the media are worthy and overlooked subjects for scholars of democratization and political transition; that the professional aspects of the press's institutional functioning may represent an important influence, even in state- and party-affiliated media; and that for official media, the salience of professional influences (philosophical and material) tends to increase in transition situations which reduce the material and political clout of the affiliate in question.

Future research ought to provide a range of case studies across broad types of transition situations: for example, from bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes to centrist democratic ones; from monarchical regimes to parliamentary democratic ones; and — the present focus — from left-revolutionary regimes to centre or centre-right ones. Any such analysis will need to grasp the underpinnings of a media organ's role and functioning, and the range of variables which a transition situation is likely to bring to the foreground. In the Conclusion, the thesis will seek to generate a preliminary set of such variables, building on the analysis of the twin functions shaping *Barricada*'s agenda during the 1980s. It is in this sense that the subtitle of this thesis is deliberately two-sided: considering (in a necessarily tentative way) *Barricada*'s present role in Nicaragua's ongoing political transition, but also isolating with greater empirical reliability the factors, influences, and constraints which shape the transition process underway at the paper itself.

Any transformation in state- or party-affiliated media will involve a sea change in the nature and salience of the mobilizing function which is, after all, essential to these organs' operation as "official" organs. Accordingly, the thesis moves now to consider the philosophical roots of the mobilizing tradition, before turning to the implications of the mobilizing function for *Barricada*'s project during the 1980s.

Chapter 2

BARRICADA: THE MOBILIZING FUNCTION EXAMINED, 1979-1990

Introduction

From the first day of its existence until its formal reorientation in January 1991, *Barricada* was the official organ of the Sandinista National Liberation Front. It is important to understand what this entailed.

The essence of *Barricada*'s official-organ status was its mobilizing function on behalf of its FSLN owner and sponsor. Moreover, the left-revolutionary character of the Sandinista Front and the Nicaraguan Revolution virtually guaranteed that it would be the Leninist model of media mobilization which exerted the greatest influence over the FSLN and its organs (if not state-society relations in revolutionary Nicaragua as a whole). Accordingly, an overview of the development of the Marxist-Leninist tradition of media mobilization is followed here by an attempt to evaluate the impact of the tradition on FSLN leaders and *Barricada* staffmembers alike.

Since material factors underlie any institution's functioning, it is also necessary to examine this dimension of the relationship between *Barricada* and the FSLN. What were the material implications of *Barricada*'s official-organ status? Among other things, the discussion here provides essential background for the analysis in Chapter 4, which details the varied pressures placed on *Barricada*'s since the paper lost its economically-advantageous affiliation with the ruling regime in April 1990.

The chapter then turns to delineate the FSLN's agenda for state-building and national defence as this evolved over the course of the revolutionary decade. This is followed by an examination of the institutional evolution of the party paper. That such a direct comparison is possible suggests, by itself, the high degree of correlation between the leadership's mobilizing agenda and *Barricada*'s own transformations and reorientations. But important anomalies are also evident in the comparison — discordant notes which the official-organ stereotype does little to explain.

The Birth of the Mobilizing Press: Marx and Lenin

It is sometimes forgotten that the two great thinkers and strategists from whom state-socialist societies drew their inspiration — Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin — were journalists before they were prominent theorists or leaders. Both practised journalism as a means of propaganda or livelihood throughout their careers. Both, too, bore the brunt of constant suppression and censorship by the states they worked to subvert. Marx battled the Prussian authorities during the long disputes over the *Rheinische Zeitung* and its successor. Lenin, for his part, was forced to publish his germinal Social-Democratic newspaper, *Iskra*, outside Russia to avoid czarist persecution. Not surprisingly, both writers had a good deal to say about the role of the press in bourgeois society — but they also stressed the importance of the revolutionary press in undermining that society, through dissemination of an agenda for radical change.

Marx began (1842) with a traditional libertarian view of tne press as

> the omnipresent open eye of the spirit of the people, the embodied confidence of a people in itself, the articulate bond that ties the individual to the state and the world ... the ruthless confession of a people in itself.[1]

By 1849, he had developed a systematic philosophical system and a political orientation which demanded a new, more focused, openly subversive conception of the press. It was the press's duty "to denounce," and "*to undermine all the foundations of the existing political system.*"[2]

Lenin placed still more emphasis on the press's subversive role, adding to it a conception of the press as revolutionary unifier, channelling workers' spontaneous demands into a "mass of consciousness."[3] As in the liberal-democratic tradition, the press was a means of generating a shared communal identity (a theme examined in greater detail in Chapter 3). But the foundation of this communal identity, for Lenin, was a distinctive *class* consciousness. To forge and strengthen that consciousness, at least in czarist Russia,[4] required a national revolutionary organ. Lenin wrote in *What Is To Be Done?*:

> ... *There is no other means* of *nurturing* strong political organizations except by means of an all-Russian newspaper. ... One can *only* 'begin' by making people *think* ..., by making them add up and generalize all and sundry sparks of ferment and active struggle.[5]

Such a newspaper would be capable of "summing up the most diverse types

of activities and thus *impelling* people to go untiringly forward along *all* the many ways that lead to revolution in the same way as all roads lead to Rome."[6]

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin's conception of the revolutionary press shifted. The press would now serve as "an instrument of socialist construction,"[7] helping to organize production and mobilize defence efforts in the new Soviet state. Lenin's opinion of, and policy toward, press pluralism in the immediate post-revolutionary years is a controversial topic. Do the seeds of Stalinist totalitarianism (including Stalinism's tyrannical grip over the mass media and intellectual life) lie in Lenin's purist adherence to the "necessity and inevitability" of socialism?[8] Or did Lenin actually grant significant space to dissident opinion even in the abyss of civil war and economic crisis?[9] While not dismissing the possible importance of this "pluralism index" for regimes adopting Leninist models of state-building and state-society relations, Lenin's important contribution for our purposes seems to lie in his conception of the revolutionary mobilizing function of the media. He was the first to present, in systematic form, a press model based on the channelling of diffuse mass energies into an explicitly revolutionary agenda.

At the heart of the Leninist model of press functioning lies a hierarchical relationship between party and paper. The official organ works to disseminate party ideology and buttress party policy, but is not usually granted a role in *generating* ideology or policy. In left-revolutionary societies, this hierarchical model of party-press relations has tended, historically, to be bolstered by the military and/or economic crisis such regimes almost invariably encounter on taking power.

It is also worth noting the implications of Leninist mobilizing strategies for traditional press values like professionalism and objectivity — though these values were rather less "traditional" in Lenin's own time. In general, the mobilizing strategy rejects bourgeois press principles of impartiality and classical objectivity in favour of *partiinost*, the integration of press institutions into party structures. Within this framework, objectivity implies not critical distance from the social process, but active *involvement* in that society — mobilizing its members for a revolutionary struggle which has its "objective" scientific basis in the Marxist analysis of human history.[10]

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Of course, Lenin is far from the only theorist to consider and promote the mobilizing function of the mass media. The mobilization motif is in fact a hallmark of modern theorizing on development and underdevelopment. The theorizing, moreover, has tended to bear a normative, prescriptive dimension. As such, it has directly and indirectly influenced Third World development strategies, particularly those overseen by left-revolutionary regimes.[11]

For example, postwar developmentalist theorists stressed the potential of mass media for transmitting a modernizing ideology from urban poles of development in Third World countries to "backward," isolated areas of the countryside.[12] The underdevelopmentalist critique which arose in reaction to the developmentalists' unabashed First Worldism condemned the use of the media to implant alien modernizing values. In seeking to redress imperial and neo-imperial injustices, however, the underdevelopmentalist critique likewise posited a mobilizing role for the media — this time centred on the inculcation of indigenous values and autonomous cultural and national identities.[13]

While the underdevelopmentalist critique held considerable attraction for many Sandinista leaders and pro-revolutionary media figures, it is argued here that the Leninist model of the media's role in revolutionary mobilization is most directly relevant to an understanding of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. This is true both with regard to the guiding attitudes and expectations of FSLN leaders, and the self-conceptions of *Barricada* staffers.

The Sandinista Press, 1961-79

The Sandinista press which emerged after the founding of the Front in 1961 was closely structured along Leninist lines. In the realm of print media, the first "official" Sandinista foray was Carlos Fonseca's *Trinchera*, originally a 4-page mimeographed tabloid published sporadically from August 1962 (a total of 83 editions in all, according to Comandante Tomás Borge[14]).

In the inaugural edition, Fonseca wrote that the periodical aimed to "orientate, strengthen, and solidify our organization." *Trinchera* would fill the need

for "a vehicle of diffusion that is authentically revolutionary. ... We believe that in the future, *Trinchera* will convert itself into [a] popular organ of orientation and combat." The fact that this statement differs little from the formal statements of self-definition which would grace *Barricada*'s editorial page in the years after 1979 testifies to the enduring presence of the Leninist mobilizing strand in Sandinista ideology and revolutionary praxis.

Fonseca cited eight main tasks for *Trinchera*:

1) Explain and clarify what constitutes a revolution;
2) Valiantly attack, without fear or opportunism, the somocista tyranny;
3) Combat the reactionaries of the country;
4) Combat the domination of *yanqui* imperialism in the country;
5) Combat the capitalist exploiters and landowners, defending the workers and peasants;
6) Unmask and denounce the false labour leaders and revolutionaries;
7) Defend the struggle of the Cuban people against *yanqui* imperialism;
8) Lead a campaign for the unity of all the democratic anti-somocista and anti-imperialist forces.[15]

The names of many of the underground publications produced by the Sandinista Front between 1961 and 1979 likewise attest to the Leninist orientation of the early revolutionary media: "Social Presence," "Sandinista Struggle," "Critical Thinking," "Revolutionary Unity."

The Leninist influence is visible not only in the specific role reserved for the media, but in the generally high-priority status accorded the revolutionary press by early Front leaders. "In the underground period, the task of the underground press was very important," Carlos Fernando Chamorro recalled.

> It was always under the surveillance of very high cadres. ... Those underground publications played, I guess, their role in promoting some basic elements of internal cohesion within the FSLN's structures, structures which were [for most of the pre-revolutionary period] relatively small.[16]

In the final period of insurrection against the Somoza regime, it was radio which took over: Radio Sandino broadcast from Costa Rica beginning in mid-1978, and ad-hoc broadcasting operations sprang up in major Nicaraguan cities in the last days of the fighting.[17] But the "immediate necessity" which arose in the immediate aftermath of the revolutionary seizure of power was for a print organ. "There was a tremendous need," according to Chamorro, "to put on the street a newspaper which would help represent the voice of authority and organization of the new government and society."[18]

At this point, the role of the FSLN media switched overnight from that of *provocateur* of anti-regime sentiment to marshaller of popular energies toward construction of the revolutionary society. The transition neatly parallels the strategic revision which the Leninist press model underwent in the wake of the Bolshevik triumph in Russia.

The FSLN, the Leninist Model, and the Media, 1979-90

A central feature of the media environment in Sandinista Nicaragua was its degree of pluralism, perhaps unprecedented in the history of left-revolutionary regimes.[19] (The contrast with the country to which revolutionary Nicaragua was often compared — Castro's Cuba — is striking.)[20] Among the most prominent right-opposition media organs wnich continued to exist and function during the 1980s were the newspaper *La Prensa* and Radio Católica.[21] Only in the area of television was a state monopoly preserved. The pluralistic media environment was decisive in the growth and evolution of *Barricada*'s professional function, the subject of the analysis in Chapter 3.[22] It is also vital to placing in perspective Sandinista leaders' conceptions of the role of official media. In general, it appears the Leninist influence was much stronger in the area of the leadership's relations with party and state media than with ostensibly-independent or oppositionist ones.

Several features of FSLN policy vis-à-vis the party and the state's "official" media can be cited to support the assertion of decisive Leninist influence in this area:[23]

• The establishment of a party newspaper, *Barricada*, just six days after the revolutionary seizure of power (together with alleged attempts early on to draw *La Prensa* into an alliance with the revolutionary state).[24]

• The creation of government agencies to formalize and regulate the relationship between the regime and the mass media (both allied and oppositionist). These agencies included the Directorate of Publication and Press of the Junta of National Reconstruction, which promulgated the first set of post-revolutionary media legislation; the National Secretariat of Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN, responsible for constructing an overarching propaganda apparatus for the

party centred around print and broadcast media; its successor from 1984, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (DAP), headed between 1984 and 1987 by *Barricada* Director Carlos Fernando Chamorro;[25] and the Office of Communications Media, which oversaw censorship policy after responsibility for the mass media was transferred from the Ministry of Culture to the Ministry of the Interior in 1982.

• The formalizing of the Union of Nicaraguan Journalists (UPN) as a Nicaraguan version of Latin America's *colegación* tradition. This was part of a broader Sandinista attempt, following Leninist strategies of state-building, to establish party control over national unions.[26]

• The nationalization of media belonging to the Somocista ruling class and the establishment of Sandinista hegemony over the state media sector (primarily Sandinista State Television [SSTV], the radio station *La Voz de Nicaragua*, and — later — the radio stations grouped together in the CORADEP network).[27]

Earlier we noted the implications of the Leninist mobilizing model for traditional press values such as objectivity and impartiality. In line with Lenin's reinterpretation, statements by Sandinista leaders during the revolutionary decade tended to downplay or dismiss these values as they are interpreted or implemented by liberal-democratic media. But there was, at the same time, an acceptance of the de facto pluralism of the Nicaraguan media environment — even an appreciation of the ethical merits of that pluralism. This suggests, once again, a distinction between the leadership's conception of the role an official organ like *Barricada* ought to play, and the strategy adopted toward Nicaraguan media as whole. The latter seems to have been conditioned more by the Sandinistas' generally pluralistic approach to state-society relations.

Some of the leadership's ambivalence is captured in a 1982 speech by National Directorate member Carlos Núñez on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the generally pro-Sandinista Union of Nicaraguan Journalists (UPN). Núñez argued that capitalist journalists were incapable of acknowledging the "social function" of their activities, which centred on "a collective sense of responsibility." Instead, they were motivated by a "ferociously competitive" instinct and a

> tremendous individualism ... they are like solitary lions whose success is based on their affinity for discovering the news and bringing it to the public, as though it was their very own trophy.[28]

Capitalism, Núñez contended, used the media as a means of alienating the exploited classes and bolstering an inegalitarian economic, social, and political status quo. In Nicaragua, common people were no longer exploited pawns, but

> actors, subjects, creators of their own history and, for this reason, [they] have much to say and the right to be heard, just as the media - who are also 'of the people' - must reflect this popular character [by] being the voice, the instrument of the people.[29]

Compare these comments with those of the post-revolutionary Lenin, denouncing the "thoroughly mendacious and insolently slanderous bourgeois press":

> ... we must set to work systematically to create a press that will not entertain and fool the people with political sensation and trivialities, but which will submit the questions of everyday economic life to the people's judgement ...[30]

But Núñez also urged the UPN to make

> *appropriate* use of the unrestricted freedom of expression which exists for the Nicaraguan people - because it is for the people that it exists, and *not for their enemies* - and this is what the [forces of reaction] do not want to grasp.[31]

This last quotation conveys several interesting dimensions of the Sandinistas' attitude toward pluralism and the role of the revolutionary and pro-revolutionary press. There is, first of all, the philosophical homage to the "unrestricted freedom of expression" which lies at the heart of liberal-democratic media models.[32] On the other hand, there is a conception that this freedom exists "for the [majority of the] people," and not for their enemies.[33] The phrasing is ambiguous, probably deliberately so. Is there an implicit threat that the freedom of expression granted to "enemies" is a contingent quantity? Or is Núñez merely contending that freedom for "enemies of the people" is not the *main purpose* of freedom of expression? Both views appear to have vied for influence in Sandinista media policy, and in punitive measures adopted by the FSLN during the revolutionary decade — a subject the Appendix to this thesis considers in greater depth.[34]

The Limits of Criticism

Questions of the integration of pro-revolutionary media into a Leninist-style propaganda strategy are perhaps best framed in the context of the critical role of these media vis-à-vis ruling authorities and the revolutionary process. Critical capacity is, arguably, as accurate a gauge as any of a media organ's institutional

autonomy. How, then, did Sandinista leaders perceive the critical role of pro-revolutionary media?

This varied, depending on what media outlet was being considered. The Managua daily *El Nuevo Diario*, designated by Sandinista strategists as a supportive but unofficial voice, was expected (and permitted) to maintain a degree of critical distance from the ruling regime — the better to preserve its image as an independent but essentially pro-revolutionary institution.[35] *El Nuevo Diario* was liable, in addition, to some of the same coercive and punitive measures employed by the FSLN in its dealings with opposition media.

Leadership expectations of *Barricada*'s critical role were both more complex and more contradictory. At *Barricada*'s 5th Anniversary celebrations, Comandante Daniel Ortega referred to the official organ as

> a critical instrument at the service of the people, which has helped to make manifest, to reveal, to point out the faults and disabilities to be found in the governmental sector, in the various institutions and sectors of Nicaraguan society. We encourage and support this constructive political role which animates *Barricada*.[36]

Limits, however, were evident. As early as *Barricada*'s first anniversary, Comandante Carlos Núñez stressed the difference between objectivity and impartiality, with considerable implications for criticism of actions taken by the revolutionary regime:

> As for those who bemoan the lack of 'objectivity' in *Barricada*, [let it be noted that] *Barricada* is an objective periodical, but what it is not and will never be - let us say this clearly - is impartial. [This is] because it is at the service of the interests of this Revolution, which are none other than the interests of the working people. *Barricada* is not impartial because, like the revolution itself, it is a Sandinista organ; like the revolution it is, therefore, popular and anti-imperialist.[37]

How these leadership expectations shaped and constrained *Barricada*'s project is analyzed in greater depth in Chapter 3. We move here to consider to what extent, and in what respects, the Leninist model served as a benchmark for *Barricada* staffmembers themselves.

The Leninist Model and Barricada

"We organized *Barricada* around the Leninist idea of what the press should be," recalls Sofía Montenegro:

> The common understanding of this on the staff was that the press should not only be a medium of information, but also should help to organize a totally disorganized society. The whole Somocista state had fallen to pieces, absolutely destroyed. You

> had to reconstruct institutions, help people to organize and defend their interests, and all the time *keep moving*, advancing the revolutionary project. That was another characteristic of this view, that the press should serve to make propaganda for revolutionary ideas. Finally, it should be an organ of information, to bring people the news they needed to organize their daily lives.[38]

The predominance of the Leninist conception on *Barricada*'s early self-conception, particularly in the formative early days of the paper, is hardly surprising. We have shown that this model was the major, almost the exclusive, influence on the functioning of the Sandinista underground press prior to 1979 — a tradition *Barricada* championed,[39] and a mantle it inherited.

In the post-revolutionary environment, the Leninist model was advanced as "a new journalism" for "the new Nicaragua." An editorial of 13 August 1979, less than a month after the revolutionary victory, acknowledged the "courageous and outstanding participation" of national journalism in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship:

> But in the same way that the insurrection ended on July 19 1979, to give way to the tasks of the revolution and of the government which today occupy our heroic combatants, so our journalism and our journalists stand ready to turn a new page in the struggle which today is constituted in entirely different terms from those of the past. The journalism which we are committed to developing has as its objective the informing, orientating, and educating of our people in the tasks and responsibilities which each and every Nicaraguan must assume - in the short-term, to ensure the success of our national reconstruction, and in the future to forge a country in which the injustices evident in the great social contradictions will disappear forever ...[40]

Perhaps the clearest statement of *Barricada*'s Leninist foundations followed a couple of weeks later. A statement on the one-month anniversary of the paper's birth proclaimed that despite the paper's scarce material resources, *Barricada*'s ambitions were grand — and from the Leninist viewpoint, rather orthodox.

> We are, in this moment, the only newspaper written by the revolutionary vanguard. We know that this implies a complex and diverse agenda: to inform, in the sense of making known that which occurs in our country and around the world; to orient the people and contribute to the task of National Reconstruction; to disseminate the political line of the FSLN; to help bring about the organization and normalization which our liberated country so badly needs as it emerges from the rubble of war, to support the measures taken by the Government of National Reconstruction; and to provide information that is both truthful and dedicated to the demands of our people.[41]

This sort of language was regularly redeployed in *Barricada*'s pages over the course of the revolutionary decade. The paper's first-anniversary issue offered a particularly concise distillation of the Leninist model. *Barricada*'s function was to serve as "an organ of propaganda to educate, orientate, and mobilize the people

around revolutionary principles and revolutionary truth."[42] The model was formalized in the 1985 Editorial Profile, prepared by Carlos Fernando Chamorro during his stint as the FSLN's Chief Propagandist.[43] "As an official organ," Chamorro wrote, "*Barricada* must comply with the following functions":

> a) To be a vehicle of mass information of the FSLN for the divulging of its political line, an instrument of support for the mobilization of the masses around the tasks of the revolution, and to convert itself into an effective medium of communication between the masses and the FSLN.
> b) To contribute to the formation of the base committees, members, and activists of the FSLN to wage the ideological struggle, arming them with arguments and revolutionary conceptions, and to be a vehicle of support for the organization of ideological work at the base.[44]

That is, *Barricada* would be a means of disseminating the vanguard's ideological formulations to lower-level militants and activists, again in the traditional Leninist manner.[45]

Party and Paper: The Material Relationship

The intimate ideological integration of the official organ with party structures has its corollary in the material bonds between party and paper — a doubly advantageous arrangement when the party has strong para-statal features, allowing the official organ also to receive support from state sources. The implications, for *Barricada*'s functioning, of party and para-statal ties were manifold.

From the first days of its existence, *Barricada* has been an FSLN-owned enterprise. It remains one. According to Chamorro, however, the FSLN never provided a subsidy "in the classical sense, and there was no subsidy by the state either."[46] Business Manager Max Kreimann elaborates on the question of subsidies:

> *Barricada* belongs to the FSLN. So it makes it rather difficult to separate the property of *Barricada* from the property of the FSLN. What the FSLN did was to create a business. It's not that it donated something to *Barricada*, because *Barricada* doesn't operate independently of the FSLN ...[47]

Neither did the FSLN operate independently of the Nicaraguan state. The para-statal nature of revolutionary rule in Nicaragua meant the Front's leadership exercised considerable de facto control over state resources, and could extend perquisites accordingly to favoured individuals, enterprises, and institutions.

Early FSLN contributions to *Barricada*'s material functioning reflect the improvisational nature of the paper's early operations, and the dislocation and material scarcity which prevailed in the wake of the revolutionary victory. Recalls

Sofía Montenegro:

> I remember one of the members of the FSLN National Directorate, Luís Carrión, arriving at the [*Barricada*] office. "You need some money, eh? Well, here's some capital to start with." He gave us four hundred dollars. That was the extent of the Front's contribution in the beginning [*laughs*].[48]

According to Chamorro, direct donations of cash along the lines of Carrión's were "the minimum component" of the FSLN's contribution.[49] Of greater importance was the de facto support the FSLN offered, particularly in the areas of capitalization and state-sector advertising, which allowed the paper to take formal responsibility for its own payroll and other operating expenses.[50] More specifically, the FSLN's direct and indirect contributions to *Barricada* included the following:

Capital Equipment. Among the donations arranged through party channels, or provided by the party itself, were vehicles for transportation and distribution and typesetting equipment. Many of the early contributions of equipment came from the foreign press stationed in Nicaragua rather than through FSLN channels.[51]

The most important material contribution arranged by the FSLN National Directorate was East Germany's 1984 donation of a Plamag Rondoset Petit 96/1 printing press. The press greatly increased *Barricada*'s printing capacity, from 14,000 impressions per hour on the paper's old Fairchild rotary press to 54,000 impressions per hour with the addition of the Plamag press. This exceeded the combined capacity of all other presses in Nicaragua.[52]

The process of obtaining the Plamag press offers some useful insights into the material relationship between *Barricada* and the FSLN, and the kind of material advantages which *Barricada*'s affiliation with a ruling and para-statal regime engendered. The decision to seek the donation "was the result of a political initiative taken by the FSLN at the highest level," according to Chamorro. Similarly, the decision to donate the press was made "at the highest level" of East Germany's Socialist Unity Party:

> I don't know who personally participated in that. Both [National Directorate members] Tomás Borge and Henry Ruíz have told me they participated in those negotiations. Once you got the decision at the highest level in Germany, the German party - because of the close connections between the state and the party - ordered Plamag to fabricate the press. Once the political decision was made, the technical aspects of the installation and investment were left to *Barricada*. The Germans sent technicians to Nicaragua, we discussed with them what kind of base we needed, what kind of physical space was available, all these details.[53]

From 1981 onward, a National Directorate representative to *Barricada* served as a conduit for transmitting the paper's requests and needs. Chamorro, for example, refers to the "very close and direct surveillance" of *Barricada* by Carlos Núñez, the Directorate representative between 1981 and 1984. "He knew very well the needs of the paper, and he was our channel [to the Directorate] when it came to the needs of the paper."[54]

State-sector and party printing contracts. *Barricada*'s first venture outside the newspaper business was a contract to print the periodical of the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS) in 1979. There followed a contract for the Inturismo publication, *Patria Libre*, and for millions of booklets used in the Sandinista literacy campaigns of 1980 and 1981, together with follow-up materials under the auspices of the *Plan de Sostenimiento de Alfabetización y la Educación de Adultos*.[55] For the 1984 national elections, *Barricada* again printed millions of items.

All these materials were printed on the Fairchild press expropriated from the old Somocista paper, *Novedades*. The addition of the Plamag press in 1984, and the 1987 donation by East Germany of a bookbinding machine, greatly increased *Barricada*'s ability to generate income via state and party printing contracts. As of 1987, *Barricada* was the largest supplier of books for Nicaraguan primary and secondary schools — some 2,310,000 volumes between 1980 and 1987 — and also produced 10,000 copies of higher educational texts. It prepared millions of pamphlets, magazines, cards and various educational materials for FSLN activists, mass organizations, and armed forces. It handled the major releases of Editorial Vanguardia, the magazines of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior, and the official periodicals of the major urban and rural trade unions, together with the monthly publications of the National Association of Nicaraguan Teachers (ANDEN) and the Health Workers' Federation (FETSALUD). It printed the publications of Special [Military] Zones I and II and Region V, along with large quantities of "educational" materials for the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (DAP). *Barricada Internacional* and the pro-Sandinista Managua weekly, *La Semana Cómica*, also rolled off the presses at the *Barricada* plant.[56]

According to Chamorro, these contracts were "one of the most important

reasons we were able to grow, to capitalize, to earn money and reinvest it in *Barricada* to make it a strong industry." He estimates that the enterprise earned twice as much from outside printing contracts as from the sale of newspapers and advertising.[57]

State-sector advertising. Advertising from the various ministries of the revolutionary state accounted for about 85 percent of *Barricada*'s ad copy prior to February 1990.[58] The predominance of state-sector ads permitted *Barricada*, at least initially, to be selective in its dealings with the private sector. Chamorro notes that *Barricada* always "went to the street in competition for private advertising," but acknowledges that the steady flow of state ads originally led the paper to adopt an "idealistic" advertising policy:

> I remember one time we may have rejected a page of advertising by a transnational corporation, because we thought we had some ethical principles that were not to be sold on the market.[59]

"But that changed," Chamorro adds, by the mid-1980s — well before the catastrophe of the 1990 election defeat led to a near-evaporation of *Barricada*'s state-sector advertising, and prompted a much more tenacious hunt for private-sector ads. Nonetheless, during the revolutionary decade, *Barricada* "was not advertiser-oriented":

> We had a small advertising department; we didn't have aggressive people out looking for ads, and also we weren't very good clients. Our philosophy was to favour the reader, not commercial interests. So we decided on a policy of advertising which was completely new: we'd put all the advertisements on non-facing pages. You can go into the archives and see that *Barricada* would give page 6, page 4, page 8 to advertising. That's not the best for the advertisers themselves - they want to be on the facing page.[60]

This policy changed only after the Sandinista election defeat.

Paper donations. Particularly in the early years of *Barricada*'s operations, the FSLN assisted *Barricada* by arranging for donations of newsprint, mostly via the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[61] *Barricada* originally had to assume the debts incurred by the old Somocista press in order to keep paper supplies coming from private companies in the United States. When the Contra war began, and in particular when the U.S. imposed an economic embargo in 1985, private paper supplies dried up. "Party-to-party negotiations" produced the donations necessary to keep *Barricada*'s newspaper and book-printing operation functioning. Nicaragua's

other two daily papers (and various weekly and monthly publications) also received their share of these donations.[62]

Training and education. Regular training sessions and seminars for journalists were arranged by official party bodies like the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. It was expected, says Sofía Montenegro, that the FSLN would "give backing to the development of [pro-Sandinista] journalists," enabling them to "develop themselves as journalists and also as political cadres."[63]

Broader policy measures. Finally, it is worth noting the broader policy decisions taken by the Sandinistas, particularly in the realm of subsidies on basic goods. These freed up discretionary income and allowed *Barricada* — along with Nicaragua's other two dailies — to increase readership dramatically. Correspondingly, circulation fell when the Sandinistas cut subsidies and imposed sweeping austerity measures in the latter half of the 1980s.[64]

Similarly, one should not ignore the preferential treatment extended to *Barricada*, as official party organ, by the Office of Communications Media of the Ministry of the Interior, responsible for implementing Sandinista censorship policies from 1981 onward. During the period of heavy prior censorship, from 1982 to 1987, *Barricada* was unique among Nicaragua's three daily papers in that it was not required to submit copy in advance to the Office of Communications Media. The paper had "a good relationship" with the censoring authority, Chamorro recalls, "and they were not bothering you every day like the other [papers]."[65] Given that prior censorship was a tool used to harass, intimidate, and punish the opposition *La Prensa* throughout the revolutionary decade, and given that even pro-revolutionary media were targeted on occasion (as detailed in the Appendix), the fact that "a degree of trust" was extended to *Barricada* must be viewed as a form of de facto support provided by the revolutionary regime.

Beginning in 1988, according to several sources at the paper, *Barricada* began contributing a portion of its income directly to FSLN coffers — "not a fixed amount," says Business Manager Max Kreimann, but a sum that varied depending on the paper's profits.[66] In subsequent chapters of this thesis, *Barricada*'s status as a money-making enterprise for the FSLN will be explored further, with a view to

establishing links to the paper's increasing institutional and editorial independence.

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Having sketched the broad outlines of the Leninist mobilizing model and the relationship between the FSLN and its official organ, we turn to an examination of how far *Barricada*'s project during the 1980s reflected the mobilizing agenda generated by its sponsors. Detailed consideration of the overall context in which FSLN post-revolutionary policy initiatives and ideological platforms were constructed is followed by an examination of the different stages of Sandinista policy as it evolved over the revolutionary decade. This analysis is followed by consideration of *Barricada*'s institutional evolution. To what extent was *Barricada*'s growth and development a function of FSLN ambitions for the newspaper, and for Nicaragua as a whole?

Revolutionary Nicaragua in Comparative Perspective

Any regime implements policy in the face of prevailing constraints, both domestic and international in origin. In revolutionary societies those constraints are generally all-pervasive.

Defying Marx's prediction (and prescription), modern left-revolutionary regimes have taken power primarily in underdeveloped Third World societies — societies which have, moreover, experienced considerable material damage and social dislocation in the immediate pre-revolutionary period. To compound the dilemma, there are precious few examples of successful seizures of power by the revolutionary left which have not immediately faced sustained, usually violent opposition from counterrevolutionary forces based within or outside the revolutionary state.

The protracted period of subversion and siege which generally follows the instalment of left-revolutionary regimes radically narrows the range of policy options available to revolutionary rulers. All such regimes, if they are genuinely revolutionary, advance a state-building agenda which seeks to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of the *ancien régime* with institutions and patterns of state-society relations reflecting revolutionary ideology and — in varying measures — the

demands of the revolution's popular constituency.

Following from this, implementation of the state-building agenda often involves explicit "positive discrimination" in favour of certain social actors, generally from the popular sector. Such discrimination exacerbates class conflict and increases levels of social polarization. In response, middle- and upper-class forces — when not eliminated, expropriated, or forced into exile — seek to establish their bargaining clout or express their displeasure through disinvestment, capital flight, self-exile, and other measures.

Further internal polarization often ensues as the result of counterrevolutionary campaigns by external actors, constraining the revolutionary regime still further. A disproportionate amount of the government budget is diverted to internal security and military forces. In this highly conflictive environment, a dynamic usually develops which some analysts see as reflecting a deliberate strategy of outside subversion, and which others perceive as evidence of the innate authoritarian tendencies of the revolutionary regime. Internal polarization and/or foreign-based subversion combine with a general environment of scarcity and national emergency to promote the increased salience of authoritarian, "command" elements of revolutionary rule. Whereas at the outset a revolutionary regime may seek to respond to grassroots demands, mass mobilization increasingly becomes a process of generating or preserving popular backing for elite decisions. Unquestioning obedience becomes the hallmark of pro-revolutionary militants, organizations, and institutions. The possibilities for medium- or long-term policy construction and planning are swamped by the exigencies of the moment. Revolutionary ideology increasingly centres around emergency self-defence and day-to-day survival. The outlines of what, precisely, is being defended grow hazy.

The history of the Nicaraguan Revolution, from July 1979 to the Sandinistas' defeat in the 1990 elections, follows the above pattern, which is also typical of other Third World social revolutions — Cuba, Grenada, Vietnam, China, Mexico. The supersession of a revolutionary state-building agenda by an agenda of revolutionary self-defence is visible in all these instances, but is very much the defining

characteristic of Sandinista policy as this evolved between 1979 and 1985.

Reconstruction and State-Building, 1979-84

Not only early on, but throughout the years of FSLN rule, several principal influences and constraints on Sandinista policy-making can be isolated. The operative factors were visible from the start: in the FSLN's "72 Hours Document," a product of the Front's First National Assembly of Cadres in September 1979. The document spoke of

> a) The need to gain ground to consolidate our army;
> b) The need to maintain a high level of social cohesiveness, in particular with the bourgeoisie;
> c) The expectation of financial aid from the Western bloc;
> d) The need to detract from the legitimacy of imperialism's tactics of sabotage;
> e) Our leadership body's political pragmatism [that is, the attempt to co-opt "middle-of-the-road" political groups that briefly expressed an interest in merging with the FSLN] ...[67]

The stark fact of economic near-collapse, in the context of Nicaragua's longstanding dependent insertion into the international economy, dictated some degree of accommodation with the national bourgeoisie.[68] This was intimately related to a second policy constraint: the Sandinista regime's relationship with the United States. In the first year of the revolution a measure of good grace existed in Washington.

Some aid flowed from the Carter regime in its final days, though it was aimed principally at shoring up the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie at the Sandinistas' expense. This situation changed powerfully with the ascension to power of Ronald Reagan in January 1981. Confronted by the increasingly vitriolic opposition of the regional (and global) hegemon, the Sandinistas were forced to choose between compromising revolutionary values and entrenching them in the face of foreign attack. Typically, they chose both routes. The high degree of political pluralism and freedom of expression which characterized Sandinista Nicaragua was geared, in part, toward a foreign audience seeking guarantees that the Sandinistas were not heading down the road of state-socialist totalitarianism. On the other hand, the years 1979-85 witnessed a gradual consolidation of the power of the revolutionary vanguard — the FSLN National Directorate — and the growth of a more hierarchical relationship between the vanguard and its popular constituency,

reflecting among other things the spiralling militarization of Nicaraguan society.[69]

Despite this increased verticalism, the Sandinistas were also faced throughout their tenure with a third policy constraint: the imperative to attend to a popular base which had nurtured the revolutionary movement for years, and which provided decisive mass support in the military showdown with Somoza's forces.[70] The regime's interaction with the masses was formalized and channelled through the popular organizations: pro-revolutionary unions (the CST and ATC), youth movements (the JS-19), women's organizations (AMNLAE), neighbourhood committees (the CDS), and so on.

The organizations were a means of diffusing the decisions of the vanguard to the masses. More than this, though, they were the principal means by which new social actors were incorporated into the revolutionary state-building agenda, and the main method by which popular demands could be channelled to the leadership. Especially in the first five years after the revolution, the organizations acted as distinct interest groups. But their role declined appreciably over the years. The organizations grew more dependent on the state for allocation of scarce resources, and military-style, command-and-obey patterns of rule increased in the face of the foreign aggression.[71]

Mention of state allocation of resources speaks to another central characteristic of Sandinista policymaking and state-building in the 1980s: the intimate intertwining of party and state, visible in the increasingly para-statal functioning of most Sandinista institutions (*Barricada* included). To a considerable extent, this reflected the vanguardist ideology of the FSLN leadership and the impact of Lenin's vision of the revolutionary state. But it testifies as well to the massive material damage and structural disaggregation which confronted the Sandinistas upon taking power.

The revolutionary regime replaced a 50-year family dictatorship that had penetrated to the very marrow of the Nicaraguan state; the elimination of that dictatorship meant the virtual obliteration of the state apparatus which had sustained it. As the hegemonic force in the Government of National Reconstruction, the Front inherited wholesale the holdings of the Somoza

dictatorship. It was natural that those administering these holdings, and the broader revolutionary project, would be drawn from party ranks. Indeed, ministerial portfolios were often (and in the most important cases) allotted to individual members of the National Directorate. In addition, the development of military and security forces imbued with revolutionary values — and thus under direct leadership supervision — was seen as the only deterrent to successful counter-revolution or foreign invasion. Comandante Bayardo Arce's 1984 statement that "The National Directorate has reserved for itself the definition of major lines of political economy, military doctrine, agrarian reform, and foreign policy" provides a neat capsule definition of those areas of economic and political life in which party involvement was most intense, and para-statal features correspondingly most apparent.[72]

Sandinista state-building efforts proliferated between 1979 and 1984. By 1983, though, the military effort against the Contras had grown to overwhelm most other concerns. Attention shifted first to defending and preserving revolutionary advances, then to desperate attempts to slow the pace of their inexorable erosion.

"Everything for the Combatants": National Defence, 1982-87

In September 1981, a core group of ex-officers in the National Guard of the Somoza dictatorship established the *Fuerzas Democráticas Nicaragüenses* (FDN). It was the first formal appearance of the so-called "Contras," who had operated on a piecemeal basis as terrorist bands since early 1980, attacking Sandinista cooperatives and kidnapping or killing literacy workers in remote rural outposts.[73]

The election of Ronald Reagan brought the Contras a steady and increasing flow of U.S. funds. Material support for Contra terrorism was accompanied by a concerted U.S. campaign in the international arena which gradually stifled sources of foreign aid and reconstruction loans to the Sandinista government.

Through most of 1982, Contra raids were confined to the northern border region, though with sufficient intensity to prompt the declaration of a State of Emergency in March of that year. In 1983 and continuing through 1984, combat reached deep into the heart of Nicaragua. At the same time, a rebel movement — partly integrated into the broader Contra forces, but increasingly autonomous in its orientation and functioning — took hold on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Its

constituency was the indigenous Miskito population, deeply opposed to the latest variant of rule by Pacific Coast Nicaraguans.

Largescale resettlement policies were instituted by the Sandinistas in the northernmost provinces and along the Atlantic Coast, but by 1983 it was clear that the Nicaraguan regular army (the Sandinista People's Army, EPS) was incapable of meeting the expanded challenge. In August 1983 the Sandinistas announced a military draft (Patriotic Military Service, SMP). The growing scale of combat and the national reach of conscription were matched by a qualitative increase in Sandinista efforts to mobilize the population in defence of the revolution. In 1984 and 1985 the U.S. invasion threat also became more tangible, with the establishment of a full economic boycott against Nicaragua (May 1985), stepped-up joint military exercises in Honduras, and sonic-boom overflights by U.S. jets.

The official slogan for the year 1985 was "For Peace, Everything To Confront the Aggression." Indeed, by this time the war was consuming a full 50 percent of Sandinista government spending, and nearly every major revolutionary initiative had been put on hold. (The exceptions were land reform, which concentrated on a redistribution of existing resources, and a successful autonomy project for the Atlantic Coast, which succeeded in defusing the military crisis there.)

In April 1985, the tide of battle turned with the Sandinista Army's capture of the key Contra base in Jinotega Province. Lower-level Contra activity continued, however, as did the U.S. campaign of embargo and international isolation. In August 1987 the Sandinistas and Contras reached a peace accord (the Esquipulas agreements) brokered by Costa Rican President Oscar Arias.[74]

National defence thus headed the Sandinista agenda for at least four crucial years in the mid-1980s, swamping the momentum for reconstruction and economic growth generated between 1979 and 1982. The extent of material destruction alone was shattering: 31,000 Nicaraguans killed (including 17,000 Contras); 100,000 men withdrawn from the national economy and placed under arms; 250,000 people displaced; up to $17 billion in damages.[75]

In 1984, at the height of the war, President Daniel Ortega summed up both the scale of the assault and the consuming nature of the response organized by the

government:

> In terms of material goods, defence requires a share of food supplies, construction equipment, fuel, and industrial products. ... Defence requires the cooperation of workers, peasants, and technicians, of leaders of the people's organizations and young people, and of all who have answered the call for defence, bringing to that historic task the best cadres from our labour force, our principal source of productive strength. All these brothers, the best of our heroic people, could be planning the economy, drawing up projects, building grain silos, and bringing in harvests instead of suffering and dying on the border to defend the homeland from an inhuman and immoral aggression. ... Defence of national sovereignty, of people's power, and of the gains won by the people requires, as we have seen, *Defence of the economy and an economy of defence.*[76]

The Economy Takes Over, 1986-89

In 1986, the first of many brutal bouts of hyperinflation took hold in Nicaragua, underlining the near-collapse of the national economy. In an attempt to shore up what productive capacity remained, the Sandinistas imposed a series of harsh austerity plans and increasingly courted "patriotic producers" among the national bourgeoisie. IMF-style economic strategies included generous incentives to agriculturalists and industrialists, although efforts were made to preserve elements of the social safety net for the poor majority.

This arrangement was formalized in the first *concertación* agreements of 1988 (a later version would surface during transition negotiations following the 1990 elections). The Sandinistas used their presence in, and control over, the Nicaraguan union movement to limit working-class demands and labour agitation. This led to an increasing, perhaps inevitable distancing of the regime from its popular base, and is widely held to be a central explanatory factor in the Sandinistas' electoral defeat of February 1990.[77]

With the war all but won in the countryside, FSLN propaganda strategy increasingly centred on bolstering a popular base threatened by state-sector cutbacks and other sweeping austerity measures. Another major focus during this period was the national campaign surrounding a new Nicaraguan Constitution, with its emphasis on compromise and conciliation among the country's polarized social forces. The focus of FSLN mobilizing efforts predictably shifted in 1989 to the long election campaign preceding the Sandinista defeat of February 1990.

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In the conditions of war, economic crisis, and national emergency outlined

above, with society increasingly under militarized vanguardist administration, one would expect institutions linked to the ruling party to direct the majority of their resources toward the war effort and attempts to bolster the national economy. We turn, accordingly, to an examination of *Barricada*'s functioning and evolution during these years of crisis and upheaval. How closely did the paper's editorial agenda reflect the FSLN's agenda for state-building and national defence? What does this indicate about the prominence of the mobilizing function at *Barricada* over the course of the revolutionary decade? What other variables appear to have operated?

Barricada's Evolution, 1979-90

Founding Stage

The formative stage of *Barricada*'s operations lasted from the paper's first appearance — as a rough four-page broadsheet on 25 July 1979 — through to the onset of all-out war against the Contras in 1982. Despite shifts in the paper's coverage and design to reflect competition with *La Prensa* (discussed below), the central explanatory variables for *Barricada*'s functioning during this period are the FSLN's state-building agenda and the physical damage and institutional disaggregation which prevailed in Nicaragua in the wake of the revolutionary seizure of power.

Staffmembers' recollections of this period are replete with accounts of shortages, professional limitations, and inadequate plant. In terms of editorial content, this stage was characterized by a promiscuous desire to "tell everyone about everything," in senior writer Onofre Guevara's words.[78] There was also a desire to respond to the activities and demands of the popular movements which had swelled revolutionary ranks in the last months of the Somoza regime. Politically, this period is also notable for the early "honeymoon" between the bourgeois anti-Somocista community and the guerrilla vanguard.

As political battle lines were being drawn, so too were the broad outlines of revolutionary policy being sketched. In general during this stage, Chamorro acknowledges, *Barricada* was "more concerned about the newspaper's educational role, less concerned about 'news'." Editorial discussions centred around "how to

respond to the needs of the new [popular] groups that were emerging, especially the labour unions." With the national economy in a state of collapse, the paper adhered "more or less [to] the Leninist idea of the newspaper as an organizer of production."[79]

Central elements of *Barricada*'s coverage during this early stage attest to the breadth and diversity of the revolutionary constituency and agenda. Non-systematic content analysis suggests that priorities for news coverage included the various institutions established by the revolutionary government (particularly the Popular Sandinista Army); diplomatic relations and campaigns for foreign aid undertaken by the Junta of National Reconstruction; popular campaigns instituted by the revolutionary government (particularly the mass literacy campaigns of 1980 and 1981); and the threat posed by elements of the Somocista National Guard which had escaped to Honduras.[80]

With the vanguard agenda diffuse and outside inputs both salient and varied, *Barricada*, like most emergent revolutionary institutions, was preoccupied with the pressing necessity of establishing itself and stabilizing its operations. Material challenges for the paper during this period included the building of a stable journalistic and administrative staff; a move from the cramped quarters of the old Somocista newspaper, *Novedades*, to larger and better-equipped facilities in 1982; implementation of stable salary arrangements;[81] and the establishment of a distribution network and stable supplies of ink and newsprint, enabling an increase in circulation.

The preoccupation with material considerations points to the salience of institutional factors in the paper's functioning. This was evident, too, in the progressive delineation of bureaucratic relations between the paper and the party leadership. The latter phenomenon seems to have been governed by considerations beyond the merely material or strictly institutional, a contention which is central to the discussion in Chapter 3.

Second Stage: Barricada *as War Bulletin, 1982-86*

From 1982 to 1986, the war against US-backed Contra rebels leapt to overwhelming salience in Barricada's mobilizing function and editorial content. The

advent of *corresponsales de guerra* (war correspondence) as *Barricada*'s "main dish" through the mid-1980s[82] mirrored the FSLN leadership's own shifting priorities. FSLN leaders and *Barricada* staffers alike viewed the paper's role as that of propagandist for the war effort, particularly after the introduction of Patriotic Military Service in 1983. Thus, for much of this period *Barricada* was "practically a bulletin of information on the war," in Sofía Montenegro's words.[83]

Two systematic analyses of *Barricada* during this period bear out staffmembers' recollections. A small-scale content analysis, carried out for this thesis, examined *Barricada*'s front pages for June 1984, at the height of the Contra war. The front pages of 27 editions were surveyed. Of these, 18 of the above-the-fold headlines were directly related to the war effort. In two further cases, secondary stories — above the fold and alongside the main story — also concerned the war. In their 1988 monograph, meanwhile, Guillermo Cortés and Juan Ramón Huerta found that 64 percent of the total area of *Barricada* front pages between 18 and 24 March 1986 consisted of stories concerning the military aggression against Nicaragua.[84]

Numerous other transformations in the paper's operations are also evident during this stage, however, apparently reflecting imperatives other than those associated with the paper's traditional mobilizing function. These include radical transformations in the paper's material functioning and staff stability, and professionally-motivated attempts to construct a news agenda and journalistic language less centred on exhortation and rhetoric.

Most of the essential features of *Barricada*'s material operations were in place by the end of 1982, a year Chamorro considers a watershed in the paper's development:

> In 1982, we were able to organize a better staff. We made up a team for the first time, with Xavier [Reyes] and another guy, Marcio Vargas, now the director of [the pro-Sandinista weekly] *El Semanario*. ... For the first time we were able to spend some time on [coming up with] a new face for the newspaper in terms of design, for example by using typefaces in a more creative manner ... and provid[ing] basic news on the front page for people who are in a hurry. ... It was important for us, to help define our new identity.[85]

Nineteen eighty-two also marked the advent of systematic attempts to determine — through consultation with representatives of various Sandinista sectors

and organizations — the kind of presentation, layout, and journalistic language that would best meet the informational needs of *Barricada*'s constituency.

Third Stage: 1986-1988

As the war in the countryside wound bloodily down, new trends predominated in *Barricada*'s institutional functioning and editorial agenda. Increasingly, the paper shifted its coverage away from the military effort and toward the economic crisis which consumed Nicaragua from 1986 onward. A second feature of this period was *Barricada*'s professional and political response to the disappearance of its crosstown competitor, *La Prensa*, closed by the Sandinistas for 15 months from July 1986 to October 1987.

In early 1986, the FSLN leadership announced a new economic plan (the Fonseca Plan) designed to address the mounting crisis. Taking its lead from the shift in FSLN priorities, *Barricada* moved to treat economic issues "with greater specialization," according to Xavier Reyes, Managing Editor for much of this period. "We began to concern ourselves with educating journalists in economics, and in writing about agricultural issues." The paper also received explicit instructions from FSLN leaders "to involve ourselves more in that field [economics]."[86]

The closure of *La Prensa* in July 1986, on the other hand, created an opportunity-space for *Barricada* which would serve as a vital testing ground for far-reaching transformations at the paper following the Sandinistas' 1990 electoral defeat. *Barricada* staffers saw the closure as an opportunity to win readers permanently away from *La Prensa* by imitating some of the journalistic features and emphases which predominated in the crosstown rival. "We were trying to be more objective, more balanced," says Xavier Reyes. Among other things, this involved an effort to moderate *Barricada*'s stilted and clichéd tone: "Our journalism was still quite rhetorical and adjective-laden."[87]

Fourth Stage, 1987-90: Constitution, Election, Reorientation

Beginning with the Esquipulas peace agreements of August 1987, and continuing through the Sandinista election defeat of February 1990, two main developments in *Barricada*'s coverage are worth noting. The first is intuitive, given the predominance of the mobilizing function at all stages of *Barricada*'s operations

during the revolutionary decade: the FSLN official organ became a subordinate tool in the 1990 election campaign. "The campaign absorbed everything," Chamorro states, "and this was a very long campaign — a year or more."[88]

Nonetheless, a second important development took place prior to the onset of election fever. During 1987 and 1988, sweeping transformations in *Barricada*'s relations with the FSLN were first mooted. The discussions — which most senior staffmembers recall participating in — reflected changes in the FSLN's "line" vis-à-vis state-society relations. Peace negotiations were underway with the Contras, weakened by military setbacks and by the Iran-Contra scandal in the U.S.; revolutionary campaigning centred on construction of a Constitution that would bridge political and social divisions, reconciling all Nicaraguans. But the reorientation project was also born from longstanding dissatisfactions among *Barricada*'s staff with the paper's official status, which had led to excessive, sometimes suffocating constraints on the paper's journalism.

Conclusion

The above discussion suggests that broad transformations in *Barricada*'s editorial agenda took their lead, at all stages during the 1980s, from the agenda of the FSLN National Directorate. Even during the initial formative period of that paper's operations, with the parameters of revolutionary power still very much in flux, the paper was closely integrated in a bureaucratic sense with the FSLN leadership. Chapter 3 will show that leadership vigilance was, in fact, most intense during this early period.

The finding is in line with what might be called the *reflex rule*. The Leninist model of the official party organ, and Leninist conceptions of the media as an implement of revolutionary mobilization, bestow upon the official organ an essentially proselytizing, propagandistic orientation. Changes in coverage and content are likely to mirror closely the shifting priorities of the vanguard leadership — responding, in turn, to transformations in the domestic and international environment.

Thus, during the revolutionary decade, *Barricada*'s mobilizing role closely

paralleled FSLN leadership priorities. In rough chronological order, these priorities included: disseminating revolutionary ideology; harnessing popular energies for revolutionary state-building; rallying the Nicaraguan population for the defence effort against U.S.-backed Contra rebels; explaining and promoting the harsh economic austerity measures imposed by the Sandinista regime in the latter half of the revolutionary decade; and overseeing the process of peacemaking and Constitution-building that preceded the 1990 elections.

Even the limited overview here demonstrates, however, that other variables and imperatives were operative at all stages of *Barricada*'s evolution. One such variable might be defined as the paper's *institutionality*. This evolved in tandem with leadership designs for the paper, and was heavily dependent on the wide range of material advantages offered by *Barricada*'s affiliation with the revolutionary party and state. Nonetheless, the move to more spacious quarters, the amassing of a sophisticated material plant, and the coalescing of a stable staff with increasing professional skills and experience were all fundamental in shaping the paper's institutional identity — in ways that have little directly to do with party-paper relations.

Considerations of craft, professional quality, newsworthiness, and readability also appear to be operative throughout. Moreover, the paper's self-definition vis-à-vis its principal competitor, *La Prensa*, seems to have its roots in professional considerations as much as political ones.

This diverse range of concerns, variables, and inputs — institutional identity, journalistic craft, orientation toward readers and competitors — we define here as the *professional function*, which vied with *Barricada*'s mobilizing imperative at all stages of the paper's development during the revolutionary decade. Chapter 3 seeks to identify the philosophical and material roots of the professional function — and the dissonant manner in which professional considerations interacted with the paper's mobilizing role during the Sandinista years in power.

Chapter 3

READERS VS. LEADERS:

THE PROFESSIONAL FUNCTION EXPLORED, 1979-90

Introduction

"Very rapidly [after the 1990 election defeat], we reached the conclusion that no matter that the FSLN had lost — we as journalists had won, and we had to capitalize on that victory."[1] Does Carlos Fernando Chamorro's intriguing statement reflect an attempt merely to put the best face on the Sandinistas' electoral setback? The argument of this thesis, to the contrary, is that alongside the traditional mobilizing role of the official party organ, there existed at *Barricada* a distinct professional function, founded on principles of objectivity, critical distance, and human interest. To some extent, the existence of this function belies the surface congruity between the FSLN mobilizing agenda and *Barricada*'s project during the 1980s, and it appears to underlie and partly explain developments at the paper since the 1990 election defeat.

This chapter seeks to establish that beneath the surface — occasionally breaking into the open — there existed a range of professional ambitions, priorities, standards, and approaches which

- sought expression within the parameters of *Barricada*'s mobilizing role;
- regularly generated feelings of dissonance for *Barricada* staffers, testifying to a degree of perceived disharmony in the mobilizing and professional functions;
- led the paper to seek a measure of distance, both bureaucratic and editorial, from the FSLN leadership;
- encouraged *Barricada* staffers to advance perspectives and solicit information that reflected the paper's increasing institutional identity, rather than relying exclusively on informational resources generated by the FSLN, the revolutionary state, or sympathetic foreign sources;
- spawned discussion of *Barricada*'s formal "deofficialization" — that is, the

paper's renunciation of official-organ status and a para-statal role; and

• led, on occasion, to open conflict between *Barricada* staffers and National Directorate members, state functionaries, and foreign diplomatic sources.

Where do the philosophical and cultural roots of this professional function lie, and what accounts for their emergence in the *Barricada* instance? This chapter will consider, first of all, the origins (both philosophical and material) of conceptions of journalistic professionalism. The contention is that the foundations of *Barricada*'s professional function lie in models of press functioning most closely associated with the western press tradition. This is not to assert that *Barricada*'s posture toward these models is one of blind imitation; but neither should the direct transmission of western (in this case, North American) values and models be underestimated. Indeed, it would be surprising if a country exposed to 150 years of intense foreign influence and political hegemony did not display cultural patterns, and models of institutional functioning, which reflected to some extent the hegemon's dominant influence.

It is argued that an important conduit for transmission of the North American press model to *Barricada* was the Nicaraguan press tradition itself, which additionally shaped and constrained the paper's functioning in numerous ways during the period under analysis. An outline of this tradition is therefore presented — one which addresses both broad features common to Third World media systems, and elements unique to Nicaragua (in particular the powerful presence of *La Prensa*, an opposition force under both the Somoza dictatorship and the Sandinista revolutionary regime). A brief study of the *La Prensa–Barricada* relationship will suggest the extent to which *Barricada*'s functioning during the revolutionary decade was oriented toward competition, both professional and political, with its crosstown rival.

The evolution of relations between the FSLN and *Barricada* is central to establishing the presence and pertinence of the professional function, even under conditions which restricted its salience in the paper's editorial content and material operations. Accordingly, the party-paper relationship will be analyzed from two perspectives. An evaluation of transformations in channels of bureaucratic communication and mechanisms of party control will set the stage for consideration

of "the official straitjacket." By this phrase we refer to the dissonance *Barricada* journalists perceived between their professional functioning and the role requirements dictated by *Barricada*'s official-organ status.

A useful way of exploring the operative conceptions of professionalism among *Barricada* staffmembers is to consider the contrast some staffers draw between *Barricada*'s project and that of the party press in Cuba — the country to which revolutionary Nicaragua bore perhaps the closest resemblance. A case-study of *Barricada*'s war reportage will indicate the existence of professional considerations even when objective circumstances would seem to militate most strongly against their expression. The chapter concludes with an examination of the reorientation project, first mooted at *Barricada* in 1987, which serves as an important precedent for the far-reaching transformations in the paper's post-1990 functioning.

I.

The Professional Function: Roots and Origins

The Evolution of the Western Press Model

The first great liberal statement of the press as society's main forum for the "free and open encounter" of ideas is generally held to be Milton's *Areopagitica* (1644). "Where there is much desire to learn," Milton wrote, "there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making." This line of thinking — together with its epistemological foundation, that "Truth was definite and demonstrable"[2] — was further explored two hundred years later by John Stuart Mill. Mill rejected Milton's argument that truth "had unique powers of survival,"[3] but did hold that truth was knowable and demonstrable, and would tend to re-emerge despite attempts to suppress it. As for the role of the press in debating and disseminating truth:

> The time, it is hoped, is gone by when any defense would be necessary of the 'liberty of the press' as one of the securities against corrupt or tyrannical government. No argument, we may suppose, can now be needed against permitting a legislature or an executive, not identified in interest with the people, to prescribe opinions to them and determine what doctrines or what arguments they shall be allowed to hear.[4]

For Mill and other exponents of classical liberal or libertarian doctrines, suppression of press freedom meant "silencing the expression of an opinion." From a utilitarian perspective, this involved "robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation — those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it."[5]

But these lofty statements should not blind one to the mutually-supportive interaction of economic liberalism and philosophic libertarianism. As Edwin R. Black points out, a broad symmetry is evident between liberal economic philosophy and the libertarian approach to press functioning, though formal causal links are inherently harder to isolate.[6] As an 'invisible hand' guided the free market, so would the invisible hand of "every man's wish for truth" lend order and purpose to the free marketplace of ideas. In both cases, the duty of government was to interfere as little as possible with the momentum of the underlying forces at work.

Alexis de Tocqueville, examining the combative and sometimes scurrilous press of mid-19th century America, similarly stressed the connection between constraints on the press and restrictions on society as a whole: "The sovereignty of the people and the liberty of the press may ... be regarded as correlative."[7] De Tocqueville's primary interest, though, was public associations in American popular democracy. The press acted, for him, as an indispensable lubricant to associational life, a means of overcoming the inevitable distance among a dispersed, atomized citizenry:

> Newspapers ... become more necessary in proportion as men become more equal and individualism more to be feared. To suppose that they only serve to protect freedom would be to diminish their importance: they maintain civilization. ... In order that an association among a democratic people should have any power, it must be a numerous body. The persons of whom it is composed are therefore scattered over a wide extent, and each of them is detained in the place of his domicile by the narrowness of his income or by the small unremitting exertions by which he earns it. Means must then be found to converse every day without seeing one another, and to take steps in common without having met. Thus hardly any democratic association can do without newspapers.[8]

De Tocqueville's formulations have powerfully influenced the notion of the press's positioning vis-à-vis civil society, shaping modern conceptions of the press's social responsibility, including its role as "watchdog" over ruling elites and aggressive discoverer of corruption and abuse of power.

If a link can be posited between libertarian epistemology and market ideology, a materialist analysis may similarly be useful in analyzing the development of two key liberal-democratic concepts of press functioning: professionalism and objectivity. Professionalism as a value is linked, logically enough, to the rise of journalism as a *profession*. This, in turn, is a phenomenon closely associated with the rise (during the early 19th century) of the political party press in Europe and North America; party sponsorship first enabled journalists to engage in their craft full-time. The professional autonomy of the journalist was consolidated with the displacement of the party-linked press by an emergent mass-circulation, "popular" press, beginning in the mid-19th century.[9]

As for press objectivity, its philosophical roots lie in Enlightenment epistemology. Possibly the most important factor in the evolution of modern notions of objectivity, however, was the rise of the commercial press, structured on advertising as a principal source of revenue and predicated on an ever-expanding mass readership. As Peter Golding and Philip Elliott note,

> The search for new and larger readership draws the press away from a strident factionalism and toward a more central band of opinion, in which a mix of apparent neutrality and entertainment make a paper attractive as much as influential.

One result of these environmental factors, according to the authors, was an ideological change "stressing the objective and authoritative nature of the news being supplied," a key feature of which was the replacement of "lengthy discursive commentaries" by "part-American, part-telegraphic, terse, brief 'reporting' ... as the mark of efficient newspaper work."[10] The distinction between (objective) news and (subjective) commentary has existed ever since in liberal-democratic societies.[11]

Another central development in the western press of the 19th and early-20th century was the rise of "human interest" as a governing criterion of newsworthiness. Here the links to economic and material factors are far-reaching. The 19th-century penny press sought to compensate for its low price by generating a mass readership and selling this readership to advertisers.[12] The audience was largely an urban one, at a time of sweeping demographic upheaval. Newspapers of the time sought to soothe the feelings of dislocation and alienation which increased urbanization generated. One method of doing so was to stress the individual's worth, and the

validity of his or her daily experience, in an urban context otherwise notable for its homogenization and impersonality. Michael Schudson writes that

> the penny press invented the modern concept of "news." ... One might say that, for the first time, the newspaper reflected not just commerce or politics but social life. ... [The penny press] invented a genre which acknowledged, and so enhanced, the importance of everyday life.[13]

The rise of the penny press brought with it an unprecedented degree of competition among newspapers for circulation and advertising revenue. This had the effect of bolstering the aggressive pursuit of news as a feature of journalism: to the one who "broke" the news story went the spoils in the form of market edge and increased advertiser interest.

Since the rise first of the party press and then of a truly "mass" media, core values of objectivity, professionalism, and human interest have floated free of their material moorings, and are now generally advanced as self-evidently ethical conceptions of media functioning. It is notable that even the most aggressive critiques of the modern liberal-democratic media do not fundamentally question such values, but rather accuse the media of betraying them.[14]

On these philosophical and material foundations has been built the modern craft of journalism, which stresses the critical distance inherent in "reporting"; a separation (now grown slightly less rigid) between subjectivity and objectivity; acuity of observation; and succinctness of language. The nature of the modern craft is well-conveyed in the section-headings to a popular journalism text:

> **Vision.** To write well, first see well. Acquiring the camera eye. ... The difference between writer and reporter. A professional attitude toward temporary art. Skepticism for received opinion - and one's own.
>
> **Focus.** Abstraction. The language of Vaguespeak. Seeing the war through the single soldier. Detail. Don't ask the reader's emotion - earn it Avoiding bias. ...
>
> **Form.** Grammar and diction. Season, but don't overspice. Arrangement of detail. Construction and unity. Style. Keeping the "I" out.
>
> **Ideas.** Awareness and news sense. Inspiration vs. hard work. Getting out of the office. ... What is not news.[15]

These are the modern values and practices generated and adhered to by a first-world press tradition, exploiting a degree of technological sophistication and global reach unprecedented in history. To more accurately grasp the professional heritage to which *Barricada* was heir, however, it is necessary to consider the historical insertion of these First World standards and models into settings

characterized by scarcity, underdevelopment, and cultural subordination.

Underdevelopment and the Nicaraguan Press Tradition

With the analysis of the press tradition in Nicaragua, we move to consider influences on *Barricada*'s project which have no direct link to the paper's mobilizing function and no ready parallel in the FSLN's agenda for the paper or for Nicaraguan society as a whole. The analysis will accordingly draw out areas of divergence — even of open contradiction — between the requirements of *Barricada*'s mobilizing role and the range of professional pressures, constraints, and readership expectations associated with the practice of journalism in Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan press tradition is only partly *sui generis*, and consideration of trends common to Latin American or Third World media systems will be supplemented by an evaluation of these trends as they are translated in the distinctive Nicaraguan environment.

The Collaborative Pattern

Despite the generally private nature of media ownership in Latin America,[16] regional media for the most part did not develop as institutions unto themselves, as in North America. John Spicer Nichols notes that media "frequently were founded and continue to serve as collaborators with specialized power contenders in society, usually political factions."[17]

In the Nicaraguan case, Nichols ties "the major figure in the history of Nicaraguan journalism," murdered *La Prensa* editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Sr., to the collaborative tradition. Chamorro belonged to one of the country's most prominent political families; *La Prensa* was purchased by his father as "a forum for the Conservative platform and eventually an international symbol of opposition to the Somozas' and the Liberal Party's dominance of Nicaragua."[18] Communications sociologist Guillermo Rothschuh confirms the collaborative tradition's applicability to Nicaragua:

> The written press in Nicaragua has been strongly linked to political parties or factions of political parties. It has been strongly partisan at all times since its foundation at the end of the last century to now.[19]

The implications of this for journalistic practice and newspapers' relations

with their readers are readily apparent, Rothschuh contends:

> It's been proven in Nicaragua that this kind of journalism provokes a certain if not total rejection by the readership, a certain distance and cautiousness. Because people understand that what comes first isn't defense of the interests of society as a whole, but of a particular party or governing régime.[20]

A collaborative media organ — which for present purposes could be defined as one in which the mobilizing function predominates — thus faces a range of barriers in establishing professional credibility among readers. From the perspective of sponsoring parties or régimes, moreover, the collaborative tradition encourages a propagandistic orientation and discourages the more distanced, disinterested reportage which is a putative hallmark of western media systems. The Nicaraguan "cultural formation," one young Nicaraguan journalist wrote in 1986, imposes on journalists a role as "simply reproducers of ideologies, ideological agents" — that is, as *mobilizers*. Journalists are strictly limited in their ability to act as "active participants in the formation of opinions."[21]

Problems of Professionalism

Collaborative traditions tend to militate against the develop of professional values and formal training. In Nicaragua, the transition from collaborative to independent models of press functioning was halting and incomplete at the time of the 1979 revolution.[22] Levels of professionalism were so low that journalism carried with it a pervasive image of "bohemianism," with the journalist viewed as "a bum, a drunkard, irresponsible, and so on," according to *Barricada* senior writer Guillermo Cortés.[23]

The early days of *Barricada*'s functioning hardly represented a decisive break with the pattern of underdevelopment. Interview subjects at *Barricada* recalled, often with bemusement, the strikingly low level of experience and professionalism which prevailed in the paper's formative period. "We were nearly complete amateurs," says Sofía Montenegro:

> We had no idea that things like accounting and administration even existed, until some people from *La Prensa* came over to help us out while their offices were being repaired. We didn't sell the paper initially, we just gave it out. We had no distribution network, nothing. And frankly, we didn't give a shit, you know. ... The people who were really new were the journalists. They were mostly former students; some of them were youngsters who'd just come out of university. A few had some experience in radio, but none in writing.[24]

Those without formal training practiced what in Nicaragua (and elsewhere in Latin America) is called *periodismo empirico* — "empirical journalism," repertorial skills learned on the job. Occasional efforts were made under the Sandinistas to increase training for pro-revolutionary journalists not able to secure one of the limited places in Managua's School of Journalism. In particular, occasional seminars were organized by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, and some training sessions were sponsored by the Union of Nicaraguan Journalists.[25] But they apparently had little effect. Xavier Reyes argues that "We spent ten years talking about the revolution, instead of *educating* ourselves to be able to talk about it [more effectively]."[26]

Material Scarcity

Shortages of key resources — paper, printing facilities, distribution vehicles, and so on — is a common feature of press operations in Latin America. In an especially poverty-stricken and underpopulated nation like Nicaragua, it is hardly surprising that the written press has tended to be "small, unprofessional, and ramshackle," in Nigel Cross's words.[27]

The impact of this aspect of underdevelopment is amply on display in *Barricada*'s early professional functioning. The paper began life with a minimum of equipment and resources — an editorial on the paper's one-month anniversary noted that the FSLN's official organ still had no vehicles, only seven typewriters, "no tape-recorders, no photographic equipment, no archives, no adequate plant or furniture."[28] Sofía Montenegro recalls occasions early in *Barricada*'s existence where journalists wrote in an office illuminated only by car headlights.[29]

The influence of scarcity is visible in another area of the paper's operations. Material and logistical cooperation among Nicaragua's dailies has long been the norm — prompted by the unpredictability of access to resources, and bolstered by the unique network of family linkages which binds politically-opposed media organs.[30]

Poverty and Illiteracy

The limited discretionary income available to the majority of the population in Latin American countries, combined with high levels of illiteracy, has had a broad

and varied impact on the Nicaraguan media environment. First, relative cost-efficiency combines with illiteracy to lead to a high predominance of radio over the printed press as a source of mass information and entertainment.[31] Patterns of literacy and wealth mean that in Latin America as a whole, press circulation tends to be limited to the intellectual class. Hence Nichols' statement that Nicaraguan print media historically "are better described as *class* media than *mass* media."[32]

Underdevelopment also limits transportation infrastructure, constraining the ability of print media to penetrate into rural areas.[33] Even in urban zones, distribution is hampered by dependence on child street-vendors. Chamorro's description of the logistics of *Barricada*'s Managua circulation (as of 1991) provides a vivid picture of the constraints imposed by underdevelopment, even in the otherwise favourable environment of the capital city:

> It's a problem of circulation. Let's say there are in Managua 150 or 200 agents. Each agent has under him a group of kids - most of them are kids. They study. Now, a good seller could sell 80 newspapers, maybe up to a hundred. But what happens is that you have the same agent taking both *El Nuevo Diario* and *Barricada*. So that kid who could sell 80 or 100 papers would only sell 40 of *Barricada*. If, on the same day, he has also to sell [the pro-Sandinista weeklies] *El Semanario* or *La Semana Cómica*, that adds to the amount of paper he has to carry. The result of all this is that if you get the papers to the drop-off point a bit late, the kids will take *El Nuevo Diario* and not come back [for *Barricada*]. The amount of time they can devote to selling the papers is relatively brief, because they have to go on to study.[34]

To the elite function of the written press, then, must be added its heavily urban orientation. These constraints and limitations are, however, offset to some extent by idiosyncratic features of the Nicaraguan landscape. During the 1980s, war and dislocation in the countryside swelled Managua's population to the point that it now comprises about a third of the country's population. This worked to increase the potential readership of newspapers which had difficulty penetrating beyond urban areas, and also facilitated the provision of literacy training to these poorer sectors.

In *Barricada*'s case, the paper's rural distribution was bolstered by its privileged status as official organ of the ruling party. *Barricada* could "piggy-back" on distribution networks established under conditions of revolutionary mobilization and military emergency in the countryside. As the main educational resource of FSLN militants and political officers, *Barricada* was widely distributed among

conscript troops (who also received relatively high-quality literacy training). *Barricada*'s importance as a propaganda resource also ensured that the paper penetrated, albeit in small quantities, to party militants based wherever the FSLN was working to spread the doctrine and accomplishments of the revolution.[35]

Moreover, a series of measures taken by the Sandinista government in the mid-1980s led to a sharp increase in the viability of newspaper purchase among poorer social sectors. Ironically, this process peaked as the wider Nicaraguan economy entered a free-fall, from 1984 to 1986. Prior to the imposition of harsh austerity measures in 1987, state subsidies on basic basket of essential goods (*canasta básica*) freed up discretionary income for the poorest sectors. The result was a massive increase in *Barricada*'s circulation.[36]

It is also worth noting the role of revolutionary ideals in mitigating the elite orientation of a print medium like *Barricada*. The revolution's official organ viewed itself as representing not the moneyed upper classes, but the revolutionary masses. In the early days of the paper's operations, it was obvious, says Sofía Montenegro, that "the interests *Barricada* would represent were those of the broad majorities: the popular bloc that made the revolution possible, with an emphasis on the workers and peasants." In line with syncretic Sandinista ideology, the paper's appeal to traditional revolutionary sectors would be supplemented by efforts to reach "people who ordinarily were not considered the 'subjects' of revolutions. In the case of Nicaragua," Montenegro asserts, "the Sandinistas' ability was to *find* new subjects for the revolution, apart from the traditional peasant and proletariat bases" — and, in the process, win new readers to *Barricada*.[37]

The *La Prensa* Tradition

There was, additionally, a powerful precedent in Nicaragua for a newspaper that sought to appeal to popular sectors and reflect their concerns and aspirations. *Barricada* followed in the footsteps of *La Prensa* — the one paper in Nicaragua's pre-revolutionary history that had captured a passionate popular following. This heritage served as a potent model for *Barricada*'s own professional project in the 1980s.

"I remember when I was a teenager in my house, when dinner was served, we began with *gallo pinto* [beans and rice], coffee, tortillas — and *La Prensa*," says Xavier Reyes. "It was the daily ritual of every Nicaraguan family" — at least those that sympathized with the anti-Somoza opposition.[38] Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate the significance of *La Prensa* as "part of the institutionality of Nicaragua ... a newspaper rooted in the traditions of the people," in Reyes' words.[39]

Carlos Fernando Chamorro similarly refers to the "flavour of *La Prensa*," a brand of journalism that was "popular, aggressive, and at the same time well-presented."[40] The paper, of course, was inseparably linked to the personality of Carlos Fernando's father, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Sr. The elder Chamorro's status as a champion of justice and popular rights bestowed on him a semi-mystical status while he was alive, and a saintly one after his January 1978 assassination.[41] One obvious influence of the *La Prensa* tradition on *Barricada*'s functioning was the selection of Carlos Fernando Chamorro, offspring of the slain hero, as Director of the official organ. This seems to have had a certain legitimizing intention, though it was also a product of the fact that few Sandinista militants had any experience at all in print journalism.[42]

The *La Prensa* tradition is also significant in the standards it set for visual appeal, boldness of design, and accessibility of language. Says Sofía Montenegro: "We were always conscious that you couldn't go against the tradition, the habit of reading *La Prensa* had established, and the sort of visual familiarity people had with the most popular newspaper — its big headlines, its design and layout."[43]

Barricada *and* La Prensa *in the 1980s: The "Reflex Relationship"*

Another significant dimension to *La Prensa*'s influence on *Barricada* concerns the papers' relations during the revolutionary decade — more specifically, after *La Prensa* moved into the political opposition in mid-1980. *Barricada*'s "reflex relationship" with the anti-Sandinista version of *La Prensa* provided a fundamental source of professional self-definition for *Barricada*'s journalists — one related to, but distinct from, the mobilizing function both papers served for their respective constituencies. The relationship is worth examining in detail for the light it sheds on the development of the professional function at *Barricada*.

First Stage: La Prensa*'s Return. La Prensa*'s plant was bombed out as a last-gasp measure by the Somoza dictatorship in June 1979. On 16 August 1979, less than a month after the revolutionary victory, *La Prensa* returned to the stands. *Barricada* welcomed the reappearance of the paper under the direction of "our friend Pablo Antonio Cuadra" (later one of the FSLN's most vociferous critics, and still a director of *La Prensa*):

> *La Prensa* reappears and receives the salute of its colleagues at *Barricada*. It is no mere perfunctory salute: [after all,] it has been the FSLN which has stood at the vanguard in the struggle for freedom in Nicaragua. It is a pleasure for us to be able to say, with legitimate satisfaction, that among the first achievements of the Sandinista Revolution has been the reappearance of *La Prensa*.[44]

The reorganization of *La Prensa* posed an immediate challenge to *Barricada*, especially since the new competitor also initially adopted a pro-revolutionary line, though not a strongly pro-FSLN one. At the time, indeed, *La Prensa* had the best of both worlds. It was in synch with the popular consensus during the outpouring of overwhelming revolutionary enthusiasm that followed the dictatorship's downfall, and imbued with the legitimacy of decades spent at the forefront of anti-Somoza opposition. In this early stage, the paper "kept the flavour of *La Prensa*," Chamorro recalls. This cast into sharp relief *Barricada*'s professional deficiencies: "*La Prensa* was a much better newspaper than us in professional terms. We were much more rhetorical, we didn't have much experience."[45]

Partly in response to the professional challenge, *Barricada* sought to pitch its journalism more to ordinary Nicaraguans — for example, by providing explanations and illustrations of difficult political and economic concepts.[46] Frustration with *Barricada*'s seeming inability to tap the populist spirit typified by the pre-revolutionary and initial post-revolutionary *La Prensa* seems implicit in many of Chamorro's early public statements. At *Barricada*'s first anniversary celebration, for example, Chamorro offered a blend of Leninist and populist/professional ambitions: he pledged "to raise the political-ideological level" of the paper, but at the same time to employ "ingenuity, creativity, *to find the genuine language of the people*," and to practise "a form of journalism that isn't dense and boring, but rather lively, agile, 'recreational' [*recreativa*] ..."[47]

In these first months after the revolution, without significant political

differences between them, both *Barricada* and *La Prensa* were preoccupied with their own logistical and material difficulties — *La Prensa* rebuilding its plant, *Barricada* coping with the primitive conditions of production and distribution outlined above. The situation changed drastically with *La Prensa*'s crisis and reorganization in April-May 1980.

Second Stage: Crisis and Opposition. The defection of a majority of *La Prensa* staffers to found *El Nuevo Diario* early in 1980 profoundly altered the relationship between *Barricada* and *La Prensa*. Under the direction of two other Chamorros — Carlos Fernando's brother Pedro Joaquín Jr. and uncle Jaime — *La Prensa* immediately charted a course for the political opposition. The events mirrored the increasing polarization in relations between the FSLN and the bourgeois constituency, typified by the FSLN's reorganization of the Council of State in April 1980 to secure a Sandinista majority.

The reorganization of *La Prensa* was doubly significant in that it added another player to the landscape of Nicaraguan print media, namely *El Nuevo Diario*, directed by Xavier Chamorro (brother of the slain Pedro Joaquín Sr., uncle to Carlos Fernando). As Chamorro summarizes the transformation:

> From May 1980 [when the reorganized *La Prensa* appeared after several weeks of self-imposed closure], we had for the first time a clear and confrontative opposition paper against *Sandinismo*, which was *La Prensa*; and, if you like, an independent, pro-Sandinista, professional newspaper, which was *El Nuevo Diario*. And then *Barricada*, with less experience [than the other papers].[48]

Note that here the relationships are clearly cast in professional, as well as political, terms.

From 1980 to 1984, Chamorro asserts *Barricada*'s "main concern" was "the political and ideological struggle with the right." It was an "everyday fight," symbolized by the conflict with *La Prensa*.[49] The principal challenge this posed to the paper's journalism was to avoid a permanent defensive posture in the face of accusations, charges, and disinformation in the pages of *La Prensa*. "We were facing something new: an opposition, open questioning of the FSLN," says Chamorro.

> So we were very much on the defensive at the beginning, responding to attacks, responding to questions. I guess the first thing we learned was you didn't have to answer every attack, and you could take the initiative in the debate. That has to do with political tactics, the strategy of the newspaper: how to take the initiative.[50]

The result was a kind of see-saw between offensive and defensive postures,

largely contingent upon wider events:

> You had moments when the revolution had the total initiative - like denouncing the Right for establishing connections with the Somoza National Guard or with the US. Then they [the Right] would be totally on the ropes. They'd have no excuses for allying themselves with these sectors that were totally outlawed in our society. ... But in moments of calm, we weren't as able to raise interesting issues, and the Right was much more able to deal with problems of family, tradition, religion, the Church. These were all *ideological* problems, and they were able to make out of them political problems for debate.[51]

How did this essentially political rivalry translate in professional terms? Chamorro cites the greater competence of *La Prensa* journalists when it came to turning human-interest coverage to its own ends, "mak[ing] national and political problems out of individual and particular problems. They would take advantage of *anything*. They'd take the tragedy of a single family and say, 'This family has been abandoned by the revolution.' That was for me a discovery, that we were very much behind in dealing with [problems of] everyday life."[52]

Third Stage: The Closure of La Prensa. *La Prensa* editors were confronted with censorship and occasional closure from the moment the paper "reorganized" and moved firmly into the political opposition. Systematic prior censorship was also imposed following the FSLN's imposition of a state of emergency in March 1982 (see Appendix).[53] On 22 May 1986, however, the paper's directors carried their opposition a stage further, flying to Washington to lobby in person for US aid to Contra rebel forces and holding meetings with Contra leaders. On 25 June 1986, $110 million in aid was approved by the US Congress. The next day, publication of *La Prensa* was indefinitely suspended on orders from the Ministry of the Interior.[54]

La Prensa remained closed for 15 months — until October 1987, when the ban was lifted under the terms of the Esquipulas peace agreements. The ambivalent response among *Barricada* staffers to the closure of the paper they had persistently denounced as a subversive force offers insights into the complex, sometimes contradictory professional relationship between pro-revolutionary journalists and their arch-rivals.

This ambivalence resulted from three main factors. In the first place, *La Prensa* disappeared when *Barricada* "felt strong" in the wake of the 1984 FSLN election victory and improvements in the professional standard of the paper's journalism. Chamorro, who defended the closure of *La Prensa* at the time,[55]

nonetheless recognized that the decision represented "a tremendous risk for the self-isolation of society and the press ... we could end up having a press only for ourselves [Sandinistas], and not for the rest of society, which still existed" despite the disappearance of the most prominent opposition voice in the print media.[56]

Second, a collegial spirit had arisen between *La Prensa* and *Barricada* staffers; it extended to the highest level, as demonstrated by the Directorate's cooperation in sharing scarce resources. Xavier Reyes remembers disagreeing with the decision to close *La Prensa* because although "politically we were rivals ... *professionally we were colleagues.* We couldn't agree [with the closure], because we imagined ourselves in the same position, being closed down, and imagined how we'd feel about it."[57]

Finally, *Barricada* staffmembers shared a sense that the conflict with *La Prensa* had been decided by outside intervention, rather than in a fair fight on grounds of political persuasiveness and professional merit. Xavier Reyes' comments are again worth quoting. He draws a distinction between the policy adopted by the FSLN toward opposition radio broadcasts and that toward print media. The Sandinista response to the challenge of opposition radio was the construction of CORADEP, a network of radio stations advancing a more popular, locally-based, less ideological brand of broadcasting.[58] "Our [Sandinista] radio stations managed to get a [majority of the] national audience," Reyes complains.

> We, on the other hand, resorted to closing *La Prensa*. We've never had the chance, until now [1991], to have the reader decide for him or herself whether to believe *Barricada*, or *La Prensa*, or *El Nuevo Diario*. So the work of those years can't be evaluated in terms of who earned and won the final credibility, who ended up with the readers.[59]

The standards are those of professional as well as political rivalry: competition for readership; "earning" credibility through journalistic quality.

Most intriguing of all is the vague sense of *ennui* which *Barricada* staffers remember following the *La Prensa* closure. "Our reason to fight every day was *La Prensa*," says Sofía Montenegro. "And it was very dull, you know, when it wasn't there [*laughs*]. Something was missing." Chamorro concurs: "In general it was dull, yes. We had a kind of reflex relationship with *La Prensa*, and I guess we were all stimulated when *La Prensa* reappeared in October 1987."[60]

But the closure of the main opposition paper also created opportunities for *Barricada* which would prove vital as a testing-ground for the more far-reaching professional transformations that took place after the Sandinista electoral defeat. *Barricada* viewed the closure of its rival as an opportunity to win readers permanently away from *La Prensa* by appropriating some of *La Prensa*'s journalistic emphases and strategies. Once again, the political component of the competition predominated — but the political imperative was translated by *Barricada* staffmembers into a range of professional initiatives. "In 1986, there were two newspapers talking to two kinds of audiences," recalls Xavier Reyes:

> We talked to Sandinistas and revolutionaries, and *La Prensa* talked to the non-Sandinistas and people who weren't revolutionaries. So the challenge was to make this newspaper read by the sectors who'd read *La Prensa* before. We had to fill the information vacuum. We did it by trying to talk about the people and situations *La Prensa* had covered: for example, what [the rightwing business organization] COSEP was doing, what [anti-Sandinista] Cardinal Obando was doing, what the rightwing parties were doing. The only field which we weren't ready to take on was the counter-revolution. We weren't going to take the side of the counter-revolution, as *La Prensa* had.

In addition, says Reyes, journalists were encouraged to be more flexible in the sources they consulted for stories — a basic tenet of professional journalism. "We tried to include other points of view, convert people and institutions into news who were not [traditional] sources" for *Barricada*. "We were trying to be more objective, more balanced."

In general, the measures aimed to broaden *Barricada*'s entertainment, sports, and human-interest coverage. The seventh-anniversary issue of the paper (25 July 1986) announced the creation of new feature sections. It also promised more international news, better analysis and commentary, greater domestic coverage, a stronger focus on entertainment, and an expanded *Buzón Popular* [People's Letter Box]. Reyes acknowledges that "We didn't manage to fill the vacuum 100 percent."[61] Still, it is difficult to overstate the importance of this period of improvisation and professional innovation — which took its lead from *La Prensa*, although the measures arguably were only possible in *La Prensa*'s temporary absence from the scene. This period of experimentation coincided with, and contributed to, discussion at the paper concerning the possible "de-officializing" of *Barricada* and expansion of the professional function, a development that is analyzed in the

conclusion to this chapter.[62]

The Role of the U.S.: The Professional Model and Cultural Hegemony

La Prensa's populism and pugnacity under the Somoza regime — its aggressive investigative bent, its attention to the plight of the common person, its doses of crime and sensationalism — attest to the influence of the North American press tradition. One would expect no less, given the intimacy of contact between the U.S. and Nicaragua, dating back to the first U.S. military interventions in the mid-19th century.[63] The U.S. cultural influence helps explain not only the nature of *Barricada*'s professional function, but also the direction taken when it came to transforming and reorienting the paper's project in the wake of the 1990 election defeat.

Visitors to Nicaragua during the revolutionary decade were often struck by the ambivalent attitude toward U.S. cultural influence which prevailed among Sandinista ranks. In Chapter 2, we noted the FSLN's ambivalent view of western press models; in the broader cultural sphere, Sandinista policies, leadership pronouncements, and street-level discourse similarly combined an energetic rejection of U.S. political intervention in Nicaraguan affairs with an abiding passion for U.S. cultural products, particularly baseball, television, and popular music.[64] Rosario Murillo captures this ambivalence well:

> Most of the people who belonged to the Sandinista Front for many years grew up ... with what I would call a culture of Donald Duck and Superman. We became "anti-American," in terms of U.S. government policies, not because of communist ideas, but because of what the U.S. did to this country. ... We were able to see the difference between simple, everyday American people and American *policies*; we were also able to see the difference between rock music and American policy. ... I think we had the cultural privilege of being able to see the difference between *real* imperialist policies and things that were just part of a culture, a way of life. Things that weren't harmful to anybody, and that in many cases were even enjoyable: films, music, art, even hamburgers and hot dogs. And baseball, of course.[65]

The link between mass culture and mass media is an intimate one. U.S. cultural influence accordingly was translated into a more direct attempt to inculcate a North American press model, via the School of Journalism at the University of Central America.[66] The School of Journalism was founded under the auspices of the U.S. Embassy on 9 June 1960. Attesting to the close links between economic

factors and professional values in the North American press tradition, the school was established as part of U.S.-sponsored attempts to build a Central American Common Market in the 1960s. According to Guillermo Rothschuh, the media were seen by U.S. strategists as pivotal to dissemination of the "new forms of business management and marketing of merchandise" which the Common Market experiment sought to promote.[67]

The School of Journalism's enrolment was never particularly large (even today, it has just 200 students). "Empirical journalism" predominated at all stages in the evolution of the Nicaraguan media system. But prior to 1979, the School was Nicaragua's only forum for the explicit, systematic proselytizing of professional journalistic values and practices. The link to *Barricada*'s post-1979 functioning is strengthened by the fact that Bayardo Arce, the National Directorate member who served as representative to *Barricada* from 1984 onwards, taught at the School prior to going underground.[68]

To the extent that conceptions of "newsworthiness" were also influenced by U.S. cultural patterns — particularly in the fields of entertainment and human interest — the U.S. cultural presence helped shape *Barricada*'s post-1979 professional function. This posed, however, an acute dilemma for the FSLN's official organ. On the one hand, the paper served as mobilizer for a political party founded on principles of anti-imperialism and opposition to U.S. hegemony. Throughout the 1980s, it assisted in the task of constructing an alternative "popular culture" (founded, for instance, on ideals of revolutionary cooperation rather than capitalist competition). But *Barricada* was also concerned to increase its appeal to readers and reflect their interests. Those popular interests included a taste for the mass-culture products of the imperial centre — even among firmly pro-revolutionary sectors.

Moreover, this dilemma presented itself to *Barricada* (as a purveyor of news and entertainment) in far more pressing and multifaceted a form than to the FSLN leadership, and thus deserves to be considered in the context of *Barricada*'s distinct professional function. Carlos Fernando Chamorro's comments in this respect are highly revealing.[69] Chamorro, first of all, expresses admiration for the

professionalism, energy, and penetrative capacity of U.S. media, particularly television.[70] He shares Murillo's affection for many U.S. cultural products.[71] The treatment of these themes in *Barricada*'s pages during the 1980s, however, varied considerably, and was strongly conditioned by the paper's attempts — after its formative period had given way to greater institutional stability — to expand its range of coverage and increase its appeal to ordinary Nicaraguans. Both of these appear to be primarily professional concerns, though the latter has strong political overtones.

> I guess the first problems we had in dealing with American culture in our newspaper didn't have much to do with Madonna or the other [U.S. pop-culture icons]. That was totally outside our scope of discussion in the first years We were much more concentrated on people's needs, and other things. But sports coverage always remained sacred, because of the American [baseball] leagues. For some time, we didn't publish detailed news dealing with American baseball, because it wasn't in accordance with the values of the revolution. We were not promoting professional sports, only amateur sports.

This policy changed in response to *Barricada*'s unwillingness to sacrifice potential readership for the sake of lofty ideological purity. Professional competition with *La Prensa* and, to a lesser extent, *El Nuevo Diario* was also "very important" to transformating the paper's professional efforts in the areas of entertainment, science coverage, and human-interest material, Chamorro acknowledges. This is particularly evident in the 1985 establishing of *De Todo Un Poco*, a page offering "a mix of national culture, international curiosity, and *Popular Mechanics*-style science," and the page's expansion following *La Prensa*'s 1986 closure (see above).

Evaluating these shifts in *Barricada*'s news agenda — shifts which continued at an accelerated pace after the 1990 election defeat, with powerful material imperatives suddenly added to the mix — Chamorro argues that a certain orientation to U.S.-style "infotainment"

> compensate[s], in my opinion, for our incapacity to create national and cultural values that are interesting and attractive to people. That's the way I see it. I would like to have much more interesting things dealing with areas that might be more helpful in terms of [construction of new] values. But there's the limitations imposed by what you're able to do on your own, your dependence on those aspects [of U.S. popular culture]. ... In the final analysis, I feel if we don't have a better answer - if we can't put forward an alternative - the best we can do is deal with this as a normal aspect of life, rather than imposing any kind of censorship or seeking to diminish its importance. Because *we're a totally open society, and if we don't do it, others will* [emphasis added].

This suggests that in a pluralistic environment, any media organ's ability to

alter the prevailing cultural framework is limited:

> We have to be consistent with the fact that I cannot limit the influence of those values that I may not necessarily be willing to *promote*. ... What can you do? Are you going to deny the reality? I don't think we can. I don't think we can take a position saying, "This is not important, and the only way we're going to present it is to criticize it or offer different ideas." We are part of a society whose values we are not able, by ourselves, to determine. ... It would be very easy to denounce these values as simply created by American imperialism. I think people wouldn't buy that in Nicaragua.[72]

It is worth asking, at this stage, whether the ambivalent posture toward U.S. mass-cultural influence carried over to *Barricada*'s conceptions of objectivity and professionalism, two values central to U.S. media models. Formally, at least, *Barricada*'s writers and editors shared the FSLN leadership's suspicion of these values. The first in-depth statement of purpose published in the paper — the editorial of 13 August 1979 — rejected commercial conceptions of journalistic professionalism. It criticized the sensationalism of mass media in the developed world. Western press models had turned thousands of journalists into "eunuchs"; western media applauded "tyrant assassins" holding power, while calumniating "the patriotic militants in the [national] liberation movements." In short, the western press model was one "which always tells us we have to be objective and impartial, while it itself is neither."[73]

Nonetheless, *Barricada* appears to have shared the National Directorate's more ambivalent stance toward these professional values. It is arguable, in fact, that this ambivalence ran far deeper at *Barricada* — because the paper's staffers dealt daily with problems of objectivity, professionalism, and newsworthiness which existed for FSLN leaders only as abstract and politically-manipulable commodities.

Consider, for instance, *Barricada*'s stance in the sensitive area of criticism and critical distance. These conceptions are integral to western press models, as noted earlier. But how can such distance exist alongside an official organ's primary mobilizing function — even in theory? On the occasion of *Barricada*'s 1st Anniversary, Carlos Fernando Chamorro took pains to draw a distinction between constructive and destructive criticism of the revolutionary regime. "Without criticism there can be neither journalism nor revolution," he stated:

> But we do not refer here to destructive, counter-revolutionary criticism, but rather to criticism which offers a searching analysis of problems and proposes alternative revolutionary solutions for them.[74]

An editorial in the paper a year later again stressed the need for constructive revolutionary self-criticism. "There is administrative corruption ... inefficiency and a lack of coherence in some sectors of the state apparatus ... bureaucratism and the resistance of some functionaries ..." Nonetheless, any criticism ought to be "fraternal and responsible."[75]

The critical function was enshrined in *Barricada*'s 1985 Editorial Profile. "As the official organ of the FSLN," the Profile argued, "it is incumbent on *Barricada* to exercise systematically a critical function, orientating [*orientadora*] and constructive, concerning the deficiencies which affect the execution of the policies of the revolution." However, the paper's responsibilities as official organ of the FSLN bestowed on *Barricada* a special obligation:

> Unlike other media in which the exercise of criticism does not imply a tacit adherence to the official position of the FSLN, in *Barricada* this [criticism] must be characterized by the application of the following principles:
>
> a) Firm confirmation of all facts, taking into account the points of view of all parties involved in the problem at hand;
>
> b) Individualization of responsibility [that is, explicit allocation of responsibility to the guilty parties];
>
> c) [Provision of] Alternative proposals to solve the problem;
>
> d) Pursuit of solutions to the same [i.e., following the story through to its conclusion] ...[76]

The statements are revealing. Exercising the critical function is viewed as bringing into play numerous standard elements of the professional equation, particularly consultation of a variety of sources ("all parties involved") and investigative zeal ("pursuit of solutions").

How did this stated self-conception, with the variety of professional considerations hinted at above, mesh with the reality of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function — in a political environment characterized by immense pressure on revolutionaries to "close ranks" and swallow criticism? How, for example, could an effort be made to consult a diversity of sources — a professional imperative — when this might elicit information damaging or inconvenient to the paper's mobilizing function? Most crucially, how could an element of professional distance be preserved, in the face of competing claims on *Barricada* by individual members of the National Directorate anxious to bolster the mobilizing function and direct it to their own ends?

These questions bring to the fore the question of *Barricada*'s bureaucratic and editorial relationship with its sponsors in the FSLN leadership. We turn, then, to an examination of the evolution of these relations from two perspectives. First, the bureaucratic aspects of the party-paper relationship will be considered. Secondly, we will ask whether the combination of mobilizing and professional functions was *perceived* by *Barricada* staffmembers as problematic — and if so, how these perceptions affected *Barricada* staffers' self-conceptions and influenced editorial standards or strategies during the 1980s.

The Party-Paper Relationship, 1979-90: Establishing a "Norm"

The analysis in Chapter 2 argued that given the nature of an official party organ, particularly one operating in an environment characterized by war, siege, and economic crisis, the mobilizing function strongly predominated at *Barricada* during the 1980s. The paper supported and disseminated policy guidelines established and communicated by the FSLN leadership. Clearly, too, *Barricada* staffmembers perceived themselves as dedicated revolutionaries supportive of the political status-quo. There was a "common acceptance of the necessity of a vanguard," which "had been amply demonstrated during the years building up to the revolution," in Sofía Montenegro's words.[77] At no time were the basic aspects of FSLN rule — with their broad implications for the FSLN's official organ — seriously questioned or protested by *Barricada* staffmembers. This is true even of staffers whose politics tended toward the anti-authoritarian or anarchical.[78]

Nonetheless, the streamlining and formalizing of channels of communication between party and paper — the *bureaucratic relationship* between the FSLN leadership and *Barricada* — offers vivid insights into the potential and actual conflicts engendered by the complex interaction of mobilizing and professional functions. The (eventually successful) attempt by *Barricada* staffmembers to establish a "norm" that would delimit and contain leadership influence over *Barricada* amply attests to the presence of professional considerations in the paper's self-conception during the 1980s. Professionalism may have been a flexible and much-abused commodity, given the relentlessness of the mobilizing imperative; but

it was also a surprisingly resilient one.[79]

In its dealings with the FSLN leadership, *Barricada* was confronted from the first by a central dilemma: a lack of defined roles for the media, and an inability among Directorate members to reach "a full consensus about the newspaper" (Chamorro).[80] He adds:

> That has been, if you want, one of my obsessions: the importance of the media. ... Probably that's a feeling shared by many of us here: that the media by itself, the importance of the media not only as an instrument of information and also of political formation but also as a reproducer of values and ideologies, never was taken into full consideration within the leadership of the FSLN - because there were many other things to do, and the media were seen simply as *an instrument of the reproduction of political information.*[81]

Chamorro himself tried to rectify the situation to some extent during his tenure as Chief of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda — a stint which produced many of the formal "profiles" of pro-revolutionary communications media, including *Barricada*, which are cited at various points in this thesis. But his effort "was not one shared by the whole of the FSLN."[82]

The problem was compounded by the collective nature of the FSLN leadership. The National Directorate was composed of representatives from three pre-revolutionary Sandinista "tendencies" which united for the final campaign against the Somoza dictatorship.[83] These tendencies do not seem to have spawned crippling ideological tensions within the Directorate during the FSLN's years in power — indeed, the Leninist model of democratic-centralist decision-making appears to have operated with reasonable efficiency between 1979 and 1990. *Barricada*, then, was not confronted with the delicate task of picking and choosing among disparate ideological platforms. What the paper *was* forced to reckon with was nine powerful personalities — each of whom assumed a strong public profile after the revolutionary victory, and most of whom received ministerial portfolios in the revolutionary government.

Every National Directorate member, furthermore, had his own conception of what ought to constitute *Barricada*'s project and news agenda — fuelled, inevitably, by a perception that his particular area of operations was the most important to the revolutionary process. Xavier Reyes' delineation of this phenomenon is the most sharply detailed. "As the revolution became more institutionalized" — that is, in

the first two or three years following the Triumph — "all the members of the National Directorate demanded a strong presence on the newspaper":

> So Jaime Wheelock felt that what he was doing in agriculture was so important it should take up all eight columns of the front page. Carlos Núñez felt the National Assembly [which he oversaw] was the most important thing. Daniel Ortega felt the activities of the central government were most important. Tomás Borge felt what he was doing was most important. So you had nine telephone calls every day! ... Some days were more unbearable than others.[84]

According to Reyes, the phone calls were made to Chamorro as director of the paper, but "when that failed, they would go down to the level of the writers, trying to persuade them that the news [the various National Directorate members] wanted covered was the most important."[85]

Chamorro's response to the range of Directorate pressures leaves little doubt about the presence and prominence of a professional function at *Barricada*, one that gained in salience as the paper's institutional stability increased. "Our criterion as journalists," says Chamorro, "was that you had to take into consideration the political aspect [i.e., National Directorate desires], but you couldn't subordinate the journalistic importance or the public interest to the political aspect *all* the time."[86]

> If you had five members of the National Directorate participating in different activities, there might be one thing of the five that is really a priority, decided politically by the FSLN. So I would say, "Okay, you tell me what's your priority, and from then on *I* decide what is more important, *according to my perception of the public interest.*"[87]

It was Chamorro's central concern that *Barricada* not become "a totally predetermined newspaper" — that space, in other words, be preserved for the paper's own professional initiatives and decisionmaking capacity:

> We had to negotiate and accept certain things. [But] we fought in order to introduce new concepts. Basically the new concept was: *Journalistic criteria have to be respected, and you can't predetermine everything.* We had a lot of complaints about how we administered the norm, but I think over time, everybody [in the Directorate] started forgetting about it ...[88]

As an example of the process of negotiation and compromise, Chamorro cites the distinction established by the paper's writers and editors between "official messages of the National Directorate" — which would automatically receive extensive and prominent coverage — and "what could be simply the political opinion of someone, or their daily activity as a[n individual] Minister." There was also the matter of coverage of speeches by leadership figures:

> The norm tried to remove pressure from the paper so the members of the National

> Directorate would not expect all their speeches to be published intact. The newspaper had a degree of autonomy to decide whether, by the standards of editorial policy, the speech was important and offered new ideas, and whether to edit it or publish in full.

Barricada also worked to avoid compromising its degree of independence by becoming closely linked with a single Directorate figure, in the manner of several other pro-revolutionary media outlets.[89] According to Onofre Guevara, the equal treatment accorded all Directorate members extended to the tiniest details: "Carlos Fernando was careful to balance the activities and representation of every member of the Directorate, even down to the size of the photos and the space the article took up."[90]

Nonetheless, accidents in communication between the Directorate and the paper were regular and inevitable, says Chamorro, making implementation of the norm "a difficult relationship that I had to deal with as Director of this newspaper." Such misunderstandings offer further evidence of *Barricada*'s distinct institutional identity, by pointing to the existence of internally-generated initiatives that may or may not have been cleared by the Directorate or met with the leadership's post-facto approval.[91]

A second "norming" strategy centred around requests that the National Directorate streamline its demands on *Barricada*, in light of the constant and exhausting mediation necessitated by Directorate members' individual supplications. Responding to Chamorro's requests, Directorate member Carlos Núñez was made sole official channel for Directorate demands. As Sofía Montenegro describes this vital process of streamlining and channelling,

> A decision was taken by the National Directorate to create only one channel to the newspaper, to avoid all the *comandantes* calling in to the Editor or Director of the paper. They decided [the channel] should be ... one *comandante*. Anyone [on the Directorate] who had coverage needs should go to this *comandante* as the one who would speak with Carlos and discuss with him, of all the necessities, which one got space.[92]

The initiative in this regard, however, clearly came from *Barricada*. And there were some on the Directorate who had difficulty adjusting to *Barricada*'s greater degree of autonomy, according to Xavier Reyes:

> Once Tomás Borge called Marcio [Vargas, a senior editor at the time] and said he wanted a certain news item on the front page. Marcio told him he wasn't going to do it, because the decision [regarding front-page coverage] had already been made. Comandante Borge told him it wasn't a suggestion, but an order. Marcio said he

> wasn't going to do it unless he talked with [Directorate representative] Comandante Núñez first. They started arguing on the telephone.
>
> Afterwards, Comandante Núñez complained to Borge, and asked for an explanation of his behaviour. They both analyzed the situation, and I think on *Barricada*'s anniversary in 1983 or 1984, Comandante Borge publicly apologized to Marcio for having yelled at him over the telephone that night, and for having tried to impose on the newspaper. He said he wanted to apologize publicly, because it wasn't the way you should deal with the paper.[93]

How extensive was the role of the Directorate representative, and in what areas was it most prominent? This appears to have varied under Núñez and his successor from 1984 onward, Bayardo Arce — either as a result of differing personal styles, or because of deeper institutional transformations at *Barricada*. For whatever reason, the stewardship of Núñez was more hands-on and vigilant than that of his successor, Bayardo Arce. Núñez (who died of cancer in 1990) is remembered with great fondness by *Barricada* staffers, but his oversight of the paper was at times both exhaustive and exhausting.[94] By contrast, Sofía Montenegro characterizes the tenure of Núñez's successor as a "more distant" one — well before the Sandinista election defeat and associated developments in the party-paper relationship. Bayardo Arce "let Carlos [Fernando Chamorro] do his job. At any rate, the communication was basically by phone. His presence was less visible. We can't say he was bossing us around. Even though, when he bossed, he bossed!"[95]

Another important feature of Arce's tenure was his background as a professor of journalism. He was, perhaps, more attuned to the paper's professional values and aspirations, and its need to preserve some measure of institutional autonomy. In any case, it is scarcely disputable that the direct leadership supervision of *Barricada*'s operations declined under his stewardship.[96]

The Role of the Political Commissariat

One other element of the bureaucratic relationship between the Directorate and *Barricada* is also worth touching on, since it provides further evidence of an essential downward gradient in leadership vigilance over the course of the revolutionary decade. Early in *Barricada*'s existence, a political commissariat was appointed by the Directorate to function at *Barricada*, as well as at other FSLN-owned media like Radio Sandino. The commissariat was a group of party militants, responsible for overseeing the political content of each day's edition. According to

Xavier Reyes,

> Journalists handed over their articles to a commissar, and he or she made sure that what was written there was in line with the Sandinista line. If it wasn't, he or she would return it to the journalist. If it was O.K., it would be passed on to the Chief of Writing, who would then begin the strictly journalistic work [on it].

Considerable tension in the journalist-commissar relationship stemmed from the fact that, in the *Barricada* case, most of those initially designated as commissars had little or no prior journalistic experience. The *Barricada* commissariat, according to Reyes, originally consisted of a student "who had just entered the School of Journalism," but was a party militant; another party member with no journalistic experience; a photographer; and Reyes, the only fully-fledged journalist. Thus,

> Journalists who had a lot of experience were bothered by the fact that people who weren't journalists would touch their material. In addition, this was like establishing a certain distance between the journalist and revolutionary work: it was like setting up a barrier, like doubting that the journalist was capable of interpreting correctly the new phenomena in society.

Even at this early stage, then, journalists apparently valued opportunities to undertake their own initiatives without party representatives looking over their shoulder. In 1981, the role of the commissariat was revamped under Reyes' supervision. As Chief of Information on the commission, Reyes created a "normal writing structure," with deputy directors, a chief of writing, and journalists — "that is, without any political intervention by the party." *Barricada* thus established a more traditional newsroom hierarchy, founded more on professional requirements of news production and less on absolute conformity with the ideological tenets that guided the paper's mobilizing function.[97]

Barricada *and the Popular Organizations: A Supplementary Note*

An analysis of the streamlining of party-paper relations, and the greater professional autonomy at *Barricada* which the process managed to establish, should not ignore a similar transformation in relations between *Barricada* and the Sandinista popular organizations. In Chapter 2 we noted that the organizations' autonomy, and thus their ability as independent actors to make demands on the FSLN's official organ, decreased over the course of the revolutionary decade. Nonetheless, they retained a capacity to influence the *Barricada* agenda, particularly by indirect means — that is, via petitions to FSLN leaders.[98]

As in its dealings with Directorate members, *Barricada* sought to preserve a measure of autonomous professional functioning in the face of mass organization demands. A revealing example centres around planning in the late 1980s for a new *Barricada* supplement, *Gente* [People], eventually edited by *Barricada* staffer Sofía Montenegro. According to Chamorro, *Gente* was intended as a visible symbol of *Barricada*'s professional functioning, especially in the area of human-interest material. It was to be "a publication not too tied to political demands, to the agenda of the FSLN," one that would "deal with problems of everyday life, of culture in the broad sense of the word."

As soon as *Barricada*'s intentions became known, however, a "little internal battle" took place:

> We had to organize an internal lobby within the FSLN, because being the organ of the FSLN, the fact that we were going to have a new supplement - everybody wanted to be the *owner* of that supplement. The Sandinista Youth [JS-19] wanted to have a youth supplement. The Sandinista women's movement [AMNLAE] wanted to have its own supplement.

By this late point, though — 1989 — *Barricada* had established its institutional independence to a point sufficient to withstand these varied demands:

> We said, *we* are the ones who are the professional journalists. It's fine that all these people - the Sandinista Youth and women - will present their ideas [to *Gente*] at the level of an editorial council. But the direct responsibility for *Gente* will be taken by us.[99]

It seems clear, then, that professional considerations were a central if not a determining factor in party-paper relations. *Barricada* viewed as necessary — and took a certain professional pride in — the degree of institutional distance between the paper and the party leadership, or between the paper and other revolutionary constituencies.

These concerns appear somewhat anomalous in the left-revolutionary tradition. Were they perceived as such by *Barricada*'s staffers? Further insights into the evolution of the professional function can be gleaned from the contrast, drawn by several staffmembers, between *Barricada* and *Granma*, the official organ of the Cuban Communist Party.

The Cuban Party Press: An Anti-Model

"I always mentioned the example of *Granma* as something I did not want

Barricada to be," contends Chamorro[100] — although his distaste for the Cuban model was not necessarily shared by some members of the FSLN National Directorate.[101] The *Barricada* Director acknowledges that the Cuban party press was "a point of reference for us, and one we could understand closely, much more than [the East German party paper] *Neues Deutschland*, *Trybuna Ludu* in Poland, or *Pravda*." But for him, the Cuban press served primarily as an "anti-concept,"[102] an example more cautionary than instructive. Daniel Flakoll Alegría, editor of *Barricada*'s international edition, says *Barricada* worked, instead, to reflect more accurately the mindsets and demands of its readership:

> I think the Cuban press is, you know, unsmokable. You can't get through it, whether you're talking [in terms of] layout or content. It's pure propaganda from the first page to the last. I think *Barricada* fell into that at first, but quickly retracted, because it doesn't mesh with the feelings of the people here. You know, [*Barricada*] had its heavy quota of propaganda, but done in the Nicaraguan style. I personally think *Granma* is a paper that's been imposed on the Cubans, something that goes totally against their cultural makeup. It's so stiff and formal, and the Cubans themselves are a people who are at their best when they're making jokes about themselves.[103]

In what areas did *Granma* serve as an "anti-concept"? These can be isolated in a way that helps to delineate the specific professional concerns of *Barricada* staffers:

Extreme subordination of news coverage to official requirements. In *Granma*, Chamorro points out, "whenever Fidel [Castro] meets with a foreign visitor, there's always a box up there in the left corner, saying that Comandante Fidel met with so-and-so."

> It doesn't matter whether there was a more important event happening in the country - [Fidel] would always get top billing. Our desire was *not to subordinate traditional news standards* to that kind of extreme, though we understood perfectly the necessity of strengthening the authority of our leadership, and the importance of what the state was doing.[104]

Chamorro claims to have rejected this "pre-elaborated model" as a philosophical foundation for *Barricada*. The requirements of daily functioning, however — especially as Nicaragua's military and economic crisis deepened, and the aid of state-socialist societies mounted in importance — sometimes forced greater accommodation to this model, a subject which will be examined in detail below.

Excessive vigilance over the paper's operations by party functionaries, and intense prior censorship. Sofía Montenegro visited the *Granma* offices in the mid-1980s. She

says she emerged "horrified and laughing":

> You know, *Granma* is *here*, and the Central Committee headquarters is over *here*. You write an editorial, you have to take it over to the Central Committee. There's some big shot from the party who checks what you write and gives the O.K. Only then can it be printed. This sort of thing never happened at *Barricada*.

Montenegro claims to have written "hundreds" of editorials for *Barricada* over the years, clearing them only with Chamorro prior to publication.[105]

Avoidance of "common news." Chamorro's comments on *Granma*'s refusal to allow a significant human-interest component are particularly useful in isolating the professional component in *Barricada*'s editorial strategy. "What was happening in the street" was immaterial to *Granma*, Chamorro argues; the paper "would give no importance to things that happened to common citizens. Even police incidents wouldn't be considered news."[106]

Lack of individual opinions. The lack of open debate in *Barricada*'s pages appears to have been a source of constant complaint among the paper's writers and editors during the revolutionary decade.[107] The permissible range of opinion on *Barricada*'s editorial page was, in fact, fairly tightly constricted over the course of the revolutionary decade. Nonetheless, Chamorro again claims to have sought to limit the *Granma*-style taboo on debate and self-criticism which suffocated discussion in the Cuban press, and led to a highly homogenized writing style.

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Much of the evidence presented in the chapter so far has pointed to a perceived dissonance between the mobilizing and professional functions at *Barricada* during the revolutionary decade. The remainder of the chapter will explore this dissonance as it was manifested in the paper's journalistic project in the 1980s. The analysis leans heavily on post-facto recollections by staffmembers, but these are supplemented by a significant body of contemporary documentation (most of it internal, some public) pointing to perceived deficiencies in *Barricada*'s journalism. We will also consider signal incidents of conflict or disharmony between *Barricada* and party leaders which attest both to the presence of the professional function, and to its often-uneasy interaction with the mobilizing function. Finally, the proposals for a sweeping reorientation of the paper's project which surfaced around 1987 will be examined in light of *Barricada* staffmembers' longstanding professional

aspirations.

II.

"The Official Straitjacket"

The basic quandary in which *Barricada* found itself arose when the paper sought to balance professional considerations and readership aspirations with the requirements of a mobilizing function whose broad parameters were predetermined by party and state leaders (often, as noted, the same people). For Sofía Montenegro, "the basic problem" in editorial terms devolved to a single question: "How do you combine what you believe the people *should* know [the mobilizing function] with what they *want* to know?" According to Montenegro, the paper's success in this area was variable and limited:

> Sometimes we made a balanced newspaper, in the sense that what the people should know was, at any rate, in line with the agenda the FSLN had. But the FSLN had a macro-view: macro-economics, macro-war, macro-politics, macro-diplomacy, and whatever. ... The National Directorate was seeing the global picture, and their vision of what constituted news - those items of political and national and international importance - arose from this global vision. The [ordinary] people, on the other hand, might be more interested in the price of food. ... It was a constant struggle. Sometimes we succeeded, and sometimes we didn't [108]

At the same time as *Barricada* worked to advance a more orthodox journalistic agenda, however, it ran up against the "straitjacket" of the paper's official status — a straitjacket forged, directly or indirectly, by the expectations of FSLN leaders in their varied party, state, and government capacities.

The Para-Statal Quandary

The blending of party and state in revolutionary Nicaragua ensured that *Barricada* shouldered the burden of leadership expectations based not only on demands for "revolutionary unity" from the FSLN's official organ, but on the traditional, pre-revolutionary position of the journalist vis-à-vis government and state authorities. Developments under the Sandinistas represented "a great leap" away from journalists' previously corrupt and servile attitude, according to *Barricada* senior writer Guillermo Cortés. Nonetheless, Cortés complained in a 1983 article for *Barricada* that some "Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Directors of Departments, etc. ...

view journalists as mere reproducers of declarations or bulletins. ... On various occasions, we [journalists] have had the feeling that ministerial pronouncements seek to pass themselves off as sacrosanct and not open to questioning by reporters."[109]

The two sides of this stereotypical relationship are well captured in a 1983 cartoon by the Nicaraguan caricaturist Róger Sánchez, reproduced overleaf. The (Sandinista) state functionary follows the standard pre-revolutionary practice of spoonfeeding information to the journalist. And, as during the pre-revolutionary era, the journalist's posture of compliance is unmistakable.[110]

In an interview, Cortés recalled one occasion when National Directorate member Jaime Wheelock, Minister of Agriculture in the revolutionary state apparatus, sought support from *Barricada* journalists for a plan to stimulate production among farmworkers. The plan would encourage Nicaraguan *campesinos* to work six hours a day instead of four:

> I said to the *comandante* that this was all very well, but if they were demanding more work from farmworkers, then they should make a greater effort to control state expenses, especially luxury expenses like fancy vehicles. He became furious. He began to explain that there was no problem with luxury cars in the Ministry of Agriculture - whereas in fact, that's where there were the most [problems]. Finally he out-and-out called me a Somocista! So there were those attitudes that if someone came out with a criticism, then came the pressure. An atmosphere was created, an environment that if you didn't quite agree with what was agreeable to those in power, it would go badly for you.

He adds that "it was a certain concept on the part of the National Directorate to exercise a very strong control over its [official] media, and to express a certain distrust of the capacities and skills of the journalists of those media."[111]

Another dimension of the "official straitjacket" related to *Barricada*'s reporting of Nicaragua's foreign relations. The pressure here was twofold. On the one hand, National Directorate leaders held expectations with regard to *Barricada*'s mobilizing function which sharply inhibited and constrained the paper's diplomatic coverage. On the other hand, the diplomatic and international community tended to assume that anything *Barricada* published was an official statement "from the top" — as was standard in the more tightly-controlled party press of the state-socialist societies. This latter form of pressure deserves mention in the present context because, as with mass-organization protests and demands, complaints about *Barricada* coverage originating in the local diplomatic community or overseas tended

Figure 3.1. The limitations of partisan journalism. A revolutionary state functionary spoonfeeds press conference material to an eager pro-revolutionary journalist: "Open your mouth and close your eyes ..." Róger Sánchez's cartoon appeared in *Barricada*, 1 March 1983.

to be channelled through the FSLN leadership. Sooner or later, they could be translated into direct pressure or requests for clarification from the Directorate itself.

The potentially explosive implications of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function in this respect are best captured by an incident related by several *Barricada* staffmembers — a rare attempt at practical jokery which turned very sour indeed. In 1986, *Barricada* experienced an "internal crisis" involving Xavier Reyes (Managing Editor while Carlos Fernando Chamorro was serving at the Department of Agitation and Propaganda) and Marcio Vargas, another senior editor. According to Sofía Montenegro,

> Marcio was always complaining that the person in charge of writing *Barricada*'s headlines wasn't coming up with headlines that really reflected the substance of the story. They discovered that what this guy was doing was reading the first three paragraphs of a story, and that's all. ...
>
> The headline guy rejected the criticism, and so Marcio decided to set him a trap. He took a story written by one of the best journalists at the paper and wrote a false paragraph which was, politically, absolutely explosive. The article was about a meeting between President Ortega and representatives of the Evangelical Church in Nicaragua. It was a time of some tensions between the church and the government, and this meeting was hugely significant to resolving the disagreements. ... At the end [of the article], Marcio stuck his joke paragraph, which went something like: "But the Evangelical Church leaders said they didn't want Ortega to attend the meeting, because they didn't like him much ... "

The intention was to slip the article past the headline-writer's screen, the better to demonstrate his lax work-habits. According to Montenegro, the headline-writer "did his usual cursory job." But under deadline pressure, Vargas apparently forgot about his joke; it passed through the proofreading stage thanks to the headline-writer's OK.

"The next morning," Montenegro recalls, "news of the supposed animosity between the Evangelicals and Daniel Ortega was on every newsstand in Nicaragua." It was, in Montenegro's words, "a fucking scandal":

> The National Directorate's first thought was that this article had been planted to sabotage the meeting with the Church: there must be a counter-revolutionary inside *Barricada*!

When the truth was relayed to the Directorate, "they accused the [*Barricada*] staff of irresponsibility," and Vargas and Reyes — two of *Barricada*'s most senior staffers — were fired from the paper. (Reyes returned in 1990; Vargas presently directs the moderately pro-Sandinista Managua weekly, *El Semanario*.)[112]

In its general, day-to-day coverage of diplomatic matters, *Barricada* was again confronted by the paper's (and the party's) para-statal nature, and the conflicts between the mobilizing function and the professional function this engendered. "There was a party apparatus for foreign relations and also a state apparatus," Chamorro recalls, but "in certain respects there was no distance between the two." Navigating the diplomatic minefield, as an institution similarly caught between party and state, presented *Barricada* staffers with numerous professional dilemmas; Chamorro calls it "one of the worst, most uncomfortable things I have faced in journalism."[113] The pressure had a direct impact on expansion or expression of the professional function in several main areas:

Strict limits on criticism. As the political and economic importance of socialist-bloc countries to Nicaragua increased during the 1980s, the FSLN imposed rigid limits on *Barricada*'s coverage of state-socialist societies and their representatives. Chamorro appears to have been able to moderate some of the more extreme demands — refusing, for example, to bolster cults-of-personality in the usual state-socialist fashion. *Barricada* did not, for example, publish greetings to Eastern European leaders on their birthdays; that was "the type of thing which I considered totally ridiculous, and even totally contrary with our culture." Nonetheless, says Chamorro, "we were not critical at all" of the state-socialist regimes, though many features of political life in those societies struck *Barricada* personnel as preposterous or oppressive.[114]

> I never thought the model for Nicaragua was the Soviet Union or East Germany, still less Cuba. But I found myself faced with the contradiction that *Barricada* was the party paper; the FSLN had a certain policy toward these states and their ruling parties. ... If somebody wrote something very critical of the type of socialism existing in Poland or the Soviet Union, this would be considered an attack on those societies. That would endanger the relationship between the FSLN and those countries and parties. There was simply no possibility of that I think it would have been much more important at this point in time [i e , during the revolutionary decade] if we had played at least a modest role in allowing people to analyze those societies more critically: how they were based, and how consistent they were in applying their principles But it wasn't possible.[115]

On rare occasions when a critic did raise her voice, the response from diplomatic quarters and the FSLN was swift. Sofía Montenegro recalls one occasion when, in her capacity as *Barricada*'s International Editor, she attended a talk by a Polish government representative concerning recent developments in his homeland.

> My questions were aggressive, and they sounded quite impertinent. What's more, the guy kept avoiding them. So I'd stand up again and put the question another way round, nagging him. The rest of the comrades began to pinch me to shut up: "You're being insolent! How dare you talk like that!" I said, "Fuck it. I'm a journalist. If I don't publish the answers, at least I want to know them for myself." ... The result was I got a party call and an official sanction. My punishment was that at a party base committee meeting here at *Barricada*, Carlos should publicly reprimand me in front of the rest of the comrades. Well, he complied with the order. It wasn't too bad. I didn't have to apologize for my behaviour, and I was given the chance to explain why I'd done it. ... Nonetheless, it was a formal sanction for me.

"What this shows," Montenegro summarizes, "is that you didn't only have to watch what you were saying outside; you also had to be concerned about what others within the FSLN would be saying about you. With all these tensions and pressures, where could you find the middle ground — being loyal to the truth, without hurting the interests of the Front? What the hell could you do?"[116]

Coverage requirements. When FSLN leaders visited socialist-bloc countries, their welcome would be given heavy prominence in state and party media. On visits to Nicaragua, accordingly, many socialist representatives held similar expectations of *Barricada* as official party organ — expectations which translated into pressure on *Barricada*, both directly and via the National Directorate. This was "one of the areas in which we suffered more," says Chamorro, because often news would have to be fashioned from minimal information. The only professional challenge was to turn banal diplomatic rituals into something that might interest *Barricada* readers.[117]

The paper's attempt to find space for the professional function where the mobilizing function predominated took various forms. Anything newsworthy about an official visit would be played for all it was worth, and visits abroad by *Barricada* reporters allowed the paper's journalists to describe what they saw in a way that was more appealing and accessible to a Nicaraguan audience.[118] Nonetheless, the degree of self-censorship remained considerable.

Language of reportage. Chamorro worked hard to avoid diplomatic reporting which echoed the "incredibly impersonal" style of state-socialist newspapers and news agencies (he refers to it as "a diplomatic language translated into journalism ... a style and a language that had no flavour at all").[119] As in similar situations, *Barricada* tried to find space for professional reportage within the limits set by the mobilizing function. The paper worked to avoid "accept[ing] from [the foreign

delegates] their own version of what they wanted published or known in Nicaragua," according to Chamorro:

> We said, Okay, give us the inputs, the communiqués and news releases, and *we'll write it in our own language. If this is a reality we have to deal with, let's try to make it interesting to our readers.*[120]

Thus, although *Barricada*'s journalism retained many of the characteristics of the staid and formulaic press functioning which prevailed in the media of state-socialist societies, it is clear *Barricada* staffers felt a dissonance between their mobilizing role and traditional conceptions of journalistic professionalism. Where possible, the criterion of newsworthiness was added to the editorial agenda. Even propagandistic material was translated into "our own language," a journalistic style seen as being less radically at odds with professional standards and considerations.

War Reportage: The Professional Function In Extremis

The previous chapter of this thesis sought to establish the prominence of war and military emergency in *Barricada*'s mobilizing function between approximately 1982 and 1987. During this period, *Barricada* reporters went out on tours ranging from three weeks to three months, living with the regular soldiers (albeit with certain special privileges).[121] As might be expected, the posture of *Barricada*'s journalists in the field was openly collaborative and highly propagandistic in nature. "It was a militant journalism," acknowledges Guillermo Cortés:

> We weren't [dispassionate] observers. We'd taken a side. We were in favour of the Sandinista Revolution We were confronting a military force organized, financed by the United States which was putting the revolution at risk. So when we went out on operations, we went out almost as soldiers. armed, ready to shoot, ready to kill and be killed. ... I now think that a [real] war correspondent has a different role - more professional, less emotional, less political. The risks are part of the work. But for us, the risks weren't part of the work - they were the result of a political choice we'd made. I don't regret that, but being a war correspondent in professional terms is something else. ... We lived with a sense of death very close, very intimate, and probably a war correspondent who's less political takes greater precautionary measures[122]

Nonetheless, although the constraints of the "official straitjacket" were somewhat easier to tolerate given the imperative of national defense, they were no less intense than in other areas of the paper's coverage — indeed, they were rather more so. It is worth examining the experience of the *corresponsales de guerra* in greater detail for the light it sheds, sometimes indirectly, on the existence of the professional function at *Barricada* during the 1980s. In particular, the problem of

censorship and self-censorship, considered at greater length below, created inevitable distortions and evasions in the paper's coverage. Did *Barricada* journalists feel unease or dissonance as a result of the mobilizing imperative in this context? If so, given the factors (nationalism, revolutionary solidarity) which militated against such dissonance, this would be a strong testimonial indeed to the existence of professional considerations in the journalists' approach to their craft.

It is notable, first of all, that journalists' recollections often centre on the sense of professional challenge and excitement associated with the *corresponsales de guerra*, "a new journalism, without precedent in Nicaragua," according to Xavier Reyes.[123] The experience acted as an important spur to the development of an institutional identity and a sense of independent initiative at *Barricada*. Chamorro, for example, stresses that the war enabled *Barricada* to develop a forceful, energetic professional agenda:

> In 1982 and 1983, that's when the newspaper came out strongly in the streets - not simply fighting against *La Prensa* or against the political parties of the right, but bringing to the front page the real situation of the country. No other newspaper could do it like us. That was the key point in our development, the war reportage. We sent four reporters to different fronts, and we had very impressive coverage ...[124]

Military censorship, however, placed numerous practical constraints on the exercise of the professional function. Although these constraints were generally accepted as legitimate, *Barricada* staffers offer searching criticisms in retrospect. Restrictions were tight to the point of suffocation: "no information on the movement of troops," says Xavier Reyes:

> no information on weaponry, no information on casualties - our own or the enemy's. No names which would identify the troops. So we devoted ourselves to doing lyrical work, to describing the countryside, the beauty of the soldiers, because there was no military information [we could publish], no military facts.[125]

Note again the desire at least to pay lip-service to standard journalistic practice, reminiscent of attempts to find something "newsworthy" in the diplomatic coverage imposed by *Barricada*'s mobilizing function.

The instances when *Barricada* incurred the wrath of censoring authorities are also useful in pointing out the difficulties journalists encountered in structuring their coverage to professional as well as mobilizing requirements. Guillermo Cortés remembers writing a dispatch from the town of San Dionisio in Matagalpa Province which unintentionally contradicted a key tenet of FSLN propaganda:

> The Contras were there. I wrote an article which was published the day after in *Barricada*, and hours later troops arrived to escort me out of the area. They took me to Matagalpa, and took away my uniform and my rifle. I felt like an officer being stripped of his stripes! Without any explanation, they told me to go back to Managua. The problem was, I'd said in my report that the Contras were on the outskirts of San Dionisio. What I was saying, in other words, was that the Contras were operating in the heart of Nicaragua. But official propaganda was saying that combat was confined to the border [with Honduras].[126]

A similar quandary arose when Cortés reported on "the extraordinary growth of a counter-revolutionary unit which had infiltrated into Matagalpa in 1983 and advanced from there to Chontales [Province]. It eventually because the famous Jorge Salazar Regional Command. There were thousands of peasants involved in the force. Well, that part of the article was completely censored. The Sandinista Army was waging a war — its official organ couldn't be saying the enemy was *growing*!" Likewise, commentary on treetop-flying techniques developed by Sandinista helicopter pilots "was never published," Cortés contends. The treetop flying was meant to evade Contra heat-seeking missiles, which were exacting a heavy toll on the helicopter fleet — but which the military authorities refused to admit existed.[127]

On other occasions, *Barricada* war reporters were placed in the position of virtually manufacturing news from scratch to conform to official propaganda, even when the reality in the street appeared rather different. This brought to the fore a range of "contradictions [which arose when] it was necessary to support a political line," according to Guillermo Cortés.

The dilemma is vividly present in the recollections of Gabriela Selser, *Barricada*'s only female war correspondent, who was assigned in 1982 to cover the relocation of native populations on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast to special military resettlement areas — one of the Sandinistas' most notorious policy fiascos. "The army decided all the Miskitos along the border with Honduras had to be taken away because they were a social base for the Contras," Selser recalls. As a *Barricada* journalist, she was expected to pay greatest heed to the requirements of the official organ's mobilizing function: in this case, to write something which explained the FSLN's resettlement decision and, ideally, noted some support for it among the local population. But reality soon intruded into the pat scenario:

> The problem was that the people didn't want to live there [in the resettlement centres]. The [Miskito] women were crying, accusing the Army of having forcibly removed them

> from their houses. They asked us [journalists] to tell the truth: that they weren't doing well there. The houses built for them were very different for the kind of dwellings they were used to. In addition, there was the normal feeling of uprootedness: they missed the river, their trees, their house.

Selser came back from the assignment "really traumatized" by the experience. Immediately, she was caught up in debate over how *Barricada*'s coverage would reflect the situation:

> We had very strong discussions about how to focus the story. In the end, we managed to write a story in which [the real situation] was outlined, but sort of between the lines, in a disguised way. For example, we said it was natural [the Miskitos] would feel bad [about being resettled], but they would get used to it.

Nonetheless, Selser disagreed strongly with the "line" eventually adopted as a compromise measure. The proof of its essential mendacity, she says, "is that, years later, the number of people [on the Atlantic Coast] that joined the Contras and rose up in arms was much greater."[128]

Other memorable predicaments centred around the Sandinistas' introduction of a military draft (SMP) in 1983. Gabriela Selser is critical of *Barricada*'s early coverage of the SMP. Initially, with a military force consisting of volunteer battalions, the war against the Contras was "something idyllic or romantic." With the introduction of the draft, however, "there was a change. More contradictions came into play within the combatants themselves, and their relationships with society and their families":

> I think that one of the greatest mistakes in Sandinista propaganda at that time was to try and show the patriotic military service as a great big "fight for love." Without trying to evaluate the way it uprooted families, the fear of the combatants, the fear of dying, the danger - normal, natural things. ... There were even stories about combatants that would say things like, "He's lost an eye, he's lost a leg, he's an orphan, but still he's going to do his military service." In that respect, I think we lost a lot of credibility.[129]

Selser, though, says she struggled to find ways to "integrat[e] the political propaganda interest" with the human drama that underlay it. On one occasion she was dispatched to visit a military training camp, and wrote a long story contrasting recent recruits with battle-hardened veterans.

> I compared the combatants who had just arrived from the city for training - young boys, very scared, with a lot of [internal] conflicts, who just wanted to leave - and those who had two or three months of training and were already feeling much more secure in their capacity to fight. I think that was the only way in which you could deal with the former phenomenon, the fear. You couldn't just write the negative thing, that the boys were scared and so on, without putting in the other side.

Over the years, she says, the broader FSLN propaganda strategy itself changed, and the parameters of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function along with them. FSLN leaders increasingly recognized that capturing the "human drama" was vital to bolstering morale. "These things had to be reflected. They couldn't be hidden."[130] A final example of the dilemmas which arose in implementing the mobilizing and professional functions concerns the FSLN decision in 1987 to open negotiations with the Contra rebels. For years, *Barricada* had advanced a mobilizing line that was "very intense, very visceral and emotional" with regard to the Contras, in the words of Guillermo Cortés. The sudden necessity to advance a radically different propaganda line led to considerable turmoil and some disenchantment among *Barricada* reporters.

> Here at the newspaper *there was an effort to base ourselves on events, on facts* [says Cortés]. But always the rhetoric was very strong. [The line of no negotiations with the Contras] was a permanent component of Sandinista propaganda. Tomás Borge said the stars would fall from the sky and the seabeds would dry up before they would negotiate with the Contras. And [suddenly] they negotiated! That was what all propaganda was like: first they said that, and now they said this. It was heartbreaking, hard to understand.

The transition in the journalists' orientation was by no means an immediate one, according to Cortés. "As strong as the control over a medium may be, or as absolute as one person's control over another may be, it's impossible to make such an automatic turnabout. There had to be a policy of assimilation." Cortés himself eventually came to agree with the decision to open negotiations, but many other militants harboured "feelings of bitterness," particularly in the light of the FSLN's subsequent electoral defeat and fall from power.[131]

The evidence presented above suggests *Barricada*'s professional functioning waxed and waned depending on the relative constraints presented by the mobilizing function — the outlines of which were sketched by FSLN leaders responding, in turn, to broader features of the national and international environment. The influence of those broader features can also be seen in the birth of the reorientation project at *Barricada* in 1987, which reflected the FSLN's efforts to advance a new, more inclusive agenda for Nicaraguans, building on the peace negotiations underway with Contra rebels. But the first rumblings of reorientation — which would become a reality only in the aftermath of the 1990 elections, with many of *Barricada*'s

mobilizing constraints lifted or sharply reduced — also testify to the pertinence of professional considerations in the *Barricada* project. The professional function, it appears, was tightly circumscribed between 1979 and 1990. But its status is not reducible to a function of other variables: it is an organically distinct strand in the paper's functioning, regardless of its relative salience at given points in *Barricada*'s development. The concluding section of this chapter, then, analyzes the early murmurings of the reorientation project in light of the contemporary and post-facto diagnoses of *Barricada*'s deficiencies offered by the paper's staffmembers.

Diagnosis: The Birth of the Reorientation Project

In 1987, with peace negotiations underway between the FSLN and Contra rebels, fundamental changes in *Barricada*'s project first established a serious presence in internal discussions at the newspaper. In particular, a transformation was proposed in *Barricada*'s formal relationship with the FSLN and the para-statal apparatus it oversaw. As Chamorro makes clear, this process of reorientation could only have come about in an environment in which basic pressures — external to *Barricada*, and to some extent to the FSLN itself — were muted:

> The changes in *Barricada* had to take place when the political negotiation process began to be a reality. Because we assumed - and it was logical - that the military contradictions were going to diminish, and that the struggle in Nicaragua was henceforth going to centre on political and ideological aspects. Therefore, the media would become more important. It was obvious that we needed a much more fresh, agile, informative press, and one much more capable of going beyond rhetoric.[132]

Sofía Montenegro recalls that the proposals met with a generally favourable response from FSLN leaders, but the professional motives underlying them were generated internally by *Barricada*'s staff:

> I think the National Directorate was conscious that we needed a change; they felt themselves that [*Barricada*'s] officializing everything had become a straitjacket. But they were thinking more in terms of the lack of space to manoeuvre, rather than thinking strictly in terms of the newspaper itself. The ones who really thought in terms of the newspaper were *us*! But if you put together the hunger with the will to eat, you get a project.[133]

Chamorro's model for a restructured *Barricada* emphasized a new orientation vis-à-vis civil society, and drew heavily on the example of the Mexican paper *Excélsior*. He saw *Barricada* as potentially "*un periódico del sistema*" — a paper which transcended formal party affiliations and appealed to a broader constituency,

by stressing common constitutional foundations rather than factional interests.

> I thought about a paper which would not necessarily be official, would not be too tied to the FSLN, but would seek to be more the paper of *consensus* on the basic foundations of [Nicaraguan] society. A newspaper that would be much more preoccupied with defending the Constitution than with the party aspects of the FSLN. *Excélsior* is the institution of the political class of Mexico. In a very subtle way, it's oriented to support, not the [ruling] PRI in itself, but the system the PRI is supporting. It's seen by the society as an institution which speaks for itself; it has a commitment to the basic foundations of the system - the type of economic and political model you're promoting - and at the same time it's not too tied to the party. It's a very sophisticated arrangement.[134]

If the primary impetus for change came from *Barricada* staffmembers, as Montenegro and other staffers suggest, it is worth examining more systematically the specific areas of the paper's professional functioning that *Barricada* staffers perceived to be inadequate or deficient. The analysis below builds on evidence adduced over the course of the chapter. It also deploys comments and documentation drawn from both before and after the 1990 election defeat — in a way which seems to suggest the essential consistency of staffmembers' outlooks over the pre- and post-election periods.

Proposals for reorientation were geared to bolstering the paper's professional functioning in the following areas:

Critical Distance. Barricada's general failure, during the revolutionary decade, to incorporate perspectives critical of revolutionary policies or personalities was a constant source of dissatisfaction for many of the paper's staffers. In the New Editorial Profile prepared for the FSLN National Directorate in December 1990, Chamorro argued that *Barricada*'s journalistic mission had been dissipated and deformed by the restrictions inherent in serving as official organ for the party in power. *Barricada* had become "an extremely predictable newspaper" (*un periódico sumamente predecible*), preserving only a minimal critical distance, "in many cases none at all," in its relations with official sources. The paper had been "fundamentally a daily [which served to] diffuse the FSLN line, with few variations." This had prevented *Barricada* writers from "formulat[ing] alternatives which would nourish revolutionary thought," and emerging thereby as genuine "leaders of public opinion." Attempts to deal with these deficiencies under the Sandinista regime had occasionally borne fruit. But they had been "limited and unsystematic" in their

implementation.[135]

Similar conclusions were reached by an extensive pre-1990 investigation of *Barricada*'s critical function, co-authored by *Barricada* senior writer Guillermo Cortés as part of a degree program at the Nicaraguan School of Journalism. Cortés and his co-author studied the front pages of 42 editions of *Barricada* through 1985, 1986, and 1987.[136] To the total of 241 front-page articles were added 15 correspondents' letters from the *Buzón Popular*, for a total of 256 articles.

Cortés found an "almost absolute preponderance, in *Barricada*'s coverage, of official discourse and official sources." The paper made little effort to "exercise systematically a critical function," its obligation according to the paper's 1985 Editorial Profile. One hundred and fifty-three of the 256 articles dealt with management of the state or the "social praxis of the masses." Of these, "only three could be classified as [genuine] investigations and examples of critical journalism, complying with the minimum requirements established by *Barricada*." Sixty-four percent of domestic news on *Barricada* front pages originated with official, primarily governmental, sources. Forty percent of this information was emitted by members of the FSLN National Directorate and by the offices of the President and Vice-President. Cortés concluded:

> ... in *Barricada* there is not an integral exercising of the journalist's critical function. ... Superficiality, lack of rigour, absence of investigation and failure to follow cases through to their conclusion ... characterize the majority of the articles published by the paper in the period under investigation ... The daily appears to be highly concentrated on the divulging of official government activity; it acts, moreover, as a mere reproducer of the interests of the various official institutions, without a line of its own which would allow it to satisfy other, more broad and varied, information necessities of the population.[137]

As the existence of this study suggests, the political climate in Nicaragua during the 1980s was never so stifling as to forbid airing this kind of criticism of *Barricada*'s functioning.[138] Still, criticizing *Barricada* (or Nicaraguan journalism more generally) is very different from criticizing the party, the state, or the revolution, though even in this area sanctions were never vicious. For *Barricada* journalists, the overriding imperative was revolutionary unity to confront subversion and outside attack. And that unity, Chamorro comments, "depended on the fact, up to a certain point, that internal problems were discussed [only] internally in the FSLN. Public discussion had to do mostly with defending the revolution against the Right or

against US strategy."[139] Or, as Guillermo Cortés succinctly puts it: "What was important was not that all opinions and all versions came out, but that [the story as published] coincided with the political interests" of the FSLN.[140] This all but guaranteed the predominance of the mobilizing function in the paper's operations during the FSLN's years in power.

Self-Censorship. The practice of self-censorship, and the divergence between mobilizing and professional functions which it suggests, is a constant theme in interview subjects' post-facto reminiscences. Allusion has been made to *Barricada*'s unique status vis-à-vis state and military censoring authorities during the revolutionary decade. But this special relationship was contingent on *Barricada*'s compliance with the parameters established *by* that censorship policy — compliance which was in key respects taken for granted. As revolutionary militants, *Barricada* staffmembers internalized censorship guidelines; they acted as their own commissars.

The problem was sensitively analyzed by Eduardo Estrada in a 1986 article for the Nicaraguan publication *Pensamiento Propio*. Estrada wrote that "for those journalists who operate within a revolutionary framework, it is difficult at times to determine what is censorable and what is not." The result was an inhibited, excessively cautious journalism. More nebulous, but no less powerful in its impact, was the existential dilemma for pro-revolutionary journalists of reporting material unfavourable to the Sandinista Front or open to manipulation by the revolution's enemies:

> Criticism of the revolution and the state is rather self-criticism. Our sentiments toward the revolutionary process act to inhibit us. ... [Criticism is viewed as] "giving arms to the enemy."[141]

In conversation, *Barricada* journalists regularly referred to the unease they felt in voicing criticism of revolutionary acts or policies. The explanation for the dissonance, moreover, seems related to a perceived clash between professional and mobilizing requirements. "It was very hard to distinguish between our rights as journalists and our political loyalties to the party and the revolution," says Guillermo Cortés. "But we all knew that what we were doing [i.e., reporting in an uncritical manner] was *not very professional.*"[142] As Sofía Montenegro adds, the difficulty was compounded by the massive threats the revolution faced, and the powerful

implications of publishing material that was critical (or inaccurate):

> You were absolutely conscious of your responsibilities toward the Front. You didn't have the possibility of writing anything wrong in *Barricada*. Anything you wrote was [perceived as] official. You had no margin of discretion at all. ... Out of this there developed a *paralyzed* journalism. You were so intimidated by the possible effects of what you could write about the revolution that you always exercised immense self-restraint. ... That's how self-censorship came along. ... Everybody was cornering you. You lived constantly in a state of siege. ... You had to think very carefully, weigh every word that made it into print. There wasn't much possibility to fool around.[143]

Peer pressure also came into play. As Estrada pointed out, although fear of intimidation by state authorities existed, appeal mechanisms served as safeguards; no such protection was available to defend the journalist against accusations from comrades that he or she was "reactionary," "counter-revolutionary," "deviant."[144]

In the most extreme instances, peer pressure could take the form of sanction by the Front leadership. Sofía Montenegro was the *Barricada* staff-member who appears to have pushed acceptable limits most often in this respect, particularly with her criticisms of the leadership's policy and statements on women's issues. After one occasion on which she publicly criticized President Daniel Ortega, her behaviour "became a big issue inside the Front: Sofía's getting insolent." According to Montenegro, a gag order was issued which barred her from writing about women's issues on *Barricada*'s editorial page for a year.[145]

Few avenues existed for *Barricada* personnel to evade the demands of self-censorship, but at least one regular contributor managed to find one. Róger Sánchez, renowned for his irreverent caricatures, took over the weekly paper *La Semana Cómica* in 1985 and used it as an outlet for material (particularly sexual satire) which was deemed inappropriate for the party's official organ. Throughout his tenure at *Semana Cómica*, Sánchez continued to contribute cartoons to *Barricada*. In a 1987 interview, he argued that the *Semana* was "the best medium to exercise my profession with the greatest freedom possible. *Barricada* is the official daily, and logically this involves certain limitations." The *Semana* was "an independent space, more flexible."[146]

Rhetoric Versus Human Interest. In a section of the New Editorial Profile entitled, "Critical Balance of the Experience of *Barricada* Up to February 1990," Chamorro wrote that a "scheme of predetermined values" had led to "a marked tendency to favour speech over acts" in the paper's reporting, "many times to the

detriment of the informational interests of the population." That is to say, lofty pronouncements had often taken precedent over ground-level reality.[147] This, in turn, had had a direct impact on the repertorial conventions and the language of the paper, leading it to emphasize abstractions (*lo conceptual*) over "what should be a more popular, factual language" of reporting.

Guillermo Cortés recalls that the reorientation discussions in 1987 centred in particular on this aspect of professional functioning, that is, "taking your lead from the facts, and putting rhetoric in second place":

> Our stories tended to be hybrids of information and commentary. We tried to give people everything ready-formed. We hooked them up to an I.V., you know. We didn't allow them to *feed* themselves with the information, to chew it, digest it, and extract from it their own conclusions. We replaced the minds of the people with ourselves; we thought for them, and gave them the truth. We wanted to change all that.[148]

Recall, in this context, Sofía Montenegro's comments on the contrast between the FSLN's "macro-view" versus the "micro-view" of the average Nicaraguan. Montenegro's summary of the dilemma makes clear the connection between excessive "officialization" and the lack of individual voices in *Barricada*'s pages:

> [*Barricada*'s] was a highly depersonalized language. I was the one [as editor of the Editorial Page] who thought, "We have to personalize the language; [as a journalist,] you should be able to recognize your own voice. But with the frame of mind we had and the political framework in which we operated, this was a no-no. Because in that way, obviously, you opened the door to dissent. Since this was an official organ, it was felt that this would be contradictory.[149]

Polarization. *Barricada* did not create the political cleavages which divided Nicaraguans in the mid-1980s. But it was widely felt that the paper's excessive rhetoric (matched by Managua's two other dailies) reflected that polarization — in a manner that not only did nothing to heal the country's social and political fissures, but was actively injurious to *Barricada*'s professional functioning.

Until 1987, depolarization did not figure highly on the agenda for either the FSLN leadership or *Barricada*. As discussed above, however, this began to change with the Esquipulas peace accords and the final stages of national constitution-building. Discussion at *Barricada* of the implications of depolarization seems to have been linked to a deeper desire for *democratization*, both within the FSLN and in Nicaraguan society as a whole. Greater pluralism was deemed possible in the aftermath of peace negotiations, and with the establishment of a Constitution which

purported to represent a foundation for national consensus. As Sergio De Castro remembers the 1987 discussions, "we were aware of the need for democratization inside the FSLN and for all society":

> Even if we had won the [1990] elections, I think we would have changed the way we worked politically. Also the way the Sandinista Front related to the state, to the government, to the popular organizations - and among its own ranks as well.[150]

Senior writer Onofre Guevara recalls: "There was a feeling you had to make a paper that was more socially acceptable to everyone, less partisan." *Barricada*, says Guevara, "needed to grow as a tool of general information, because it was obvious the interests of the party weren't necessarily everyone's interests."[151]

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As noted in Chapter 2, discussion of far-reaching change at *Barricada* was largely abandoned, given the imperative of mobilizing Sandinista forces for the 1990 election campaign. But the early discussions provide a clear indication of the prominence of professional considerations in *Barricada* staffers' self-perceptions.

We have seen that the possibilities for expansion of the professional function were widely held to be contingent on wider transformations over which the paper had no real control — in particular, a society-wide process of depolarization, and a willingness on the part of contending factions to abide by the provisions of the Nicaraguan Constitution. The stunning electoral defeat of 1990 presented *Barricada* with more professional space, more suddenly, than any staffer had dreamed. It also confronted the paper with a range of unfamiliar constraints which both permitted and demanded a greater emphasis on professional considerations. In the wake of the FSLN's fall from power, *Barricada* was stripped of many of the perquisites and de facto subsidies which had consigned to material factors a mostly peripheral role in the paper's functioning between 1979 and 1990. We saw at the beginning of this chapter that such factors were decisive in shaping conceptions of professional standards and values in the media of North America and Western Europe. One would expect them, then, to attain greater prominence in *Barricada*'s post-1990 functioning, a matter and an era to which we now turn.

Chapter 4

AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

Introduction

In a country prone to sudden and catastrophic natural disasters, geological metaphors come readily to mind when Sandinista journalists describe the sense of shock and dislocation associated with the 1990 election defeat — a setback that few Sandinistas had considered remotely likely. Guillermo Cortés's comment is typical: "It was like an earthquake. Everything came apart. All your work plans, your future, your project."[1]

Carlos Fernando Chamorro spent election night travelling back and forth between *Barricada* and FSLN election headquarters at Managua's Olof Palme Convention Centre. He was expecting an FSLN victory "by a wide margin," if not a landslide. Around 9:30 on election night, he saw the first early results: "It was quite clear for me, at that moment, that we had lost." "Shocked and surprised," his thoughts nonetheless turned around 1 a.m. to the question of how to report and interpret the stunning results for *Barricada*'s readers:

> In that moment, in which everybody felt personally depressed, I was thinking about what to do. I couldn't close the edition until I had official results. Then the official results started arriving, but they weren't definite - only 10 percent or so of the vote counted. So I couldn't run a story in which the defeat was decisively announced.

Accordingly, *Barricada* appeared on 26 February with an announcement that the UNO coalition was leading, but postponed a final verdict until the following day, after Daniel Ortega's concession speech had ended all doubt.[2]

At this point *Barricada* found itself confronted with the pressing task of preserving some cohesion among Sandinista ranks in the face of a shock which was, for many, psychologically shattering.[3] With the entire edifice of the revolutionary state wavering, with most Sandinista militants locked away trying to absorb the impact of the defeat, *Barricada*'s professional imperative remained. There were deadlines to meet, along with the expectations of a readership desperate for news

and consolation from one of the few Sandinista institutions still visibly functioning. Sofía Montenegro's testimony is evocative:

> The thing was, we had to work here. We at *Barricada* were forced to face reality when the whole country was paralyzed. The only things that functioned in the whole Sandinista Front were this paper and the National Directorate - and the Directorate never even appeared in public for the first week after the defeat

"We had to keep moving," Montenegro adds. "We couldn't close the paper and go home just because we were crying."

> You couldn't ignore what had happened, obviously. But I guess all of us were motivated by a need to provide a sense of solidity and continuity. At the same time, it was a chance for us to prove we were *an institution by ourselves*. I think it became clear to a lot of people that we had a reliable, responsible staff. While everybody outside was passionate, screaming at the top of their lungs, crying . well, we kept more or less a sense of self-control. That gained us a lot of credibility. "We are here": it was a point of reference for all *Sandinismo* For us it was a trial by fire, and we passed the test [4]

The two months between the election defeat and the Chamorro government's accession to power in April 1990 established patterns and trends which solidified over the rest of the year, climaxing with *Barricada*'s formal de-officialization in January 1991.

1) The mobilizing function remained prominent in the paper's functioning. Indeed, with *Barricada* one of the few FSLN institutions operating with something approaching normalcy, the paper's mobilizing role gained an added significance, if not an added salience in terms of editorial content. During the two-month transition period, *Barricada*'s pages scrupulously followed the policy lines laid down by the FSLN leadership for a peaceful turnover. "We were still the government," Chamorro says, "and the main problems for the Sandinista Front were solving the Contra question and organizing the retreat of the FSLN from the government."[5] The implications are apparent: *Barricada* was still a para-statal organ; the "main problems for the Sandinista Front" were the problems of the leadership, embroiled in delicate negotiations for Contra demobilization and political transition; the main problems for the leadership were perceived as the main problems (and thus coverage requirements) of *Barricada*.[6]

2) The professional function of the paper leapt in salience, independent of the extent to which this was manifested in changes to *Barricada*'s journalism. That is, the paper's *existence as an institution* suddenly assumed a powerful symbolic

significance among Sandinista ranks. In particular, in the first few days after the defeat, the pressures and incentives familiar to journalists around the world — deadline pressures, reader expectations — increased in salience as motivating forces for *Barricada* journalists.

The point at which those elements of the professional function associated with *Barricada*'s journalism and news coverage began to vie with the paper's mobilizing function can perhaps be isolated as 25 April 1990. On the day his mother took office as President of Nicaragua, Carlos Fernando Chamorro witnessed "the first sign of a revival of journalism" at the paper he directed. He took as a "hook" for this revival the pledges of economic reform made by the new President of the Central Bank, Francisco Mayorga.

> He said he would turn the economy around in 100 days. That was something that allowed you [as a journalist] to say, "Okay, now we start a new period. We're going to check on and be vigilant about [the promises made by] this government." ... We took the initiative very rapidly. Then you start discovering *this new function*, but that obliges you to think: "What's happening? We've changed, but what more do we have to do?" So I think this obviously brought about a process of maturation of ideas [for further change].[7]

3) With the near-chaos surrounding the turning over of the revolutionary state structure to Chamorro government administrators, *Barricada* had its first taste of the economic constraints which would prove a further powerful influence on the paper's professional functioning — particularly in the areas of business and marketing, and in the paper's competitive orientation vis-à-vis Managua's other dailies.

This chapter examines the impact of the FSLN retreat from state power on *Barricada*'s mobilizing and professional functions. Central contentions include the following:

• The FSLN defeat lifted from *Barricada* the burden of supporting the regime in power, eventually decreasing the salience of the mobilizing function and radically reducing the dissonance between that function and its professional counterpart.

• The normative agenda of political democratization and *concertación* among contending sectors of the national political elite decisively influenced the National Directorate's own agenda, and provided an important political "space" enabling *Barricada*'s longstanding professional function to assume greater prominence.

• The outlines of the FSLN mobilizing agenda were rendered more flexible

(and therefore more open to interpretation by *Barricada* staffers, in light of the professional function) by the Directorate's loss of strength and legitimacy, and by the prevailing atmosphere of questioning and self-examination among Sandinista ranks.

• In the construction of the FSLN's (and therefore its own) mobilizing agenda, *Barricada* came to play a semi-autonomous role, encouraging debate and discussion about the FSLN's future and seeking to establish itself as a "public-opinion leader." Its performance in this respect encountered strong opposition from some Sandinista sectors, including one National Directorate member.

• The importance of *Barricada*'s functioning to the FSLN's financial well-being grew, at the same time as material pressures and constraints on *Barricada* (and their influence on the paper's broad professional agenda) increased dramatically.

A Caveat

Discussion of *Barricada*'s present role and function moves the analysis from the realm of history into the arena of current events — that is, onto ground that is constantly shifting. Inevitably, some of the analysis concerning *Barricada*'s relations with the FSLN and the rise to prominence of the paper's professional function must remain partial and provisional. The relative power balance of actors in the Nicaraguan political equation is in a state of flux. Moreover, the very *identity* of these actors, as actors, is ambiguous. Both the Sandinista Front and the governing UNO coalition are confronted by the threat and reality of internal dissension and division; Nicaragua remains in the grip of economic crisis and the political confusion engendered by a near-collapse of the state presence in rural areas. The prevailing uncertainty militates against precise formulations about the present, or confident predictions about the future. But it is central to the analysis nonetheless. It is a key variable permitting and necessitating the greater salience of *Barricada*'s professional function — as a means of survival, as well as a longstanding goal which it now seems possible to attain.

1990-91: The Transformation of the Party-Paper Relationship

Shortly before the formal handover of power to the government his mother, Violeta, happened to head, Carlos Fernando Chamorro arranged a meeting between

National Directorate member Daniel Ortega and Sandinista journalists. The meeting, Chamorro recalls, "was quite open in terms of [Ortega] saying, 'Okay, we don't want to have any control over what you do. We're simply going to give you information, and everybody can do what he wants, with his own ideas and lines.'"

> After the meeting, I went to Ortega and said, "Don't you think it's time now for *Barricada* to stop being an official organ of the FSLN? There's no reason for it now." He said, "Yes, it's a good idea. Why don't you make a proposal?" ... I also talked with other members of the National Directorate. For all of us, it was clear something had changed. It was no longer a question of principle whether *Barricada* was the official organ of the FSLN or not.[8]

Although the commonsensical tenor of this conversation apparently belied divisions within the National Directorate over the advisability of *Barricada*'s reorientation (including misgivings on Ortega's part — see below), the structural transformation of the party-paper relationship proceeded relatively smoothly over the course of 1990, with *Barricada* taking the lead at all stages. In general, the National Directorate appears to have recognized *Barricada*'s official-organ status was now outdated and impractical: a burden that ill-equipped the paper to cope in the new political and economic environment, and that limited *Barricada*'s ability to contribute to the Front's regeneration — or to its depleted coffers.

More than that, though, the comparatively non-problematic nature of the reorientation suggests the Sandinista leadership's degree of preoccupation elsewhere. Given the atmosphere of dislocation and near-collapse, the Directorate had every reason to be thankful that a key FSLN institution was prepared to shoulder responsibility for its own material functioning, while making regular contributions to FSLN party funds and maintaining a close and responsive relationship with the Directorate. It is clear the Front's loss of power, legitimacy, and control over state resources was the key factor in creating an accommodating attitude among most Directorate members towards *Barricada*'s professional and institutional aspirations. Contends Guillermo Cortés:

> Right now, the Front is going through a very hard time. It[s leadership] has lost authority, credibility, legitimacy. It's difficult for them to lead even their own organizations. Even if they wanted to have greater control over *Barricada*, the situation itself prevents it. Well, we're taking advantage of that.[9]

The process of delinking over the course of 1990 and early 1991 was marked by two major structural changes in the party-paper relationship.

The Creation of the Editorial Council. In mid-1990, an Editorial Council modelled on European, particularly Scandinavian, press functioning was instituted to further streamline relations between *Barricada* and the FSLN leadership. The Council consists of Carlos Fernando Chamorro; Bayardo Arce (whose status as a member of the FSLN National Directorate was confirmed at the 1991 party congress); William Ramírez, a Sandinista representative to the Nicaraguan National Assembly; Alejandro Martínez, former Sandinista Minister of Foreign Trade, and today an important economic advisor to the National Directorate: Rodrigo Reyes, former President of the Supreme Court, and still a member of the Court; and two *Barricada* editors, Sergio De Castro (former editor of *Barricada Internacional*) and Xavier Reyes (Managing Editor during Chamorro's stint at the DAP).

The Council's composition, and the fact that candidates were presented to the National Directorate for approval, testifies to *Barricada*'s continuing close links with the FSLN leadership and its accommodation to a broader Sandinista mobilizing strategy. Clearly, though, a central purpose of the Council is to entrench the paper's freedom from day-to-day vigilance by party leaders. Argues Chamorro:

> It's much better to know that we're going to have a meeting [of the Editorial Council] every two weeks; every two weeks we're going to have a brief evaluation, and at the same time share important information dealing with the law, the economy, politics and foreign policy. I think there is still vigilance [by the FSLN leadership], but this is [now] totally *a posteriori*. I mean, we don't get any phone calls from anyone saying, "What are you going to publish tomorrow? What's your headline for tomorrow?"[10]

The introduction of the Council, then, is only the most recent of a long line of measures aimed at limiting party control and vigilance over *Barricada*'s day-to-day functioning, discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Formal De-officialization. The second major post-election development in the party-paper relationship — and the more controversial one — was *Barricada*'s formal renunciation of official-organ status, with the concomitant changes to the paper's logo and masthead described in the opening pages of this thesis. The de-officializing of the paper followed Chamorro's drafting of a New Editorial Profile, presented to the National Directorate for approval in December 1991.[11]

In the profile, Chamorro noted "a pluralist inclination in the periodical and an opening towards diverse sectors" of Nicaraguan society.[12] It was vital for both the paper and the FSLN's opposition strategy as a whole, Chamorro wrote, that

Barricada be perceived by the general population "as *a journalistic institution with its own identity*, that is to say, with some degree of autonomy in relation to the FSLN as a political subject, to strengthen to the maximum its potential credibility and influence" (emphasis added).

The FSLN itself would benefit, Chamorro argued, from "a modification of the official character of *Barricada* as a party organ." By "not having to submit [itself] in a rigid way to the tactical requirements of FSLN policy," *Barricada* would gain "a greater margin of freedom-of-action" to reflect the interests and demands of its readers — because "in the final analysis, it is the people [as a whole] that the revolution seeks to attract" to its cause. "Obviously," Chamorro wrote,

> the Sandinista Front will remain as always a privileged informational source [*un sujeto informativo privilegiado*] for *Barricada* Its official positions, when they are defined by the relevant organs (the National Directorate, the Sandinista Assembly), will be divulged at length, in the same way that [its] policies and interests will be defended and represented through the paper's [editorial] strategy But in its informational or editorial treatment, the paper will adopt a formal distance, in the sense that the FSLN will no longer be in itself the protagonist or the voice of *Barricada*

Crucially, Chamorro stressed that a formal delinking would accomplish nothing unless it were accompanied by "a deep de-officialization" in the paper's manner of coverage and presentation. He acknowledged concerns that this delinking would lead to the paper representing "only its journalists," or the interests of a single sector of the FSLN. But he cited the Editorial Council, with its unprecedentedly broad sectorial representation, as the principal guarantor of *Barricada*'s status as "an organic medium of the FSLN." This mobilizing role would now be considerably expanded, however, and rendered far less reflexive. Instead of the party's official organ, *Barricada* would be a "newspaper of the revolution, or a newspaper of *Sandinismo*."[13]

The National Directorate placed its public imprimatur on the paper's reorientation with Bayardo Arce's article in the first edition of the new *Barricada*, which echoed Chamorro's arguments in the Profile. "These changes, towards which we have been moving over the last few months, do not mean *Barricada* will cease to be a Sandinista publication," Arce noted. Rather, "without being the official organ of the FSLN, it will continue to be the property of the FSLN, but now under a broader political definition: as a periodical of the revolution and, therefore, in the

national interest" — a neat logical progression, if perhaps an optimistic and self-serving one.[14]

The de-officialization process again demonstrates the twin strands of *Barricada*'s functioning, and the transformation in each which the electoral defeat encouraged and necessitated. With its pledge to remain "a newspaper of the revolution," the paper reiterates its mobilizing role as an organ of *divulgación* for the FSLN's opposition strategy.[15] Even more central to the New Editorial Profile, however, is *Barricada*'s professional function. The post-election environment is viewed as both a golden opportunity and powerful incentive for redressing the imbalance in the mobilizing versus the professional function, perceived to have existed since the paper's founding.[16]

We will analyze here the evolution of the two functions, the various factors which shape and constrain them in the post-election environment, and (more provisionally) their relative degree of salience for *Barricada*'s present and future functioning.

The Mobilizing Function Transformed

For the first two months after the 1990 election defeat the prominence of the mobilizing function in *Barricada*'s news coverage was undimmed. The image of continuity, however, is deceptive. The traditional architect of the paper's mobilizing function was undergoing sudden, far-reaching, and unexpected trauma.

In the weeks prior to the Chamorro government's accession, FSLN and state leaders coordinated a hurried campaign of resource redistribution, designed to provide for the future of a party and movement which had never seriously considered the prospect of losing power. Under Laws 85 and 86, passed before the official transition, the Sandinistas turned over to militants and supporters title to some 20,000 homes, 50,000 urban plots, and 9,000 landholdings comprising well over a million acres of land.[17] The indecorous speed with which laws were passed and property turned over testifies to the FSLN leadership's extreme preoccupation with laying a material foundation for the Front's survival — and the ad-hoc nature of preparations made for just such an eventuality.[18]

In the atmosphere of dislocation and confusion, Sandinista popular

organizations, unions, and institutions were largely left to fend for themselves. The formal party apparatus was reduced to skeletal levels — from a ministry-sized contingent of 3,400 to just 200. The remaining core was incapable of administering the transition process for the Sandinista state structure and the revolutionary movement as a whole.[19] Once the Chamorro government took power, the Front's capacities were further undermined. The FSLN was reduced to reliance on its handful of foreign holdings and private businesses — *Barricada* prime among them.[20]

Politically, the post-election period witnessed a sharp devolution of authority to the grassroots membership of the various Sandinista organizations and institutions. In the period after the Chamorro accession to power, these bodies (those that did not collapse outright) operated with increasing independence, political and material, from the party leadership.[21]

To speak, then, of an "FSLN mobilizing agenda" in the post-election period is to refer to a much more nebulous, diffuse, and formative commodity than existed during the Sandinista years in power. The ability of the FSLN leadership to represent all Sandinistas is cast into question, and its ability to elicit obedience on demand is virtually nonexistent.

Moving beyond the framework of the Sandinista Front, the agenda of the FSLN leadership now reflects a broader process of compromise and coexistence initiated and encouraged by diverse sectors of the Nicaraguan political elite. The process of *concertación* was based on an overarching, if fragile, moral imperative which first appeared among Sandinista leaders, policymakers, and intellectuals around 1987, and assumed primary salience in the volatile and complex post-election environment. Fuelled by the negotiations surrounding the April 1990 transition, *concertación* was formalized with agreements in Summer 1991 that ended a crippling and destabilizing round of urban strikes by pro-Sandinista unions. The FSLN leadership accepted a consultative role, continued control over the Army and state security forces, and a de facto veto over certain areas of government policy, including repeal of Sandinista property laws. In return, the FSLN agreed to serve as mediator between the Chamorro regime and pro-Sandinista sectors (especially

striking urban unions), and pledged to seek a return to power by peaceful means only. *Concertación* blended, however, with the FSLN's traditional orientation toward the poorer sectors which had proved its most dependable constituency throughout the revolutionary decade.[22]

Concertación, then, is a tightrope walk which forces the FSLN leadership to play two roles, perhaps not irreconcilable but certainly very delicate. As Carlos M. Vilas points out, *concertación* "make[s] it difficult for [the leadership] to encourage protests and confrontations. At the same time, they need to eventually place themselves at the forefront of those protests, or else they risk losing control of the popular movement and being marginalized in the internal political debate of Sandinismo." He notes further that such a posture sharpens the divisions within the upper ranks of the FSLN, forcing the party to choose between

> a conciliatory position, adopting the role of a *constructive interlocutor* in the name of the "Nicaraguan people" and "democracy," ignoring the social tensions and contradictions and the different political agendas behind these terms ... or a position of firm opposition to the anti-popular and vengeful character of the measures adopted by the [Chamorro] government. This ambiguity testifies once more to the coexistence of heterogeneous perspectives and tendencies within this multiclass organization, which includes social democrats, Marxists, revolutionary nationalists, and technocratic developmentalists.[23]

How to construct a coherent mobilizing agenda from such heterogeneity — with familiar populist appeals suddenly rendered complex, even contradictory? The shock of defeat combined with the unfamiliar complexities of the new political environment to generate the "internal political debate" to which Vilas refers.

In June 1990, the Sandinistas held an extraordinary assembly at the aptly-named town of El Crucero (The Crossroads) outside Managua. Delegates aired sweeping criticisms of Sandinista rule and the institutional structure of *Sandinismo*.[24] The debate mirrored the re-examination of priorities and perspectives underway among Sandinistas, from which two broad streams of thinking have emerged. Among the "principalists" — ideological purists stressing defense of popular interests, and discipline to bolster revolutionary cohesion — are many mid-level leaders of Sandinista trade unions and popular organizations, along with some intellectual figures like Rosario Murillo. "Pragmatists," on the other hand, stress the need for cross-class alliances, constructive negotiation, and the implications of the collapse of Eastern European state socialism — which for leading figures like

Directorate member Victor Tirado means "the end of a strategic alliance" which enabled movements of national liberation to withstand imperialist (particularly U.S.) pressure.[25]

To the extent that an FSLN political agenda has emerged to shape *Barricada*'s mobilizing function,[26] it is centred around the twin poles of *democratization* and *depolarization*, constituent elements of the broader *concertación* policy.

Democratization is a two-sided concept. The "FSLN line" states that democratic rules should apply to political relations in Nicaragua, and political life should be founded on the Nicaraguan Constitution, whose construction was overseen and approved by the Sandinistas.[27] Democratization is also viewed as emphasizing popular interests over elite ones. In addition, the Front pledges itself to internal democratization — in response to the perception that the FSLN "lost touch" with the masses over the years of revolutionary rule, and thus required reinvigoration from the base up.

The New Editorial Profile, accordingly, defines the democratizing mission as follows:

> i) The defense of the State of Law, the Constitution, and democratic rights, among which the most important is freedom of expression;
> ii) The widening of space for popular participation, and the democratization of the popular organizations and social movements;
> iii) The unity, democratization, and programmatic relaunching of the FSLN, and its projection in society as forger of an authentically democratic, participatory, and representative political culture;
> iv) The struggle for the political depolarization of society, and the channelling of conflicts into democratic forms of expression;
> v) The defense of socio-economic alternatives which, in a framework of equity and social justice, will benefit the development of the popular sectors;
> vi) The defense of national independence and sovereignty and the values of national culture.

For *Barricada*'s journalistic stance, the democratization agenda (under the rubric of *concertación*) translates into acceptance of the legitimacy of the new government, and an implicit limit to permissible criticism:

> It would be wrong, totally wrong, for us to deny the legitimacy of this government [says Chamorro]. If we decide they don't exist, that they're a fraud, that they're simply the sons of *Yanqui* imperialism and therefore don't have a right to express themselves or be a government - well, what we'd have to do is organize a coup d'état or a military insurrection. But they exist, and we have to dispute their ideas against our ideas.[28]

The political dilemma for *Barricada* is similar to that of the FSLN leadership

and Sandinista delegates to the National Assembly. How does one criticize enough to be taken seriously as a critical, pro-revolutionary voice, but not so much that the delicate status quo is fundamentally undermined, to the detriment of all? In Guillermo Cortés's words,

> ... [our] opposition cannot be so strong that it causes the fall of the government, nor can it stop being an opposition. This is a difficult balance to strike, and it's weighing on the newspaper.[29]

With regard to the sensitive issue of the FSLN's *internal* democratization, Chamorro says *Barricada* took the El Crucero assembly of June 1990 as "a broad reference point," opening its pages to an increasing diversity of views on the future and preferred structure of the Sandinista Front.[30]

In general, then, the paper continues to seek guidance in its mobilizing function from outside sources — though there is a perceptible shift away from the National Directorate and toward more broad-based, democratic samplings of the Sandinista constituency, such as assemblies and congresses. One should note, however, that this by no means constitutes a "neutral" stance towards the internal debate, at least in the eyes of some Sandinista "principalists." In fact, it was *Barricada*'s role as a forum for criticism, debate, and dissent which resulted in the harshest attacks so far, from within Sandinista ranks, on the paper's post-election functioning. On 2 September 1990, Rosario Murillo, director of the now-defunct Barricada supplement *Ventana* and companion of ex-President Daniel Ortega, delivered a stunning *j'accuse* against *Barricada*, Sofía Montenegro's supplement *Gente*, and *La Semana Cómica* under Róger Sánchez. Her "open letter to the Sandinista membership," published in *El Nuevo Diario*, charged that a "sect" had "made use of the Sandinista Front's media, funded by the FSLN, for purposes of personal projection." Murillo added: "I am in favour of the revolution's media playing an active role in criticism of our political action in all areas. But, criticism is one thing and discrediting and destruction another."[31] More recently, Daniel Ortega himself entered the fray with a "frontal attack" on *Barricada* that echoed Murillo's charges against the former official organ and other pro-Sandinista media. Stating that he had disagreed with the decision to allow the paper greater freedom and wished to see the measure overturned, Ortega accused *Barricada* of having

grown too "commercial." He also criticized Sandinista radio stations for putting the "voices of the enemies" on the air. (The longer-term impact of Ortega's angry words is uncertain, but his position clearly does not represent a majority view among Directorate members. It would appear to require at least a consensus among FSLN leaders to halt *Barricada*'s shift away from strict party affiliation and control.)[32]

Depolarization is linked to democratization (and to *concertación*), but is worth addressing separately. This element of the FSLN political agenda — and thus of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function — should be viewed in the context of a shattered economy, a population exhausted by a decade of war, and a political culture which historically has lacked "a tradition of comity, the sense of civility between those who disagree with each other."[33]

The implications for *Barricada*'s journalistic project appear to be a matter of consensus among the paper's editors and writers. They centre not only on a sense of national mission, but on the perceived congruence between depolarization and journalistic professionalism. Guillermo Cortés:

> In a country where conflicts have historically been settled with bullets, the mass media and the journalists have been limited in their opportunities to practice their profession. Here in Nicaragua, if the rule of law and the role of civil society is going to be strengthened, then there will be greater opportunities for professional journalism. ... Society as a whole is moving toward a new way of being, of resolving problems - of talking *to* each other, not shooting *at* each other.[34]

Sofía Montenegro adds:

> That's what we're trying to do at *Barricada* now: to show people how to be tolerant. Tolerance involves doing a lot of very tough mental calisthenics, but once people see you doing the exercise, they can see the value of it, the goodness of it, and they can begin to imitate it. The idea is that the struggle isn't something you have to carry on with guns and bullets all the time. Words have their own weight and strength. ... We haven't forgotten the struggle. On the contrary, we're very aggressive about it. But we want to show you can be direct in your criticisms, without being absolutely blinded by emotions in a way that prevents you from observing reality accurately and objectively.[35]

What are the implications of the new FSLN agenda for *Barricada*'s mobilizing function? Two points are worth noting. First, in its broadest outline, the paper's mobilizing role continues to exist, and the influence of the FSLN National Directorate remains significant. Second, though, the agenda is much more amorphous and diffuse than previously. It responds to a wider range of inputs — not only outside influences, but (given increasing internal democratization) greater input from Sandinista sectors and institutions. It is also prone to greater internal

dissension, more publicly expressed, as Victor Tirado's comments on the end of anti-imperialist revolutions and Daniel Ortega's recent outburst against *Barricada* make clear. *Barricada*, as one of the more significant and stable Sandinista institutions still existing, thus gains an important say in construction of the agenda that will guide its mobilizing function. This influence may even be disproportionate, given the paper's important role as a forum for diverse views. Whatever the limitations of its explicit editorial "line," it can serve as an outlet and mouthpiece for different and sometimes divergent opinions and agendas. In its capacity as a public-opinion leader, moreover, its influence is likely disproportionate to its limited circulation, a theme addressed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Finally, the FSLN's very retreat from government greatly diminishes the dissonance between *Barricada*'s mobilizing and professional functions. A critical stance towards government (and, to a lesser extent, state) authorities no longer contradicts the paper's Sandinista orientation. When Guillermo Cortés argues, for instance, that "it's easier to do journalism from the opposition," he is referring to the congruence between traditional conceptions of journalistic professionalism (founded on objectivity and critical distance) and an affiliation with the political opposition. Put another way, Cortés is emphasizing the incongruities which inevitably arise for any paper whose primary allegiance is not to critical distance and objectivity, but to a party in power. The significance of this transformation to *Barricada*'s mobilizing and professional functions, and the relationship between them, is difficult to overstate.[36]

The Professional Function Transformed

It is clear from the phrasing of Chamorro's New Editorial Profile that the main impetus for the transformation in the party-paper relationship 1) originates with *Barricada* and 2) responds to longstanding, but long-muted, professional aspirations among the paper's staff. The Profile devotes attention to the paper's mobilizing function, but concentrates on "its character as a medium of communication," wherein *Barricada* defines itself "as *a daily of general information* with a national reach."[37]

There follows a list of ten desiderata designed to enable the paper to advance

its new "journalistic strategy." They are worth quoting in full, since there is no clearer articulation of the editorial implications of the professional function for editorial policy, content, and design:

i) [To move toward] a balanced journalism which breaks with the unilateral nature of information predominant in Nicaragua. That is to say, the consultation of various sources in covering news, the presentation of alternative opinions, etc., in order to gain credibility and professional quality.

ii) To construct an individual agenda. *Barricada* must reflect daily reality, but above all it must come up with an investigative agenda of news. To give facts priority over speech [*discurso*, i.e., assertions which may or may not be grounded in fact].

iii) To combine agility with profundity ... Abundant information in short note-form, combined with more in-depth material, should [contribute to] a modern and attractive design for easier reading.

iv) There should be no informational "blank-spaces" [*No hay que dejar vacíos informativos*], even taking into account the fact that there will always exist questions of political convenience which must be considered in deciding whether to publish [an item] or not.

v) To establish a solid relationship with the public which is linked to the daily. Small and large concerns, demands - whether individual or social - should always receive privileged attention.

vi) To undertake self-promotion of *Barricada*'s role, its achievements and those of its journalists, as an institution. Each small victory of *Barricada* should be claimed as a conquest which serves to increase [*Barricada*'s] own space.

vii) To combine journalistic genres which will permit [the paper] to offer a diversity of reading material and [present] a distinctive journalistic style. To cultivate chronicles [*la crónica*], reporting, interviews.

viii) To grant a special importance to human-interest [material] and entertainment. [These serve as] "hooks" for readers. [There should be] a surprise every day. A touch of craftiness, pain, joy, without succumbing to unnecessary stridency.

ix) To cultivate a plain language [of reportage] ... to purify the language of rhetoric and hyper-adjectivization [*sobreadjetivación*].

x) To formally separate opinion from information, and to adopt a necessary distance in treatment of informational subjects. This does not imply that information should be stripped of all its political significance [*intencionalidad política*] ...

Among the specific methods of realizing these ambitions, the New Editorial Profile lists the promotion of investigative journalism "covering all the reader's areas of interest"; the opening of *Barricada*'s opinion-editorial page to permit a broadening of "the debate ... between Sandinismo and other social sectors"; an increased opportunity elsewhere in the paper for individual opinions to be expressed in the form of columns, while "maintaining a criterion of professional quality"; and an increased presence of satire and humour.

The outline of the professional function in the Profile reflects the ideological and philosophical suppositions of the press model most commonly associated with liberal-democratic societies. Apart from the separation of fact and opinion (perhaps the key underlying tenet of 19th-century notions of press "objectivity"), note the shift away from politically partisan language to a plainer style more appealing to a mass readership, and the consultation of a variety of sources and presentation of alternative opinions. There is, in addition, the increased emphasis on human-interest material ("small and large concerns — individual or social"). This is strikingly similar to the traditional news agenda of liberal-democratic press models, with their stress on "the importance of everyday life," in Michael Schudson's words.[38]

This new definition of the professional function also represents a reaction against the previous ten years of strife in Nicaragua — a recognition that *Barricada*'s scope ought to extend beyond the themes of war and crisis which dominated public discourse in the country during the 1980s. As Sergio De Castro expresses the point, more bluntly:

> Look. People - revolutionary people - like to fuck, like to drink, like to go to the beach. Why not? Who can imagine that if you're a revolutionary or a progressive, you're going to behave like a monk in a monastery? It's crazy. People are tired of war. They have been saturated with politics. We have to reflect the other aspects of normal life.[39]

The reaction against the suffocating stress of politics and public discourse in post-revolutionary Nicaragua constitutes, too, a reaction against *Barricada*'s previous highly subordinate insertion into the FSLN propaganda agenda. There is a striking correlation between the ambitions outlined in the New Editorial Profile and the Statement of Ethical Norms and Principles, and the complaints and criticisms of *Barricada*'s journalism voiced by staffmembers both before and after the election defeat. One can, in fact, *reverse* many of the above-cited imperatives and desiderata and emerge with a critique of *Barricada*'s functioning during the revolutionary decade put forward by the paper's staff. The paper's failure to formally separate opinion and information, for instance, is a constant theme in the retrospective analyses offered by *Barricada* staffers in interviews for this thesis.

The broad philosophical influences on *Barricada*'s new professional function

are evident in another key document of the post-election era: the statement of "Ethical Principles and Norms of *Barricada*" circulated in April 1991. After reiterating some of the Profile's theses and tenets, the statement turns to the question of *Barricada*'s responsibilities to its readers:

> The primary responsibility which *Barricada* assumes is to truthfully inform its readers. To achieve this proposition, news should comply with the following requirements: *precision* (taking into account all the important and secondary details of a news item, with exactitude and fidelity); *comprehensiveness* (the panoramic inclusion of [all aspects of] the news story); *penetration* (going deeply into the significance of the item to discover its importance). The exercise of these three faculties will result in coverage that is faithful to the news story and will determine the primary characteristic of its style: objectivity, the absence of bias [*juicios*], of opinion, of personal evaluation of the item.[40]

Specifically exempted from these requirements, as in the liberal-democratic tradition, are those aspects of journalism — interviews, columns, opinion pieces — "in which the journalist necessarily includes his or her own opinions ... in a manner clearly differentiated" from the basic, objective news reporting. As will be argued below, these are integral to *Barricada*'s function as a public-opinion leader.

It is not enough, however, to limit analysis of *Barricada*'s new professional function to abstract philosophical influences, the political environment of *concertación*/democratization/depolarization, and basic principles of journalistic craft. It was argued in Chapter 3 that the models of press functioning which emerged in liberal-democratic societies were the product not only of Enlightenment thinking, but of the practical, material factors which transformed elite journals into "mass media," and the competitive pressures which emerged from that transformation in a free-market environment. *Barricada*'s professional function, particularly in the key areas of advertising, marketing, and business management, likewise strongly reflects the material and economic pressures associated with the new free-market environment — the very constraints and challenges from which the paper was largely insulated during the Sandinista years in power, thanks to the material perquisites associated with its para-statal role. We turn to a detailed consideration of these factors and their role in shaping the professional function.

Economic Factors: A New Salience

The principal impact of economic factors on *Barricada*'s post-election

professional function has been in the realm of business, advertising, and marketing. The transition to an unfamiliar free-market environment has resulted in major transformations in these (suddenly key) areas of the paper's operations. Economic factors have also powerfully affected *Barricada*'s competitive positioning vis-à-vis Managua's two other daily papers: a central feature of the post-election period is competition for readership among all three dailies, but in particular between *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario*.

In the words of *Barricada* Business Manager Max Kreimann, "We're in a new, free-market situation, which we're violently beginning."[41] The economic and material factors shaping and constraining *Barricada*'s professional functioning in this era can be divided into two main sub-groups.

The environment of generalized economic crisis. This affects all Nicaraguan newspapers, regardless of political stripe. Economic crisis was pervasive in Nicaragua well prior to the Sandinista fall from power. But the *governing tenets* of the crisis have recently undergone a significant change in a free-market direction. The realignment which this necessitates is particularly sharp for those institutions embedded in the neo-patrimonialist system of resource distribution established by the Sandinistas during the revolutionary decade, but the impact of the crisis is not limited to pro-revolutionary forces and institutions.

In the period following the Chamorro government's accession to power, Nicaragua experienced another round of the vicious hyperinflation which had plagued the economy since the mid-1980s. As the *córdoba* declined in value, the price of papers rose accordingly; circulation figures for all three papers peaked and fell in tandem with the price increases.[42]

The "maxi-devaluation" currency reform introduced by the Chamorro regime in March 1991 had a further, strongly deleterious economic impact, at least on *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario*.[43] While savings accounts were adjusted to reflect the full scale of the devaluation, chequing accounts were boosted by a factor of only three, well short of the fivefold increase in the old *córdoba* relative to the US dollar. According to Max Kreimann, "Before the measures, we had the equivalent of $430,000" in *Barricada* chequing accounts. "With the measures, we were left with

$220,000. We lost $210,000 from one day to the next, overnight."[44] The devaluation also led to a cut in real advertising rates (hence — all else equal — advertising income) of some 20 percent.

The free-market austerity measures have also resulted in an astronomical increase in material costs. Daniel Flakoll Alegría, editor of *Barricada Internacional*, points out that during the revolutionary decade,

> although we had the monopoly of newsprint [usually provided free of charge by East Bloc countries], we always allocated the same amount to *La Prensa*, even if we had to take some from *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario*. But now it's not the Chamorro government that has all the newsprint: it's private investors who come to sell it to you. Now it's a question of your financial ability to buy it.[45]

The economic crisis among revolutionary forces and institutions. This refers to the particular pressures brought to bear on Sandinista institutions and organizations, resulting from the FSLN's loss of control over the distributive apparatus of state resources. It subsumes as well the measures taken by the new Chamorro government which are apparently aimed at stripping revolutionary organizations and institutions of the buttresses ("privileges") upon which they had grown to depend. This latter category includes the economic constraints on *Barricada*'s functioning associated with Chamorro government decisions apparently aimed directly at the paper.

Since taking power, the Chamorro government has pointedly refrained from imposing direct restrictions on *Barricada*'s (or any other medium's) functioning by means of media legislation, prior censorship, and the other mechanisms of state coercion regularly employed under the Sandinistas.[46] Two central government decisions have, however, had a strong impact on *Barricada* (in one case, on other leftist and/or pro-Sandinista media as well).

Shortly after taking power, the Chamorro government cancelled *Barricada*'s contract with the Ministry of Education, worth somewhere between $500,000 and $2.5 million a year to the newspaper.[47] The cancellation was made "for explicitly political reasons," contends Max Kreimann. According to several sources at *Barricada*, the government turned to a publishing operation in Honduras, since *Barricada*'s was the only press in Nicaragua capable of handling the contract.

In addition, the transition to UNO rule meant a steep reduction in *Barricada*'s

state-sector advertising, which accounted for some 80 percent of the paper's ad revenue during the revolutionary decade. In large part, state-sector advertising migrated to the pro-government *La Prensa*. At the time of field research for this thesis, state-sector advertising still constituted a significant proportion of *Barricada*'s advertising — perhaps 30 percent, slightly more when the government implemented publicity campaigns aimed at all sectors of the population (such as the March 1991 maxi-devaluation). The 30 percent figure is deceptive, however. *Barricada*'s overall *quantity* of advertising shrunk drastically in the wake of the election defeat — from an average of 5 pages per edition prior to February, to just 2 in the post-defeat environment (.6 of a page from state sources).

From a longer-term perspective, present advertising figures represent "a below-survival level" of revenue, Max Kreimann acknowledges. He argues further that the near-collapse of state-sector ads constitutes a de facto policy adopted by certain sectors of the Chamorro government:

> What I think is that there are sectors of the government who are enemies of the Front, and thus of the newspaper of the Front It's not a direction from the executive, but something that happens at the intermediate level [of decision-making].[48]

A final Chamorro government policy strongly affected *Barricada*'s sister publication, *Barricada Internacional*. Prior to the election defeat, approximately half the international edition's subscriptions came from the Nicaraguan state, mainly for (free) distribution by embassies abroad. Those subscriptions were cut when the Chamorro government took power, radically curtailing *BI*'s circulation, steering the publication toward the financial shoals, and placing its continued survival in doubt.[49]

What measures has *Barricada* taken since the election defeat to reorient its professional function in the face of these new and unfamiliar economic constraints?

Staff Cuts. *Barricada*'s largest-ever staff level was 480 employees, in the mid-1980s. The number reflected the kind of subsidized underemployment common under regimes emphasizing socialist (albeit preferential) redistribution of scarce resources. As such, state-sector overstaffing was a main target of the Sandinista-imposed austerity measures of 1988-89. These measures also impacted on "para-statal" institutions such as *Barricada*, resulting in a cut in the paper's payroll of some 17 percent — from 480 to 400 employees.

Following the election defeat, further downsizing took place, reducing the payroll to 350 persons. It is not entirely clear to what extent these cuts result directly from the election defeat and the associated, far-reaching material crisis in *Barricada*'s operations. According to Kreimann, the layoffs are "not due strictly to the electoral defeat, but to internal measures to improve efficiency. It's a strictly business matter."[50] It is fair to suggest, however, that the defeat exacerbated the need for, and therefore the significance of, business sense and corporate efficiency. Intuitively, these would tend to assume greater importance in the professional functioning of an institution stripped of a sponsor's subsidies and support.[51]

An added, and intriguing, effect of the election defeat has been to reorient the wage-system, for those employees remaining, more along free-market lines. As the salience of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function decreases (along with the degree of vigilance exercised by party leaders), there is a corresponding reduction in the salience of certain "revolutionary values," such as voluntary labour, which are viewed as less tenable in the post-election environment.[52]

Advertising Policy. As with the changes in staffing levels analyzed above, transformations in advertising policy and its salience to *Barricada*'s professional function began some time before the 1990 election defeat. In particular, the policy of confining advertising to less prominent, non-facing pages was abandoned some time before the election. Nonetheless, Kreimann draws a sharp line between *Barricada*'s approach before the FSLN's fall from power and after:

> The logic of the market before the electoral defeat wasn't a highly competitive one. Even with the measures we [i.e., the Sandinista government] adopted a year-and-a-half or two years before the election defeat, which freed up the market, many things were still regulated: the circulation of consumer and luxury goods; how one bought things in the economy So there wasn't an incentive for this business to mobilize itself to look for advertising, because there was a captive demand from the state. That is, the state advertised with us, and we had almost total rejection from the private sector. Whatever effort we made regarding the private sector would have been spending money in vain, because they just weren't going to advertise with is.[53]

Barricada's professional response to the new environment has been twofold. The salience of *Barricada*'s advertising department to the institution as a whole has increased significantly, symbolized by the department's move to more spacious offices previously occupied by *Barricada Internacional*.[54] *Barricada* has also begun an aggressive pursuit of private-sector advertising, exploiting the atmosphere of

concertación and emphasizing *Barricada*'s principal advantage in this regard vis-à-vis its competitors: the ability to run advertisements in full colour.[55]

An excellent example of the new, aggressive advertising strategy is the paper's decision to publish every day in full colour for the month of April 1991, at a financial loss. The policy decision was made partly to lure new readers (see below), but also, according to Kreimann, "to attract more advertisers, offering them colour, giving it to them free as a promotion, and implementing a variety of features related to the fact that in Nicaragua there has never existed a newspaper which came out in full colour every day." The strategy, says Kreimann, is "part of an effort to get [advertising] up to a survivable level and beyond that."[56]

The Publishing Service. A signal feature of the post-election environment was the increased salience of *Barricada*'s publishing operation to the paper's professional function and to its overall financial health, in light of the virtual collapse of state-sector advertising.[57] The paper's response to the cancelling of state contracts by the Chamorro regime was to exploit the capacity and versatility of *Barricada*'s printing plant and, at the same time, to exploit divisions among fractious centre-right and rightwing forces. *Barricada*'s opportunism in this respect has led to some curious marriages of convenience. *El Nicaragüense*, the rabidly anti-Sandinista paper of the rightwing business organization COSEP, is printed at the *Barricada* plant. Apparently, *El Nicaragüense*'s directors originally gave the contract to *La Prensa*, but discovered their factional political disputes with that paper's directorate (linked to *La Prensa*'s support for *concertación*, which COSEP opposes) were more daunting than the prospect of using *Barricada*'s plant. Nowhere is the increased salience of economic factors to the paper's professional function more evident than in Kreimann's explanation of the decision to accept such contracts:

> This sort of thing didn't happen before, because the political factor predominated in business decisions. Now you see more the business aspect of the newspaper, because it's more necessary. If we don't [take this position], we won't survive.[58]

Marketing: The Battle for Readership. *Barricada*'s new orientation towards its readers has three main components: design, marketing strategy, and editorial content. All are crucial to an understanding of the transformation of the paper's professional function, and the key role of economic factors in that transformation.

Design. Most of the principal changes in this area are partly or primarily geared to existing reader demand or to a projected expansion of *Barricada*'s readership base. The alterations include: a change in the fighter-at-the-barricades logo, viewed in the New Editorial Profile as "belong[ing] to another political epoch" (see p. 1); the shift from seven to six columns per page, "permit[ting] a cleaner design, a more legible publication, and a major improvement in graphic [capability]"; the introduction of a "fuller and stronger" typeface; and an overall design concept based on an "intermediate presentation, neither strident nor excessively sober," but bolder and more appealing to readers.[59]

A major reader-based marketing campaign, implemented after *Barricada*'s formal de-officializing, was the April 1991 stretch of full-colour editions, exploiting the paper's unique printing capacity. A more longterm alteration was the paper's decision to publish once a week in colour on a regular basis. According to Kreimann, readership increases by approximately 20 percent on days when *Barricada* publishes in colour.[60]

The new marketing strategy has decisively conditioned *Barricada*'s orientation vis-à-vis Managua's two other dailies. A shift is visible away from the mobilizing function and towards the professional function, broadly construed, as *Barricada*'s primary source of competitive self-definition. The adversarial political relationship between *Barricada* and *La Prensa* remains to some extent. But its salience to *Barricada*'s functioning has been muted, both by the overarching context of *concertación* and by the shift in competitive orientation to the professional (business) arena. Accordingly, *Barricada*'s main competitor is now the paper that vies with it for "market share" on the pro-revolutionary left — *El Nuevo Diario*.

The transformed relationship with *El Nuevo Diario* has had several key ramifications for *Barricada*'s professional functioning, both in the areas of marketing and editorial policy/content. The switch to occasional colour publishing and a more streamlined design can be seen as pointing up *END*'s deficiencies (colour capacity aside, *Barricada*'s competitor features a crude and cluttered design). Competition has also taken place in the field of pricing.[61]

Editorial Policy and Content. The influence of the professional function

(again broadly construed) is vivid and paramount in this area of *Barricada*'s operations. In particular, the increased salience of catering to readers' desires and interests reflects both philosophical influences (a human-interest component; an end to *sobreadjetivación*; etc.) and the exigencies of day-to-day competition and survival in a free-market environment.

Several months after the election defeat, *Barricada* — its formal de-officialization looming on the horizon — commissioned a nationwide survey of some 3,300 readers, focusing on content preferences. The survey found the most popular page in the paper to be the entertainment- and popular science-oriented *De Todo Un Poco*.[62] It also established Sofía Montenegro's supplement, *Gente* — which concentrates on cultural and sexual themes rather than overtly ideological ones — as *Barricada*'s most popular supplement, by a wide margin. Science, sports, and culture were the three preferred areas of news coverage, with 39, 29, and 15 percent support respectively.[63] The poll results bolstered *Barricada*'s pre-existing professional inclination to increase the proportion of human-interest material entertainment, and cultural themes in the paper's coverage, and to adopt a generally lighter, more "agile" tone in its reportage.[64]

Several elements of *Barricada*'s new editorial policy and content appear linked to the paper's desire to woo readers from *El Nuevo Diario* and, in general, to lay a foundation for increased circulation when economic circumstances permit. *De Todo Un Poco* was expanded from one page to two on Sundays, with a view to eventually instituting a Sunday colour supplement.[65] A more vivid example was the decision to shift "The Horoscope of Madame Tousso" from monthly to weekly appearance, "acting in response to numerous appeals from our readers, who by means of letters and phone calls" had urged the change on *Barricada*, according to the official announcement in *Barricada* (1 April 1991).[66]

A more general and controversial aspect of *Barricada*'s new professional function also appears to reflect the new competitive orientation vis-à-vis *El Nuevo Diario*.[67] The reference is to *Barricada*'s forays into *periodismo amarillo* — "yellow journalism," although the term carries more titillating, less sordid connotations in Spanish. What shade of yellow? Kreimann's response is the most straightforward:

"Crime, beauty contests, naked women, women's asses on the beach."

> We're a little yellower, and people like it. These were policies that didn't exist before. But I would say the little yellow journalism that's there is ... *educated*. Educated in the sense that it's unlike *El Nuevo Diario*, which will say, "So-and-so raped so-and-so," give lots and lots of details, names and surnames, and then three days later the people who are mentioned write letters saying it didn't happen. That shows a lack of respect for those people. We try not to print sordid things in a way that a child who reads them will think of them as somehow normal, and we try to be more balanced and courteous.[68]

The yellow tint to *Barricada*'s content — mild though it may be — testifies further to the influence of the Nicaraguan press tradition on *Barricada*'s professional function. ("The reality the majority of people here were born into — you can't change that in 20 years," argues Kreimann. "People like to read this stuff."[69]) As with other constituent elements of the professional function, the post-election environment both prompts and permits the emergence of features which were mostly latent, though not entirely dormant, during the revolutionary decade — when *Barricada*'s mobilizing function all but swamped professional considerations. The new "human-interest" emphasis can be viewed as a kind of halfway house between *Barricada*'s old sobriety and *El Nuevo Diario*'s yellow excess.[70]

What is the relative balance of economic and philosophical factors in *Barricada*'s professional functioning? An evaluation at this stage is speculative, and perhaps sterile. Among *Barricada* staffmembers, the philosophical impetus was downplayed by only one interviewee:

> For them to say that all the changes are the result of changed perceptions of what *Barricada*'s role should be in Nicaraguan society is dubious. I think it's much more the simple fact that they're running out of money, having to lay people off, and they're trying to find a way to increase their readership and raise advertising revenue.[71]

The prominence of professional journalistic values seems evident, however, in the comments of most other interview subjects cited in this chapter, and in the internal documents prepared by Chamorro. In closing, though, it is worth reiterating the significance of a key constraining factor on *Barricada*'s circulation, and speculating on its future impact on the paper's professional function.

As noted earlier, the generalized economic crisis in Nicaragua places limits on the ability of any Nicaraguan newspaper to increase readership and circulation outside the confines of redistributive, zero-sum competition. Chamorro's own thoughts in this respect are oblique, but deserve consideration. Asked to put

forward a best-case scenario for *Barricada* two or three years hence, the Director emphasized his desire that "readers will have a stronger influence on the newspaper ... [by that I mean] a large conglomerate of readers and opinions, rather than those who simply want to have their short-term or immediate interests represented in the newspaper."[72] At the moment, however, the possibilities of *increasing* that "conglomerate of readers" is strictly limited:

> Today we are at about 35,000 copies. I don't think we'll be able to go above 40,000, because of the economic crisis. You can make the best and most beautiful newspaper in the world, with full colour and whatever, but people don't have the money to buy it.[73]

On the other hand, Chamorro declared himself "totally convinced that we are going to have a process of economic recovery [in Nicaragua] starting in 1992." The specific changes he anticipates in the paper's professional function as the result of an improved economic situation include "more pages" and "more specialized coverage."

The first of these (and perhaps the second, to the extent that specialized coverage requires investment in staff training or the hiring of additional personnel) is clearly linked to available material resources. If an increase in resources is linked to an economic upturn, the means by which such an upturn could be translated into greater material prosperity for *Barricada* are limited: publishing contracts, advertising revenue, and increased sales. At the moment, sales constitute about 50 percent of the paper's income. If they remain vital to the paper's material well-being, it is reasonable to assume that the paper will seek to increase circulation and readership when the potential for such an increase is seen to exist. The influence of economic factors on editorial policy and coverage, then, may well be *potentially* far greater than in the present zero-sum environment.

Barricada as a Leader of Public Opinion

The concept which ostensibly guides *Barricada*'s new professional functioning is its role as a leader of public opinion. "In general," Chamorro wrote in the New Editorial Profile, "[*Barricada*] has lacked opinion leaders on various themes. The reality of [relations with] the FSLN and the lack of a tradition has impeded the projection of a broad spectrum of opinions, even within [the boundaries of]

Sandinismo." He added:

> The daily must aspire to convert itself into a leader of public opinion. This supposes its belligerent involvement and the taking of positions in the national debate, not only in relation to political questions, but with regard to all the themes of interest to the population.

Accordingly, he proposed an increase in the presence of investigative journalism, to "broaden the space for debate" on the opinion pages, and to increase "the space for [expression of] opinions on other pages of the periodical through journalistic columns and special sections, maintaining a criterion of professional quality."

The concept of the public-opinion leader serves as an apt symbol, not only of the continuing presence of the mobilizing and professional functions in *Barricada*'s journalism and business strategy, but of the transformations in each function. As a forum for debate among Sandinistas, the paper seeks to generate and disseminate a diversity of ideas and strategies; this process is held to be necessary for the emergence of any FSLN consensus position. The paper's role in this regard is clearly tied to the mobilizing function of the former official organ. But the parameters of that function, as noted. have undergone a sharp transformation. From merely divulging a pre-formed "party line," the paper has moved to encourage and air wide-ranging debate and discussion that might lead to construction of a longterm Sandinista strategy — itself a more flexible "line," more reflective of popular aspirations.

In its editorial stance, the paper takes its lead from National Directorate decisions, voting patterns of Sandinista deputies to the National Assembly, and the consensus positions which emerge from assemblies and congresses such as El Crucero and the July 1991 party congress. But general conformity with *Barricada*'s editorial stance is no longer a prerequisite for columnists or outside contributors.

It is via the mechanism of the public-opinion leader, moreover, that *Barricada* itself seeks to shape the mobilizing agenda that will guide it. To the extent that an "FSLN line" exists, and to the increasing extent that this line responds to articulate sectors of the Sandinista constituency, *Barricada* — as a self-supporting and semi-autonomous Sandinista institution — stakes out its own ground in the national debate, one that is no longer necessarily coterminous with the wishes, ambitions, or

opinions of National Directorate members. The mobilizing function at *Barricada* thus becomes the end-result of a more subtle and complex dialectical process in which the paper plays an initiating, not purely reflexive, role.[74]

One by-product is that rigid ideological considerations are placed much lower on *Barricada*'s scale of priorities. The paper is able, for example, to publish a range of opinions about the future of the Front, without closely identifying itself with any single agenda. It is also free to maintain a "correct" rapport with anti-Sandinista forces, and to report on their activities and statements with greater fairness, accuracy, and professionalism. Indeed, *Barricada*'s attempts in this vein have met with a certain grudging respect from political opponents.[75]

The role of public-opinion leader draws extensively on the liberal-democratic press tradition, notably those elements which emphasize social responsibility, a "watchdog" stance vis-à-vis the ruling authorities, objectivity, and fair treatment of diverse contending sources. In particular, Chamorro's conception of *Barricada* as *un periódico del 'sistema'* — "defending to the end the democratic rights of the population and its institutions," as the New Editorial Profile has it — resembles the implicit constitutional basis for much liberal-democratic press functioning. Opinion-leader status is a cornerstone of *Barricada*'s new professional function, which reflects the longstanding aspirations of a majority of *Barricada* staff as well as the post-election political environment of compromise, negotiation, and *concertación*.

The analysis here has demonstrated, though, that more than abstract philosophical models work to shape and constrain the professional agenda, not only at *Barricada* but in those western press traditions most often associated with core values like professionalism and objectivity. Material and economic factors were integral to the evolution of the liberal-democratic press; in the chilly free-market environment which prevails in Nicaragua, they have assumed sudden and decisive importance to *Barricada*'s professional functioning.

The political imperative of *Sandinismo*'s survival blends with material pressures to increase the salience of a broader readership to *Barricada*'s functioning and future goals. The new self-definition seeks to move the paper beyond the constituency of the converted. This lends to the professional function a relatively

stable medium-term mission, one not contingent on the mobilizing function, which seeks to bolster the FSLN's chances of recapturing a popular majority and perhaps returning to power in 1996. Central post-election changes in coverage, content, and design are aimed at fortifying *Barricada*'s presence as a distinct institution; increasing the prestige of *Sandinismo*; and buttressing the paper's material stability by attracting advertisers and drawing away readers from *El Nuevo Diario*. (Expanded readership and increased advertising revenue are, of course, closely linked.)

Opinion-leader status is also geared to overcoming a central environmental constraint which impedes the functioning and influence of most Third World print media. High levels of illiteracy, limited infrastructure for distribution beyond or even within large cities, scarce disposable income among consumers, and many other factors conspire to constrain Third World newspapers' professional functioning and potential mobilizing impact. The role of opinion leader, however, is seen at *Barricada* as positioning the paper to play *a vanguard role for Nicaraguan media as a whole* — that is, radio and to a lesser extent TV. The sway both these media hold over the national consciousness far exceeds that of newspapers, and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. "Implicit in my vision is that you're going to influence the radio and television," acknowledges Chamorro.[76] Sofía Montenegro offers a more detailed vision of how the *Barricada* example might be transmitted to other Nicaraguan media:

> The news in *Barricada* is much more in-depth than anything you can do on the radio, and it serves to give guidelines to radio stations. The people who are on the radio *read* the newspaper. And if you can influence the directors and journalists of the radio stations, you can influence the wider population indirectly. You help establish a certain tone for political discourse. If *Barricada* lowers its voice and seeks to encourage tolerance, it creates pressure on others to follow suit. We're making a better journalism now, more analytical and clear-minded, and it's helping people to think - including the guys who have the microphones. Maybe it'll come to the point that we distribute only ten thousand copies of the paper, but it'll be important and influential nonetheless.[77]

Both *Barricada*'s professional function and its mobilizing role continue, then, to reflect the broader environmental constraints common to print media within the Nicaraguan tradition and the Third World more generally.

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This chapter has traced the transformations in the mobilizing and professional

functions at *Barricada* following the shocking electoral setback of February 1990. In the Conclusion, an overview of the evolution and interaction of these two functions since the paper's founding will be presented. Some thoughts will also be offered as to how the present findings might illuminate the range of influences on the role of mass media, particularly party- and state-affiliated media, in situations of democratization and political transition.

Chapter 5
CONCLUSION

Stereotype and Reality

A stereotype exists of party- and state-affiliated media as little more than passive reflections of the mobilizing agenda of their party, state, or para-statal sponsors. While all media exist to disseminate messages to their audience, the standard image of state and party meda is that the message arrives more or less prepackaged. Rigid norms exist which govern presentation of the package in the particular medium, down to the most microscopic aspects of coverage: placement of photographs, hierarchies of names, etc. Indeed, during the heyday of Soviet Communism, a veritable cottage industry sprang up within the western academic and intelligence communities, geared to gleaning the real significance of such apparently trivial elements of official media coverage.

To the extent that any skill or craft is credited to the journalists staffing these institutions, it centres on their ability to translate the macro-programme presented to them by their sponsors into a micro-agenda for "news" coverage. The range of professional skills normally associated with western journalism is held to be entirely absent among the official media. "Reporting," after all, implies adherence to facts independent of their convenience quotient for one's political masters — an option not open to the party hireling any more than to a paid publicist or an ad-copy writer.

Like most stereotypes, this one is grounded in reality. In the present context, the analysis of *Barricada*'s functioning cautions against underestimating the extent to which the paper, over the course of the revolutionary decade and even today, reflects the policy agenda determined by the nine-man FSLN National Directorate. The exemption granted *Barricada* from the kind of prior censorship imposed on other media during the 1980s speaks to the virtually identical mobilizing agendas of the FSLN leadership and the official party organ. Likewise, the placement of *Barricada*'s Director, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, at the head of the Sandinista propaganda apparatus for three crucial years in the mid-1980s testifies to the broad

degree of trust extended to *Barricada*, via its Director, by the party leadership. Even today, in the aftermath of the shattering 1990 election defeat, the presence of the FSLN leadership on the *Barricada* Editorial Council is an institutional fact of the paper's existence.

Nonetheless, this thesis has offered evidence strongly suggesting that a distinct professional function has also existed at *Barricada* from the early days of the paper's functioning. For the most part, it is a function not imposed or even encouraged by the party leadership, and indeed at times not easily reconcilable with the leadership's own agenda. But it is an aspect of the paper's functioning evident in the internally consistent post-facto recollections of a large number of *Barricada* staff-members. (Equally importantly given recent developments, the professional function is evident in testimony concerning *ambitions for future functioning* which staffmembers have held at various stages.) Even before the FSLN election defeat freed these staffers to speak more openly about the complexities and compromises inherent in revolutionary journalism, the distinct agenda was evident in internal documents prepared by Chamorro during his stint at the Department of Agitation and Propaganda; in contemporary analyses of press functioning, such as the thesis prepared by *Barricada* staffwriter Guillermo Cortés for the Managua School of Journalism; in occasional disharmonies between *Barricada* and the FSLN censorship bodies of the Army and the Ministry of the Interior; and in several key instances of conflict, sometimes serious, between members of the FSLN Directorate and *Barricada* staffers.

Perhaps the most persuasive evidence for existence of professional factors in *Barricada*'s operations, and their increased salience over time, is the variety of measures adopted to regularize relations between party and paper and to decrease the vigilance of party leaders over *Barricada*'s operations. With one exception, all these measures resulted from initiatives, protests, or appeals by *Barricada*'s staff, reflecting the paper's own institutional interests and professional ambitions. In the first few years of the paper's operations, *Barricada* was expected to respond to a wide range of (sometimes mutually exclusive) coverage demands by individual National Directorate members. It was expected, as well, to tolerate the presence of political

commissariats who exercised strict ideological vigilance over the paper's content, and who stressed orthodoxy over professional quality. After protracted appeals by *Barricada* staffers, this arrangement was superseded by a system of communication forcing Directorate members to agree on a consensus position with regard to *Barricada*'s coverage priorities. This was then communicated to *Barricada* via a single Directorate representative, whose vigilance in turn declined over the course of the revolutionary decade: from constant presence under Carlos Núñez to a more "hands-off" approach under Bayardo Arce. (This development is the only one in the long evolution of party-paper relations which cannot clearly be linked to an initiative by *Barricada*, reflecting the paper's desire to increase the space available for its professional functioning. It may, in fact, simply be a reflection of the Directorate representatives' different management styles.)

The creation in 1990 of an Editorial Council responsible for setting the broad outlines of *Barricada*'s editorial and business policy reifies the party-paper relationship further. Although all members are noted Sandinistas, only one is a National Directorate representative, and the Council's composition seems to reflect *Barricada*'s desire to address certain professional deficiencies, rather than increasing the paper's integration into the agendas of various Sandinista "sectors."[1]

Further evidence for a distinct agenda at *Barricada* can be adduced from the fact that *Barricada*'s professional functioning during the FSLN years in power varied independently, to some extent, of the mobilizing tasks imparted by the party vanguard. Among other things, *Barricada* during the 1980s was responsive to reader demands, to the exigencies of journalistic competition with its crosstown rival *La Prensa*, and to internally-generated calls for changes in design, language, and content.

This thesis throughout has used the terms "mobilizing function" and "professional function" to demarcate the two broad agendas which can be seen to influence *Barricada*'s functioning from its inception in 1979 to its transformation and formal "de-officializing" in 1991. The mobilizing function from 1979 to the election defeat of 1990 reflected the policy agenda constructed by the FSLN National Directorate. That agenda, in turn, reflected inputs from other revolutionary sectors, and varied over time as a result of shifting political requirements and priorities. Key

among those external political factors were those linked to the onset of fullscale war (1982-83) and economic crisis (1986-87).

In the aftermath of the election defeat, the mobilizing function both declined in importance and began to reflect a broader range of influences and inputs: in particular, an emerging elite consensus in the direction of greater negotiation and accommodation (*concertación*), and the contributions of articulate sectors of the Sandinista movement seeking to participate in the Front's process of internal reorientation and self-examination. To add to the complexity of the current mobilizing agenda, *Barricada* staffmembers, particularly the paper's editors and columnists, might themselves be identified as an "articulate Sandinista sector," one whose relatively small numerical size is offset by *Barricada*'s growing prominence as a public opinion leader.

The professional function of *Barricada*, on the other hand, emerged and developed without initiatives or encouragement by the FSLN leadership, and without a clear correlation to (or integration with) the leadership's policy agenda. It has its philosophical and ideological roots in those features of journalistic craft and press institutions that have given rise to notions of objectivity, professionalism, and newsworthiness. This set of journalistic desiderata is founded on philosophical principles and press ideals dating back to 17th-century England. As a canon, with the crucial human-interest component, it first appeared in the United States press of the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. With the U.S. rise to cultural and political hegemony in this century, furthermore, it is a model of mass media functioning which has been transmitted and inculcated around the world. From a materialist perspective, it is also a model firmly grounded in economic considerations which powerfully shaped and constrained its core values. The idea of "objectivity," for example, seems founded not only on Enlightenment epistemology, but on the practical requirements of increasing circulation and readership, and the crucial generation of revenue via advertising.

To cite the powerful influence of this model on *Barricada*'s professional function is not to accuse the paper of blindly following a prescription imposed from outside. Indeed, *Barricada* joined other critics of the "American model" in heaping

abuse on the distortions of objectivity and professionalism allegedly spawned by the U.S.'s imperial role. Nonetheless, to protest the perversion of core values is in a sense to acknowledge the legitimacy of those values. And it forces one to reckon with the continuing potency of the model which espouses them, in however denatured a form.

Professional and Mobilizing Functions: Graphing the Salience

Graphically, the salience of these two functions to *Barricada* from 1979 to 1991 can be conceptualized as follows:

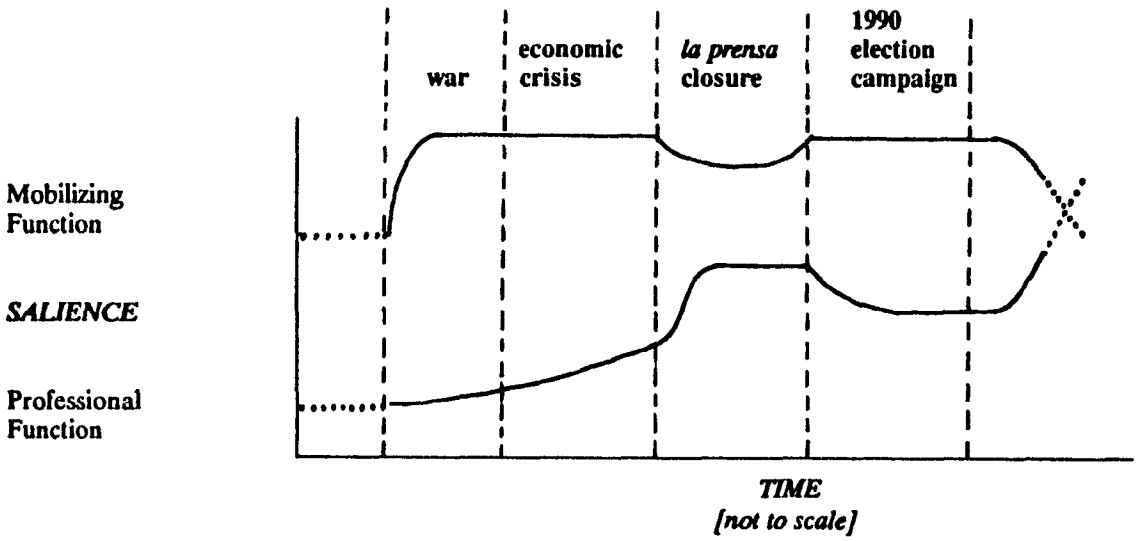

Fig. 5.1 Evolution of the Mobilizing and Professional Functions at *Barricada*, 1979-91.

Throughout the revolutionary decade, the mobilizing function of the paper holds sway, overshadowing the professional function. In the initial period of *Barricada*'s existence it remains somewhat static and imprecise, reflecting post-revolutionary dislocation and disorganization; the ad-hoc nature of the paper's functioning, with limited resources, very low levels of professionalization, and borrowed facilities; and the broad pro-revolutionary consensus which existed among various social forces in Nicaragua prior to the demarcation of ideological "battle lines" beginning in April 1980.

The onset of largescale terrorist attacks by former Somocista forces in 1981,

their escalation into full-scale war, and the imposition of a State of Emergency in March 1982 predictably led to an increase in the salience of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. The salience held at a steady, very high level through 1986, with the spiralling economic crisis increasingly replacing the Contra war as the main focus of mobilizing efforts.

The dip in the mobilization function depicted as occurring prior to the onset of the 1989-90 election campaign is attributable to the disappearance of *Barricada*'s political competitor, *La Prensa*, from the stands as a result of an FSLN policy decision in July 1986. *Barricada*'s efforts at this time to win *La Prensa* readers centred on an attempt to imitate some areas of *La Prensa* coverage and content (for example, by increasing the amount of entertainment and human-interest material in the Front's official organ). Equally significantly for present purposes, a diminution in the level of explicit political partisanship and confrontational rhetoric in *Barricada*'s coverage was sought as a way to broaden the paper's appeal to non-traditional readership sectors. (Note, however, that the evidence for this decrease in salience of the mobilizing function is largely anecdotal. To establish it with greater certainty would require an extensive content-analysis of *Barricada*'s news coverage over time, something beyond the parameters of the present research.)

One other central development also worked during this period to decrease the salience of the mobilizing function. For the first time, and to some extent as a reflection of the process of consensus- and Constitution-building then underway in Nicaragua, *Barricada* editors and the paper's Director began to discuss the possibility of "de-officializing" the paper. At least a formal disavowal of para-statal status was envisaged, and even the possibility of ceasing to be the FSLN's official organ apparently was considered.

The point at which the salience of the mobilizing function to *Barricada* returned to its previous high levels is also difficult to establish without systematic content-analysis. Did the return of *La Prensa* in October 1987, with the concomitant lifting of prior censorship, have the effect of downplaying the salience of mobilization? In a free-for-all, (politically) competitive atmosphere, one might expect the paper to have continued its strategy of wooing *La Prensa*'s readers to

Barricada. Or would the transferring of political debate and discourse back to the media arena instead result in an *increase* in the salience of the mobilizing function?

Even if the latter were true, it could be argued that the mobilizing function reflects a greater degree of *self*-mobilization by *Barricada* staffers (fuelled by revolutionary idealism, but also clearly energized by the renewed battle with *La Prensa*). In any case, it seems certain that the onset of the yearlong election campaign, culminating in the national vote of February 1990, saw the mobilizing function returned to its former levels of salience. Just as importantly, *Barricada* returned to its subordinate posture, its editorial agenda closely integrated with the broader FSLN policy agenda.

Consider now the professional function as it evolved over the course of the revolutionary decade. Depicted in the graph is a gradual increase in salience through to the disappearance of *La Prensa* in mid-1986. This increase reflects increased levels of *material stability/capacity*, on the one hand, and of *institutionalization*, on the other. This period witnessed the transformation of a jerry-built four-page broadsheet, published out of facilities where illumination sometimes came from vehicle headlights, into a significantly self-supporting and physically autonomous enterprise — one whose material plant far exceeded, in capacity and sophistication, anything else in Nicaragua.

A gradual increase is also evident in levels of professionalization, as journalists amassed on-the-job experience; as the paper's approach to ideological conflict with its crosstown rival *La Prensa* grew less reflexive and defensive, more assertive; and as the paper succeeded in establishing a greater degree of institutional autonomy from the FSLN leadership and other sectors of the Nicaraguan state and the Sandinista Front. *Barricada*'s editors and Director succeeded in streamlining the relationship between National Directorate members and the paper, by means of formal and unitary Directorate representation. They also successfully stressed the importance of the paper's own news priorities as against Directorate, state, and mass organization demands for coverage.

The pattern of salience depicted as developing during *La Prensa*'s absence from the Nicaraguan media scene in 1986-87 serves as a counterpart to the decline

in salience of *Barricada*'s mobilizing function during the same period. The second upswing in the prominence of the professional function remains somewhat speculative in the absence of systematic content-analysis. Nonetheless, as noted above, even if the mobilizing function is viewed as having re-established itself with the return of *La Prensa* in October 1987, the *engine* for that mobilization likely came at least in part from *Barricada* staffmembers themselves, responding to the challenge of renewed competition with their rival. A key component of *Barricada*'s professional function during the revolutionary decade was its self-definition vis-à-vis *La Prensa* (with the influence of the pre-revolutionary Nicaraguan press tradition to which this self-definition attests). It is possible and even likely, then, that increases in both the mobilizing and professional functions between October 1987 and the onset of the election campaign in early 1989 are not mutually exclusive.

The steady growth in the professional function depicted as occurring between 1979 and 1986 no doubt disguises more complex advances and retreats, beyond the capacity of the present research reliably to detect. The central contention argued here, though, is that the professional function *exists*. During the revolutionary decade it is constantly overshadowed by the mobilizing function. But one can imagine revolutionary situations in which the stresses and strains of war and economic crisis would lead to purges from above, causing the professional function to disappear. At *Barricada* it quite clearly did not disappear. Indeed, it seems to have increased in salience even during the period of greatest external pressure and crisis, as a result of the positive impact of other factors: increased levels of material stability, growing institutional autonomy, and greater journalistic experience. The existence of the professional function is evident in the search for greater autonomy from Directorate control; in post-facto accounts by staffmembers of the disquiet they sometimes felt in structuring news stories to meet mobilizing requirements; and in the largely independent initiatives adopted to address the disappearance of *La Prensa* in 1986.[2]

With the election defeat of 1990, the salience pattern of *Barricada*'s twin functions dramatically changes. On the one hand, the mobilizing function decreases in salience — reflecting the diminished coherence of the "FSLN agenda" in the

wake of the Sandinistas' fall from power, and a prevailing atmosphere of questioning and self-examination. Key mobilizing issues continue to exist: the paper still takes a lead from the FSLN National Directorate in the central areas of *concertación*, Contra demobilization, criticism of Chamorro government economic measures, and so on. But with the role and even the legitimacy of the National Directorate a topic of widespread debate; with the FSLN's control over state resources and institutions radically reduced; and with increased internal dissension evident at the leadership level, the Directorate's ability to generate a set of propositions capable of mobilizing Sandinista supporters is limited.

The new mobilizing agenda, then, is much more porous and formatory than previously. In many respects it represents a sharp move away from the kind of confrontational rhetoric and polarization which characterized Nicaraguan political discourse prior to 1990. In order for it to be successful *as* a mobilizing agenda, it cannot be imposed through the kind of command-and-obey methods employed during the revolutionary decade. The FSLN leadership is stripped of the state resources which would enable a carrot-and-stick approach to the population; moreover, the leadership lacks the kind of clear legitimacy which existed prior to the defeat. Finally, the *nature of the mobilizing agenda itself* is enough to provoke dissonance among Sandinistas unused to a posture of accommodation and compromise vis-à-vis the political opposition, and disturbed by public disputes among leadership figures.[3] There is thus greater room for a more exploratory approach to the mobilizing function, one which allows the presentation of a diversity of viewpoints and critiques, and which (perhaps not coincidentally) opens space for the increased salience of the professional function.

Encouraged, buttressed, and necessitated by a wide range of factors in the post-election environment, the professional function begins to approach, even to surpass *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. The most obvious and important reason is that the professional function finds many of its constraints removed. The blow which the election defeat delivered to the revolutionary state and the revolutionary movement as a whole facilitates *Barricada*'s efforts to dissociate itself from party vigilance and control. (The example of the paper's independent functioning in the

first traumatic week after the election also stood *Barricada* in good stead.)

With *Barricada* transformed into an opposition media organ, reporting which is antithetical to state requirements — a defining characteristic of the avowedly independent press of the western model — no longer runs counter to the mobilizing function. That is, the professional, political, and existential dilemmas which once confronted a *Barricada* journalist pondering criticisms of the state are sharply lessened in their poignancy. They do not disappear entirely, because the posture of both *Barricada* and the Sandinista leadership toward the new régime is by no means a reflexively adversarial one. There exists instead a recognition that the new order, for all its weaknesses, is both fragile and preferable to a range of alternative scenarios.

At the same time as the emergence of the professional function becomes more possible, it also becomes more necessary. *Barricada* is suddenly confronted by a host of pressures and constraints which force a sharp reorientation in the paper's functioning, and establish a range of factors as inputs to the professional function which — if not entirely unknown to the paper during the revolutionary decade — were never fundamental considerations. The most pressing of these is *Barricada*'s sudden immersion in a free-market environment. While the paper had risen to a position of significant self-sufficiency by the end of the revolutionary decade, that posture belied the many overt and de facto subsidies and preferential treatment extended by the Sandinista party and revolutionary state. All of these — state-sector advertising, state and party printing contracts, privileged distribution networks, and state/party subscriptions — evaporate virtually overnight.

Paralleling the development of the professional function in western media (with special reference to the core values of objectivity, neutrality, critical distance, and human-interest), *Barricada* increases the scale of aggressive outreach to advertisers, potential clients for its printing service, and new readership sectors. A reorientation is visible away from political competition with *La Prensa* and toward competition for readers and advertising revenue with *Barricada*'s counterpart on the pro-Sandinista left, *El Nuevo Diario*. The competition with *El Nuevo Diario* similarly encourages (though it does not by itself account for) a transformation in *Barricada*'s

news content and coverage.

Finally, the broad degree of convergence — the decrease in dissonance — between *Barricada*'s mobilizing and professional functions enables the paper, at least for the time being, to stake out a middle ground in its orientation and functioning. It is not necessary to forswear the paper's essential mobilizing role (its adherence to a "Sandinista agenda," as this emerges from the process of re-examination and reorganization) in order to exercise its professional function. Key professional values such as objectivity, impartiality, and consultation of a diversity of sources blend well with a mobilizing agenda emphasizing coexistence, mutual respect, and negotiation. Indeed, to the extent that *Barricada* comes to play an institutional role as a voice for civil society and leader of public opinion, the two functions may be seen to bolster each other, rather than merely vying for prominence in the newspaper's agenda. It is also notable that, to the extent that *Barricada*'s post-election editorial "line" can be ascertained without systematic content-analysis, it stresses tolerance of a diversity of opinion within Sandinista ranks by presenting itself as a forum for contending views on the future of *Sandinismo*. This clearly allies the paper with those Sandinista sectors seeking a greater degree of pluralism and openness among party ranks; it likewise riles those "verticalist" forces who appear to prefer to a more traditional vanguard-style party structure, with lower ranks dutifully obeying edicts of the Directorate. In the present context, it has the effect of further decreasing the contradiction which was seen, in the past, to inhere in the paper's twin role as mobilizer and professional organ.

The above is not to suggest that *Barricada* as an institution has an option of abandoning its mobilizing function. The paper has always been, and continues to be, owned by the Sandinista Front; even in the event of factional fragmentation *Barricada* would likely end up advancing one faction's interests and agenda. Nonetheless, extreme dissonance perceived between the two functions would likely have spawned an exodus on the part of staffmembers unwilling to see their professional function crudely or gratuitously subordinated. Ample precedent exists in Nicaragua — even since the 1990 election — for such a journalistic exodus.[4] But *Barricada*'s functioning over the years, and today, displays a remarkable stability in

staff composition if not staffing levels (which have experienced sharp cuts owing to economic austerity factors under the Sandinistas and the post-election crisis among Sandinista ranks).

This stability during the revolutionary decade is explicable largely in terms of the high legitimacy which the FSLN leadership and its agenda commanded among Front militants. It is also a product of the unusual degree of pluralism and tolerance which existed within the Sandinista Front and in revolutionary Nicaragua as a whole (unusual, that is, for a ruling vanguard party facing extraordinary internal and external threat). The stability in the post-election environment, on the other hand, seems largely due to the low degree of perceived dissonance on the part of *Barricada* staffers with regard to the paper's two functions. It is true that a context of generalized economic crisis encourages those with jobs to do what is necessary to keep them. But this would not obviate internal grumbling and private disgruntlement; it might, indeed, prompt them. But such dissatisfaction was notable by its absence during field research for this thesis, which was carried out largely within the confines of the *Barricada* premises, and in close and sympathetic contact with a wide range of *Barricada* journalists, editors, and other staffmembers.

Broader Relevance of the Project

What of the wider implications of the present findings, in particular for situations of political transition and democratization?

This thesis has demonstrated the existence at *Barricada* of a distinct professional function, overshadowed but by no means eliminated by the mobilizing function which tends to predominate in state- and party-affiliated media — fuelled by traditional press models, shaped and constrained by economic variables. Even in state- or party-affiliated media where a mobilizing function by definition predominates, the increased salience of the professional function seems also to be a function of time. That is, it develops alongside the media organ *as an institution*, and is more likely to find expression as the organ gains material stability and as its staffers gain experience.

The professional function seems, in its broad outlines, to blend well with

regulated political competition, mass franchise, and patterns of negotiation which are the ostensible hallmarks of liberal democracy. Indeed, as shown in Chapter 3, the press has generally been viewed as a central institution in liberal democracy. Ideally, it is the voice and conscience of civil society; the transmitter and explicator of elite decisions to the electorate, but also civil society's "watchdog" in the elite's policymaking process; and the forger of bonds among atomized citizens in increasingly complex mass democratic societies. Theorists seeking to translate the western liberal-democratic experience into prescriptions for the developing world have similarly emphasized the role of the press as transmitter of modernizing values, herald of an emergent national identity, and guardian against governmental corruption and social decay.

In situations of democratization and transition from authoritarian rule, the *Barricada* example suggests that media organs of the outgoing party, or of the state infrastructure undergoing transition and a change in putative masters, may experience a "window of opportunity" for implementation and extension of the professional function. Their ability to make the adjustment will, however, be closely correlated with the extent to which the professional function existed and was able to develop during the pre-transition era — if, that is, staff composition is not supplemented by an influx of outside talent.

The *Barricada* example suggests, too, that economic/material factors and constraints will increasingly make themselves felt on media organs whose mobilizing function previously was closely tied to high levels of support and subsidy by the sponsoring party or state structure. These economic and material factors will tend to bolster the professional function. The increase in salience of the professional function may come largely at the expense of the mobilizing function. If the latter does not decline for other reasons, it will tend to inhibit the media organ's ability to generate revenue in the absence of state and party supports.

Several caveats, however, should be noted. First, the professional function need not *always* grow over time in the pre-transition era. The function's emergence and evolution will be closely linked to the degree of authoritarianism and the rigidity of the ideological orthodoxy imposed on militants, linked in turn to the level of

revolutionary legitimacy which the sponsoring party or state apparatus commands. Regular party purges, for example, would tend to result in chronic, cringing lackeyism among staffmembers rather than individual initiative and critical distance.

Second, not all state- and party-affiliated media organs will find themselves in the same position during and after a period of political transition. For example, a rightwing newspaper closely associated with an outgoing rightwing military regime may still be able to count on a consistent (or even rising) level of advertising support from business sectors. This might compensate for a decline in state or party support and lessen or eliminate the need to broaden readership and seek new sources of ad revenue.

Lastly, there may well be differences in the particular pressures, incentives, and constraints faced by state, para-statal, and party media in transition situations. A party-affiliated paper, for example, will not face a crisis resulting from a *change in ownership*, of the type encountered by state media organs as the reins of state are handed over.[5] Indeed, in the post-1990 Nicaraguan media context, the greatest upheavals have been those at state-owned radio and television stations, where the conservative agenda of incoming administrators has been met by massive disaffection and an exodus on the part of pro-Sandinista staff. In one instance, this has led to the founding of a new radio station (Radio Ya) from the body of the state-owned Radio *La Voz de Nicaragua*.[6] In the *Barricada* case, on the other hand, the sources of any identity crisis are not much different from those afflicting Sandinista ranks as a whole. And any uncertainty or sense of directionlessness seems more than offset by the energy which accompanies the unexpected opportunity to bolster *Barricada*'s professional function, apparently reflecting the longstanding wishes of a majority of staff.

The Media in Transition: Generalizing the Findings

It was suggested earlier that analysts of political transition and democratization have so far paid little attention to the role of the media in transition processes, a surprising oversight given the significance almost universally accorded the press by post-Enlightenment theorists and philosophers of democracy. In general, transformations in press functioning under conditions of democratization

and transition have tended to be viewed in the broader context of the resurrection of civil society. This perspective, however, largely excludes any media organs affiliated with outgoing regimes, or with the state structures undergoing transition. Our analysis has suggested that these media ought not to be dismissed so summarily. They may well have developed or retained a professional function distinct from the mobilizing role they play for their party or state sponsors. And given the unquestioned importance of the press to democratic functioning, these media can be expected to play significant roles — roles which may not be entirely explicable in terms of the shifting priorities and agendas of their sponsors.

If a greater understanding is to be gained of the role these media (and media more generally) play in democratization and political transition, a logically prior step may be to understand the micro-processes which shape and constrain press functioning in the pre- and post-transition environments. Any media role during or after transition is, after all, predicated on three key factors:

- the media organ's *existence* (that is, its ability to weather the storm of transition without collapsing, and its ongoing ability to secure material resources and revenue necessary to the organ's functioning);
- its *degree of autonomy* (its ability or inability to play an autonomous or semi-autonomous role in transition, as an institution meriting consideration independent of the party or state sponsor, if this remains); and
- the organ's *degree of influence*, linked to objective factors like circulation or broadcasting capacity and to more nebulous factors (the media organ's degree of credibility, its perceived legitimacy, the breadth and nature of its appeal, etc.).

It is worth considering the example of media in the former Soviet bloc to see how far *Barricada*'s experience might be generalizable to media (particularly state- or party-affiliated media) in other societies undergoing political transition or democratization. It appears that many of the pressures and constraints encountered by the Nicaraguan paper have clear parallels in the experience of Central and Eastern European media. Moreover, media *responses* to these pressures, including the new societal role these media seek to play, bear striking similarities to the *Barricada* experience as outlined in this thesis.[7]

Some of the common features of media environments in transition situations, and the problems and pressures of media organs undergoing transformation, can be isolated as follows:

Liberalization of the media environment and the lifting of censorship. In nearly all countries of the former Soviet bloc, state controls on media functioning have been lifted or radically reduced. In several cases new press freedoms have been constitutionally enshrined, including in the former Soviet Union.[8]

One frequent result of liberalization is a proliferation of media outlets, reflecting the new lack of state-imposed constraints. Often the explosive growth of new publications is stemmed or reversed by the range of economic and material constraints imposed by market forces. In Poland, for example, 600 new publications appeared in the five months following the communist collapse.[9] Although it has not received attention in the present thesis, a more muted version of this explosion was also visible in Nicaragua following the Sandinista election defeat in 1990.[10]

Economic Constraints. It is important to note, however, that the proliferation may tend to be parabolic rather than incremental in nature. At the same time as policy measures act to reduce constraints on press functioning, material factors (scarcity, inflation) and the realities of market competition act as powerful winnowing forces. This process is well-captured by Miklós Vámos's comment, in the context of Hungarian democratization, that "It has never been so easy to start a daily or a weekly, and it has never been so easy to lose one."[11]

Recent reports from the former Soviet Union refer to the massive material pressures which threaten many newspapers in the region. These include in particular huge increases in paper, ink, postage, and typography costs; some papers now limit publication frequency, owing to a 40-fold increase in paper costs (from 300 to 13,000 rubles per ton).[12] The impact of inflation has also been felt, for example on the real value of prepaid subscriptions (or, in the *Barricada* case, the real value of chequing accounts after the March 1991 "maxi-devaluation"). The media organ may be trapped by the disappearance of the old command economy, on which they relied for their materials, and the advent of a new market economy which renders many items either unavailable (owing to the collapse of traditional distribution networks)

or prohibitively expensive. The evaporation of state subscriptions has also had a powerfully deleterious impact in many instances, mirroring the situation at *Barricada* (and particularly at *Barricada Internacional*).[13] In several instances, newspapers now freed of government control and interference have pleaded for state intervention to stabilize or subsidize material costs.[14]

Staff cuts are often the first sign of economic constraints' increased salience. *Barricada*'s staff levels declined in the wake of the Sandinista fall from power, but the cuts were even more sweeping in peripheral areas of the paper's operations such as *Barricada Internacional*. A similar phenomenon is visible in the experience of many party- and state-affiliated media in the former Soviet bloc.[15]

Problems of professionalism. Particularly in state- and party-affiliated media (or in those societies where only such media existed aboveground), the need to move from a mobilization orientation to a more professional one has been a pressing one, and the difficulties in the transformation are clearly evident. The quandary is not limited to state- and party-affiliated journalists, but it is particularly acute for them. A Polish MP, Mieczyslaw Gill, argues, "We have to rediscover the roots and reflexes of journalism. ... We've got to abandon once and for all the idea that a newspaper should deliver a message, that it should be a transmission belt. But in this country today, who knows anything but political journalism?"[16]

An associated element of "professional underdevelopment" is the collaborative tradition in many Third World media systems, and the public perceptions and expectations of a media organ's identity and allegiances which follow in tow. As in Nicaragua, a collaborative posture predominated in many Central and Eastern European press traditions (especially after the imposition of Soviet client status). Media organs are expected to serve as mouthpieces for a party, organization, or interest-group, and to forswear fairness and impartiality in favour of a mobilizing emphasis. The impact of the collaborative posture is threefold: on journalists, who in transition situations may merely seek a new "party line" to defend or advance;[17] on the new political elite, who may expect old-style subservience; and on the public, which has come to view all reporting as inherently biased and partial.[18]

An important variable in the professional equation is the degree of political and press pluralism permitted under the *ancien régime*. Clearly, professional values are more likely to emerge in environments which do not reduce journalists to the status of low-level functionaries acting as passive transmitters of regime pronouncements. Political pluralism, by definition, also encourages a diversity of opinion, which accords greater prominence to individual journalists as "leaders of public opinion" — another hallmark of modern professional journalism. Furthermore, pluralistic environments are generally characterized by political and professional competition among media organs, which may act to hone professional values. (It is also possible that such competition could degenerate into a quest for market edge through pandering to the lowest common denominator; this would tend to inhibit the growth of professional values and standards.)

Scholars analyzing pre-existing levels of pluralism and professionalism will also wish to consider the journalistic tradition in the individual country undergoing political transition. The signal importance of the pre-1979 *La Prensa* in shaping Nicaraguan journalists' role perceptions and professional aspirations has received extended attention in this thesis. In other countries, the nature of press functioning in the pre-*ancien régime* era may be no less significant.

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Two phenomena prevalent in the experience of party- and state-affiliated media of the former Soviet bloc have no clear parallel in the *Barricada* experience. The phenomenon of suppression of media outlets by the new ruling authorities has not, as noted, been a feature of Chamorro government media policy in Nicaragua, but it has been evident in the former Soviet Union.[19] Another feature of media functioning in the ex-Soviet bloc is a glut of buyout attempts by foreign press magnates seeking to purchase local media outlets at bargain prices. The situation is particularly extreme in Poland and Hungary.[20] A related phenomenon is the flooding of local markets by foreign publications, especially visible in East Germany prior to political union with the West.[21] In Nicaragua, local media have not as yet attracted the attention of foreign purchasers, and the local market for print media is similarly unappealing. Television remains a state monopoly, but the presence of

foreign programming has increased markedly since the Chamorro regime took power.[22]

Generalized Responses

The responses of Central and Eastern European media organs to the set of pressures and constraints outlined above are analogous, in central respects, to the strategies implemented by *Barricada* since the Sandinista fall from power. They include:

Changes in name, formal identification, and design. In general, those media organs seeking to survive in a newly pluralistic, market-oriented environment are anxious to drop or downplay their previous affiliations. Writes Miklós Vámos:

> Most well-established and prestigious publications are dying in Eastern Europe. Of course, only the ex-Communist papers could have been well established. They all dropped their old names, except for *Nepszabadsag* ("People's Freedom") in Hungary, which sticks to its old name and subtitle: "Socialist Daily" ... The Polish *Trybuna Ludu* dropped Ludu ("of the People") and stopped being the paper of the Polish Communist Party's Politburo. The Bulgarian *Rabothnitshesko Delo* ("Workers' Affair") was renamed *Duma* ("Word"). The Romanian *Scinteia Poporului* ("Spark of the People") first dropped "of the People," then changed its name to *Adovarul* ("Truth"). All the socialist papers publicized for many years the famous Marxist slogan: "Workers of the world, unite!" None of them adhere to this idea any longer. The new slogan should be: "Capitalists of the world, invest (in our paper)!"[23]

The diminution of Sandinista power in Nicaragua is in no way comparable to the collapse of state socialism in the former Soviet bloc. Nonetheless, the parallel between the above developments and the recent alterations to *Barricada*'s logo and slogan is inescapable.

A new identification with civil society. In an attempt to broaden readership and assist in the search for advertising revenue, many former state- and party-affiliated media in the ex-Soviet bloc have stressed their new identification with the interests of civil society. Following its suppression by the Yeltsin government, for example, the former CPSU party daily *Pravda* "announced that it would start publishing again ... not as the voice of the now-crippled Communist Party, but as an independent paper of 'civic consensus.'"[24] Recall *Barricada*'s new slogan, "In the National Interest," and its effort to move beyond the constituency of the converted.

The need to establish a connection with civil society is stronger for those media organs closely associated with the *ancien régime*. In many cases the legitimacy of the former sponsoring party has fallen precipitously; the only way for the media

organ in question to establish a new foundation of legitimacy is to demonstrate its "objectivity" and independence from vested interests. Ironically, then, media in whose past functioning a mobilizing agenda is most salient may, in a transition situation, be those media organs with the greatest incentive to emphasize traditional professional values.

A reorientation of business strategy appears to be tied to the new identification with civil society, and is certainly reinforced by it. In a market environment, the primary means of income-generation for mass media is the selling of audiences to advertisers. Thus, a search for readership generates incentives of its own for a strategic identification with civil society — that is, with the organ's *audience*. Another characteristic of the professional reorientation vis-à-vis business management is an increased receptivity to, and search for, advertising revenue. For example, a landmark event in the evolution of the former CPSU daily *Pravda* occurred when the paper turned over front-page space, previously reserved for an outline of the day's news, for an advertisement: "(Buying) stocks in the all-Russian Exchange Bank will guarantee your success and are a symbol of your prosperity."[25] Other testimony from Eastern Europe attests to the importance of advertising revenue (or other sources of outside support) in filling the gap left by withdrawal of state and party sponsorship and subsidies.[26] The parallels with the *Barricada* experience need no elaboration.

On the above evidence, then, analysis of the media in processes of political transition must be sensitive not only to broader changes in the political environment, but to economic forces — as well as to factors and features specific to the media institution and its professional functioning. All these avenues of investigation appear vital to a more nuanced understanding of the transformations these institutions undergo, and the roles they seek to play, in processes of democratization and political transition.

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Although more systematic and extensive comparative analysis of the media in situations of political transition needs to be undertaken, the above discussion should serve to bring home the broader implications of the present research.

A close examination of *Barricada*'s role in the ongoing process of political transition in Nicaragua is beyond the confines of the present project, though some tentative observations in this area have been advanced. This thesis has sought, instead, to focus on the factors shaping and constraining the paper's functioning over the first 12 years of its existence, with particular attention to elements which are not generally associated with the functioning of party- and state-affiliated media. It has tried, moreover, to demonstrate the multifaceted impact of the transition situation itself on the paper's functioning. This is both more readily ascertained than its role *in* transition (given prevailing conditions of political flux), and necessary to any understanding of the paper's broader institutional role in the uncertain future Nicaragua faces.

Appendix

SANDINISTA MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATION, 1979-90

Barricada's functioning during the 1980s is difficult to grasp without addressing the broader framework of media-state relations in revolutionary Nicaragua. The media legislation promulgated by the Sandinista government during the 1980s was never aimed directly at the party's official organ. A measure of confidence was extended to *Barricada* (and other party, state, or para-statal media) by FSLN leaders and state censorship authorities — a privilege not extended to other media, even pro-revolutionary ones like *El Nuevo Diario*. Nonetheless, as argued in Chapter 3, a relationship of trust existed largely because *Barricada* journalists could be trusted to *internalize* the parameters of FSLN media policy, in a way that rendered formal prior censorship unnecessary. It is important to note, then, precisely what these parameters were, and what punitive measures were taken when media organs overstepped their bounds. That is the purpose of this Appendix.

A discussion of media policy and legislation should not proceed without an important caveat. Punitive measures imposed by legislative means have never been the norm among Central American states when it comes to disciplining or destroying opposition media. But the Sandinista government recognized a de facto limit on the means of coercion employed in its dealings with Nicaraguan media, with censorship and closure the most extreme methods regularly utilized. (The only instance of jailing of journalists centred not on the FSLN's conflict with the rightist opposition, but with ultra-left militants of the Maoist-style Movement for Popular Action.) This relatively mild record bolsters the contention of this thesis that political discourse and regime-opposition relations in post-revolutionary Nicaragua were unusually pluralistic and non-violent by regional standards. At no point over the course of the

1980s, for example, did state coercion approach the levels of terror endemic in El Salvador and Guatemala during the same decade.[1] Rather, in Nicaragua an opposition press that was "relentlessly ideological, propagandistic, one-sided, sensationalistic, negative, and even dishonest,"[2] and whose operations were heavily subsidized by an outside power intent on subverting the revolutionary regime,[3] was tolerated — albeit with occasional periods of forcible closure, and with constant harassment by prior censorship from 1982 to 1987.[4] Opposition radio functioned under only the most general censorship restrictions, though with occasional instances of post-facto closure, and was vocally anti-Sandinista throughout.[5]

Media Legislation: A Brief Overview

The Junta of National Reconstruction wasted little time in promulgating the first media legislation in post-revolutionary Nicaragua. The General Provisional Law on the Media of Communication was issued as Decree No. 48 of the revolutionary government on 16 August 1979, less than a month after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship.

The Provisional Law built on the dictum (also expressed in the bill of rights issues shortly after the revolutionary victory) that freedom of expression was not absolute. And reflecting the broader revolutionary conception of media and communications, the Ministry of Culture (rather than the Interior Ministry) was given responsibility for supervising the legislation. According to John Spicer Nichols, the Provisional Law called upon all media to operate "within the bounds of social responsibility."[6] His analysis of the legislation's basic themes offers some important insights into patterns of Sandinista thinking which persisted over the revolutionary decade:

> Sections of the law prohibited media content that portray women as sexual objects and promote laziness, subversion, other crime, and human degradation. Violence, pornography, and advertising of tobacco and liquor were specifically banned. In addition to listing types of content that the media must not disseminate, the law also stated the types of content that must be disseminated, such as "... to express a legitimate preoccupation for the defense of the victories of the revolution, the process of reconstruction and the problems of the Nicaraguan people." Later, these general provisions were interpreted to preclude the discussion of sensitive political topics such as food shortages, military matters, and the timetable for elections.[7]

The media law also included legislation to prevent "excessive" media control

by a single economic group. It provided for the nationalization of media owned by Somoza or Somoza supporters who had fled the country, an act which gave the revolutionary regime its monopoly in the field of television broadcasting.

Sandinista media policy jelled with the issuing of three decrees in September 1980 which placed explicit limits on press freedom. Decrees 511, 512, and 513 banned the press from publishing reports of armed clashes without the permission of the Ministry of the Interior. The Ministry of Commerce was given control over news that could "compromise ... national economic stability" (such as reports on shortages and scarcity). The date for national elections was fixed as 1985 (later moved forward to 1984); but with free elections a key rallying point for anti-Sandinista forces, the decrees banned media discussion of electoral matters until the year preceding the scheduled vote.[8]

Decree No. 619 of 13 January 1981 formally transferred responsibility for implementation and supervising of media functioning from the Ministry of Culture to harder heads at the Ministry of the Interior. Decree No. 812, promulgated on 9 September 1981, declared a "state of economic and social emergency," to last for one year; measures aimed at media functioning included a prohibition on publishing or broadcasting falsehoods that could undermine the national economy.

On 14 March 1982, a more sweeping "law of national emergency" was declared (Decree No. 996) to counter the spiralling Contra aggression against Nicaragua. The Office of Communications Media issued the following declaration:

> A. All radio newscasts, political party opinion programs or those of any other organization, are suspended;
>
> B. All radio stations in the country must join in network with the Voice of Nicaragua [state-owned radio] on the following schedule: 0600, 1200, 1800, 2400, for the transmission of the newscast, "The Voice of the Defense of the Fatherland";
>
> C. All radio and written media are hereby ordered to submit their daily programs or editions to the Communications Media Directorate to be reviewed before release.[9]

In general, "the plethora of ambiguous media laws [was] expressly designed to facilitate government control of sensitive news," particularly concerning economic and military matters.[10] The legislation was in fact more specific and restrictive than much of that promulgated under the Somoza dictatorship — though law and practice diverged widely under Somoza.[11] The Sandinista regime abrogated to itself a broad range of emergency powers which permitted a variety of repressive actions,

some of which are discussed below.

Discussion continued at the highest levels of the Sandinista Front concerning reforms to the Provisional Law on the Media (which still formally existed, though it was "temporarily" superseded by the 1982 emergency regulations). According to Carlos Fernando Chamorro, a draft reform was presented in 1984 by the Ministry of the Interior under Tomás Borge. Chamorro, then the FSLN's chief propagandist, rejected the draft as "casuistic, defensive — and also, I would say, very oppressive." Another attempted reform fizzled early in 1987.[12]

Media restrictions were eased for the 1984 election campaign and censorship was relaxed for most of 1985, until the imposition of a new State of Emergency on 15 October 1985. One of the first actions taken under the renewed emergency legislation was the closure of the ecclesiastical publication *Iglesia*, directed by Bishop Bismarck Carballo, one of the Sandinistas' most vocal opponents. Tension continued at a high level, climaxing with the closure of *La Prensa* on 26 June 1986, immediately following the US Congress's vote of $100 million in new aid to Contra rebels.

In August 1987, the Sandinistas signed the Arias Peace Plan, pledging among other things to guarantee full freedom of expression. Most controls on the media were lifted. Restrictions remained, including penalties for publishing reports held to inhibit the "consolidation of the revolution."[13] Nonetheless, the measures immediately transformed the mass media into "the country's most vital arena of political activity," according to Michael Massing.[14] Punitive actions were rare, and sometimes directed against pro-Sandinista media, particularly *La Semana Cómica*.

The role of the media, and restrictions thereon, were enshrined in the Sandinista-drafted Constitution of 1987 (eventually approved by all opposition parties represented in the National Assembly). Taken together with the terms of the Arias Peace Plan, the constitutional provisions represent a clear retreat by the state in terms of interference with opposition media. They also, however, testify to the resilience of some central philosophical foundations of Sandinista media policy:

> *Article 66*: Nicaraguans have the right to truthful information. This right includes the freedom to seek, receive, and publish information and ideas whether through oral, written, or pictorial means, or through whatever mechanism they choose.

> *Article 67*: The right to inform is a social responsibility, and it should be exercised with strict regard for the principles established in the Constitution. This right is not subject to censure, but to the responsibilities subsequently established in the law.
>
> *Article 68*: The means of social communication are in the service of national interests. [...] The existence and function of public, corporate, and private media will not be subject to prior censorship and will be subject to that which is established in the law.[15]

Finally, on 27 April 1989, a new press law was formally enacted in the wake of regional agreements reached by the Central American presidents two months earlier. Formal restrictions remained only on the dissemination of material "contrary to the security of the state, national integrity, peace, and public order."[16] This law was in effect at the time ot the 1990 elections. It was repealed by the Sandinista-dominated National Assembly during the three-month transition period after the election defeat. The repeal appears to imply a recognition that the law would not so well serve a Sandinista Front stripped of power. For one thing, the law reiterated the state's monopoly on television stations, and the Sandinistas were hoping to establish their own station after the Chamorro government took power. As noted in Chapter 4, the Chamorro régime has passed no media legislation since taking office.

Punishing the Press: Censorship and Closure

The debate over censorship and restrictions on media freedom under the Sandinistas focused almost exclusively on the fate of *La Prensa*, the opposition paper published during the 1980s by the current Nicaraguan President, Violeta Chamorro.[17] *La Prensa*'s first closure took place in April 1980 — not as the result of overt state censorship, but because of internal wranglings among the Chamorro family which led that month to the founding of *El Nuevo Diario* by a breakaway majority of *La Prensa* staff. To the extent that the regime played a role in this early closure, it was via a boycott instituted by the Sandinista-sponsored Union of Nicaraguan Journalists (UPN), whose president worked at *La Prensa*.[18] The first formal closure notice from the government came on 10 July 1981, apparently the result of insulting comments made in *La Prensa* concerning the deceased founder of the FSLN, Carlos Fonseca.[19]

The Sandinistas sought in several ways to justify the campaign of systematic

harassment and censorship against *La Prensa* (and other rightist opposition media like the Catholic Church's Radio Católica). In general, the activities of these media were presented as an issue of "national defense," not of "freedom of the press." A 1986 statement by the Sandinistas' Centre for International Communication in Managua (possibly drafted by Carlos Fernando Chamorro in his function as Chief of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, DAP) argued that "In a war situation such as that under which the people of Nicaragua live, the right to dissent should not be confused with an open position of endorsement of counterrevolutionary actions":

> The central objective of the Reagan administration is to undermine the confidence of the Nicaraguan people in their project of social transformation embodied by the Sandinista revolution. ... Inherent within the plan is the creation of an internal front in Nicaraguan cities to carry out counterrevolutionary sabotage, terrorism and social instability, taking advantage of the existing economic limitations and scarcities. ... *La Prensa* was a suitable instrument to accomplish this objective. Its positions reflected the feelings of those sectors of society which openly had expressed their subordination to the interests of the Reagan administration both inside and outside the country.[20]

The closure order issued against *La Prensa* in July 1986 made clear this perception of *La Prensa*'s subversive function, and also echoed conceptions of the media's social responsibility which had been a hallmark of Sandinista press legislation from the early days of the revolution:

> The Press Directorate of the Interior Ministry informs the Nicaraguan people:
>
> (1) That the American administration's immoral approval of the $110 million for counter-revolutionary forces means continuation of the war of aggression, which within our own country has been encouraged and defended by some unpatriotic groups.
>
> (2) That as our people prepare to confront and defeat imperialist aggression, which has brought death and destruction to Nicaragua, the newspaper *La Prensa*, acting as spokesman for the interests of the aggressive power, has been escalating the level of its provocation and disinformation, seeking thereby to justify United States aggression, denying the validity of the Contadora Group as the only possible solution for peace in Central America.
>
> (3) That the newspaper *La Prensa* has never lived up to its social, ethical or professional responsibility, and has not reflected the common goals of Nicaraguan society, which is the obligation of the press to its people.
>
> (4) That it has repeatedly violated orders of this Directorate by publishing expressly prohibited material.
>
> (5) That despite preventive warnings, editors of *La Prensa* continue to behave defiantly, and to disturb order and public safety.
>
> (6) That on the basis of the foregoing, based on Decree 130 of October 31, 1985, and Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the provisional press law, the Directorate has resolved to suspend the publication of *La Prensa* indefinitely.[21]

In other policy statements, the Sandinistas also drew explicit parallels

between *La Prensa*'s function and the destabilizing role of *El Mercurio* in Allende's Chile.[22]

Whatever the merits of the Sandinista case for censorship as an emergency measure of national self-defense, there is no doubt the censorship policy was applied unevenly, capriciously, and usually excessively. Beyond the quasi-Orwellian restrictions on subject material (which sometimes led to up to 80 percent of *La Prensa*'s copy being cut from a single edition), the process of censorship could be drawn out in a manner which inhibited printing and distribution of the paper. *La Prensa* editor Jaime Chamorro, writing in 1987, called the process "nervewrackingly methodical":

> After the day's edition of *La Prensa* was completed, we were required to send three copies of every page (including advertisements and comic strips) to Captain [Nelba] Blandón's office, along with two pages of "filler" - material that had previously been approved and hence could be substituted for whatever the censor decided to cut out. This decision, which had once taken about two hours, later averaged between four and six, and in March 1986 actually reached the absurd level of six hours and fifty minutes. The delay was deliberate, of course, and served, among other things, to hurt *La Prensa* financially, since it sometimes entailed increasing the number of work hours by as much as 60 percent.[23]

It would be an error, however, to limit the analysis of media-state relations in Sandinista Nicaragua to opposition media alone. Indeed, a nuanced analysis of media functioning during the revolutionary decade turns up some revealing surprises. It demonstrates, for instance, that *constraints were regularly placed on allied or sympathetic media*, most prominently *El Nuevo Diario* and *La Semana Cómica*.[24] And the newspaper which suffered most extensively from closure was not *La Prensa* but a small ultra-leftwing periodical operated by militants of the Maoist-oriented Movement for Popular Action-Marxist-Leninist.

Closing El Pueblo. The Sandinistas, taking power at the vanguard of a broad multiclass coalition, were immediately faced with two main challenges. One was to establish FSLN hegemony over the diffuse pro-revolutionary popular movements. The other was to maintain a degree of political consensus that would prevent disinvestment and capital flight, on the one hand, and win international aid for reconstruction, on the other.

Given this agenda, the FSLN viewed both extreme-left union agitation and rightwing labour organizing as serious threats to national unity and economic

recovery. This perception is well-conveyed in a National Directorate pronouncement of March 1980:

> "Union democracy" [the banner of the extreme left] and "ideological pluralism" [a rightwing slogan] disguise the interest of the enemies of our workers in keeping them fragmented in order to impede their monolithic, organic and political unity. ... The organizational dispersion of the working class is not an expression of the exercise of proletarian democracy, but rather a product of the very structure of capitalism, which opposes capital to the worker at the individual level, as well as a policy of oppression which imperialism and its allies promote in order to shatter our workers into a multiplex array of syndical particles, thus hindering their revolutionary development as a class. ... True union democracy thus corresponds to the historical imperative to effect only one organic, political and class standard for the workers ...[25]

That is, a "class standard" under Sandinista hegemony.

The above statement marked the climax to a sweeping political campaign against the ultra-left which had, in fact, begun the very month of the revolutionary victory. On the morning of 21 July 1979, two days after the Sandinista seizure of power, Melvyn Wallace, director of the Maoist paper *El Pueblo*, was taken into custody and his paper closed.[26] *El Pueblo* had issued a stinging criticism of the composition of the Junta of National Reconstruction (which included several bourgeois representatives). Much more sensitively, it had agitated against régime demands for the disarming of the popular militias (*milpas*), sponsored during the insurrection by the Movement for Popular Action (MAP-ML) and its aboveground union arm, the Workers' Front (FO).

El Pueblo reopened a month later. But on 25 January 1980, it was raided and its plant occupied. The occupation apparently resulted from the paper's role in inciting work stoppages at the Ingenerio San Antonio, a major financial concern. According to Juan Alberto Henríquez, present director of *El Pueblo*:

> The military arrested everyone who was in the newspaper at the time. They arrested leaders of MAP and the Workers' Front on the national level. They took away the machinery and we were detained for a month and a half. Then we were sentenced to ten years or more of prison. In the end, we were freed after four and a half months [on 6 June 1980]. Nothing, absolutely nothing [of the material plant] was turned over to us. ... They were like Attila, they destroyed everything. It was an act of barbarism which had never been seen before in the history of journalism in Nicaragua.[27]

Henríquez explains the motivations behind the action as follows:

> Obviously the interests of the government at the time were to try to neutralize the left-wing forces. ... They weren't scared of the reactionaries, the conservative forces, because they had nothing to offer the people of Nicaragua. But yes, they were scared of the Left, because we had new things to say. Given the alliances they had with the bourgeoisie, it was in the Sandinistas' interest to eliminate the Left. So they didn't

> allow us to develop as a medium of communication, or even as a party.[28]

The paper, its plant confiscated, did not publish again during the Sandinista years in power, though a monthly paper belonging to the MAP, *La Prensa Proletaria*, appeared between 1980 and 1986 under censorship. *El Pueblo* resumed publishing in March 1990 following the Sandinista election defeat.

Avance, the newspaper of the Nicaraguan Communist Party,[29] was also regularly and heavily censored throughout the Sandinista years in power. In a 1986 interview, Sandinista Chief Censor Nelba Blandón called *Avance* "a paper [which], as a matter of course, ignores the realities of war and international pressure that we have to reckon with ... [and] cast[s] aspersion on our laws ..."[30]

The FSLN and El Nuevo Diario. The first press victim of the Sandinista state of emergency introduced on 15 March 1982 was *El Nuevo Diario*, the leftwing Managua daily founded in 1980 by a breakaway majority of *La Prensa* staff. The morning after emergency regulations were introduced, *El Nuevo Diario* hit the stands with a huge headline heralding a "state of *siege*." The paper was promptly shut for a single issue (Edition 654) for running a headline which "does not reflect reality," according to the Office of Communications Media.[31] The paper was shut again, for two days, in 1988 when it reprinted the photograph which had led to the closure of *La Semana Cómica* (see below).

Like the opposition paper *La Prensa* but unlike *Barricada*, *El Nuevo Diario* had to submit each day's copy in advance to the censor's office. Carlos Fernando Chamorro confirms that "*Nuevo Diario* was much more affected than [*Barricada*] by censorship":

> I remember them presenting what they called "extreme" cases in which the Office of Communications Media tried to impose on them, not only changing information but the type of headlines they had to write. They lost a lot of time by having to submit the paper every day - that was their first concern. And they felt humiliated.[32]

Nonetheless, according to Chief Censor Nelba Blandón, *Nuevo Diario* was permitted the luxury of publishing blank spaces in protest against censored copy, a privilege not granted *La Prensa*. Despite instances of chafing, the overall relationship between *El Nuevo Diario* and state authorities was not "tense or conflictual."[33]

Róger Sánchez and La Semana Cómica. Throughout the revolutionary decade, the late Róger Sánchez, one of the world's pre-eminent political cartoonists,

published editorial cartoons in *Barricada*. In October 1985, however, seeking a less constrained environment for his caricatures and writings, Sánchez took over the reins of a weekly publication, *La Semana Cómica*. He proceeded to turn it into a publication that was, in his own words, "back-talking, iconoclastic, anarchic, messy ... and for that reason subversive."[34] The paper was especially notorious for its exploration of sexual themes. Sánchez argued that "Erotic humour is also political and ideological ... Sexual repression is a factor in the domination of the bourgeoisie, historically, which still remains today within the revolution."[35]

According to *La Semana Cómica*'s present director, Noel Irías, the paper's relationship with the sometimes-puritanical Sandinista leadership was one *"de bolero"* (love/hate). "There were still taboo subjects" during the Sandinista years, "and *La Semana Cómica* broke many of those taboos. That process of breaking taboos made a lot of people break out in hives."[36]

In its Edition 373 of 1-7 March 1988, *La Semana Cómica* overstepped the bounds. It published a murky black-and-white photo of a woman shaving her pubic hair. The caption referred to Nicaraguan "women preparing themselves" for International Women's Day (8 March). The photo provoked a storm of outcry from the Nicaraguan women's organization AMNLAE. Minister of the Interior Tomás Borge responded by decreeing the closure of *Semana Cómica* for one issue.

Sandinistas who supported Sánchez responded by condemning the closure. Sergio De Castro, at the time editor of *Barricada Internacional*, warned of the advent of "a new inquisition, in which morality becomes the business of the state."[37] *La Semana Cómica* returned to publication, but ran into trouble once again in the summer. Its issue of 2-8 August 1988 included a photo of a scantily-clad woman holding an Uzi, with a reference to the Sandinista military which state authorities viewed as insulting. Again Borge ordered the paper shut for a week.

La Semana Cómica's travails symbolize a schism in much revolutionary politics, in which militant self-discipline and moral asceticism are ranged against a more anarchist ideology stressing liberation from traditional moral fetters. In revolutionary Nicaragua, the split seems to have mirrored the dispute between Sandinista tendencies calling for increased state power and an intertwining of party

and state, and those questioning or rejecting the hierarchical, militaristic model put forward by the statists. In this context, questions of sexual discipline and purity can quickly assume a political dimension. Sánchez's irreverence was certainly two-sided in this sense, as was that of Sofía Montenegro, whose sometimes-fractious relationship with Sandinista leaders was discussed in Chapter 3.

• • •

This appendix has sought to demonstrate several features of media-state relations during the Sandinista years in power. In the first place, it is clear that analysis of these relations should not be limited to the FSLN's relationship with opposition media like *La Prensa*. There is much to be learned about Sandinista media policy, and the implicit boundaries which *Barricada* as official party organ had to respect, by considering the functioning and fate of pro-Sandinista and ultra-left media organs.

Second, media policy seems to have been couched throughout in terms of national defense rather than press freedom. Grounds for the national-defense perspective can be found in the subsidies *La Prensa* and other opposition media received from US sources, but the definition of "subversion" seems to have been influenced by paranoia as well as by practical considerations. Sandinista media legislation also reflects a conception of the media's social responsibility which blends elements of liberal-democratic, Leninist, and underdevelopmentalist traditions.

Finally, the punitive measures imposed by the Sandinistas on Nicaraguan media outlets had strict limits which compare favourably with the mechanisms of state terror deployed elsewhere in Central America during the same period. For opposition media, closure was the most extreme tactic employed, with one exception (the jailings associated with the closure of *El Pueblo* early in the post-revolutionary era). In the case of pro-revolutionary media, punitive measures did not extend beyond formal expulsion from party ranks — this in only two cases,[38] one (Sofía Montenegro) later rescinded. Journalists of all political stripes functioned in revolutionary Nicaragua without the threat of physical coercion or liquidation; tolerance for dissenting voices within party ranks waxed and waned, but was usually broad. Taking radio into consideration, a pluralistic media environment existed in

Nicaragua throughout the revolutionary decade. Given emergency conditions and prevailing levels of political polarization, however, this did not translate directly into diverse and flexible journalism *within* individual media outlets, whether pro- or anti-Sandinista.

Notes – Chapter 1

1. Bayardo Arce Castaño, "The new *Barricada*," *Barricada*, 30 January 1991.

2. Carlos Fernando Chamorro, "*Barricada*'s Commitments," *Barricada*, February 21 1990.

3. Arce, "The new *Barricada*."

4. There is no exact translation for the Spanish term *concertación*. It combines elements of compromise, consensus, and cooperation, and refers to 1) the nationalist campaign undertaken by the Sandinistas in 1988 to gain the support of "patriotic" members of the business community for the FSLN's economic austerity measures and 2) the much broader process of negotiated political transition and ongoing coexistence advanced, since the 1990 elections, by a broad cross-section of the Nicaraguan political elite, including Sandinista leaders and the "Las Palmas" group of technocratic advisors around the current President, Violeta Chamorro. For an analysis of the internal politics of *concertación* in the fragile UNO coalition, particularly the key role of Chamorro's Chief Minister Antonio Lacayo, see Trish O'Kane, "The New Old Order," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 24:1 (June 1990), pp. 28-36.

5. This is not to suggest a zero-sum relationship between the two functions. The latent presence of the professional function appears to have increased over the course of the 1980s at the same time as the mobilizing function was also increasing in salience and intensity. In the post-1990 context, the mobilizing function is rendered more ambiguous and diffuse by a wide range of factors relating to internal FSLN politics and to the broader political and economic environment. Many of those same factors and pressures work to increase the salience of the professional function, to the point that it arguably holds a hegemonic position in the paper's present functioning. There is a point at which a media organ's mobilizing role may obviate the more *explicit* (rather than latent) manifestations of the organ's professional function, at least with regard to editorial policy; but across a fairly broad spectrum of operations, the two functions should not necessarily be viewed as mutually exclusive.

6. "Transition," that is, understood not as a formal transfer to a new regime, but a more sweeping restructuring of the state apparatus and state-society relations. This tends to be especially protracted in transition situations which leave the *ancien régime* still with significant political resources and a strong presence in state institutions, and where political discourse is dominated by ongoing negotiations and competition among old, new, and revived social actors. In this sense the transition period is still very much underway in Nicaragua two years after the election defeat - as it is still underway, for instance, in Chile, where Pinochet (like the Sandinistas) retains control of the military and state-security apparatus.

7. Africa seems to be the most likely ground for the next stage of democratizing transitions.

8. At least one book-length treatment published before the formal crystallization of the "democratization school" in the 1980s provides some useful observations and, to a lesser extent, frameworks for analysis of the media in transition situations. See Kenneth Maxwell, ed , *The Press and the Rebirth of Iberian Democracy* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983). Maxwell's conclusion to the volume, "Authority, Democracy, and the Press: Some Comparative Perspectives," accurately states that "the mass media has become of such significance to society that it is virtually impossible to formulate a political position without considering the mass media as an inextricable

component of the political order" - an evaluation that scholars of the democratization school seem for the most part to have rejected.

Maxwell notes further that "there is an incomplete symmetry between *the mass media as an institution with a life of its own*, and its existence as an instrument of power or of social domination" (pp. 164-65). He thus acknowledges, in passing, a crucial point: that the media ought not to be viewed as merely the passive reflections of others' agendas or ambitions. He also refers to the intersection between liberal democracy and the free market (see p. 169); examinations of the Spanish and Portuguese media in the latter half of the 1970s turn up interesting data on the influence of economic factors in winnowing the initial proliferation of media organs in the wake of liberalization. (See, e.g., Jorge Braga de Macedo's contribution, "Newspapers and Democracy in Portugal: The Role of Market Structure," pp. 55-89).

Several limitations to the Maxwell volume should be noted, however. First, the book appeared before democratization spread significantly beyond the Iberian context, spawning the emergence of a "democratization school" of analysts. As such, it lacks a broader theoretical framework of the kind first posited by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead. Second, rather arbitrarily, the authors define the transition period itself as "in purely institutional terms end[ing] with the inauguration of the first elected and constitutional government in each country" (Maxwell's introduction, p. 28, ff. 28). The cut-off point is important, because both the Spanish and Portuguese media systems in transition continued to be characterized by a strong state presence in, and ownership of, the media. State media during transition tended to shift their editorial orientation with the political winds, particularly in Portugal (see Francisco Pinto Balsemão's observations in "Democracy and Authoritarianism and the Role of the Media in Portugal, 1974-1975," pp. 124-25). But the role of, and transformations in, these media following the establishment of "normal democratic life" in Portugal in 1976 - when the nature of extent of their state support might be expected to undergo significant change - is nowhere examined in detail. Throughout, the contributions downplay the significance of these official media as "institutions with lives of their own." Lastly, the contributions to the Maxwell volume are macroanalytical in nature. They are to be commended for contributing to an understanding of the impact of the transition situation *on* media systems - a logically prior step to grasping the media's role *in* transitions. But there is almost nothing in the way of case-study analysis of *individual* media organs and institutions, and little firsthand commentary or testimony from journalists themselves as to the impact of the transition on their outlook and operations. Such perspectives - microanalytical and phenomenological, respectively - appear vital to an understanding of the multifaceted impact of transition on journalists' political orientation and professional values.

9. Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

10. O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Tentative Conclusions*, p. 37.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

12. The situation becomes somewhat more complex when, as in the case that is the subject of this thesis, a newspaper formally allied with a particular political movement seeks to advance a broader agenda "in the national interest." But *Barricada*'s present editorial line reflects many of the same considerations O'Donnell and Schmitter describe as being inherent in pact-negotiation: the recognition, for instance, that "conflicting or competing groups ... can neither do without each other nor unilaterally impose their preferred solution on each other."

An interesting feature of the present process of pact-negotiation in Nicaragua is that the "compromise among class interests" being worked out is designed to guarantee protection for, and preservation of, institutionalized *revolutionary* interests, rather than "to reassure the bourgeoisie that its property rights will not be jeopardized for the foreseeable future," as is the case in most of the examples O'Donnell and Schmitter study (see *Tentative Conclusions*, pp. 46-47). But leaving aside the fact that this particular transition - like the recent transformations in Central Europe - proceeds from left to centre-right, the essence of the process seems much as O'Donnell and Schmitter have described it for right-to-centre or right-to-centre-left transitions.

Notes – Chapter 1

13. See Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*. Volume 1: *Prospects for Democracy*; Volume 2, *Southern Europe*; Volume 3, *Latin America*; and Volume 4, *Comparative Perspectives*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1986.

14. Alfred Stepan, "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," in O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, eds., *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule, Vol. III: Comparative Perspectives*, p. 75.

15. A more recent volume edited by Stepan, *Democratizing Brazil: Problems of Transition and Consolidation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), likewise makes no mention of press functioning over the course of some 400 pages of text.

16. Alain Rouquié, "Demiliatrization and the Institutionalization of Military-dominated polities in Latin America," in *ibid.*, pp. 108-36.

17. On the CIA's use of mass media in destabilization campaigns, see Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), especially pp. 70-72, 78.

18. Diamond, Larry, Juan J. Linz, and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds. *Democracy in Developing Countries: Vol. 1, Comparing Experiences with Democracy, Vol. II: Africa, Vol. 3· Asia, Vol. 4: Latin America*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990.

19. Larry Diamond and Juan J. Linz, "Politics, Society, and Democracy in Latin America," in *ibid., Vol. 4: Latin America*, pp. 36-37.

20. Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism, and the Struggle for Democracy," in *ibid., Vol. 2: Africa*, pp. 33-92.

21. Larry Diamond, "Nigeria: Pluralism, Statism, and the Struggle for Democracy," in *ibid.*, Vol. 2: Africa, pp. 33-92.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71. See also the discussion at pp. 82-83. Diamond also recounts the circumstances surrounding the October 1986 assassination of Dele Giwa, "one of Nigeria's most talented, admired, and fearlessly independent journalists," editor-in-chief of *Newswatch* (a publication "widely celebrated for its biting commentaries and aggressive investigative reporting"). See pp. 59-60 Again, though, the framework remains limited to the press's crusading role under authoritarianism, though the extra detail is welcome.

23. Christian Coulon, "Senegeal: The Development and Fragility of Semidemocracy," in *ibid.*, p. 155

24. Masipula Sithole, "Zimbabwe: In Search of a Stable Democracy," in *ibid.*, p. 243

25. John D. Holm, "Botswana: A Paternalistic Democracy," in *ibid.*, pp. 179-215.

26. See, e.g., Ergun Ozbudun's contribution, "Turkey: Crises, Interruptions and Reequilibrations," and Chai-Anan Samudavanija, "Thailand: A Stable Semi-Democracy," in *ibid., Vol. 3: Asia*, pp. 187-229, 305-346. Samudavanija's work features references to the mobilizing role of regime-controlled media "for psychological warfare and/or mobilizing mass movmenets in times of political crisis" (p. 324). Ozbudun notes the development of "a vigorously free and independent press strongly committed to democratic principles" and mentions its role in criticizing human rights abuses (p. 220) - again, the standard (and rather superficial) framework for analysis of the press in transition and democratization.

27. Daniel C. Levy, "Mexico: Sustained Civilian Rule Without Democracy," in *ibid., Vol. 4: Latin America*, pp. 459-97. The quoted phrase is drawn from the discussion at pp. 468-69.

28. See Arturo Valenzuela, "Chile: Origins, Consolidation, and Breakdown of a Democratic Regime," in *ibid.*, pp. 159-206. Valenzuela's comments are limited to a passing reference to the media's role in publicizing the plebiscite which led to the transition from Pinochet's authoritarian rule (p. 197).

29. Bolívar Lamounier, "Brazil: Inequality Against Democracy," in *ibid.*, pp. 111-158.

30. Cynthia McClintock, "Peru: Precarious Regimes, Authoritarian and Democratic," in *ibid.*, pp. 335-386. See McClintock's comments at pp. 361-62.

31. See Straubhaar, "Television and Video in the Transition from Military to Civilian Rule in Brazil," *Latin American Research Review* 24:1 (1989), pp. 140-54.

32. See Maria Helena de Magalhães Castro, "Television and the Elites in Postauthoritarian Brazil," Kellog Institute Working Paper, November 1990; and Joan R. Dassin, "The Brazilian Press and the Politics of *Abertura*," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 26:3 (August 1984), pp. 385-414.

33. Cynthia McClintock, "The Media and Re-Democratization in Peru," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, 6 (1987), pp. 115-34.

34. McClintock, "The Media and Re-democratization," pp. 125-26. If the FSLN leadership is viewed as the de facto owners of *Barricada*, similar tensions can sometimes be isolated in the Nicaraguan instance.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 131.

36. See Harvey Starr, "Diffusion Approaches to the Spread of Democracy," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, 2 (June 1991), p. 379.

37. Giuseppe Di Palma, *To Craft Democracies: An Essay on Democratic Transitions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 189.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

40. Sanford Ungar in Judith Lichtenberg, ed., *Democracy and the Mass Media* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 368-98. Ungar also pays considerable attention to the media's role in Central European political transitions.

41. Ungar, "The Role of a Free Press," pp. 371-72.

Notes – Chapter 2

1. *Karl Marx On Freedom of the Press and Censorship*, trans. with an introduction by Saul K. Padover (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 31.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 143. Emphasis in original.

3. V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 80.

4. As Paul LeBlanc points out, Lenin did not feel that the need for a national newspaper (and, for that matter, for a highly hierarchical party structure) was necessarily generalizable to other countries. See LeBlanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press International, 1990), p. 49.

5. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, pp. 175-76.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

7. V. I. Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government" (1918), in *V.I. Lenin: Selected Works, One-Volume Edition* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 418.

8. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, p. 41.

9. See LeBlanc's contention that "up until 1921 opposition parties and Menshevik and anarchist newspapers functioned legally ... and other activities took place that were to become unthinkable in the Soviet Union not only under Stalin but also in the 1980s. Even after the formal banning of oppositional soviet parties, many non-Bolshevik socialists and scholars could continue, in the 1920s, to produce freely 'nonconformist' (today one would say 'dissident') publications - pamphlets, books, magazines." LeBlanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, p. 295.

10. For a useful discussion of these themes in Lenin's work and in Soviet principles of press functioning, see Brian McNair, *Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 19-24.

11. "Indirectly" in the sense that the developmentalist critique seems to have reflected, and buttressed, a broader U.S. imperial ideology in the postwar era which had decisive implications for developing countries under U.S. hegemony.

12. Developmentalists attempted to confront a central question of the modernization problematic in the emerging post-colonial world: How could the capacities and capabilities of the new states be expanded and increased, when the modern foundations of those states were established by outside powers and existed alongside pervasive "traditional" patterns of social organization and cultural life? In the groundbreaking work of communications developmentalism, Lucien Pye posed the problem as follows: "In most of the new countries there is the massive problem of trying to awaken the bulk of the people to new ideas and to the potentialities of new techniques, without at the same time producing crippling tension and deep psychological frustrations and anxieties. Unless the masses of the people are exposed to new ways of thinking and led to adopt new attitudes, there can be little hope of any steady progress toward economic development, social modernization, and political maturity ... A strong case could indeed be made that the two most general and most fundamental problems in political modernization are precisely these two of changing attitudes and reducing the gap between the ruling elites and the less modernized masses."

    Almond and Coleman's classic treatise on *The Politics of the Developing Areas* viewed "the political communication function" as the means by which all functions in the political system were implemented: "political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation,

rule-making, rule application, and rule adjudication." An "autonomous, neutral, and thoroughly penetrative system of communication" was essential to the growth and preservation of "an active and effective electorate and citizenship." The institutional autonomy of communications media was what guaranteed a "free flow of information" between ruler and ruled. This went some distance toward guarding against abuses generated by institutionalized elite interests ("covert communications in the bureaucracy, the interest groups, and political parties"); abuses and corruption could be confronted only after they had been effectively publicized by the media. See Gabriel Almond and James S. Coleman, ed., *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), pp. 45-52.

13. Underdevelopmentalist critics worked to focus attention on "the process of incorporation of different areas of the world capitalist economy," and the means of penetration, control, and coercion that the industrialized world used to subordinate Third World economies and national aspirations to the economic or security requirements of the developed West. In this light, inevitably, the "world culture" celebrated by the contributors to *Communications and Political Development* came to be viewed as a pernicious and invasive form of cultural imperialism.

    Attempts to redress the perceived communication imbalance took a variety of forms. In several cases, Third World states sought to work through the United Nations and other international bodies, buoyed by attempts (beginning in 1972) to articulate a New World Economic Order and its complement, a New World Information Order. See D.R. Mankekar, *Media and the Third World* [New Delhi: Indian Institute of Mass Communication, 1979], p. 104). In 1976, a UN-linked Conference of Ministers meeting in New Delhi established a "Non-aligned News Agency Pool." The organization's goal was to disseminate news and information *among* Third World countries, thereby broadening the range of sources available to newspaper editors in developing countries. The Agencia Nueva Nicaragua (ANN) was created by the FSLN on 19 October 1979 as the Sandinista contribution to this news pool. The ANN viewed its role as correcting the distorted picture of the Sandinista Revolution presented abroad and offsetting the use of communications media to spread disinformation. A statement of principle distributed around the time of the 10th anniversary of the revolution stated that "Nicaragua has confronted ... two principal problems: misinformation (distorted news [*noticias inexactas*] about the revolution) and disinformation (a total lack of news)." The ANN sought to advance the cause of information sovereignty (*soberania informativa*), another theme very much in line with the standard underdevelopmentalist critique. It also sought to cater to the informational requirements of the solidarity movements which sprang up in North America and Western Europe. See "The New Nicaragua Press Agency and the Exercising of Information Sovereignty," ANN publicity brochure, 1989 (?).

    In the present context, it is worth noting that even the underdevelopmentalist critique mapped out a communications strategy which clearly emphasized the mobilizing role of the media. The values which this vanguard sought to implant among the masses were "modernizing" ones, albeit interpreted against the grain of conventional, First World conceptions of modernization.

14. Borge quoted in *Barricada*, 6 March 1988.

15. Fonseca quoted *Barricada*, 25 July 1985.

16. Chamorro interviews, 28 February, 28 April 1991.

17. They included Radio Insurrección in Matagalpa; Radio Venceremos in León; Radio Liberación in Estelí; and Radio Revolución in Juigalpa. See Guillermo Rothschuh Villanueva, *Comunicación: La Cuerda Floja* (Managua· Editorial Tierra Arada, 1986), pp. 44-45.

18. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

19. The point is made with ironical force and scarcely disputable accuracy by Noam Chomsky: "Under the totalitarian Sandinistas, foreigners were permitted to a forge a political coalition [UNO] based upon the terrorist force [the Contras] they created to attack the country; and they were allowed to pour millions of dollars into supporting it in the elections. Foreigners engaged in what the World Court condemned as 'the unlawful use of force' against Nicaragua were allowed to fund a major

newspaper [*La Prensa*] that called for the overthrow of the government and openly identified with the terrorist forces pursuing these ends, proxies of the foreign power funding the journal. Under these totalitarians, such foreigners as Jeane Kirkpatrick and US Congressmen were permitted to enter the country to present public speeches and news conferences calling for the overthrow of the government by violence and supporting the foreign-run terrorist forces. 'Human Rights' investigators accompanied by Contra lobbyists posing as 'experts' were permitted free access, as were journalists who were scarcely more than agents of the foreign power attacking the country. Nothing remotely resembling this record can be found in Western democracies; in the United States, Israel, England, and other democracies, such freedoms would be inconceivable, even under far less threat, as the historical record demonstrates with utter clarity." Chomsky, "The Decline of the Democratic Ideal," in *Deterring Democracy* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 325-26.

Carlos Fernando Chamorro wrote in 1989 that "Nicaragua not only has a democratic and progressive [i.e., pro-revolutionary] press, which would have difficulty surviving in any other Latin American country, but also has a section of the media which, much more than opposing the government - as can happen elsewhere - is totally antagonistic towards the system and wages a daily battle to overthrow it, in connivance with a foreign power, the United States. This challenge, which would be intolerable in other countries, is our daily bread." Chamorro, "Front page battlefront," *Barricada Internacional* (in English), 8 July 1989, p. 36.

20. In Cuba all television and radio stations were taken over by the state, which in turn is under the formal institutionalized control of the country's sole legal political party, the Cuban Communist Party. Studios and theatres were also nationalized. See Elizabeth Fox, *Media and Politics in Latin America: The Struggle for Democracy* (London: SAGE Publications, 1988), p. 20. In Nicaragua, the perceived impossibility of expropriating the bourgeoisie, taken together with the Sandinistas' constant efforts to split bourgeois ranks and nurture a "patriotic" element willing to cooperate with the revolutionary regime, meant the bourgeoisie's access to and ownership of media outlets and other forms of public expression were taken for granted - under Sandinista hegemony.

    Another important factor which militated against the establishment of a Cuban-style media monopoly was Nicaragua's very high degree of penetration by foreign radio stations. The country lies roughly at the centre of one of the most congested regions in the world. Howard H. Frederick estimated in 1985 that "76 foreign AM and FM radio stations penetrate Nicaraguan territory," versus just 15 stations belonging to the government-run CORADEP network. The government-aligned stations, moreover, had "signals of varying qualities" and considerable problems of regional penetration and equipment maintenance. (Frederick in Armand Mattelart, ed., *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua* [New York and Bagnolet: International General, 1986], pp. 73-75.)

    Nearly all the foreign stations were conservative and anti-Sandinista to a greater or lesser degree in their ideological orientation. Some were explicitly established as part of the U.S.-led drive to subvert and overthrow the Sandinista regime. Given the high degree of saturation by foreign stations, and the fact that radio was the prime source of information and entertainment for the large majority of the Nicaraguan population, the benefits of a formal state media monopoly would have been minimal. The risks, moreover, would have been considerable - both in terms of alienating the domestic bourgeoisie and lending support to the U.S. campaign against the Sandinista government.

21. Joan Coxsedge states that in 1984, of 45 radio stations in Nicaragua, just 18 were pro-Sandinista and 25 were privately owned. Coxsedge, *Thank God for the Revolution: A Journey Through Central America* (Sydney and London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. 122.

22. To say that something approaching the pluralistic media environment of liberal-democratic societies existed in Nicaragua is not to deny that considerable restrictions on media functioning were instituted and enforced during the Sandinista years in power. These are dealt with in the appendix to this thesis.

23. The implementation of the Leninist model of the media in these various ways should be seen in the context of the Sandinista Front's broader conception of itself as a revolutionary vanguard. In his superior analysis of the philosophical roots of *Sandinismo*, Dennis Gilbert stresses the FSLN's

character as a "a self-selected disciplined, revolutionary elite ... [with an] emphasis on mobilizing and transforming rather than neutralizing the masses"; this has, he argues, been the most important influence on the Sandinistas, both in the period of pre-revolutionary organization and during the FSLN's years in power.

The ambivalent stance of Sandinista leaders toward press pluralism points to deeper ambiguities in the concept of the revolutionary vanguard. In a memorable passage, Gilbert notes the "enormous ideological tension latent" in the vanguard strategy: "The vanguard wants to liberate and empower the oppressed and at the same time to control and transform them. The tension begins to manifest itself after the vanguard has deposed the unpopular old regime and assumed political power. It is then in a position to coerce those it purports to represent. What does the vanguard do if the masses resist its historical vision? The question is most likely to arise as a revolution traverses periods of domestic and external strain and the vanguard must demand current sacrifices in exchange for future (uncertain) benefits." Dennis Gilbert, *Sandinistas: The Party and the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 33.

The Leninist vanguard model also points to considerable inner tensions in the concept of socialist democracy. The concept is centred on a view of the mass-party relationship as a dialectical one, which inevitably brings to the fore certain dilemmas: Who articulates? Who demands? Who responds? And - since few revolutionary socialist experiments have not been confronted by immediate violent opposition from within or without - how compatible are any of these arrangements with the requisites of militarized self-defence?

To some extent, as Paul LeBlanc argues, the vanguard model is inevitable in revolutionary organization: "Any organized group that has a definite perspective it feels is superior to others, and that seriously attempts to win large numbers of working class activists (not to mention the majority of the working class) to that perspective, is open to charges of 'vanguardism'. The abandonment of such an orientation can lead only to inactivity (or the elevation of contemplation and commentary to the status of 'revolutionary praxis') or, in the best of cases, to individualist political acts." Nonetheless, even LeBlanc recognizes that "certain tensions are inherent in the Leninist conception of organization"; there is within it the potential for the growth of "sectarian arrogance and elitism, which can contribute not only to its degeneration into a bureaucratic dictatorship after capitalism is overthrown, but even more to its degeneration beforehand into a sect that isolates itself from living social struggles." LeBlanc, *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, pp. 291-92, 352.

24. The allegation of the attempted Sandinista takeover of *La Prensa* is made by one of the newspaper's directors, Jaime Chamorro, in his article "How 'La Prensa' was silenced," *Commentary*, January 1987, pp. 39-44.

25. The Department of Agitation and Propaganda was one of seven "Auxiliary Departments" constituting the National Directorate staff, a bureaucratic body of about 600 party functionaries. For more information on the structure of Sandinista party organization, see Gilbert, *Sandinistas*, pp. 48-52.

26. The UPN was formed on 1 March 1978 (National Journalists' Day) and formalized as a *colegio* just a month after the revolution, the purpose of this new arrangement being much the same as for *colegación* in other Latin America countries - i.e., to permit easier state control over national journalism. When the Council of State was reorganized in 1981 to incorporate representatives from the mass organizations which had emerged since the revolutionary victory, the UPN was even granted a seat! See John Spicer Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," in Thomas W. Walker, ed., *Nicaragua in Revolution* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 192. Over the course of the revolutionary decade, it was progressively co-opted by the Sandinista regime, to the extent that one member complained in 1989 that it had "gone from being an independent organization under Somocismo to a governmental appendage of 'FSLN-ismo'." (Ignacio Briones Torres, "Ten years of diatribes in journalism," *La Crónica*, 17-27 July 1989.) After the election defeat of 1990, the UPN was buffeted by many of the same chill winds as other Sandinista or pro-Sandinista institutions suddenly stripped of official state support and subsidy. At its annual congress in May 1990, the union found itself preparing for the "hypothetical event that if it disappears as an organization, property will pass to the School of Journalism." See "Journalists prepare themselves to face new challenges," *Barricada*, 12 May 1990.

27. The FSLN leadership's emphasis on radio was conditioned by the recognition that 1) radio constituted "the principal instrument" of nation-building through mass media, "due to its broad coverage and speed of diffusion, and because in the conditions of Nicaragua [it] is the only medium capable of casting its influence over all the national territory"; and 2) that radio "has been the main weapon of political and military aggression against our country." (Comandante Tomás Borge quoted in *Barricada*, 6 March 1988.) An unpublished internal document of the Department of Propaganda and Political Education of the FSLN (1985), prepared under the direction of Carlos Fernando Chamorro, noted that "The enemy has sought to install a gigantic propaganda apparatus, which permit it to cover the entire country with various media, particularly radio." In a relatively short time, these media had managed to find a considerable audience and establish themselves as credible commentators, "using apparently objective language, and exploiting to the maximum their technical capacity."

    Accordingly, the Sandinistas created the *Corporación de Radiodifusión del Pueblo* (CORADEP) to unite 18 regional radio stations seized from Somocistas in a state-affiliated transmission network. The network fell into disorganization and decay over the following several years, plagued by "deteriorating and obsolete transmission equipment." (The phrase comes from an untitled, unpublished internal document of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda in 1985.) In 1985 a strategic reorientation of the network began in an attempt to bolster the Sandinista presence in disparate regions of the country. The main obstacle to the penetration of Sandinista ideology was, as Borge argued in the comments cited above, the network of anti-Sandinista radio stations established both on foreign soil or privately-owned on Nicaraguan territory. To confront the threat these posed, the stations of the CORADEP network would work toward more distinctive identities, reflecting the "personalities" of the different regions - their "values, customs, symbols, regional identities." (From "Profiles of the Communications Media," a document prepared in the first trimester of 1985 by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda; unpublished.) This, it was hoped, would enable the stations to win the majority of the listening audience. The network would become both a more effective "organism of political conduction" (i.e., from the centre to the regions), but would also seek to develop "a participative-popular radio."

    The strategy is outlined in an unpublished 1986 document of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda titled "CORADEP." The stations' character would be "popular, patriotic, and revolutionary," but their broadcasts would seek to develop "a broad language of consensus rather than partisanship." There would be more emphasis on popular music, particularly that of the individual regions, than on political rhetoric. An attempt was made to secure local workers and peasants as news reporters; news programs would be written by community workers themselves rather than merely dispatched from the centre and read, parrot-like, over the air. The popular elements of programming on the CORADEP network are suggested by the names of the programmes themselves: "Contact 6-20," "Let's Talk," "From the Street," "Directly [*En Directo*]."

    In his closing speech to the 7th Congress of the Union of Nicaraguan Journalists, Comandante Borge paraded the successes of this strategy, arguing that "local life has been revitalized" by a radio which speaks to local people "in their own language, listens to their own voices." (Borge in *Barricada*, 6 March 1988.) My thanks to Irene Selser and Jane Curschmann for their comments and insights about Sandinista strategies for radio.

28. Núñez quoted *Barricada*, 2 March 1982. In a speech to the National Autonomous University's (UNAN's) School of Journalism shortly after the revolution, Sandinista Comandante Bayardo Arce (a professor of journalism at the School prior to going underground) likewise dismissed western concepts of professionalism "One doesn't qualify as a journalist by the speed or expertise with which one hunts down news," but rather by command of "the cultural and political level of our people." Arce speech, "The journalist must live the vicissitudes of our people," *Barricada*, 11 October 1979.

29. Núñez quoted *Barricada*, 3 March 1982 (speech transcript). Correspondingly, for Sandinista leaders, "objectivity" consisted in reflecting the perspective of the popular masses, rather than that of the "decadent groups" who increasingly had little to say as they were swept aside by the forces of history. There is here a notion that "objectivity" in the sense of value-free reportage does not exist. Hegemony over media of expression will always be held by one constituency in society and

contested by others; "popular hegemony" is the most democratic form of control over media functioning.

30. Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government," in *V.I. Lenin: Selected Works*, p. 418.

31. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

32. Sergio Ramírez, a member of the Junta of National Reconstruction and later Vice-President of Nicaragua, similarly avowed that Nicaraguan press legislation "allow[s] freedom of expression of all ideas, even fascism." Ramírez quoted in Nigel Cross, "Revolution and the press in Nicaragua," *Index on Censorship* 2/82, p. 39.

33. In this vein, see the comment by Comandante Arce in January 1980: "We respect and are respecting freedom of expression, but we are not going to permit freedom of counter-revolution." Comments by Comandante Borge in November 1983 were similar: "We understand that all newspapers will express diverging ideologies, but they do not have the right to convert themselves into the voices of Reagan or those of the armed enemies of the Nicaraguan people." Both cited in Rosa María Torres and José Luis Coraggio, *Transición y Crisis en Nicaragua* (San José: Editorial DEI, 1987), p. 140, 192.

    Statements by Comandante Jaime Wheelock in 1983 stress that suppression of freedoms is valid if freedom is used to "attack the bases of the new society that are in the historic interests of the people of Nicaragua." Existing press legislation, Wheelock argued, "was necessary to discipline the news a little with a sense of responsibility. ... With these laws we limited not freedom of the press, which still exists, but rather the ability to destabilize." Opposition to the Sandinistas could be "non-revolutionary," but it "cannot be counterrevolutionary. Against [counterrevolutionaries], the revolution does not attack, it defends itself. So it is within these limits, which are quite flexible, that we are moving." Cited in Bruce Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1988), pp. 142-43.

34. See the discussion in the Appendix. Ironically or not, Núñez delivered his speech only a few days prior to the imposition of a State of Emergency which placed restrictions on freedom of expression in the context of heightened Contra rebel attacks in northern Nicaragua. This suggests a distinction in the minds of Sandinista leaders and policy-makers between freedom of the press as an abstract principle, on the one hand, and use of that freedom as a tool of subversion, on the other. In this respect it was alleged that revolutionary Nicaragua's imposition of press restrictions was no different than the policy actually implemented in liberal-democratic societies experiencing periods of crisis.

35. This is clear in the document prepared by Carlos Fernando Chamorro while at DAP, "The Role of Communications Media in Sandinista Propaganda" (1985?). The overall FSLN media strategy also encompassed "The 'Independent' Media" (the quotation marks around "independent" speak volumes). *El Nuevo Diario*, the document states, "little by little has fulfilled its self-stated role as a 'critical supporter of the Revolution'." Nonetheless, it is "an instrument to advance the politics of alliance [*la política de alianzas*] of the FSLN."

36. *Barricada*, 26 July 1984.

37. Núñez quoted in "On its first anniversary, *Barricada* must prepare itself for the coming struggles," *Barricada*, 27 July 1980.

38. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

39. In this context, see the first-anniversary editorial, "*Barricada*: Journalism of the Vanguard for A Revolutionary People," *Barricada*, 25 July 1980.

40. "The New Nicaragua Demands A New Journalism," credited as a note "from the editorial staff," *Barricada*, 13 August 1979.

41. *Barricada*, 24 August 1979.

42. "*Barricada*: Journalism of the Vanguard for a Revolutionary People," *Barricada*, 25 July 1980. At the first anniversary celebrations, Carlos Fernando Chamorro used much the same language: "Not only did we seek to construct a periodical of a new kind for educating, orientating, and mobilizing the people around revolutionary tasks, but also to forge an organ which answered only to the interests of the workers, which dealt a blow to the dominant ideology imposed on us - imperialism and reaction - over so many decades. ... The periodical of the Revolution increases the potential of the vanguard to bolster the cohesion of the FSLN and the mass organizations, and to bolster the cohesion of all the people around a revolutionary conception." "To Maintain the High Spirit of the People," *Barricada*, 26 July 1980.

43. Chamorro served at the FSLN's Department of Agitation and Propaganda (DAP) from 1984 to 1987.

44. Cited in Guillermo Cortés Dominguez and Juan Ramón Huerta Chavarria, "Critical Journalism in the Daily *Barricada*," monograph prepared for the Degree in Journalism at the University of Central America (UCA), Managua, submitted 30 June 1988, pp. 4-5. A nearly identical outline of the editorial profile is contained in "Profiles of the Communications Media," an internal document of the Department of the Agitation and Propaganda prepared under Carlos Fernando Chamorro's aegis in the first trimester of 1985, unpublished.

45. It should be acknowledged here that a certain range of opinion exists among *Barricada* personnel concerning the extent of the Leninist influence on the paper. Chamorro, for example, stresses that regardless of the subtle or overt homage paid to Lenin in *Barricada*'s formal profile and public statements, the practical influence of Leninist formulations was limited by the idiosyncratic nature of the Nicaraguan Revolution. "I don't know how influenced [the Nicaraguan] reality is by a theoretical importation of Lenin or others. I tend to think the way the FSLN has evolved has less to do with other political experiences. I don't see that the FSLN tried to build a party like the Leninist party, or a society like Soviet society. That international experience has never been present, to my knowledge, in the debates or discussions of the FSLN. ... Maybe I'm wrong, but that's my perception." Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991 Against such an argument, one must set the comments from other staff-members and FSLN sources acknowledging the influence of Leninist formulations or (with regard to public statements at *Barricada* anniversaries and so on) echoing them.

    The most satisfactory way of reconciling these perspectives might be, first, to draw a distinction between Leninist theory and Leninism in practice, and second, to emphasize the way the Nicaraguan revolutionary experience evolved over the course of the FSLN's years in power. A lack of attention or adherence to formal Leninist tenets might well be accompanied by some (and increasing) congruence *in practice* - when it comes to construction of a revolutionary vanguard with its attendant propaganda support-structure. Such principles would be expected to predominate more in the party leadership's dealings with affiliated institutions like *Barricada* than in the party's dealings with the diverse sectors of Nicaraguan society as a whole. Thus, the broad degree of pluralism which the FSLN permitted during its years in power, and the very low levels of coercive violence it employed (both running counter to Leninist practice in the USSR) are not incompatible with a Leninist approach to party organization, democratic centralism, and revolutionary discipline.

    Certainly, the National Directorate member in the best position (as the only surviving founding member of the FSLN) to gauge Lenin's influence retains the "Leninist" label, even while pointing out the non-traditional variations engendered by the Nicaraguan context. "The core of our [pre-revolutionary] propaganda was the imposition of armed struggle as the only alternative for national liberation With aversion, we separated forever from the traditional historical parties and sought the construction of a political-military organization that would not and could not conform to the classical organic forms of Leninism. In other words, I believe that the only form of Leninist organization possible at that moment was the one imposed by historical reality. Wherever possible the principle of democratic centralism was established, but in reality, [non-democratic] centralism predominated in spite of the open democratic inclination of Carlos Fonseca." Borge, "Marginal Notes on the Propaganda of the FSLN," in Mattelart, ed , *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua*, p. 49.

46. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

47. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

48. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

49. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

50. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

51. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991; Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991. According to Sofía Montenegro, "The problem was, how were we going to get this shit off the ground? Because the Somocista journalists, before they left [the *Novedades* office *Barricada* took over], took with them whatever they could and destroyed some of the teletypes and typewriters. So my first duty was to seek out members of the foreign press in Managua and ask them for help. I went around asking if they could donative negatives, cameras, typewriters, God knows what. I wrote a little advertisement and put it in the lobby of the Hotel Intercontinental, where the international journalists stayed. Donations began to come in: somebody gave us a camera, someone else a typewriter. So international solidarity was important from the start [*laughs*]." Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

52. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991; see also "An editorial complex which educates the nation," *Barricada*, 24 July 1987.

53. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

54. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991. Núñez's role is discussed further in Chapter 3.

55. "I remember during one Easter week, the workers didn't have any holiday; they worked [to prepare the literacy materials] the whole week, three shifts a day." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

56. Cited figures from *Barricada*'s eighth-anniversary edition, 24 July 1987.

57. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

58. Max Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

59. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

60. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

61. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991. Some supplies came also from Finland; Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

62. This produced some anomalous arrangements which caught the eye of foreign observers. Massing recalls "arriv[ing at the offices of the anti-Sandinista *La Prensa*] to find a truck backed into *La Prensa*'s loading dock, disgorging 300-kilogram rolls of newsprint marked 'Made in the USSR'. The trucks arrived throughout the day, delivering 700 tons in all - enough to keep the paper going for three or four months. Thus did Soviet generosity help keep the flame of press freedom alive in Nicaragua." Michael Massing, "Nicaragua's free-fire journalism," *Columbia Journalism Review* 27 (July-August 1988), p. 33

63. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1990.

64. Chamorro notes that "When the policy of economic stabilization [i.e., austerity] started, slowly in 1986 but then strongly in 1987, circulation declined steeply. Because when the subsidies were suspended, the people had to pay for food and other things, and they no longer bought newspapers as they had in the past." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

65. Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

66. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

67. Cited in Robert S. Leiken and Barry Rubin, ed., *The Central American Crisis Reader* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), p. 221.

68. The Sandinistas were willing to tolerate the bourgeoisie's productive presence in the economy, but not to grant it hegemony in economic decision-making, nor to provide its representatives with control over the political agenda - an approach mirrored in the FSLN's provisional tolerance of political pluralism, discussed above. Concretely, this meant most of the economy (about 60 percent as of 1982) remained in private hands under the Sandinistas. Figures cited in James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus: A Political History of Modern Central America* (London Verso, 1988), p. 292. According to Dunkerley, the proportions did not change significantly in subsequent years. The state sector consisted at first primarily of holdings confiscated from the Somoza dictatorship and its closest supporters; in later years it was supplemented by holdings whose owners were deemed guilty of decapitalization, absenteeism, or treason.

Forrest D. Colburn isolates the Sandinista relationship with the bourgeoisie (correctly, I believe) as a principal interpretive tool for understanding the process of revolutionary state-building: "Post-revolutionary regimes depend on economic performance. It is almost axiomatic, though, that important centres of production will be in the hands of those who are the target of the revolution, or who are at least antagonistic to it, and that at least initially the state will be unable to assume complete responsibility for the production of essential goods and services. Understanding this dilemma and how it is resolved provides insights into post-revolutionary regimes in the developing world." See Colburn, *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua: State, Class, and the Dilemmas of Agrarian Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 45

The essence of FSLN policy toward the bourgeoisie is captured in Comandante Jaime Wheelock's 1983 comment: "[W]hat has to be posed theoretically is whether it is possible that the bourgeoisie simply produce, without power; that they limit themselves as a class to a productive role. That is, that they limit themselves to exploiting their means of production and use these means of production to live, not as instruments of power, of imposition. ... It is a complex problem. But we have not renounced the search for forms in which we can integrate the more or less big individual producers who live in the Nicaragua of today into a social formation dominated by revolutionaries. ... I believe that in these conditions it is possible to find ways in which a social organization under revolutionary hegemony can maintain forms of production, groups of capitalist production relations, that are not dominant but subordinate. At this moment in Nicaragua, this exists, but without the consent of part of the bourgeoisie." Interview with Marta Harnecker, reprinted in translation in Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution*, quoted comments from pp. 134-35.

69. This relationship is well captured by the Sandinista chant, *"Dirección Nacional, Ordene!"* - "National Directorate, We Await Your Command!"

70. Colburn is correct to point out, moreover, that this constituency was primarily an *urban* one, setting a further constraint on Sandinista policy implementation: "the urban base of the revolution ... led the government to stress subsidizing consumption to the relative penalizing of producers, especially food producers." Colburn, *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua*, p. 86. The result was an agricultural policy which is now widely conceded among Sandinistas to have been, at least initially, a dismal failure. Excessive organization of expropriated holdings into large, capital-intensive state farms, and concentration on agro-export production to earn foreign exchange, eventually gave way to a more decentralized and traditional pattern of landholding. The Sandinistas realized their rural support base was being eroded by the limitations which the state-farm model and agro-export emphasis placed on the extensive land-redistribution program which they had promised upon taking power. The shift came in 1985 and 1986, with the most far-reaching land reform ever implemented in Latin America. By this time, however, as Tom Barry notes, "[r]educed peasant support for the revolution" was evident, along with "signs of increasing support for the counterrevolution, particularly among campesinos in isolated areas." Barry, *Roots of Rebellion: Land & Hunger in Central America* (Boston: South End, 1987), p. 128.

Notes – Chapter 2

71. For an examination in the context of the Sandinista Defense Committees, see Pierre LaRamée and Erica Polakoff, "Transformation of the CDS's and the Breakdown of Grassroots Democracy in Revolutionary Nicaragua," *New Political Science* No. 18/19 (Fall/Winter 1990), pp. 103-123.

72. Quoted in Gilbert, *Sandinistas*, p. 61. The justification for viewing the popular organizations and their leaders as part of the para-statal apparatus or even the formal state apparatus is their close involvement in distribution of materials, their supplementary role as intelligence and security networks, and their provision of social services normally associated with state institutions and bureaucratic structures in the developed world. These features were particularly evident as the mass organizations' independent role was circumscribed later in the revolutionary decade and integrated more closely into the vanguard's agenda.

73. This account of the military crisis in the 1980s is based largely on the two in-depth accounts of the war in Nicaragua during the 1980s: Holly Sklar, *Washington's War Against Nicaragua* (Boston: South End, 1988) and William I. Robinson and Kent Norsworthy, *David and Goliath: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua* (New York: Monthly Review, 1987). Both are strongly pro-Sandinista accounts; in the latter instance especially, this is something of a drawback, although Robinson and Norsworthy are the best source on restructurings in the Sandinista military and defence policy. A good impressionistic account of life in Managua during the period of war and national emergency is Stephen Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1991), Chapter 11. Kinzer's is also a sensitive and nuanced account of the crisis on the Atlantic Coast (Chapter 16).

    For the war as it was lived and fought in the countryside, see Alison Rooper, *Fragile Victory: A Nicaraguan Community At War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987); and John Medcalf, *Letters From Nicaragua*, foreword by Graham Greene (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1988). The atmosphere of economic crisis is well conveyed in Julia and Peter Menard-Warwick, *Letters Home: A Year in Nicaragua* (Enterprise, Oregon: Pika Press, 1989). As usual, the best brief synthesis of events during the 1980s (in military, economic, social, and diplomatic realms) is Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, Chapter 7. The diplomatic dimension is also amply on display in Leikin and Rubin, ed., *The Central American Crisis Reader*.

74. Dunkerley writes with some accuracy that the agreement "represented a form of Brest Litovsk for the FSLN in which the primary objective was to protect the revolution from further and perhaps mortal external attacks." Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, p. 326.

75. Statistics from Dunkerley, p. 325. The $17 billion figure was the one given by the Sandinistas in their claim against the U.S. before the World Court at The Hague. In June 1986, the Court adjudicated in Nicaragua's favour, declaring the U.S. war against Nicaragua illegal and ordering the U.S. to pay reparations. The Reagan Administration, which had earlier rejected the right of the Court to rule on the Nicaraguan charge, similarly refused to recognize the verdict.

76. Daniel Ortega, "A Dirty War Is Being Carried Out Against Nicaragua," in Marcus, ed., *Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution*, pp 294, 299.

77. See for example Carlos M. Vilas, "The Contribution of Economic Policy and International Negotiation to the Fall of the Sandinista Government," trans. Lena M. Gilman, *New Political Science* No. 18/19 (Fall/Winter 1990), pp. 81-102 (see also Vilas's excellent article, "What Went Wrong," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 24:1 [June 1990], pp. 10-18); James Dunkerley, "Reflections on the Nicaraguan Election," *New Left Review* 182 (July/August 1990), pp. 33-50; and, from a leftist but anti-Sandinista perspective, Paul Berman, "Why the Sandinistas Lost: Eleven Years of Nicaraguan Revolution," *Dissent*, Summer 1990, pp. 307-314.

78. Guevara interview, 2 April 1991.

79. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

80. Given the importance of the first days of the paper's operations, a small-scale survey was made of *Barricada* editions for the first month following the paper's founding. This gives an indication of the tenor and content of the paper's coverage during this period (and indeed for much of the following couple of years), though it is not intended to be a systematic sample.

The banner headline of *Barricada*'s first edition read: "We've Triumphed - and Now, Forward!" An editorial was titled "Victory of the People with Their Vanguard." Some other headlines: "The People Decided - Free Country or Death"; "Now: Consolidate the Revolution"; "Organization in the Revolution."

Over the following few days *Barricada* emphasized the organization of the main revolutionary trade union, the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores and organization of the Popular Sandinista Army. A full page-and-a-half was devoted to Fidel Castro's comments on the Sandinista Revolution (27 July), exemplifying the close bonds between the two revolutionary regimes. A critical investigation was launched into Israeli arms sales to the collapsing Somoza regime, "in the service of pro-imperialist dictators" (31 July). The opening round of agrarian reform was captured with a story on the distribution of 2,400 *matanzas* to campesinos on Managua's outskirts (2 August). The visit of the U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua, Lawrence Pezzullo, to *Barricada*'s offices was covered on 11 August. On 16 August the paper welcomed the return of *La Prensa* to the stands under the direction of "our friend Pablo Antonio Cuadra." The paper celebrated its one-month anniversary with a feature on 24 August, noting: "We are, in this moment, the only newspaper written by the revolutionary vanguard. We know that this implies a complex and diverse agenda: to inform, in the sense of making known that which occurs in our country and around the world; to orient the people and contribute to the task of National Reconstruction, to disseminate the political line of the FSLN; to help bring about the organization and normalization which our liberated country so badly needs as it emerges from the rubble of war; to support the measures taken by the Government of National Reconstruction; and to provide information that is both truthful and dedicated to the demands of the people."

81. The original salary arrangements at *Barricada* were "very communist-oriented," remembers Chamorro. "The salaries had to be decided depending on your own needs, not by whether you were a manager or your level of efficiency. I remember there was a worker who had, like, seven children, and he had to earn more than someone else who was single - no matter if the single one was more efficient. In the first days, people worked not for pay, but in order to help and to get [rations of] food, things like that." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991. Sofía Montenegro confirms that "We all worked as volunteers [in the beginning], wages weren't introduced until 1980. We'd get a ration of food, but preference was given to the workers over the journalists. Since I belonged to the category of intellectual and had no children or husband with me, I got a very small ration of food. .. In 1980, they began to pay us - not a salary, but what in the Front has always been called an 'aid,' a symbolic amount on which you have to live." Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

A more traditional salary arrangements based on experience, skill, and seniority was eventually instituted. Nonetheless, some of the original idealism remains today, according to Business Manager Max Kreimann "In this company [*Barricada*] there's a policy which is a little more socialist, we could say. We don't have the typical salary relations of a capitalist company. For example, if you divide Carlos Fernando's salary [as Director], which is 4,100 *córdoba oro* [per month], by 280 *córdoba*, which is the minimum wage, you get a 1:15 relationship. The top salary earner earns 15 times as much as the lowest If we had a typical private enterprise relationship, and the minimum salary was 280, the maximum [salary] would be 14,000 *córdoba* per month " Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

82. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

83. Montenegro interview, 16 March 1991.

84. Cortés and Huerta, "Critical Journalism in the Daily *Barricada*," p. 203. For more discussion of Cortés and Huerta's findings, see Chapter 3.

85. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991. At *Barricada*'s 3rd Anniversary Chamorro called the preceding year "an extremely difficult year, a year of intense searching, experimentation and innovation," as the paper sought to meet the challenge of balancing its role as an "intransigent defender" of popular interests with a journalism that was at the same time "truthful, modern, creative, and professional." He stated that it was the year of *Barricada*'s consolidation as a

revolutionary periodical with its own personality and identity." See "*Barricada*'s Goal: A More Critical Journalism," *Barricada*, 26 July 1982.

86. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

87. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

88. Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991.

Notes – Chapter 3

1. Chamorro interview, 18 April 1991.

2. Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm, *Four Theories of the Press* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 44.

3. Siebert *et al.*, *Four Theories*, p. 28. As Milton phrased it: "[W]ho ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?" Mill derided this as "idle sentimentality," rejecting the idea that "truth, merely as truth, has any inherent power denied to error of prevailing against the dungeon and the stake." John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978 [1850]), p. 28.

4. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 15.

5. Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 16.

6. Edwin R. Black, *Politics and the News: The Political Functions of the Mass Media* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982), p. 23.

7. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1945 [1835]), p. 90.

8. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II (New York: Vintage, 1945 [1840]), pp. 119-20.

9. For an analysis of the displacement process, see Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), pp. 12-60.

10. Peter Golding and Philip Elliott, *Making the News* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1979), pp. 20-28. As Schudson notes, the shift away from politically partisan positions was also influenced by the general decline of political factors in determining newsworthiness: "The penny papers were not only formally independent of political parties but were, relatively speaking, indifferent to political events." The gap was filled largely by human-interest material, as discussed below. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 21.

11. It is enshrined, for example, in the 1921 dictum of *Manchester Guardian* editor C.P. Scott: "Comment is free, facts are sacred." Michael Schudson notes that "the belief in objectivity is ... the belief that one can and should separate facts from values. Facts, in this view, are assertions about the world open to independent validation. They stand beyond the distorting influences of any individual's personal preferences. Values, in this view, are an individual's conscious or unconscious preferences for what the world should be; they are seen as ultimately subjective and so without claim on other people. The belief in objectivity is a faith in 'facts', a distrust of 'values', and a commitment to their segregation." Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 6.

12. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 18.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 26

14. The radical-left critique follows Marx in viewing institutions (including the mass media) as reflections of prevailing patterns of economic control and exploitation. The media under capitalism have grown to be governed by an elite which is closely and increasingly integrated with the formal political elite. The integration occurs through common patterns of elite socialization; interpenetration of corporate boards; media dependence on advertising revenue; and media vulnerability to "news management" by the political elite, as well as state campaigns of mis- or dis-information. See, e.g., Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988). Normatively, however,

the critique stakes out a position at the radical, libertarian end of the democratic continuum. Herman and Chomsky's forcefully purist devotion to a full spectrum of debate, for example, is reminiscent of Mill; their attention to principles of unbiased objectivity is evident in their systematic attempts to expose bias and partisanship. For an interesting variation on this theme - criticizing prevailing standards of objectivity as "centrist bias" - see Jeff Cohen, "The Centrist Ideology of the News Media," *Extra!* 3:1 (October/November 1989), pp. 12-14.

15. William Ruehlmann, *Stalking the Feature Story* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. XI-XII.

16. For general overviews, see Marvin Alisky, *Latin American Media: Guidance and Censorship* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1981), and Elizabeth Fox, ed., *Media and Politics in Latin America: The Struggle for Democracy* (London: SAGE Publications, 1988). "Today," writes Fox (p. 10), "almost all Latin American mass media, with the exception of Cuba and Nicaragua, are privately controlled and strikingly homogeneous commercial operations." Outside of Cuba and Nicaragua, only in Peru (from 1968 to 1974) has there been a systematic attempt to nationalize and otherwise radically revise the structure and functioning of national media. The Peruvian attempt, carried out under the aegis of a reformist military régime, proved abortive, and the situation soon returned to the *status quo ante* (Alisky, pp. 67-86). Mexico over the last two decades has witnessed a succession of attempts to debate and define the role of mass media. These debates often gave rise to new strategies for linking mass media to national development. They resulted in calls, even at the highest political level, "for the creation of a new participatory, democratic and egalitarian philosophy of communication for the national media" (Sergio and Kaplan in Fox, ed., p. 68). But while the debate led to a certain increase in state-controlled media outlets, it otherwise foundered amidst bureaucratic wrangling. Small-scale reforms and sometimes-raucous debates have also taken place in Chile and Venezuela, to similarly little effect. Attempts have also been made to reevaluate and reorient communications policies on a regional scale, beginning with the San José conference of July 1976 attended by representatives of twenty Latin American and Caribbean governments. They have little, so far, to show for their efforts (Fox in Fox, ed., pp. 6-9).

    Most mass media systems in Latin America are conglomerates (including the world's fourth largest, TV Globo in Brazil). Some of the largest conglomerates have achieved the status of important and autonomous political actors on the national stage, attracting rare scholarly attention, as we saw in Chapter 1. In addition to TV Globo, Televisa in Mexico can serve as an example (Beltran in Fox, ed., p. 4). These conglomerates are characterized by a high degree of foreign (that is, U.S.) penetration and control, and tend to be dependent on foreign programming (in the case of television) or international wire services (in the case of the press). From a class perspective, moreover, the owners and directors of these conglomerates are clearly among the economic élite, which tends to make for a certain harmony of interest with given régimes of the center or right. The very high degree of formal press freedom in Costa Rica, for example, is offset to some extent by the stranglehold which the country's business élite maintains over the national media.

17. Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 182.

18. It is perhaps tempting to view the unique pattern of press ownership and direction in Nicaragua during the 1980s as further proof of the collaborative tradition. In this strictly limited context such a link would be a mistake. The fact that all three daily papers in the country are owned or directed by members of the Chamorro family in fact demonstrates something rather different: the extent to which political cleavages in revolutionary Nicaragua increasingly came to replace traditional family allegiances in Nicaraguan political life.

    The collaborationist posture was preserved to some extent, but precisely what was being collaborated *with* underwent a profound change. Sofía Montenegro's comments in this vein are worth noting. "This [Sandinista] revolution is a rebellion of youngsters against their elders. Nineteen seventy-nine represents a profound rupture, because it forged bonds of common interest which for the most part followed generational lines, rather than the traditional family and blood ties. ... That's the reason you find families [like the Chamorros] divided today." Montenegro interview, 10 March 1991. For background on the 19th-century history of the Chamorro clan, see Davis, *Where Is Nicaragua?*, pp. 206-07, and Edmisten, *Nicaraguan Divided*, passim.

Notes – Chapter 3

19. Rothschuh interview, 16 April 1991.

20. Rothschuh interview, 16 April 1991. See also Cynthia McClintock's analysis of "The Media and Re-Democratization in Peru" (*Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* 6 [1987], p. 131): "It appears ... that [Peruvian] citizens would like to see greater political independence and objectivity in news reporting. Citizens give the media passing marks, but they do so in part because they are so pleased to have any news at all. Better educated citizens in particular are aware that most periodicals and networks had their own partisan agendas ..."

21. Eduardo Estrada, "Distrust is what causes us to censor ourselves," *Pensamiento Propio* no. 34 (July 1986), pp. 33-36.

A central feature of press-state relations in many Latin American countries - an extension of the collaborative posture - is the common arrangement by which journalists bolster their income through thinly-veiled subsidies from government agencies, political figures, or private businesses on their "beat." The system of thinly-veiled bribes is especially well-developed in Mexico; see Alisky, *Latin American Media*, p. 35. The arrangement was also an integral part of the pre-1979 press tradition in Nicaragua, according to Guillermo Cortés: "Lots of journalists didn't even have salaries, but were authorized by the media outlets they worked for to get commercial advertising in order to be able to pay themselves. This made their critical capacity vulnerable to corruption And a generalized corruption was a major feature of *Somocismo* before 1979: bribery became something almost normal Journalists couldn't be an exception in that kind of system."

However, this feature of Latin American media systems, and of the pre-1979 tradition in Nicaragua, is mentioned here only in order to dismiss it as a significant influence on *Barricada*'s functioning and agenda after 1979. Under the Sandinistas, Cortés contends, "there was a little bit of a dignifying of the profession of journalism. A certain stability in work, a somewhat higher salary, and a deepened sense of political militancy with regard to the revolutionary project of transforming society. So we entered a different atmosphere, a healthier atmosphere."

Extensive research and in-depth interviews turned up no evidence to suggest that Cortés's depiction of levels of corruption under Sandinista rule is inaccurate. Cortés does note that one feature of state-press relations during the Sandinista years could be construed as a continuation of the pre-1979 tradition: the practice of gift-giving by presidential offices at the end of every year. "It was totally different, but in some ways those gifts could have influenced the journalists." There was, however, nothing of the systematic and institutionalized bribery of the Somocista era All quotes from Cortés interview, 15 April 1991.

22. This was despite the fact that one news outlet, *La Prensa*, had succeeded in establishing itself as an "independent" opposition voice. The seeming contradiction is readily explained: in a dictatorship like that imposed on Nicaragua by the Somoza dynasty, there was little in the way of formal party organization in opposition to the regime Organized political parties, including the Conservative Party and even the Communist Party, were co-opted and closely monitored by turns Thus, the only way to carry out opposition was as an independent force, had the political climate been congenial to political organizing, it is likely that Pedro Joaquín Chamorro or other members of his clan would have established themselves as an organized political party, for which *La Prensa* would have served as a mouthpiece.

23. Cortés interview, 15 April 1991

24. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. Chamorro similarly recalls that "everything was very spontaneous. We didn't have time to organize anything. Someone would be named General Manager, but he didn't have any experience on a newspaper. We were very rhetorical, we didn't have much experience; we had very young people, some of them with experience only in radio." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

Onofre Guevara, now a senior writer, joined *Barricada* in 1980 after a long stint with the pre-1979 Socialist Party press. "I remember that when Carlos Fernando introduced me to the group, I had the mistaken idea that everybody else had loads of experience [in journalism] I said that my aim was to learn all I could from them. I remember one person started to laugh I thought she was making fun of me. Later I asked her why she'd laughed, and she said, 'Because we didn't have anything to teach you!'" Guevara interview, 2 April 1991

On 11 August 1979, a couple of weeks after the founding, *Barricada* issued an urgent call to all "vendors of periodicals in our country" to attend an "urgent meeting ... to analyze and channel all the details concerning the best [method of] distribution and sale of *Barricada*." The distribution difficulties would dog the paper into 1980: "By the first semester of 1980," according to Chamorro, "we ran out of paper, and we had to reduce the circulation. The distribution system broke down. We really did it very badly, because we'd organized a distribution system and then from one day to another we had to reduce the circulation in order to survive. It was terrible for our circulation. We made a lot of mistakes of that kind."

A roundup of problems of professionalism in *Barricada* appeared on Journalists' Day, 1 March 1987. Among the deficiencies cited were a numbing sameness in news reports; a lack of correspondence between headlines and the meat of stories (a "symptom of yellow journalism," according to the story); and misinterpretation of statements in interviews. One source complained that "On some occasions the writers [at *Barricada*] say nothing whatsoever and are unintelligible and incomprehensible." Even across town at *La Prensa*, with a far longer press tradition in Nicaragua, levels of professionalism were low - mainly owing to the necessity of importing large numbers of untrained personnel to replace the majority of the staff who defected to establish *El Nuevo Diario* in early 1980. "To be candid, some of our new reporters are terrible writers," *La Prensa*'s editor, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Jr., told Jonathan Maslow in 1981. "When we get our presses back in operation and things calm down a little, our chief writer is going to train them to write. They need it." Jonathan Evan Maslow, "The junta and the press: a family affair," *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1981, p. 52.

25. Sofía Montenegro: "We went to all sorts of seminars since we couldn't go to university to graduate. The UPN tried to come up with a degree system; the party did some things, and the university did something; you could take courses on weekends. You didn't have to sit in school, but you had a monitor or a tutor who had a program; you could study in your own free time, and present work or exams from time to time. Others of us received courses in philosophy, sociology, political economy, economic journalism, whatever. But it wasn't enough." Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

26. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. Guillermo Rothschuh points out that empirical journalism is not necessarily bad in itself; "There are very good self-taught journalists, just as there are bad professional ones." But in general there continues to exist in Nicaragua "a stagnation and an imbalance between empirical journalism and professional journalism." Rothschuh interview, 16 April 1991.

27. Nigel Cross, "Revolution and the press in Nicaragua," *Index on Censorship*, 2/82, p. 38.

28. *Barricada*, 24 August 1979.

29. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991

During the 1980s, the aspect of material scarcity which attracted the most attention from outside commentators related to supplies of newsprint. *Barricada* was to a certain extent insulated from the most severe shortages by its relationship with the ruling regime. But a longstanding de facto agreement existed in Nicaragua to share supplies of newsprint when these became available. According to *Barricada* Business Manager Max Kreimann, the phenomenon dates back to the relationship between *La Prensa* and the Somoza family newspaper *Novedades*. "That's another rather strange phenomenon in this country: the day they [Somocistas] killed Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, they were taking a hundred rolls of paper out of *La Prensa*'s warehouse to lend to *Novedades*."

According to Kreimann and others, during the 1980s arriving shipments of newsprint were carefully distributed equally among the country's three daily papers: "the rationing of paper was that when three tons of paper came in, one ton went to each paper. There's always been equitability in these things." Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991. See also Chapter 2, n. 55.

30. The degree of cooperation among press outlets extends even to "personal and business relationships," according to Kreimann: "As businesses, we always meet, more or less every month, regardless of the political aspect. We agree about a lot of things. For example, the price [of

newspapers], how much advertising will cost If there's an advertiser that didn't pay his bills to *Barricada*, I tell *La Prensa* and *El Nuevo Diario*, and they don't let that advertiser advertise with them until *Barricada*'s been paid So we have a fraternal business relationship; if I have a raw material problem they help me, and if they have one, I help them The differences are political" Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

31. In Latin America as a whole, Fox cites a statistic from the early 1980s indicating one radio for every three Latin Americans. Fox, ed., *Media and Politics in Latin America*, p iii. It was partly for this reason that Anastasio Somoza was able in the 1960s to give the written press a relatively long leash, while imposing strict controls on radio through the infamous "Black Code." "As 80 percent of Nicaraguans were illiterate," Diederich writes, "the newspapers were not damaging." Diederich, *Somoza*, p. 71.

32. Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 182. The élite nature of press functioning thus mirrors broader patterns of political power in these societies; note in this context Davis's comment that "revolution in Latin America has been described as a disagreement among the rich over how to treat the poor." Davis, *Where Is Nicaragua?*, p. 206. If political cleavages in post-revolutionary Nicaragua increasingly have come to replace family cleavages, actual patterns of distribution of wealth and power have been slower to change. According to Carlos Vilas, Nicaragua is still "a society in which kinship structures follow class lines - and are sometimes more important than ideology for explaining political processes." Vilas, "What Went Wrong?," p. 15. The kinship structures, Vilas argues, operate via "the old Conservative Party lineage that runs through both the Sandinistas and the UNO core around Doña Violeta [Chamorro], [and that] will serve as a bridge toward mutual understanding" in the aftermath of the Sandinista electoral defeat

33. In the Nicaraguan countryside, newspapers are generally bought days or weeks after their publication, at a heavy discount. Although they are read first by those able to do so, they do service mainly as cheap toilet paper. (The information was provided by a foreign-aid worker based deep in a northern rural area; personal conversation in Managua, March 1991.)

34. Chamorro interview, 18 April 1991. A subscription system, meanwhile, "works only for the middle and upper classes, who can afford it."

35. Most of the information here is drawn from an interview with Guillermo Cortés, one of *Barricada*'s war correspondents and thus in a position to witness the distribution of the paper through the military infrastructure first-hand. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

36. Chamorro says *Barricada* began publishing 50,000 copies in July 1979, slipped to 30-35,000, climbed back to 60,000 by 1984, but in 1985 was printing an astonishing 130,000 copies at peak moments. "In relative terms, the price of a newspaper was very cheap. So we were able to cover the popular sectors." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

    Compared with other sources Chamorro's recollection is at most slightly inflated. The magazine *envío* provided the following circulation figures and estimates: 1983, 75,000 for *Barricada*, 55,000 for *La Prensa*, and 30,000 for *El Nuevo Diario*; late 1985, 90,000 for *Barricada*, 55-60,000 for *La Prensa*, and 40,000 for *El Nuevo Diario* The figure for early 1986 is given as 105,000, roughly matching Chamorro's recollection See "*La Prensa*: Post-Mortem on A Suicide," *envío*, August 1986, p. 32. Joan Coxsedge cites a *Barricada* circulation of 110,000 copies in 1984, compared with 45,000 in 1982 (Coxsedge, *Thank God for the Revolution*, p. 121).

    Barricada's 5th anniversary editorial ("Five years of revolutionary truth," 25 July 1984) gives a figure of 120,000 printed on special occasions, 110,000 on a regular basis - a "quantity .. unheard of in the history of Nicaraguan journalism." In his anniversary speech, Chamorro cited the figures as proof that the "beginning of the overthrow of bourgeois press hegemony in Nicaragua" was at hand (*Barricada*, 26 July 1984).

37. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. See also Chamorro's 1981 comments to Jonathan Maslow: "The first task of the press now is to give access to the expression of the interests of the marginal sectors of the population that had no voice under the dictatorship." Maslow, "The junta and the press," p. 52.

38. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

39. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

40. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

41. Chamorro's enduring potency as a political and popular symbol was demonstrated with great clarity by the strategy employed by Pedro Joaquín Sr.'s wife, Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, during her successful 1990 presidential campaign. Commenting on the campaign, Rosario Murillo (who served as Pedro Joaquín Sr.'s secretary for a time in the 1970s) noted: "The United States was very clever in choosing a candidate who could represent a mixture of culture, politics, and *magic*. Clever in terms of being able to mix all those elements and play, as [the U.S.] always does, with the emotions, the soul of the people. You appeal to the soul of the people when you sell a symbol of a dead man [Chamorro]. You're talking about going deep into the roots of traditional culture. This is a culture with a lot of roots in death, symbology, supernatural things, magic, religious values. ... You know that when someone dies at the right time - young, and without having been able to prove whether his ideals in practice were capable of representing solutions for the people - those ideals remain forever: as a possibility, as hope. Every possible good intention that Dr. Chamorro had in life, she [Violeta] represented." Murillo interview, 24 April 1991.

42. As Sofía Montenegro puts it, "I think Carlos was brought in for several reasons. First of all, he'd started to write things for the FSLN at *La Prensa* before the revolution; among the youngsters who were 'organic' members of the FSLN, he was one of the few with journalistic experience. On the other hand there was his name - I think they felt he had his father's intuition for newspapers in his blood."

    For his part, Chamorro claims always to have rejected the idea of a career in my journalism: "Since I was very young, I more or less said to myself, 'Well, I want to do something for myself. I don't want to be in my father's shadow.'" He studied social sciences, specializing in economics, and joined *La Prensa* only after his father was killed.

    Recognizing the dominant influence of Carlos Fernando Chamorro's personality on *Barricada*, it may be germane here to cite his comments on his father's influence as this may have worked its way into *Barricada*'s functioning and agenda. "I guess [the influence] was more a personal influence on my attitude toward life, certain basic values having to do with being transparent, being faithful to your own beliefs, displaying some degree of tolerance, and being responsible for your own actions. In that period [before 1970], it also had to do with a strong anti-Somocista, anti-dictatorship question.

    "More than anything," Chamorro adds, "he symbolized the journalist who was also a politician, and thirdly an entrepreneur. He was never comfortable being an entrepreneur, though. He felt more like a man in the public service, owning a journal which was at the service of the people."

    Was there a certain ideological influence as well? "On ideological questions I was probably much more influenced by more radical theories. My father's view of the New Nicaragua had to do with the overthrowing of the dictatorship, and at the same time a process of structural change. To what extent? Well, you can't know that, because his general concepts are there only in a few speeches and writings." Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

43. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. Montenegro cites the *La Prensa* influence as another reason for rejection of the Cuban model: "When people compared *La Prensa* with [the Cuban party paper] *Granma*, *La Prensa* obviously looked more appealing, more modern."

44. *Barricada*, 16 August 1979.

45. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

46. Sofía Montenegro: "In the first years, on the editorial page, we had a kind of dictionary, listing the new words that had entered into circulation like coins. There were sociology terms, philosophical terms, economic terms, whatever. I guess this was born from a perception that we'd be speaking Chinese to people if we talked like leftists, the way we did among ourselves. On the other hand it was a response to petitions from readers." Montenegro interview. 15 March 1991.

Notes – Chapter 3

47. Chamorro quoted in "One year of revolutionary information," *Barricada*, 26 July 1980. Emphasis added.

48. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

49. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

50. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

51. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

52. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

53. *La Prensa* editor Jaime Chamorro, writing in 1987, called the censorship process "nervewrackingly methodical": "After the day's edition of *La Prensa* was completed, we were required to send three copies of every page (including advertisements and comic strips) to [Chief Censor] Captain [Nelba] Blandón's office, along with two pages of 'filler' - material that had previously been approved and hence could be substituted for whatever the censor decided to cut out. This decision, which had once taken about two hours, later averaged between four and six ... The delay was deliberate, of course, and served, among other things, to hurt *La Prensa* financially, since it sometimes entailed increasing the number of work hours by as much as 60 percent." See Chamorro, "How 'La Prensa' Was Silenced," p 42

54. The chronology is drawn from Torres and Corragio, *Transición y Crisis en Nicaragua*, pp. 242, 245-46. On 27 June, the day after *La Prensa*'s closure, the World Court announced its verdict condemning the US aggression against Nicaragua, calling for a halt to the attack, and demanding payment of indemnities for damage and loss of life caused

55. Of the *La Prensa* closure, Chamorro says today: "The decision to close *La Prensa* was a response to Washington and to the US Congress It was taken with the mentality of someone who says, 'Okay, I'm fighting with this big guy' ... The decision was to close the internal political space, but to explain that, 'Okay, I've closed this, but it's not forever It's a card for negotiations at a future, better juncture'" Chamorro's main concern at the time was "the fact that [the FSLN leadership] was taking it for granted that there was no need to make arguments and provide explanations for these decisions. I wasn't opposed to the policy as such, but to the way it was implemented, because I felt politically it was going to be very costly." It was a reflection, he claims, of the leadership's broader unwillingness to devote the necessary time and intellectual effort to designing a communications policy. "Sometimes those who take or implement decisions fail to take into account the need to design a [proper] communications policy. I think we made some headway within the leadership" in this respect, "but not everybody had the same degree of interest in this type of thing." Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

56. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

57. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. Emphasis added.

58. For details on the CORADEP network, see Chapter 2, note 27.

59. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991 He adds: "That was a clean fight, with the radio stations. The Sandinista stations - *La Voz de Nicaragua*, Radio Sandino - managed to beat the counter-revolutionary stations. Liberty of the airwaves was maintained. I can't say the same, that we won the newspaper battle with *La Prensa* cleanly."

60. Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

61. All quotes from Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

62. For brevity, and because it turns up little of analytical value, I will not deal with a "fourth stage" of the relationship between *Barricada* and *La Prensa*, that is, from *La Prensa*'s reappearance in late 1987 through to the 1990 elections Just as *Barricada* reverted to its traditional propaganda function

in the lead-up to the 1990 elections, so too did *La Prensa* and *Barricada* return to their pre-1986 mode.

63. The best overview of the evolution of Nicaraguan-US relations is Karl Grossman, *Under the Big Stick* (Boston: South End, 1987).

64. On baseball, see Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers*, Chapter 14. My own most vivid recollection in this vein is of a September 1986 rally by a Sandinista children's organization in the central square of León. Dozens of primary-schoolers wearing their red-and-black Sandinista scarves paraded around the square, shouting the familiar FSLN anti-imperialist chants and singing the FSLN anthem, with its reference to the "Yankee, enemy of humanity." In the background, though, popular music blared from the square's loudspeakers: John Cougar Mellencamp singing "R.O.C.K. in the U.S.A."

65. Murillo interview, 24 April 1991.

66. In the formative stages of the Nicaraguan media system, U.S. influence was most prominent in radio. The programs which marked the "decisive epoch" of Nicaraguan radio from the 1950s onward, were soap operas financed by U.S. companies like Procter & Gamble. Guillermo Rothschuh interview, 16 April 1991.

67. Rothschuh interview, 16 April 1991.

68. Whatever the impact of the School of Journalism on shaping conceptions of professionalism among Nicaraguan journalists, it would be a mistake to overstate the school's success in inculcating U.S. political ideology. Regardless of its founders' intentions, the school did not become a bastion of the status-quo during the 1960s and 1970s. Quite the opposite: like most educational institutions in Nicaragua, it became a strong centre of Sandinista support. Guillermo Cortés similarly cautions against confusing founding aspirations with reality: "From its very outset, you could say the school obeyed, served, a political project - maybe to reproduce [imperialist] ideology by training ideological agents. But the University of Central America [where the school was based] was converting itself into a bastion of the revolutionary movement, and the School of Journalism couldn't be an exception. So there were constant changes in its program; most of the instructors were progressive, leftist people." Cortés interview, 15 April 1991.

    Nonetheless, the School seems to have been vital in establishing the idea, unfamiliar to that point in Nicaragua, that journalism was a profession in which specialized training and education were desirable and integral. It was also, as noted, the only institution offering such specialized training. If, as Rothschuh contends, "the level of professionalism continues to be an item of debate in Nicaragua up to the present day," the School of Journalism can be held to have played a significant role in spawning that debate.

69. Chamorro's comments were made in the context of the challenges facing *Barricada* in the post-1990 period They also focus on television at the expense of print media. They warrant mention here, nonetheless, for the considerable insight they offer into the influence of U.S. cultural and media models on *Barricada*'s professional self-conception.

70. In the U.S., Chamorro points out: "Television is basically seen by everybody as a pastime. I mean, that's the greatness of the American use of television. They're much more advanced than anybody else. Because for American society, everything is a show. Whether it's Watergate or the war in Iraq, everything is a show. That gives you an idea of the *potential* of television, definitely." At the same time, he rejects the foundations of a model which "presents very serious and crucial things about your country or the world as a [mere] show." The media model is worth studying for its communicative potential, "*You* decide how you use [it]." Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

71. "The Sandinista Revolution never established any kind of limitations on [U.S. cultural values] - on music, movie stars, these types of things. ... I mean, when I was a teenager, 13, 14, 15 years old, obviously I loved [the rock group] Santana, and I loved to see the movie of Woodstock." Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

72. All quotes from Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

Notes – Chapter 3

73. "The New Nicaragua Demands a New Journalism," *Barricada*, 13 August 1979.

74. Chamorro quoted in "One year of revolutionary information," *Barricada*, 26 July 1980.

75. "Self-criticism and combat," *Barricada*, 25 July 1981.

76. Profile cited in Cortés and Huerta, "Critical Journalism in the Daily *Barricada*," pp. 5-6.

77. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

78. Sofía Montenegro, for example, was expelled twice from party ranks for breaches of discipline or insubordination; but she also rose to be Editorial Page Editor in the mid-1980s, and was never fired from *Barricada*. In the wider sense, there were remarkably few public defections from Sandinista ranks during the revolutionary decade or even after the 1990 election defeat, although the question of what constitutes "Sandinista ranks" in the post-election environment is a legitimate one.

79. It needs to be stressed, however, that all stages of the revolutionary decade, the FSLN's material ownership of *Barricada* was matched by the National Directorate's ultimate control over editorial policy and content. Asked if, in an instance of serious disagreement between *Barricada*'s editorial staff and the National Directorate, the Directorate had the final say, Chamorro responded, "Yes, that's correct." Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991. A similar question was put to Sofía Montenegro: "In the relationship between the paper and the party, when things came down to the crunch, who had the final word on whether a story was published, whether it received front-page prominence? Obviously a lot of negotiations went on, but was it clear, in the end, who had control over the paper?" Montenegro responded. "The National Directorate." "They could, under certain circumstances, say, 'This is how we want it to be,' and Carlos would accept that?" "Yeah." Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

    Chamorro offered two examples from the FSLN's ten years in power - the only such cases, he contended - when *Barricada* was forced by the Directorate to publish an erratum stating that material which had appeared in the paper did not reflect *Barricada*'s editorial policy. The first instance took place at the time of the Falklands/Malvinas conflict in 1982: "I published an article on the editorial page signed by a friend of mine, Orlando Núñez, criticizing the Argentinean Army. Núñez was saying the Argentineans were hypocrites, that it was a military dictatorship trying to appropriate the banner of nationalism. That was totally in opposition to the position taken by the FSLN - and many countries in Latin America for that matter - as a geopolitical necessity.

    "The Argentinian military was supporting the Contras at the time. In the state policy of the FSLN, it was felt that if the FSLN offered support for the seizure of the Malvinas, the Argentinian regime would abandon its support for the Contras. And on top of that, there was a big push on throughout all of Latin America to fight [over the Malvinas] in order to revive the OAS [Organization of American States] and all of that. So the article was crude, it wasn't tactical; it simply said what was happening. The day after, I was obliged to publish a little note that said, 'The article that appeared yesterday on this page did not represent the editorial policy of *Barricada*.'

    The other example of the National Directorate exercising its right to impose a post-facto retraction was "ridiculous," in Chamorro's recollection. a commentary in the paper, not bylined but written by Sofía Montenegro with editorial assistance from Chamorro, criticizing the FSLN-sponsored "Miss Youth" beauty contest· "It was a time when the *Juventud Sandinista* [FSLN youth organization] was taking on a new look, trying to adapt their strategy to certain realities, because [to that point] they'd been seen only as an organization that was recruiting boys to go off to war. ... The article wasn't against [the contest] as such, but it was critical, it raised some questions. And then I was told that this article was against the decisions of the *Juventud Sandinista*, which was supported by the National Directorate of the FSLN, and then I was obliged also to publish one of these disclaimers.

    "These are the only times we've had to say, 'What we published yesterday, we don't like it,'" Chamorro emphasizes. "Which is not a bad record for such an incident-laden period. On other occasions you had excuses or clarifications, but not a total contradiction with the [stated] editorial policy." This record, however, probably attests more to Chamorro's (and other staffmembers')

ability accurately to read and interpret National Directorate desires, and thereby avoid such embarrassing retractions. All quotes from Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

80. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

81. Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991. Emphasis added.

82. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

83. For an overview of the post-1975 factional splits, see George Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua* (London: Zed Press, 1981), pp. 91-97.

84. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

85. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. The arrangement (or rather, lack of an arrangement) was confirmed by several other sources at *Barricada*. Sofía Montenegro recalls that "We had this National Directorate, nine guys, and sometimes they would all call at the same time, each one saying, *this* is important, *this* should be the main item in the news. ... A great part of the struggle of the *Barricada* staff has been, how do you prevent this presence from distorting the journalistic profile of *Barricada*? It's been a tremendous struggle, to make the National Directorate understand that." Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991. Senior writer Onofre Guevara, meanwhile, acknowledges that "Before, any member of the National Directorate could work on his own to ask the newspaper to publish something he wanted published." Guevara interview, 2 April 1991. For his part, Chamorro notes that "When you have [to mediate among different] interests in the medium-term, there is no problem; you can administer it. The problem is when [the National Directorate members] all wanted to have an impact or presence on the same day." Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

86. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

87. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991. Second emphasis added.

88. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

89. For example, as Chamorro notes, *El Nuevo Diario* was generally viewed as "biased in favour of Tomás Borge; his own activities, his projections, would always get very important coverage." Another case was the radio station *La Voz de Nicaragua*, "conceived as the voice of the Presidency," and after the 1984 elections closely associated with the presidential office of Daniel Ortega. Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991. In general, though, the lack of strong ideological tensions among the leadership probably served to keep this media factionalism within reasonable bounds.

90. Guevara interview, 2 April 1991.

91. All quotes from Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

92. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

93. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

94. In a long tribute to Núñez published shortly after his death, Carlos Fernando Chamorro called him "a born organizer, and meticulous," with "a special sense of responsibility toward tasks large and small, even toward the most miniscule details ... [that was] at times incomprehensible." Chamorro mentioned a particularly memorable editorial meeting which began at nine p.m. and "ended at six the following morning, only after the last of us had finished speaking." Chamorro in *Barricada*, 3 October 1990.

In an interview (19 March 1991), Chamorro confirmed "there was a very close and direct surveillance of the paper" by Núñez. It was nonetheless "a very constructive and fraternal relationship, because Núñez always had a concern about developing the paper. Okay, in this editorial relationship there is always different points of view. I can't think of an editorial relationship in which two persons are always thinking the same way. There are always points of

agreement and disagreement. But ... I think it's a feeling of gratitude we all have toward him - not only myself, I think everybody." Sofía Montenegro concurs: "He [Núñez] used to come and work here, liked to write himself; he was really loved by all of us. He enjoyed being at the newspaper, spent most of his time here. Sometimes it got a little bit too nagging. You know, because he was sometimes putting excessive pressure on us. But he was very proud of the newspaper. I think we were very dear to him." Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

95. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1990. Chamorro similarly views Arce's function as a less vigilant and regulatory one: "It was different because it's a different style of assuming responsibilities. Bayardo would delegate all the work to the Director [of *Barricada*] - myself or Xavier [Reyes], who was actually Executive Editor while I was at DAP. ... He would not involve himself directly in how things had to be done, before or after. So you could say he was not as closely involved as Núñez in the material or political aspects [of the paper's functioning]." Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

96. This decline in vigilance is in some respects curious, since Arce is widely recognized as one of the most autocratic and inflexible (and, it is alleged, corrupt) of the National Directorate members. Indeed, the campaign, during the Sandinistas' first party congress of July 1991, to secure election to the National Directorate on the basis of individual candidates rather than a blanket slate seems closely linked to a widespread desire among many at the FSLN grassroots to remove Arce from the electorate, together with former Minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock, whose mismanagement of the agrarian reform is held largely responsible for the decline of Sandinista support in the Nicaraguan countryside (and the corresponding increase in a rural social base for Nicaraguan rebels). See Stephen Solnit, "First Congress of the FSLN: A New Struggle in a New Reality," *NICCA Bulletin* (San Francisco: Nicaragua Center for Community Action), September/November 1991, p. 21. As discussed briefly in Chapter 4, the Congress eventually elected a blanket slate of all surviving National Directorate members except Humberto Ortega (who had resigned to remain Army Chief under Violeta Chamorro). Word circulated after the congress vote, however, that some ballots had been returned with "Death to Bayardo Arce" written across them.

    One *Barricada* staffer, Guillermo Cortés, did relate an encounter with Arce which appears to show an authoritarian side to the Directorate member. At an assembly of journalists, Arce "was told that *Barricada* should publish opinions that were different from those of the Sandinista Front. So he said that those who didn't agree with the paper's line should go and work with *El Nuevo Diario*. That was his answer." Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

    Arce, of course, served as Directorate representative through the turmoil of transition following the electoral defeat of 1990. He remains the Directorate's representative on the *Barricada* Editorial Council, a major bureaucratic innovation at the paper which further refined, regularized, and restricted the FSLN leadership's functional presence on the paper. See Chapter 4.

97. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

98. An especially vivid instance of the pressure which mass organization appeals could generate on a media organ was the closure of *La Semana Cómica* in 1988. This resulted directly from an appeal by AMNLAE's leadership to Comandante Tomás Borge, a self-styled defender of women's rights. For further details of this revealing incident, see the Appendix

99. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991. In Sofía Montenegro's recollection, the strongest pressure came from the ranks of AMNLAE, who "decided *they* would run the [*Gente*] project." Montenegro's response was fury: "they were planning on putting people in charge who had no experience with journalism, communications, editing, or anything." In addition, the AMNLAE leadership tended toward a conservative stance on gender issues, far removed from Montenegro's own ideological feminism. AMNLAE's protests against any involvement by Montenegro met, in turn, with a sympathetic reception among some National Directorate members. Chamorro, as Montenegro's boss, was called to a meeting with the FSLN to discuss the project. He asked Montenegro to produce a profile for her vision of the project, saying, she recalls: "Why don't you modify the idea a little bit? It will scare the National Directorate if you put a feminist view. Make

it broader." The Directorate expressed its reservations about Montenegro as a supervisor of the supplement: "obviously they didn't like it," says Montenegro. Chamorro's argument to the Directorate was to stress that he would serve as Director of *Gente*, and was not willing to place his trust in someone with whom he had no professional relationship.

The argument was successful. When the battle with AMNLAE was won and she was able to launch *Gente* as a project editorially independent of the women's movement or other mass organizations, the editorial council (with Chamorro as official Director of the supplement) served as an important buffer, providing at least an illusion of mass-organization influence for the period *Gente* took to find its feet. The organizations' presence essentially collapsed with the Sandinista defeat of 1990: "After the Sandinistas lost the election, it was obvious that the one who was really running the whole damn thing was myself. Besides, the representativeness of this editorial council was now in a state of crisis: you had people representing sectors that were themselves in a state of upheaval or disintegration. Finally we decided it was ridiculous to have a council that had no real say or significance. At that point, Carlos said: 'It's time for me to go. You've proved you can handle the thing with good sense and political tact.' That's when I became Director." Montenegro interview, 3 April 1991.

100. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

101. Chamorro is cagey about which members of the Directorate advanced *Granma* as a model for *Barricada*'s functioning: "If you ask me sincerely, I cannot tell you. I have some perceptions, but I cannot tell you fully, because those perceptions have changed over time. What someone thought in 1982 might have changed six years later, and vice-versa." Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991. On the basis of anecdotal evidence provided by other staffmembers, my own speculation is that Minister of the Interior Tomás Borge (also in charge of implementing censorship policy) and Minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock were among those most concerned to keep the FSLN official organ on a short leash and under the greatest vigilance.

102. The term is Chamorro's; Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

103. Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991.

104. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991. Emphasis added.

105. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. What other differences did Montenegro observe in the operations of the two newspapers? "It struck me that there was already a bureaucracy in the editorial staff. And they had much, much less work than we had. When I visited *Granma* I found 12 people doing the work I was doing all by myself. It really shocked me. We worked from morning to night, you know, with real pressure They, on the other hand, had time to read, to go to university.

"They couldn't believe, sometimes, that this bunch of *kids* [at *Barricada*] would be given, in the first place, such responsibility, and secondly that we were let loose without Big Brother watching over us.

"Finally, we were a lot more versatile. We've been masters of improvisation, which is a typical Sandinista characteristic. We developed it into a kind of art. I don't say this is something brilliant or good. I believe in planning and organization, and improvising makes you lose a lot of time. But in the circumstances, I don't think we did it that badly."

Montenegro confirms that the deepest difference between *Barricada* and *Granma* lay in the fact that the pro-revolutionary press in Nicaragua was always confronted by the challenge of "trying to outsmart your enemies. Unlike the East Bloc or Cuba, we *had* a competition, a bourgeois press living side by side with the revolutionary press. ... I always said our greatest pride as revolutionary journalists should be for *La Prensa* to exist [unmolested], and for nobody to read it."

106. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

107. A 1985 internal document of the Sandinistas' Department of Propaganda spoke of the need to transform the paper's editorial page into "a section in which the main Sandinista blocs [*cuadros*] can offer their opinions, comment, argue, polemicize, and [work to] convince the population [as to

the merit] of our positions." The essence of the paper's mission should be "to convince, not to impose." See "The Role of Communications Media in Sandinista Propaganda"

108. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

109. Guillermo Cortés, "Something more than simple diffusion," *Barricada*, 2 March 1983.

110. According to Carlos Fernando Chamorro, Sánchez was regularly criticized for portraying revolutionary state functionaries dressed in the traditional attire of the Nicaraguan upper-class. "A tie and a jacket in Nicaragua is a very strong symbol - of something foreign, something that doesn't belong here. I remember readers commenting to me that Róger should use another type of symbol, and should not represent the state like that, because it was [now] a *popular* state." No serious pressure seems to have been placed on Sánchez to modify his style, however. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

111. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

112. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. The details of the incident were independently confirmed by Carlos Fernando Chamorro.

113. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

114. Soffa Montenegro, for instance, states that had she been a citizen of East Germany or Bulgaria or Vietnam, "I would have been a dissident. I can say that unflinchingly, without any doubt." She recalls occasions during the revolutionary decade when "we in Nicaragua came to know these [state-socialist] systems a little better, not only by travelling there and witnessing how people acted on their own turf but by watching how they performed when they lived *here*. For example, you'd meet with some East German doctors here, and invite them to your house, to go drinking, to go to the beach. And they'd always be a little awkward, saying, 'Well ...' Then we found out they had to get permission from their party in order to mingle with Nicaraguans! We said, *'What?' [laughs]*. That sort of thing couldn't enter anybody's head here." Montenegro interview, 6 May 1991.

115. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

116. Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991. Emphasis added.

117. Chamorro interview, 19 March 1991.

118. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

119. Chamorro interviews, 19 March, 12 April 1991.

120. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991. Emphasis added.

121. "Of course we received orders, and were subject to the military structure," Cortés recalls. "We couldn't move about freely But we were treated practically like officers of a battalion We didn't have to do guard duty. We had access to the commanding officer's kitchen. Nobody could give you a tough order - even the officers' orders were given in a different tone of voice" from the regular soldiers. Furthermore, says Cortés, the correspondents were "spoiled" by the regular soldiers: "If you got tired, they carried your knapsack. They took care of you. Because for them it meant a lot that a journalist would accompany them, that we weren't just war correspondents who arrived as spectators. ... There was great solidarity. And in addition, they wanted to make history, and they would try to do things that would make the front page of the newspapers" Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

122. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

123. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. A selection of the war reportage was published in book form as *Corresponsales de guerra: Testimonio de cien días de sangre, fuego y victoria*, Second Edition (Managua: Editorial Nuevo Amanecer, 1984).

124. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991. Similarly, the period during which *Barricada*'s mobilizing function centred around the economic crisis in Nicaragua is recalled by staffers as much for the professional challenges - and drawbacks - of economic coverage. According to Xavier Reyes, the "campaign" orientation which had fuelled *Barricada*'s war reportage was adapted for the economic field. "Economic activities became battles," Reyes notes. "Harvests were organized with voluntary pickers, and these assumed a military structure: 'battalions' of pickers went out, organized into 'squads' and 'platoons'. ... That generated many human situations which were very rich for journalism. Rather than talking about the figures, the number of advances in quantitative terms, it was more attractive for us to talk about the men and women who participated *in* the harvest In that respect, our journalism developed quite a bit in drawing portraits of people." Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. Avoidance of dry technical detail nonetheless fuelled clichés of its own, hampering attempts to come to grips with the subject-matter in a professional manner. As Chamorro notes, "Stories dealing with [economic] production are very difficult to write. You know, how do you make interesting what is happening in the sugar-cane industry? ... We tried to humanize the economy, and to do that, okay, you had to present the examples of good workers. We'd have very interesting and beautiful stories about people who were really dedicated to work, who had a high degree of political consciousness. But after a while, the stories were all more or less the same." The degree of repetitiveness was such that in February 1987, Chamorro temporarily suspended the pages *Lunes Socioeconomico*, a Monday feature from the early days of *Barricada*. His reasons for doing so were primarily professional, centring on perceptions of newsworthiness. "I didn't have any motivation to read these stories about units of production and trade unions that were fighting to be more productive." The page returned three or four months later with a different name, *Foro Socioeconomico*, which stressed human interest and a diversity of source material over drily technical proselytizing: "We started publishing interviews providing a diversity of views on the economy: in some cases [we'd talk with] trade union leaders, state leaders private-sector figures, this and that." Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

125. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991. *Barricada* reporters, moreover, had to contend with a two-tiered system of censorship - that imposed by field officers, and additional restrictions adjudicated by the EPS's Public Relations Office in Managua. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior (MINT) maintained its own battalions of special forces. If both Army and MINT troops were involved in an action, approval for publication had to be sought from both - until a single censorship body for military information was established after 1986, when the military emergency had perceptibly lessened. Although recognizing the need for censorship, *Barricada*'s war correspondents are generally critical of the way censorship policy was implemented. According to Guillermo Cortés, "a lot of information that was really of a public nature was confused with information which constituted military secrets. ... Information was very badly administered. I think there were people in charge of censorship who had an infantile approach to the matter, were hypersensitive, and censored many things which shouldn't have been censored. Under the guise of protecting national security, they did barbarities." Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

126. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

127. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

128. Selser interview, 9 May 1991.

129. Selser interview, 9 May 1991. Guillermo Cortés provided another example of the earlier FSLN propaganda strategy: "I remember an advertisement on Sandinista TV which presented several mothers who were very combative, who said, 'I've lost two children, but I'm ready to give two more to the revolution.' There was criticism made by Tomás Borge of this advertisement. He said they were like mothers made of stone, without hearts. That's a good example of the initial conception of Patriotic Military Service propaganda." Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

130. Selser interview, 9 May 1991.

131. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

132. Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991.

133. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991.

134. Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991. The phrase *"un periódico del sistema"* is used in the "New Editorial Profile of *Barricada*": "On the assumption of an electoral victory of the FSLN, before February 25 [1990] it was thought that *Barricada* should evolve to convert itself into a publication of the 'system'; a kind of Mexican *Excélsior* in Nicaraguan society, which would permit the governing FSLN to count on a periodical formally liberated from official party bonds, in a manner which would allow it to project itself more broadly as a journalistic institution dedicated to strengthening the national consensus and democracy." "New Editorial Profile of *Barricada*," unpublished internal document, December 1990. By these lights, Chamorro says, the Nicaraguan Constitution "becomes the more specific or concrete expression of the attempt to build a national consensus," in that it includes "principles and definitions of the kind of society Nicaragua is." Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991. The actual reorientation project would similarly refer constantly to the constitutional basis of Nicaraguan society, but in an environment where those constitutional underpinnings were under pressure from a new regime and its allies.

For more information on *Excélsior*, see Pierce, *Keeping the Flame*, Chapter 5.

135. From the New Editorial Profile.

136. To be precise, the editions of 21-27 May 1985; 5-11 November 1985; 18-24 March 1986; 19-25 September 1986; 25-31 January 1987; and 1-7 August 1987.

137. Cortés and Huerta, "Critical Journalism," pp. 183, 191.

138. Recall, too, the Róger Sánchez cartoon reproduced earlier in this chapter. Research for this thesis turned up several other searching criticisms of *Barricada*'s reportage, or that of the wider Nicaraguan print media, published during the revolutionary decade. Writing in the pro-Sandinista *Pensamiento Propio* in 1986, for example, María Flórez-Estrada argued that *Barricada*'s "Achilles heel lies in its incapacity to convince and attract those undecided, to the degree that they transmit lines to be implemented [*ejecutadas*] by the population. ... This verticalism imbues much of *Barricada*'s reporting. ... *Barricada* is making an increasing effort to provide constructive criticism about the various flaws in public administration, but this effort is subject to special considerations [*exigencias especiales*], inasmuch as it is felt that the daily of the FSLN cannot portray a chaotic image of public administration." María Flórez-Estrada, "Three voices, two projects," *Pensamiento Propio* no. 34 (July 1986), pp. 31-32.

El Nuevo Diario columnist Manuel Eugarrios was more blunt (as well as more wide-ranging) in a thoughtful piece commemorating Journalists' Day (1 March) 1987, writing that "To be frank, [the examples of] honest and constructive criticism in our media can be counted on the fingers of one hand." Nowhere, he argued, was there a proper investigation of "bureaucratism, waste and theft in state enterprises, administrative arrogance and inefficiency ... laziness and low production levels in industry, to give only a few examples." Eugarrios in *El Nuevo Diario*, 3 March 1987.

139. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

140. Cortés interview, 15 April 1991.

141. Estrada, "Our fear is what causes us to censor ourselves."

142. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991. Emphasis added.

143. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1991. One refuge for the lighthearted spirit was the regular use of 28 December (the Nicaraguan equivalent of April Fools' Day) as an occasion for practical jokes. Each year the front page was turned over to trickery; these pages hang framed outside Chamorro's office at *Barricada*. The jokes ranged from a special "Russian" edition of *Barricada* (in which the paper's type was printed in reverse) to a spurious edition of *La Prensa* mocking that paper's tendency to make wild claims against the revolution and lay the blame for everything that went wrong in Nicaragua at the FSLN's feet.

Notes — Chapter 3

On 28 December 1990, *Barricada* appeared with a huge eight-column front-page headline: "Humberto Quits!" The news that Humberto Ortega, the Sandinista Chief of the Army retained by Violeta Chamorro, had apparently resigned sent Managua into a state of shock. Wire-service reporters, glancing at the headline, leapt to their phones to transmit the news around the world In Managua, Radio Corporación, voice of the Godoyist far-right contingent of the UNO coalition, opened its six o'clock news broadcast with the announcement of Ortega's departure. Only those who bothered to read the text of the article would have discovered the real story: that, despite pleas from colleagues to stay on, Humberto *Sánchez* had decided to leave the Executive Council of Radio Sandino.

144. Estrada, "Our fear is what causes us to censor ourselves." Recall, in this context, Sofía Montenegro's account of criticism from fellow revolutionaries when she took the Polish government representative to task for avoiding her questions: "You didn't only have to watch what you were saying outside; you also had to be concerned about what others within the Sandinista Front would be saying about you."

145. Montenegro's account of the incident is as follows. "At one point, when the economic crisis was in full swing - 1987 or '88 - a national assembly of women was called, with Daniel Ortega as the guest speaker. About 3,000 women attended, and some of us had already been holding meetings at the base in which we began to question the approach of AMNLAE [the official Sandinista mass organization for women]. At the meeting, some of us stood up to point out to the movement - and to Comandante Ortega - that women were dying from backstreet abortions; there were as many women dying for lack of decent medical care in such situations as there were men dying in the war. You couldn't fool around with this shit, and pretend nothing was happening. . .

"I just stood up and wagged my finger and said all that to Comandante Ortega. Many others stood up too, but because he knew me, he directed his comments to me personally. He said the views I was putting forward were those of petty-bourgeois women; the women from the *pueblo* [villages] were asking for other things entirely. He derided my qualifications, angrily, in front of 3,000 women. ...

"What ended up happening was - *Barricada* censored Ortega's speech. You see, nearly everyone at the meeting had been scandalized. The women got angry because Ortega was reacting as a man. He wasn't behaving like a President or a revolutionary, but like a chauvinist who understood nothing of women's problems. ... *Barricada* decided it couldn't 'officialize' [Ortega's] words. He wasn't giving us the official position of the National Directorate, but rather his personal opinion. So they cut out that portion of the speech when they reprinted it in the paper."

The "censorship," says Montenegro, hurt Ortega's pride "That's when Bayardo Arce, the *comandante* who was in charge of liaison with *Barricada*, told Carlos: 'Tell Sofía to keep quiet on this subject.' Because I was about to sit down to write something that Comandante Ortega didn't know or was misinformed about such-and-such. But from then on, and for a long time after, every time I tried to write something on the issue, Carlos would say: 'It's not convenient for the newspaper.' The result was, I spent a whole year more without the freedom to write, with Carlos saying, 'Please help me. Just wait your time.'" Montenegro interview, 8 March 1991.

146. "My caricatures are belligerent, fiery," interview with Róger Sánchez in *Pensamiento Propio*, no. 42 (May 1987), p. 26. The publication was hardly an invulnerable citadel, however, as evidenced by the controversy which swirled around the *Semana*'s publication of explicitly sexual material and its banning by the Ministry of the Interior on two occasions (see the Appendix).

147. This was, of course, a flaw which in the aftermath of the electoral defeat was generally conceded to run much deeper in the Sandinista movement, and to have been a root cause of much of the sense of shock which followed the FSLN election defeat.

148. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991.

149. Montenegro interview, 15 March 1990.

150. De Castro interview, 22 April 1991. De Castro also remembers a conversation on 23 February 1990 (that is, before the election defeat) with Vice-President Sergio Ramirez, in which separation of the party and government were discussed.

151. Guevara interview, 2 April 1991.

The discussion of the depolarization project as envisaged prior to the 1990 election defeat should not miss mentioning the example, albeit short-lived, of a weekly newspaper, *La Crónica*, which published in Managua in 1988-89. The first issue of *La Crónica* outlined the paper's desire to "broaden politically, socially, and ideologically the national media," contributing thereby to "the modernization of social thinking." (*La Crónica*, 4-11 November 1988.) In an interview on the first anniversary of the paper's appearance, *La Crónica*'s director, Luís Humberto Guzmán, said his desire was to rectify the situation of media polarization. Between pro- and anti-government media, he argued, "there existed an enormous space which wasn't covered by anybody"; he sought to "offer in a single publication the distinct points of view which exist in Nicaraguan society concerning the most diverse themes." (Ignacio Briones Torres, "Ten years of diatribes in journalism," *La Crónica*, 17-27 July 1989.) Accordingly, *La Crónica* published interviews with opinion leaders from all sectors of Nicaraguan society; it adopted a generally anti-government line, but did not ally itself formally with the Contra or rightwing opposition.

The paper (with its limited circulation) was pitched to an elite intellectual audience, and there is no firm evidence it was a factor in *Barricada*'s pre-1990 interpretation of the depolarization project. Nonetheless, *La Crónica* constituted an innovative experiment in the Nicaraguan media setting, and it is important to point out that some of the features of *Barricada*'s post-1990 evolution are not without precedent. For more on the *La Crónica* experiment, see Stephen Kinzer, "In Nicaragua's Press, a Softer Voice," *New York Times*, 25 November 1988.

Notes - Chapter 4

1. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991. Also Rosario Murillo's comment: "It was like an earthquake; it changed everybody's lives." Murillo interview, 24 April 1991.

   As for the shock and surprise which the election result engendered, interviews for this thesis turned up only one person who claimed to have considered the possibility of a Sandinista defeat. Rosario Murillo, companion to ex-President Daniel Ortega, said she had been "very sceptical about us winning the elections. ... I thought about it [the possibility of defeat] every day." Murillo interview, 24 April 1991. One other Nicaraguan media figure (Róger Sánchez, *Barricada* caricaturist and director of *La Semana Cómica*) was also apparently dubious of the FSLN's chances: according to his close friend Sofía Montenegro, "he was almost sure we would lose. He was a keen observer, with a tremendous political intuition and an extremely critical mind He never dared to *print* his prediction [in *La Semana Cómica*], because we were already in the middle of the election, he'd chosen his side, and he didn't want to bad-mouth it." The veracity of this cannot be confirmed by Sánchez, who died late in 1990. Montenegro interview, 6 May 1991 Otherwise, belief in the inevitability of victory seems to have been an article of faith

2. Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991.

3. Sofía Montenegro, in fact, likens the electoral defeat and its aftermath to the death of a loved one, leading to a near-total absence of purpose among many Sandinistas "What we're seeing now among Sandinistas is a process of mourning. ... What is valid for an individual who has suffered a personal loss is valid for the [Sandinista] movement as a whole. ... We're not dealing with someone's death as such, not even the death of the party, but it's a sense of loss which psychologically has the same effects. And this big loss has been compounded by all kinds of other losses: of salary, of employment, of social benefits. ... Some people are for the first time having to confront their death and their rebirth, and a lot of them are dropping to the floor under the burden. They have lost, some of them, their reason for living." Montenegro interview, 10 March 1991.

4. Montenegro interview, 10 March 1991, emphasis added.

5. Chamorro interview, 18 April 1991.

6. A cursory survey of *Barricada*'s editions during the transition period turn up regular reports on the transition negotiations; meditations on the themes of *concertación* and reconciliation; the campaign to disarm Contra rebels; and the projected fate of reform measures implemented under the Sandinistas.

7. Chamorro interview, 18 April 1991, emphasis added.

8. Chamorro interview, 18 April 1991. Ortega's comments seem at odds with his later critique of *Barricada*'s functioning, though the disparity is explicable, see note 33.

9. Cortés interview, 9 April 1991. He adds: "I don't know if, when the Sandinista Front recovers from the electoral defeat and repairs itself organizationally, when it feels stronger and more solid with its new statutes and program, it will want to exercise greater control [over *Barricada*]. But in any case, the party will always have a special interest in the newspaper"

10. Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991. Guillermo Cortés similarly stresses that "It's more difficult for a *comandante* to come here or call on the phone and say he wants to see something published, or doesn't want something else published. The situation has radically changed. There's greater independence for the newspaper." Cortés interview, 9 April 1991

11. The document itself is signed by all members of the *Barricada* Editorial Council, but Chamorro says he wrote "all of it," albeit "as a summary of my own ideas and a lot of other people's suggestions and criticisms." Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991.

12. His words would be echoed by Bayardo Arce in his feature article for the new *Barricada*'s first edition; it is perhaps revealing, if Chamorro personally drafted the "New Editorial Profile," that Arce would follow his lead so closely. Arce wrote that *Barricada*'s reorientation was evidence not only of the new political reality in Nicaragua, but of a "pluralistic inclination in the publication, an opening toward all the sectors." Arce, "The new *Barricada*."

13. All quotes from the New Editorial Profile. De Castro, one of the signatories to the profile, elaborates on the extent to which *Barricada* is still a "Sandinista" publication: "We're a Sandinista newspaper because we understand that the Sandinistas are a party with a program for all society. But we can't pretend that this newspaper can be a newspaper only for the people who identify themselves as Sandinistas." De Castro interview, 22 April 1991.

14. Arce, "The new *Barricada*."

15. Still, as noted, construction of strategy no longer proceeds in the highly hierarchical, militaristic manner which prevailed during the later years of the revolutionary decade. The FSLN's transfer of formal hegemony, in the policy sphere, to a newly-created Sandinista Assembly at the July 1991 party congress symbolizes this devolution of authority away from the Directorate. The election of individual candidates to the National Directorate, promised for the next party congress, may further democratize relations between the Directorate and the wider Sandinista constituency. In any case, the Directorate no longer has the kind of access to state resources which would permit it to co-opt or coerce recalcitrant sectors of the revolutionary constituency in Nicaragua. Even had the Directorate's role remained formally unchanged by the congress, its de facto power would still pale in comparison to the pre-1990 period.

16. If the perceived salience of the two functions is to be gauged by the relative space accorded them in the Profile, it is the latter which clearly predominates. Over 11 pages of the New Editorial Profile, Chamorro devotes just two pages (in the middle of the text) to the question of the FSLN's strategy for political opposition and the role *Barricada* will play within it. Most of the first four pages deals with the limitations inherent in *Barricada*'s status as official organ, and with the paper's new competitive reorientation vis-à-vis *El Nuevo Diario*. Five pages at the end discuss the specific proposed changes in content, emphasis, and design. Clearly, the emphasis is on the institutional requirements of the newspaper rather than the political requirements of the Front.

17. See Terry Fletcher, "Who Owns Nicaragua?," *NICCA Bulletin* (San Francisco: Nicaragua Center for Community Action), September/November 1991, p. 6.

18. The FSLN argued in response that thousands of militants, ordinary Nicaraguans, had worked for the revolution for years with minimal or no remuneration, and at least deserved title to dwellings or property they had occupied for years on a de facto basis. See Daniel Ortega's comments that "At the time of the defeat we saw clearly that we, as the Frente Sandinista, had never been able to organize a system of enterprises as all parties in the world do to finance themselves. ... the amount of dues that militants paid was totally symbolic and it wasn't covering anything. There was a lot of carelessness in organizing our resources." *Ibid.*, p. 7. For a defense of the "*piñata*" by one who was closely involved in it (and benefitted by it), see the comments by Ortega's companion, Rosario Murillo (director of the former *Barricada* cultural supplement *Ventana*) in Adam Jones, *Nicaragua, 1991: After the Earthquake*, CDAS Occasional Paper No. 68 (Montreal: Centre for Developing-Area Studies, 1992), p. 17.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

20. According to Carlos Fernando Chamorro and Max Kreimann, present holdings and resources include: *Barricada*; Radio Sandino; Radio Ya; import-export companies based mostly in Panama (vestiges of the FSLN's efforts to circumvent the U.S. economic embargo during the 1980s); Editorial Vanguardia, a former subsidiary of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, later an independent institution; Editorial El Amanecer, a publishing house under whose auspices *Barricada*'s publishing business functions; INMENSA, a book-distribution company; several gas stations; and some small commercial enterprises, including hardware, wood, and wheat-growing operations. According to Kreimann, *Barricada* is the largest and most profitable of the Front's holdings. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991; Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

21. For example, the Sandinista urban trade union, the FNT, which had long chafed under FSLN-imposed economic austerity plans, withdrew some distance from the Sandinista leadership. In the pre- and post-transfer period, it made clear that the National Directorate's mandate to represent it in negotiations with the incoming government was extended on a limited and contingent basis - a point made with added force by the union's militant stance during a strike against the Chamorro regime's economic policies in May 1991. The official Sandinista women's organization, AMNLAE, retained much of its traditional structure, but faced a growing challenge from a loose coalition of more avowedly feminist activists, including those gathered under the rubric of the Party of the Erotic Left (PIE). (*Barricada* staffmember and *Gente* director Sofía Montenegro was a founder of the PIE.) Meanwhile, the neighbourhood "defense committees" (CDS) set up by the Sandinistas during the period of their tenure all but dissolved - though neighbourhood activists sought to restore them in revised form. And the FSLN leadership gave its approval to the formation of a Front for Popular Struggle (FLP) which sought to generate support for popular organizing and mobilizing outside the context of official Front deliberations.

    On the women's movement, see the comments by Sofía Montenegro in Jones, *Nicaragua, 1991*. On the decline of the CDS under the Sandinistas, see Pierre LaRamée and Erica Polakoff, "Transformation of the CDS's and the Breakdown of Grassroots Democracy in Revolutionary Nicaragua," *New Political Science*, No. 18/19 (Fall/Winter 1990), pp. 103-123, some details on the replacement of the CDS by a loose "community movement" can be found in Scarlet Cuadra, "Grassroots initiative," *Barricada Internacional*, October 1991, pp 9-11

22. A clear statement of present FSLN policy (in the context of the "maxi-devaluation" undertaken by the Chamorro government) is "The Position of the FSLN towards the National Problem," a National Directorate declaration issued in March 1991; see *El Nuevo Diario*, 7 March 1991. For more on the FSLN's new role and orientation, see David R. Dye, "From revolutionary vanguard to democratic opposition," *In These Times*, 1-14 August 1990, Mark A Uhlig, "Sandinista Leadership Rethinking Its Ideology," *New York Times*, 10 August 1990; and a long interview with Comandante Bayardo Arce, "The Front has always been multi-class," *Barricada*, 19 April 1991.

23. Carlos M. Vilas, "Nicaragua After the Elections: The First 100 Days," *Z Magazine*, November 1990, pp. 93, 96.

24. The resolutions of the assembly, held 17 June 1990, were printed in English translation in *Barricada Internacional*, July 1990. The assembly proclaimed that "In many cases . practices from socialist countries were reproduced [during the FSLN's years in power] which led us to take up a one-party style in the political leadership of society and to an excessive emphasis on the control and centralization of public administration," often "in a coercive and bureaucratic fashion." The militants further declared that "Our party practice should rid itself of attitudes of imposition which tend to reduce or negate the grassroots' initiative and creativity," such as "authoritarianism," "lack of sensitivity to rank and file demands and concerns," "the silencing of criticism," and "bureaucratic leadership styles and the imposition of leaders and organizational structures." It urged the party to "restructure the FSLN through a democratic process so that our grassroots support can contribute to the solution of the most urgent internal problems, taking an active part within the framework of the discussions, the election of authorities and decision-making."

25. In a deeply controversial article for *Barricada* published in July 1990, Tirado announced that "We have completed the anti-imperialist cycle of revolution, in which the main method was armed struggle and the aggressive use of political and diplomatic philosophy towards imperialism with the aim of destroying it definitively ... Revolutions of this kind cannot sustain their economies and militarily defend themselves all alone; now there is nobody to subsidize them." *Barricada*, 19 July 1991; see the excerpts (in English translation) in *Barricada Internacional*, August 1991, p. 17.

    The issue of internal democracy, meanwhile, cuts across the groups of "principalists" and "pragmatists" in revealing ways In general, calls for inter-party democracy have come partly from base militants, seeking to revitalize the Sandinista Front at the grassroots, and partly from "pragmatist" intellectual figures like Victor Tirado and former Vice-President Sergio Ramirez. They view democratization as a precondition for the effective modernization of the Front, possibly with a view to moving the party in a social-democratic direction. Fealty to the old hierarchical party structure is also evident at the grassroots, however, particularly among mass organizations (like AMNLAE) that have resisted calls for internal restructuring. And it is present in somewhat altered form among most National Directorate figures. It was, after all, the seven remaining members of the Directorate who most strongly resisted grassroots demands for individual election of leadership figures. Arguing for the need to preserve continuity and unity, the leadership figures managed to push through a slate of candidates consisting of the seven remaining members plus Sergio Ramirez and René Núñez (brother of late Director member and former *Barricada* representative Carlos Núñez). This is, it should be noted, presented even by its adherents as merely a temporary measure designed to provide a solid footing for future transformations toward greater internal democracy.

26. The extent to which a unifying program *does* exist remains very much open to question. See the editorial, "New year, old problems," *Barricada Internacional*, February 1992: "Two years after the FSLN defeat at the polls, Sandinism still has not found the way to make itself into a short-term contender for power. Although many wounds have healed over, others are being opened. The challenge this year for the FSLN is to reunify its membership which remains dispersed and to make itself into a party which represents the full range of popular interests."

27. An advantage of the Constitution from the Sandinista perspective is that it grants the President broad powers of executive decree. It was never contemplated that these powers would be held by someone other than the Sandinistas; nevertheless, the constitutional feature has proved useful, given that Violeta Chamorro and the "Las Palmas" group of technocrats clustered around her (particularly her chief minister Antonio Lacayo) are the sector of UNO most receptive to a continuing FSLN role in the state, and most dedicated to negotiating social peace and *concertación* with the Sandinistas.

28. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

29. Cortés interview, 15 April 1991.

30. At the time of field research for this thesis, *Barricada* was similarly awaiting the results of the FSLN's first party congress, though Chamorro was anticipating no major changes in *Barricada*'s orientation. "The important thing was the decision to change the profile [January 1991]," says Chamorro. "I don't think what will happen at the congress will affect the actual situation of *Barricada*, because that's been accepted by the people and by society." For an overview of the results of the congress, see David R. Dye, "Snapshot of Sandinismo," *In These Times*, 7-20 August 1991.

31. Excerpts from Murillo's broadside appear in English translation in *Barricada Internacional*, 22 September 1990. Murillo wrote "The Sandinista media has [sic] been used many, many times over the years against the Sandinista Front. Against the National Directorate. Against Sandinista policies. Against Sandinista associations and organizations ..."

    In an interview, Murillo made it clear her criticisms were directed at the decision by *Barricada* and other pro-Sandinista media to publish critical commentary about corruption among the Sandinista leadership, as well as feature articles about figures unsympathetic to the revolution, such

as former Contra leaders and Managua Mayor Arnoldo Alemán "When compañeros started to criticize in a way that I would say did not take into consideration all the elements, didn't contextualize the criticisms, when they started to accuse us - Sandinistas accusing Sandinistas of being *ladrones*, robbers - I couldn't believe it" Murillo's opposition to *Barricada*'s publishing interviews with figures such as Alemán (February 12 1991 - after Murillo's broadside appeared) seems based on the fact that such openness is not reciprocated by pro-government media in Nicaragua. "How can you have Arnoldo Alemán, who is hated by everyone, who is a fascist - how can you put him to speak there [in the pro-Sandinista press]? I don't understand that .. It's like thinking the new political culture means having your enemy saying in your spaces whatever he wants to say, and having him say in his own spaces atrocities about you, and also whatever he wants to say about how wonderfully he's doing In what country in the world do you have that kind of an opposition press?"

Barricada's editorial response to Murillo's allegations was revealing In a piece likely written by Chamorro, the paper wrote that "*Barricada* has never pretended to own the truth We are not a cathedral, nor is the Sandinista Front a church ruled by dogmas On the contrary, we aspire to be a point of convergence in the process of political regrouping of Sandinista forces .. Different positions on what the FSLN should be in the future or Nicaraguan society in the present have been expressed and printed in our pages We do not silence those who disagree with our own editorial position and we only demand that a spirit of unity prevail and that the basic norms of length and quality, imposed by the little space we have available, be respected

"We believe that true pluralism must extensively cover the diversity of opinions which exist within Sandinism in order to move, through the debate of ideas, toward a political consensus on which the unity of revolutionaries should be based

"In this sense, it seems to us understandable, but worrying, that when such an important debate has been opened with Sandinism, there are voices which want to silence it, or monopolize the debate, letting only their own opinions be heard. Precisely for that reason, [Murillo's] article ... last Sunday confirms the need to extend that debate in *Barricada* and other media outlets so that we become used to respecting other ideas, even when they do not appear to us to be fair or suited to our interests. Dissent should be a norm, a rule, and not an exception in the democratization of the Sandinista Front." ("The debate is not closing, but broadening itself," *Barricada*, 4 September 1990, English translation in *Barricada Internacional*, 22 September 1990, p 17; emphasis added.) Two features of this response are worth noting. First, serving as a forum for diverse views by no means translates to adoption of a posture of neutrality: to argue for a "debate of ideas," and to criticize "voices which want to silence" that debate, is staking out a clear position in favour of democratization. Second, professional considerations impact on the paper's mobilizing role contributions, regardless of the political views expressed, must respect "the basic norms of length and quality."

32. See Shirley Christian, "Ortega's Leadership Criticized by Sandinistas," *New York Times*, 24 March 1992, p. A11. According to Christian, "Another member of the Sandinista Directorate, Bayardo Arce, then jumped into the fray with a front-page article defending Barricada and other Sandinista news outlets for which he has overall responsibility, on the basis of their growing acceptance among the general population. Mr. Arce noted that Barricada ... had become an important source of financing for the front." The incident is revealing, not only for the indisputable evidence it provides of some dissension at the level of the Directorate concerning *Barricada*'s profile and functioning, but also for Arce's confirmation that *Barricada* is now "an important source" of FSLN funds. The degree of independence *Barricada* holds is, and is likely to remain, correlated with its material importance to party coffers - since this gives the paper's staff considerable bargaining power.

In a 1991 interview, Carlos Fernando Chamorro confirmed, without giving names, that some opposition to *Barricada*'s forswearing of official-organ status had been voiced at the National Directorate level. Ortega's critique seems at odds with his more easygoing comments, related by Chamorro, at the meeting arranged between Ortega and pro-revolutionary journalists shortly before the Sandinistas' formal retreat from government. Perhaps Ortega envisaged a surface de-officialization for *Barricada* that would not translate into a significantly greater degree of institutional autonomy for the paper, with regular published criticisms of "verticalist" tendencies

within the Front, of which Ortega allegedly is a main exponent. It is also possible that Ortega is maneuvering for support among "principalist" Sandinistas, and is therefore claiming to have opposed transformations at *Barricada* which he did not strongly disagree with during Directorate discussions of the matter. Ortega's criticisms were made as this thesis was on the verge of submission, and there was no opportunity to solicit a comment from Carlos Fernando Chamorro or other *Barricada* staffers.

33. Davis, *Where Is Nicaragua?*, p 159.

34. Cortés interview, 15 April 1991

35. Montenegro interview, 10 March 1991. In *Barricada*'s first anniversary-edition following the election defeat (25 July 1990), Chamorro wrote that "*Barricada* must move to convert itself into a broad forum of popular and national debate .. with no restrictions other than the demand for a constructive and unifying spirit. ... To our adversaries - whose respect for this periodical's opinions and news coverage is an indication of the prestige and confidence won [over the years] by *Barricada* - we invite them to do away with sterile revanchism and to contribute patriotically to the solution of the nation's problems.

36. Cortés interview, 15 April 1991 The implications of this development are also evident in Chamorro's contention that "the concept of *campaigns* has disappeared" from *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. "In the past, we were party-state. I mean, we were responsible for all, decisions that were taken and actions that were happening in the country; we were to some extent obliged to condition public opinion, to prepare it to understand or accept state decisions. 'Campaigning' meant going over and over the same ground, being systematic [in treatment of] the same subject. Today, it's completely different." As an example, Chamorro cites a hypothetical decision by the new government to open private banks (the Nicaraguan banking system was nationalized after the revolutionary victory). With the FSLN in power, *Barricada*'s responsibility would have been "to pave the way for the state decision." With the FSLN in opposition, though, the decision "is not my concern," says Chamorro. "It's the problem of the present government. We're much more concerned about what's important at street-level, and I don't think the public is all that concerned about whether private banks are opened or not. Previously, we acted not only as if we were a party organ, but to some extent as if we were very close to the state. That's the difference." The new environment frees the paper "to consider different alternatives, people feel more free to think on their own, to exercise their imagination and creativity," rather than parroting an official line decided upon by the FSLN leadership. He notes, though, a drawback to this de-officialization of the paper. "There's a risk, a temptation, to be irresponsible. Since you're not the state anymore, you're not promoting a state project So some people might think. 'Okay, now we can say anything we want - about the government, about institutions, about persons, without confirming facts. I don't think we've succumbed to this temptation; we've tried to hold to a standard of professional obligation. But I see the temptation exists for some journalists. They don't feel the [old] sense of preoccupation and obligation. That's not a dominant tendency, but it does exist." Chamorro interview, 4 April 1991.

37. Emphasis added

38. Schudson, *Discovering the News*, p. 26. "The penny press [in mid-19th century America] ... focused on the nearby and the everyday, and for the first time hired reporters on a regular basis to cover local news. Reporters were assigned to the police, the courts, the commercial district, the churches, high society, and sports The penny papers made the 'human interest story' not only an important part of daily journalism but its most characteristic feature" (p. 27).

39. De Castro interview, 22 April 1991

40. "Ethical Principles and Norms of *Barricada*," April 1991, unpublished internal document. In addition to restating the importance of consulting a variety of sources and avoiding indicating certainty where uncertainty surrounds a fact or allegation, the statement also touches on issues of corruption. "It is absolutely forbidden for journalists or functionaries of *Barricada* to accept

material donations, related to their work, from people or institutions which could compromise the independence of the publication." It also states that "the promotion of the equality and emancipation of women is a principle of the periodical," as is "respect for the religious beliefs and different racial composition of the readership," banning material which could offend these principles of equality.

41. Kreimman interview, 4 April 1991

42. To demonstrate how general has been the impact of this crisis on Nicaragua's papers, regardless of political orientation, it is perhaps worth quoting Pablo Antonio Cuadra, director of *La Prensa*. "There's a strong decline [in circulation] with inflation. The decline occurred because we had to raise the price almost every week. That confuses people. When we change the price, circulation drops, and then it very slowly rises Then we change the price again and it declines, until people convince themselves that their wages are enough to afford the new price. I think it's going to go up now, because now there's a stable price." Cuadra is referring to the currency reform introduced by the Chamorro government in the first week of March 1991, which succeeded in stemming hyperinflation, albeit at the price of increased unemployment and drastically reduced real wages; both of these factors clearly act to constrain discretionary income and limit newspaper circulation (Field research for this thesis ended in May 1991, and claimed circulation figures for the three papers since that time is not available) Cuadra interview, 26 April 1991

43. It is possible that *La Prensa*, with its closeness to government sources, could have received advance warning of the scale of the devaluation, and taken measures to protect its bank accounts. *La Prensa* was, at least, the means by which the government chose to announce the maxi-devaluation to the public, via a special issue published on 2 March 1991 For more on the impact of the currency reform, see Jones, *Nicaragua, 1991*, pp. 7-9

44. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991. According to Kreimann, *Barricada*'s normal annual operating budget of $4 million (which includes the publishing operation) would likely be slashed to "about $3 million" as a result of the maxi-devaluation. He stressed, though, that the situation was highly volatile and the long-term impact unpredictable "It will depend a lot on the capacity of our staff to administrate and sell Who knows? [Income] might increase from $3 million to $6 million You can't say."

45. Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991

46. The question of legislation and censorship is, of course, a powerfully symbolic one for Violeta Chamorro herself, given *La Prensa*'s travails under the Sandinistas. The official policy of the Chamorro government is captured in the phrase *la mejor ley de Prensa es la que no existe* The best press law is no press law.

    A brief furore did arise in January 1991 concerning the government's attempt to pass Decree 55-90, promulgated 13 December 1990. The law formally dealt with technical aspects of radio broadcast frequencies, but Chapter VI, Article 33 contained the following injunction: "in case of disturbances to the public order of the country, or should [the country] find itself in a state of war, or in the event of natural disasters or any other circumstance which requires an emergency effort by government institutions, ANDER [the Nicaraguan Administration of the Radioelectric Spectrum] is authorized to suspend or restrict the transmission of stations in whatever frequency bands are considered necessary, in all or part of the national territory " Other articles similarly referred to the capacity of the state security forces to seize control of any radio or television program "in the event of international conflict, uprising, revolt or other activities which disturb the public order," and to impose fines for disobeying the law's provisions.

    The law was signed by President Chamorro, using her broad powers of executive decree under the Sandinista-constructed Constitution, while the National Assembly was in recess. Journalists of the UPN, however, protested the legislation, arguing that it was tantamount to the "gag which Somocismo placed on the liberty of expression, with the law of communications media known as the Black Code." The government was receptive to the complaints and promised revisions to all sections of the law which could be used to restrict freedom of expression It reiterated that "one

of the pillars of this government will always be freedom of expression, and we shall not permit any doubts on this count." See *Barricada*, 30 January 1991 (revealing the contents of the decree); also see, "Chamorro: 'la mejor ley de Prensa es la que no existe,'" *Inforpress Centroamerica*, 14 February 1991, p. 6.

47. The question of exactly how much the printing contract was worth to *Barricada* is ambiguous mainly because of the complex interlinking of party and state which was a feature of the FSLN's years in power. "It's a technical thing," says Max Kreimann. "Let me give you an example. You're the Ministry of Education, and you're going to sign a $2.5 million contract with me to print so many books. That requires one ton of paper, let's say. But you [via FSLN arrangements with East Bloc countries] are going to *give* me the ton of paper, which let's say is worth a million dollars. So I assume a debt to you in the amount of $1 million. And then you [via party-to-party arrangements] give me the ink and metal plates to print the books, so I assume a further debt. So in the end, you sign a contract for $2.5 million, but only pay $500,000." Kreimann further points out that the function of the Ministry of Education contract was never primarily to enable *Barricada* to earn money; rather, it was a service *Barricada* provided, charging very little so the government could provide the population with heavily-subsidized books. The importance of this income to *Barricada*'s operations is, however, indisputable. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

48. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991. Kreimann's assertion gains credibility in the light of claims by other sources among leftist or pro-Sandinista media. Noel Irías at *La Semana Cómica* contends that "We are proscribed - there's a state prohibition now on giving advertising to *Semana Cómica*. Ministries aren't allowed to give us advertising. In some cases, it's an express prohibition - in the case of the Ministry of Finance, for example. In other cases, it's tacit [policy]." Irías interview, 22 March 1991. Juan Alberto Henríquez, director of the Marxist (but anti-Sandinista) *El Pueblo*, says of relations with the Chamorro government: "They don't give us advertising ... They don't take out subscriptions to the newspaper. For example, the National Assembly owes us subscription money dating back to the Sandinista era which it still hasn't paid; Alfredo César [current President of the Assembly] doesn't even want the collector to arrive at the door. So they're strangling us. They say they're not, that they don't persecute us - but neither do they give us any way in which to survive, despite the fact that this paper is not a party organ." Henríquez interview, 8 April 1991.

49. Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991. *Barricada Internacional* has also been powerfully affected by the transformation in the Nicaraguan political equation since the Sandinista election defeat. The paper was structured to meet the informational needs of the international solidarity community, whose ranks were sharply reduced by the FSLN fall from power. The publication received donations from foreign solidarity sources which have partly dried up; overseas subscriptions have also fallen. "The Sandinista Revolution, for many solidarity people, has fallen apart," concedes Flakoll. "It's no longer a beacon in Latin America, an example of revolution. Solidarity is now more interested in regional themes, the debate on the left, and things like that, rather than [seeing] Nicaragua as the centre and a model of a new type of revolutionary situation in the hemisphere." Reflecting the upheaval, *Barricada Internacional* shifted after the elections from weekly to monthly, then (briefly) to biweekly, then back to monthly. At the time of field research, Flakoll reported that the paper would be able to continue for about two years if present trends prevailed. The most recent issue of the publication at time of writing featured an open letter to readers, announcing that "We are now in danger of losing *Barricada Internacional* due to the economic crisis in Nicaragua and a precipitous drop in subscription levels." Only two-thirds of readers had renewed their subscriptions. *Barricada Internacional*, January 1992, p. 2.

Another casualty of the new political and economic climate should be noted. Shortly after the Sandinista party congress of July 1991, the publication *Ventana*, edited by Rosario Murillo, finally disappeared as a weekly cultural insert to *Barricada*. The paper had long served as little more than a mouthpiece for Murillo, and was financed through FSLN party channels (apparently owing to the intervention of Murillo's companion, ex-President Daniel Ortega) rather than by *Barricada*. At the time of an interview in April 1991, Murillo conceded the paper was in poor financial shape and that she had solicited enough money, mainly from overseas friends and contacts, to keep the paper alive for a year. The eventual folding of the publication seems closely linked to the political fiasco

which greeted Murillo at the party congress, where repeated attempts by Daniel Ortega to add Murillo to the slate of Managua representatives to the new Sandinista Assembly fell flat.

50. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991

51. This thesis is borne out by the disproportionate impact of the election defeat on *Barricada*'s more peripheral projects, particularly *Barricada Internacional*. The international edition's fulltime staff shrunk by more than half, from 19 to 8 persons, and *BI* was shifted in early 1991 from its spacious offices in a separate building on the *Barricada* lot to more cramped quarters within the main editorial offices. The old *BI* offices were taken over by *Barricada*'s newly-revamped advertising department, providing an apt symbol of the shift away from a more pure (but also subsidized) ideological orientation to a more competitive, business-oriented one. Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991. The cuts are "partly due to the economic pressure, because we can't afford to pay that many people for a magazine that really doesn't need so many people to produce it. The logic also has to do with being in power versus being in the opposition. While we were in power, we created a big apparatus, and it wasn't a burden - mainly because it was the government that financed it [through subscriptions]! Now, obviously, there's a different kind of logic."

    There is some indication that *Barricada Internacional*'s experience paves the way for still more sweeping restructuring and downsizing at the parent paper, *Barricada*. Flakoll contends that, with regard to staff-cuts, *Barricada Internacional* will serve as "a pilot project" for the daily *Barricada*, which "will have to do the same thing, [though] it hasn't yet done it significantly." This reflects *BI*'s pioneering role over the revolutionary decade and since the election defeat. "Computers, for example, were introduced first in *BI* and then in the daily. The change of format was made here first. The change in focus was first here, now in the daily. By format I mean for *BI* the change in size [from tabloid to magazine format], for the daily the change in logo." Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991.

52. According to Daniel Flakoll Alegría of *Barricada Internacional*, "The policy now is to pay people what should be a normal wage. Before, people worked here more out of conviction than for wages. They still do, but because of the soaring inflation, salaries have to try to keep up." Flakoll interview, 25 February 1991

53. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

54. The quality of the staffers themselves is now "more professional," Kreimann argues, but dates this change to the period prior to the electoral defeat when attempts began to restructure and reorient the advertising division.

55. Significantly, this service was technically available since the introduction of the Plamag press in 1984, but was not offered to advertisers until the announcement of *Barricada*'s new profile in January 1991.

56. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991. The policies apparently have begun to generate interest among private-sector advertisers, though with political polarization still a fact of life in Nicaragua, and with most business figures entrenched on the political right, the main target is still the limited number of pro-Sandinista businesses. "This is a very multi-class party," Kreimann notes. "Many Sandinistas belong to the middle and bourgeois classes, and we're attracting them to advertise with us. Even though they're few, it's something anyway."

    The drive to attract advertisers is still guided, at least at the rhetorical level, by ethical and probably political considerations. The statement of "Ethical Principles and Norms of *Barricada*" (April 1991) includes this injunction: "The periodical [*Barricada*] will accept paid advertisements for publication, though not indiscriminately." Advertising which runs expressly counter to the political-editorial line of the publication is subject to review by the editorial staff.

57. Advertising, which once constituted 25 percent of the paper's revenue, now constitutes between 18 and 20 percent. Half the income is from the sale of newspapers, and another 30 percent from the printing service. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

58. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991. With a view to the printing service's further expansion, *Barricada* acquired early in 1990 a new flat press geared to production of calendars, books, notebooks, magazines, cheques, and business cards. The press was purchased for $1.5 million from its original owners, who agreed to payment in monthly instalments.

59. All quotes are from the New Editorial Profile.

60. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

61. An intriguing example of price competition occurred in March 1991, following the Chamorro government's implementation of a "maxi-devaluation." All three Managua papers switched their primary pricing scheme to the new *córdoba oro*. All three began with a position of price parity, reflecting tacit or explicit agreement among the business managers; but while *El Nuevo Diario* and *La Prensa* increased their price to C 1.40, *Barricada* held briefly to a price of C 1.00, then increased to 1.20 (where it stood at the time field research for this thesis ended). *La Prensa* subsequently lowered its price to 1.20, to match *Barricada*; *END* stayed at 1.40.

    According to Kreimann, the pricing decision had two roots, one in marketing strategy, the other in politics. The action is, in fact, a good instance of the way in which both professional and mobilizing considerations act to shape and constrain *Barricada*'s post-election functioning. Rather than seeking an absolute increase in newspaper readers, *Barricada* sought to take readers away from *El Nuevo Diario*: "Because of the price, many readers who read *END* preferred to buy *Barricada* because of the pricing. We wanted to open ourselves to the market, in a way that readers who didn't read us would get to know us with our new profile. Hopefully, they'd stay with us." On the other hand, "we had a political objective. It's a way of telling our readers that we wouldn't automatically re-evaluate the price of the newspaper [in response to a Chamorro government edict]. Vis-à-vis this country's officials, managers, intellectuals - those who know about the national economy and financial situation - it's to show them that we have financial power of our own. People who know about business know that this is a sign of strength" - and thus a symbol of the FSLN's and the revolution's continuing potency and autonomy, tying in to *Barricada*'s mobilizing function. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

62. The survey found that 63 percent of respondents liked *De Todo Un Poco*, and only 10 percent disliked it. Compare this with the opinion-editorial page, which 23 percent of readers liked and 27 percent disliked. With regard to the paper's departments, *De Todo Un Poco* again featured the widest gulf between those readers who enjoyed it and those who disliked it - 63 to 10 percent. It was followed in this ranking by "current events."

63. *Enquesta 'Gran Promoción Madre' Barricada - Radio Ya*, unpublished internal document. *Gente* was the preferred supplement of an outright majority of readers (54 percent); *Revista del Campo* was next with 28 percent. No other supplement rose beyond single figures.

64. An added incentive was the difference in tone between *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario* which had led, in the view of *Barricada*'s director, to a perception that *Barricada* was the more "serious" of the two pro-revolutionary dailies. (*END* is a pugnacious and freewheeling daily which places greater emphasis on entertainment and splashy sensationalism than either of Managua's other two papers, often at the expense of strict journalistic professionalism. A typical feature story published during the field research for this thesis told the tragic tale of a young man whose tongue had been bitten off during a passionate French kiss.)

    The connotations of "seriousness" are mixed, acknowledges Chamorro. But a key part of *Barricada*'s orientation was to preserve its reputation as a responsible news-source while moving in the direction of *Nuevo Diario*'s more populist approach, which - significantly - represents the purest continuation of the pre-revolutionary press tradition in Nicaragua. Indeed, Xavier Reyes contends that during the revolutionary decade, *El Nuevo Diario* sought to draw readers away from the restructured *La Prensa* by holding to the "noisier" journalism of the pre-revolutionary *La Prensa*. Recall that *END* was founded by a breakaway group of *La Prensa* personnel comprising the majority of the latter paper's staff. Reyes interview, 13 April 1991.

El Nuevo Diario "is not the type of paper that will suffer for its lack of credibility," Chamorro argues. "But people like to read it " As for *Barricada*'s more sober approach: "'Serious' has a double connotation. One is a good one: it implies credibility. The other meaning is: *boring*. I felt we shouldn't be afraid of being perceived as a serious newspaper, but what we needed was more colour, more balance, more of an equilibrium between what we call 'traditional news' - politics, the economy, foreign policy - and [more human-interest oriented] news stories." Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

65. According to Roberto Fonseca, editor of *De Todo Un Poco*, "our mission is also to transfer news from *De Todo Un Poco* to the front page of *Barricada*, to freshen up *Barricada*" as a whole. Fonseca interview, 9 May 1991.

66. Although *Barricada* also displayed its willingness to publish criticisms of the horoscope feature, the decision to increase the frequency of its appearance seems to represent a recognition that such features are "not a very important concession for the revolutionary process," in the words of Editorial Council member Sergio De Castro. De Castro interview, 22 April 1991. Says Chamorro: "I don't personally like to read the horoscope. For me, it's totally idiotic. But a lot of people like it! What can I do? When I go and talk to people who sell *Barricada*, they tell me I should have a horoscope every *day*! So it's a concession [to that demand]." Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

67. "We did a survey of *END* readers and *Barricada* readers," says Kreimann, which found that "*Barricada* is viewed as more serious, responsible, and believable than *El Nuevo Diario*. But people bought *END* and opened it to look for the naked woman, or the disaster that occurred in this or that *barrio*, or who raped who. People read that." Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

68. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

69. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991.

70. Both Chamorro and Kreimann cited the example of an early-April feature discussing the difficulty which some children have in pronouncing the double-"r" sound in Spanish. Such coverage, according to Chamorro, represents an example of *Barricada* appealing to *El Nuevo Diario*'s constituency, but not in a way that demeans the paper's project: "We wanted to evade easy answers to the question of what "popular" views and desires would be. We feel *El Nuevo Diario* is doing a very cheap type of journalism - the easiest type. We think people, our readers, don't deserve that type of garbage. They deserve something better. It's not that we see ourselves as intellectuals or more cultured or anything like that. We feel people need and deserve stories with a human-interest element, but things that will help to enrich their lives in some way. I don't think it really helps them to know that somebody killed his wife because he was having problems with his nose. I don't think that's a real story. ..." The story about the double-"r," he says, represents a matter of down-to-earth daily concern: "something people speak about in their own houses." Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

71. The interview subject in question requested that the quote not be attributed

72. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

73. Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991 According to Max Kreimann, *Barricada*'s circulation as of April 1991 was 32,000, approximately the same as Managua's other two dailies. Kreimann interview, 4 April 1991

74. Chamorro seems to be suggesting something similar when he comments that *Barricada* "is a newspaper which is *gaining* autonomy. Gaining autonomy, inspired by the FSLN within the general framework of the FSLN [program]. It's also becoming a more transparent and real reflection of what the FSLN is *itself*, and the changes that are taking place within the FSLN, since the newspaper reflects the internal debate of the FSLN in a more balanced way than any other Sandinista or non-Sandinista medium of communication in this country." Chamorro interview, 3 April 1991.

75. Pablo Antonio Cuadra, Nicaragua's greatest poet and longtime director of *La Prensa*, commented in an interview: "It seems to me that *Barricada* has had a change for the better. There are people with a violent mentality who still write there, but it's now a newspaper which is on the level of the new democratic society we want." He contrasted *Barricada*'s performance in this respect with that of *El Nuevo Diario*: "an outrageous newspaper, as violent as ever." Cuadra interview, 26 April 1991.

76. Chamorro interview, 28 April 1991.

77. Montenegro interview, 10 March 1991.

Notes – Chapter 5

1. According to Chamorro, the composition of the council was dictated not by a desire to represent various Sandinista sectors, but to construct an advisory board with expertise in those areas most integral to *Barricada*'s new stance as an opposition paper, and in which *Barricada*'s journalistic coverage was held to be deficient. "On the one hand, we said we needed someone linked to the legislative work of the National Assembly, because that's an important part of the opposition strategy of the FSLN. Another thing was to find someone who was an expert on law, the judicial aspect, because that's been a very weak side of *Barricada*. Legal issues become important in these years, because the law is an instrument you have to know well in order to wage an opposition struggle. A third requisite was to find someone who's an expert on the economy. And the fourth person would be someone who's a 'globalist' in terms of being close to the National Directorate. That's the role Bayardo Arce plays." Chamorro interview, 17 April 1991.

2. Note again that to argue for "independence" here is not to state that *Barricada* functioned independently of the broader Sandinista policy apparatus, since in the field of "agitation and propaganda" a key architect of Sandinista policy was *Barricada* Director Chamorro. Rather, the strategies testify to a certain independence from the formal requirements and edicts of the ruling National Directorate.

3. Consider, for example, the dissonance inherent in a photograph published in *Barricada* in January 1992. It shows Chief of the Army Humberto Ortega (a key revolutionary leader and former member of the FSLN National Directorate; military commander during the years of war against U.S.-backed Contras) pinning the Sandinistas' highest medal for bravery on the chest of Colonel Dennis Quinn, the U.S. military attaché in Nicaragua. Many Sandinistas were astonished to witness Ortega criticizing "the leftist minorities which want to manipulate the sacred patriotic sentiments of our people and national dignity in order to fan the fanatical and adventuristic confrontation between Nicaraguans and the United States," "a radical minority which vainly tries to attract the poor ... with unattainable and destabilizing proposals." (This in response to those Sandinista sectors who claimed the medal ceremony besmirched the memory of Sandinista soldiers and militants who had fallen in battle against U.S.-sponsored forces.) Daniel Flakoll Alegría, "More than just a medal," *Barricada Internacional*, February 1992. What proportion of the Sandinistas' popular constituency would agree with the American leftist James Petras, who calls the medal ceremony "symbolic of the moral as well as ideological decay of the Sandinista elite"? Petras, "Sandinista 'social pact' sells poor out," *The Guardian*, 18 March 1992, p. 12.

4. Recall the examples of *El Nuevo Diario*, and the founding (post-1990) of Radio Ya, mentioned below.

5. I am grateful to Prof. Philip Oxhorn for his comments in this context.

6. For an account of Radio Ya's founding on 26 April 1990 (and its subsequent travails), see "Maneuver foiled," *Barricada Internacional*, 16 June 1990, p. 15.

7. This comparison is not intended to establish an equivalence between Soviet state socialism and *Sandinismo*. Indeed, some of the pressures, problems, and constraints faced by state- and party-affiliated media in the former Soviet bloc are more muted or mild in the Nicaragua context, largely owing to the continuing Sandinista presence in the Nicaraguan state and national political life, a reflection (in turn) of the Front's continuing strength and relative popular legitimacy.

8. The Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms adopted in September 1991 by the now-defunct USSR Congress of People's Deputies included two articles directly bearing on freedom of the press: "Article 6. Every person has the right to freedom of speech and to an unimpeded expression of opinions and convictions and to their dissemination orally or in a written form. Mass media are free. Censorship is not allowed." "Article 12. Every person has the right to receive full and true information on the state of affairs in all spheres of state, economic, social and international life, and on issues of rights, legal interests and duties." *New York Times*, 7 September 1991, p. A5.

   In addition to a more pluralistic press, an important effect of the lifting of censorship regulations in both Nicaragua and the former Soviet bloc has been an influx of hard-core pornographic material. For the situation in Poland, see Kitty McKinsey, "From condoms to aphrodisiacs, sex-shop business booming in Poland," *The Gazette* (Montreal), 13 August 1990, p. B1. On the former Soviet union, see Fred Weir, "Red-light porn alarms Soviet feminists," *The Guardian* (New York), 12 June 1991, p. 13. On Nicaragua, see "The discreet charm of porn," *Gente*, 5 April 1991 (concentrating on the proliferation of film and video pornography).

9. Annick Cojean, "The rebirth of Poland's free press," *Le Monde*, 16 March 1990, in *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 8 April 1990, p. 14. Cojean reports: "An amazing media revolution is sweeping through Poland. A new publication appears at newsstands almost every day. Neighbourhood papers are appearing in the cities and suburbs. Villages are acquiring mimeograph machines to print their own newsletters. Parishes, community groups, companies, universities and high schools are all launching publications, as are taxi drivers' associations, movie fan clubs, jazz lovers' societies and poetry circles."

10. See Guillermo Fernández, "A modest publications boom," *Barricada Internacional*, 22 September 1990. The new publications included *El Semanario*, headed by former Nicaraguan Vice President Sergio Ramirez; *Novedades de Nicaragua*, a business and professional publication with a centre-right orientation; *Bolsa de noticias*, a two-page evening bulletin; *Nicaragua desde adentro*, a biweekly edited by former Sandinista analysts and government officials; *Crítica*, a pro-Sandinista monthly; *Análisis*, a monthly of economic affairs with a centrist tinge; *Aljama*, the monthly publication of the Palestinian Arab community in Nicaragua; *Enlace*, published with Swiss funding and providing advice on "farming, fishing, health, poultry-raising, ranching and everything connected with community development"; *Process/Info*, edited by "a group of progressive Salvadorans and Nicaraguans; and *Tabú*, "Nicaragua's most 'frivolous' publication," emphasizing fashion, interviews, and sexuality. No concerted attempt was made during field research for this thesis to find out how many of these publications still appeared as of Spring 1991.

11. Mikós Vámos, "Eastern Europe's New Press Lords," *The Nation*, 30 September 1991, p. 368.

12. Among the material constraints Miklós Vámos mentions in the Hungarian context is "the incompetence of the state-run postal system. ... Even papers that are popular and could take many more subscribers are shackled by the limited capacity of the postal service. No private delivery business exists yet." Vamós, "Eastern Europe's New Press Lords."

13. For the impact of the withdrawal of subscriptions, see Henry Kamm's account of the collapse of the Prague-based *Problems of Peace and Socialism*, "With Nonreaders Gone, Marxism's Journal Fails," *New York Times*, 3 July 1990, p. A12. "More than 400 editors, about half of them Soviet citizens, worked in the former seminary to prepare the master edition of the monthly in Russian. Editions in English and Arabic were also prepared here but printed in their countries of circulation. Hundreds of other editors worked around the world to prepare 70 editions of the identical journal in a total of 41 languages, whose global circulation was reported at 550,000 copies. The costs were borne largely by the Soviet party, with lesser contributions from East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Mongolia. As the tide turned, parties withdrew their support." The last editor, Lubomir Molnar, reported: "We are ending this historical period [i.e., of the publication's existence] with money only from the Soviet Union and Mongolia."

14. See Francis X. Clines, "Press in Russia Is Hurt By the Reforms It Backs," *New York Times*, 20 January 1992. Clines writes that "There is speculation ... the Russian President, Boris N. Yeltsin, may issue an executive order controlling prices and easing the pressures on publications caught between the freedoms of press and market economics."

15. For example, *Pravda* - whose circulation plummeted from 11 million in 1980 to 1 million in 1991 - "can no longer afford to pay the $75,000 annual operating budget for the New York City bureau and by Christmas [1991] will have closed 20 of its 32 foreign bureaus. See Colum Lynch, "Give my regards to Broadwayski," *The Globe and Mail*, 21 December 1991, p D3

16. Quoted in Cojean, "The rebirth of Poland's free press." See also Ruth Gruber, "Polish Journalists Find Challenges in Publishing Independent Papers," *The Christian Science Monitor*, date unavailable. Kostek Gebert, a former journalist in the underground, pro-Solidarity Polish press, now working freelance, states: "I have absolutely no professional training as a journalist; I don't know how to do reporting." Gebert adds: "I tried several times to write a factual report on things I saw, keeping my comments to myself. That was sheer torture. ... The kind of columns I [once] did were militant columns, for a cause. What you didn't try to do was paint a balanced picture, but essentially hit at the enemy's weak spots, keep up morale. ... So what do you do now if you try to do your job decently?" The dilemma is even more acute for former Party journalist Andrzej Jonas, who notes, "It's almost impossible, like being reborn, to learn to write in a Western style, not just because of the censorship, but because of the philosophy of [Communist] journalism." A Moscow journalist, Yuri Shchekoshikin, also acknowledges the problem: "What we need now are not politicians, but professional journalists." Michael Dobbs, "Heroes of glasnost tumble as failed coup triggers purge in media," *The Gazette* (from the *Washington Post*), 29 August 1991, p. A14.

17. See Cojean, "The rebirth of Poland's free press," quoting Kracow editor Mieczyslaw Gill. "There are professional journalists who would be just as compliant with this [Solidarity] government as they were with the communists before." In some cases the subservient approach to state or party authorities may be linked to the material constraints which transition imposes on the media organ's functioning, and the appeal for relief in the form of state protection or subsidy. Celestine Bohlen notes that there exists "a deep confusion over the role of a free press" in Poland. "Some people talk about 'too much' criticism of government as a dangerous luxury in societies where democratic institutions have shallow roots. Many newspaper editors see objective reporting as an abdication of their right to act as political players." Bohlen, "East Europe's Cultural Life, Once a Refuge, Now Eclipsed," *New York Times*, 13 November 1990, p. A12. For a similar argument in the context of the former Soviet Union, see Felicity Barringer, "Read All About It! A Petrified Press in New Guise," *New York Times*, 5 September 1991, p. A10.

18. Deputy Editor Drzysztof Sliwinski, an editor at the pro-Solidarity *Gazeta Wyborcza* in Poland, states: "We are fighting very much to be an independent paper. Public opinion isn't used to such a situation and therefore they consider us very much as an official Solidarity paper. Whereas many people who are involved here, involved in the opposition and so on, also have no idea of the independent press." Quoted Gruber, "Polish Journalists."

19. The most notable instance, of course, is the suppression by Russian President Yeltsin of many of the CPSU-affiliated organs following the failed coup of August 1991. See Dobbs, "Heroes of glasnost tumble," Barringer, "Read All About It!," and Bohlen, "Pravda and Ukraine."

20. For an overview, see Vámos, "Eastern Europe's New Press Lords." On Hungary, see Kamm, "Freed From Censorship."

21. See Craig R. Whitney, "Novelty in Leipzig: a Paper With No Party Line," *New York Times*, 20 August 1990, p. D8. Jan Peter, founder of a new publication called *Leipziger Andere Zeitung*, recalls that after the political transition "the West German newspapers began moving in. We figured we had six to seven weeks to get well enough established with readers here so that we wouldn't disappear once the West German papers came in, and we made it. But I think it'd take 20 million marks, not just 20,000, to start a newspaper now." The phenomenon extends to the

world of book-publishing: for a report from the former Soviet Union, see Juan Tamayo, "Russians turning to sex and Spillane," *The Gazette* (from the *Miami Herald*), 11 January 1992, p. B1.

22. Television also remains the only area of media functioning in the former Soviet bloc not open to foreign ownership: like Nicaragua, broadcasting everywhere "is still a state monopoly" as of late 1991. Vámos, "Eastern Europe's New Press Lords."

23. Vámos, "Eastern Europe's New Press Lords," p. 368. In the former Soviet Union, *Pravda*, once "the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party," has been transformed into "plain old Pravda. Gone are the hammer and sickle, and the workers of the world uniting ..." Barringer, "Read All About It!" The picture of Lenin was also removed; see Jim Sheppard, "No longer red but in the red, Pravda prints ad on front page," *The Gazette* (Montreal), 17 November 1991, p. B5. In the Russian city of Yaroslavl, "The party newspaper marked the triumph of democracy [after the failed August coup] by changing its name from Severnii Rabochii (Northern Worker) to Severnii Krai (Northern Region). The column that used to be devoted to 'party life' has been retitled 'multi-party life.'" Michael Dobbs, "Russian heartland ill-prepared for Yeltsin's revolution," *The Gazette* (from the *Washington Post*), date unavailable (September 1991?). The Prague-based *Problems of Peace and Socialism* was reported, after its collapse, to be "negotiating with former financial contributors to convert Peace and Socialism International Publishers into an unsubsidized publishing house for left-wing, but not necessarily Communist, writing ... The editor has already chosen a non-internationalist name for the new enterprise - Patria." Kamm, "With Nonreaders Gone."

24. Celestine Bohlen, "Pravda and Ukraine deals assuage critics of Russian arrogance," *The Gazette* (from the *New York Times*), 31 August 1991, p. B6. Felicity Barringer writes that the paper *Leningradskaya Pravda* was reborn as *Sankt-Petersburgskiye Vedomosti*, *The St. Petersburg Gazette*, "a 'news exchange' dedicated to delivering 'all aspects of socially significant information for the population of Leningrad-St. Petersburg." "Like movie stars prone to changing spouses with alarming alacrity," Barringer notes, "Soviet news organizations that once owed their allegiance to the Communist Party are shedding old identities." Only *Sovetskaya Rossiya* "continues to be the unified voice of Communist Party hard-liners and the modern heirs of an old anti-Western, fervently nationalistic strain in Russian society." Barringer, "Read All About It!"

25. Sheppard, "No longer red." "Frankly speaking, it is professionally painful for us to give up this important part of our newspaper," the paper's editors announced in a small front-page box. "But our current self-financing way of life has its own severe rules. And in order for Pravda to survive under these new conditions, the staff is engaging commercial activities in the most active way. Use of this space for advertising is [just] another contribution to our budget." The paper had been running advertisements on inside pages for only a few months prior to the failed August 1990 coup.

26. For example, East German journalist Jan Peter, speaking in August 1990 prior to reunification: "We need more international advertising, maybe from British and American companies that want to do business here. And we're looking abroad for seed money from foundations or individuals interested in helping build up a really original, independent kind of new journalism here." Whitney, "Novelty in Leipzig."

Notes – Appendix

1. Booth and Walker note that by 1983 El Salvador's opposition press had been "terrorized into extinction," while Guatemala led the world in murders and "disappearances" of journalists. John A. Booth and Thomas W. Walker, *Understanding Central America* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p. 124. Lord Chitnis's report on the 1984 El Salvador elections included this passage: "But, what of the anti-government journalist in El Salvador? Assuming he finds a paper or magazine willing to publish his articles - a huge assumption - he too will be in fear of his life Not long ago, the mutilated, decapitated bodies of journalists were found on the roadside Indeed, there is now no opposition newspaper to censor They have been forced into silence." Quoted in Sklar, *Washington's War on Nicaragua*, p. 203. For a description of the campaign of destruction and assassination directed in 1980-81 at *La Crónica del Pueblo* and *El Independiente*, see Americas Watch, "The Continuing Terror: Seventh Supplement to the Report on Human Rights in El Salvador" (New York: Americas Watch, September 1985), pp. 151-152. On Guatemala, see "Protecting the press in Guatemala," *Latin America Connexions* 5.5 (Oct.-Nov. 1991), p. 1. This article cites a report by the Canadian Committee to Protect Journalists to the effect that "Close to fifty of Guatemala's 600 journalists have been murdered in recent years. ... Virtually every journalist interviewed had a story to tell about death threats." The situation is equally grim in Mexico, where "to be a journalist ... has become a high-risk occupation," according to writer Alberto Manguel: "Since 1983, under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), at least 55 journalists have been murdered or 'disappeared' . . In many cases the journalists in question had criticized a government activity or antagonized an official prior to the attacks." Alberto Manguel, "Shooting the Messenger," *The Globe and Mail*, 30 November 1991, p. D3.

2. Francisco Goldman, "Sad Tales of La Libertad de Prensa," *Harper's Magazine*, August 1988, p. 56.

3. See Nichols' careful examination of the evidence (which is overwhelming) that *La Prensa* received millions of dollars in aid from covert support networks in the U.S. government and Central Intelligence Agency. John Spicer Nichols, "*La Prensa*: The CIA Connection," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August 1988, pp. 34-35. The longest shutdown of *La Prensa*, lasting for 15 months in 1986 and 1987, followed directly on the U.S. Congress's vote to supply the Contras with $100 million in aid. Several prominent *La Prensa* directors had flown to Washington to lobby for the aid.

4. Even the measures of closure and prior censorship did not necessarily result in a highly conflictual personal relationship between state agents and representatives of opposition media organs. Nelba Blandón, former chief censor at the Ministry of the Interior, states: "I think that abroad there's a bit of a distorted vision of our relationship with political sectors that were openly in opposition to our government project. But I think we've overcome the politics of the caveman. In political terms, we're civilized adversaries. Sometimes you could raise your voice or lose your patience, but ..." She adds: "I have, for example, a personal friendship with Pedro Joaquín Chamorro [Jr], who was in charge of *La Prensa*; with Don Jaime Chamorro, another director of *La Prensa* at the time. We always had a very cordial relationship. It wasn't as though I was behind one barricade and they were behind another. We'd sit down for coffee, or sometimes drink a beer together. As we became more familiar with each other, we'd talk on the telephone every day. If Pedro Joaquín would say, 'You don't like that [story], so I'll put in this thing instead,' I knew he wouldn't go back on his word. The same with Don Jaime." Blandón interview, 15 April 1991. The picture squares well with the business and logistical relations established among Managua's three otherwise-polarized daily papers during the 1980s.

5. According to Nelba Blandón, there existed a "gentleman's agreement" between the régime and radio stations. "At first we were quite drastic with [regard to] news spots. With the passage of time, we became more flexible, because imposing prior censorship on them affected them more deeply as a medium. There were some months in which prior censorship was enforced, but later we reached a pact with the station directors which was controlled from the broadcast section [of the Office of Communications Media]. If they violated the guidelines that had been established, then we applied sanctions. But we stopped implementing prior censorship." Blandón interview, 15 April 1991.

   The main stations affected by media legislation belonged to the political opposition, but pro-revolutionary stations were also targeted. In January 1982, two months prior to the announcement of a formal state of emergency, programs on Radio Mil, Radio Mundial, Radio Católica, and Radio Corporación - all conservative stations - were closed for publicizing items concerning the activities of the Sandinista People's Army on the northern frontier. The state of emergency, though, took two programs from the pro-government Radio Sandino (the FSLN's official station) and La Voz de Nicaragua (state-run radio) off the air, along with two from Radio Mundial. The trend continued throughout the decade, with Radio Católica and Radio Corporación being the prime targets but pro-government stations also exposed to post-facto punitive measures. In 1988, for example, the Radio Sandino program "En Directo" was taken off the air for 48 hours for referring to *La Prensa* sub-director Cristiana Chamorro as a "whore" (see "No rules of the game: freedom of the press in Nicaragua," *Pensamiento Propio* Special Edition No. 27 [1-15 Aug. 1988]).

6. Nigel Cross, "Revolution and the press in Nicaragua," *Index on Censorship* 2/82, p. 39.

7. Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 191. The full text of the legislation can be found in *La Gaceta* (the official daily publication of the Nicaraguan assembly), 13 September 1979.

8. Jonathan Evan Maslow, "The junta and the press: a family affair," *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April 1991, p. 50.

9. *Foreign Broadcast Information Service* (Latin America), 17 March 1982, p. P10.

10. Cross, "Revolution and the press," p. 30.

11. A brief overview of media legislation and media-state relations under the Somoza dictatorship may be useful in this context. The Code of Radio and Television (known as the "Black Code") was promulgated in July 1962, a year after the founding of the FSLN. The code was applied with greatest severity to radio, the main means of news dissemination for the largely illiterate Nicaraguan population. "Any radio program judged 'of a subversive character' or likely to 'undermine public order' was forbidden, under penalty of a $150 fine against the station owners, directors and program authors, when such programs were aired. In early July [1962] the Somozas' handpicked Congress passed a new law extending the penalties to all associated with a 'subversive' broadcast, to even the technicians, advertising sponsors and announcers." Bernard Diederich, *Somoza and the Legacy of U.S. Involvement in Central America* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981), p. 71. The printed press also suffered occasional censorship or closure: *La Prensa*, for example, was closed during the election campaign of 1967, from 23 January to 3 February. The newspaper alleged occupying forces had caused 100,000 *córdobas* in damage. Three radio stations were also closed at this time.

    Martial law was declared in Nicaragua following the massive earthquake of 23 December 1972, including heavy censorship of the press. It lasted 18 months and was reimposed in December 1974 after the Sandinistas invaded a Christmas party in Managua thrown by Somoza crony José María Castillo Quant, taking hostages. *La Prensa* at this time appeared only after heavy censorship, restrictions which remained on print media until September 1977. Total censorship on radio stations was imposed in February 1977; many temporarily went off the air.

    On 19 September 1977, Somoza, under pressure from the Carter administration and believing the Sandinista insurrectionaries to be decisively defeated, lifted press censorship. In January 1978 *La Prensa* publisher Pedro Joaquín Chamorro was assassinated. The Somoza clan

was widely held responsible for the killing, although controversy continues. Somoza had in fact used *La Prensa* as a symbol of the press freedom which, he alleged, existed in Nicaragua: "Is there freedom in Nicaragua? I think there is. Anyone who reads *La Prensa* can see that. The fact that the opposition newspaper published all these charges against me shows that there is liberty in this country." Quoted Diederich, *Somoza*, p. 162. The assassination denied the dictator this useful propaganda device, the best argument against Somoza's direct complicity in Chamorro's murder

In December 1978, Somoza announced the end of martial law and promised repeal of the Black Code. On 6 June 1979, with the Sandinista insurrection in its final stages, a 90-day state of siege was imposed, including "complete restriction of domestic news coverage" (Diederich, p. 250).

On 11 June Somoza authorized an operation against the *La Prensa* plant and offices on the northern highway, at the heart of the urban insurrection in Managua. A Staghound armoured vehicle fired at point-blank range into the building; several guardsmen doused the premises with gasoline, and a Cessna airplane fired rockets at the building. Only the façade and the nameplate remained when the assault had finished; 230 journalists and workers were thrown out of work (Diederich, p. 257).

The assassination of ABC-TV cameraman Bill Stewart by the Somocista National Guard on 20 June 1979 is widely viewed as decisive in the Carter's administration to abandon support for Somoza. Diederich writes that "The few minutes of videotape did more to injure Somoza's reputation around the world, even among conservatives, than perhaps any single incident in the decades-long family rule" (p. 271).

12. "I had nothing to do with it[s drafting]." Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991.

13. Quoted in Michael Massing, "Nicaragua's free-fire journalism," *Columbia Journalism Review*, July/August 1988, p. 29.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Cited in Edmisten, *Nicaragua Divided*, p. 123.

16. Quoted in "Opposition unhappy with press law," *Latin America Regional Reports: Mexico & Central America*, RM-89-05, 8 June 1989, p. 3.

17. By "restrictions on the free operation of media," I mean primarily the imposition of short- or long-term bans on publishing or broadcasting, sometimes including occupation of plant by state forces. Nichols, for one, considers closure a variant of censorship, and examines the two together under the rubric of "extralegal pressures." Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 192. The granting or revoking of broadcasting licenses should also be included in this category.

18. Nichols, "News Media in the Nicaraguan Revolution," pp. 193-94.

19. Cross, "Revolution and the press in Nicaragua," p. 39.

20. "The closing of La Prensa: A case of freedom of the press or of national defense?" Pamphlet produced by the Centro de Comunicación Internacional (a subsidiary of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda), Managua, July 1986.

21. Text of communiqué cited in Kinzer, *Blood of Brothers*, p 419.

22. Former Chief Censor Nelba Blandón comments: "In general, the Sandinista government always took into account the international political costs this [censorship] policy had. We knew it was the principal tool for accusing us of being dictatorial, violating human rights, anything. But the government had to choose between two evils, and it chose the lesser evil. .. At that moment we had to say, 'Look, we're going to have to bother these [pro-US] sectors, but we're going to try to protect the real wages of the workers. We're not going to allow the media to be instruments for speculation, for scarcity, to encourage the black market - using half-truths, taking facts out of context, or publishing total lies. To stimulate the kind of situation that developed in Chile, with stockpiling and speculation" Blandón interview, 15 April 1991.

23. Chamorro, "How 'La Prensa' Was Silenced." This is the most extensive account, in English, of the Sandinista - *La Prensa* feud, along with Edmisten, *Nicaragua Divided*, a gossipy but occasionally enlightening account.

24. See also the brief discussion of measures taken against pro-revolutionary radio stations in note 5 above.

25. "Sandinism is not 'Democratism'," *Barricada*, 14 March 1980; cited in Fagen, "The Nicaraguan Revolution," p. 28. Carlos M. Vilas writes: "What for the FSLN was 'national reconstruction' was interpreted by [the leftist opposition] ... as the promotion of bourgeois class interests; labor discipline was seen as an increase in worker exploitation." Vilas, *The Sandinista Revolution: National Liberation and Social Transformation in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1986), p. 181.

26. The paper had been publishing from 1 March 1979.

27. Henríquez interview, 8 April 1991.

28. Henríquez interview, 8 April 1991. Carlos Fernando Chamorro concurs that the closure of the paper was done for political rather than legal reasons. "When I look back 12 years later, I can tell you [*El Pueblo*] was closed because of political discrepancies, because it came out with a very strong line discrediting the revolution, discrediting the *junta*, discrediting the FSLN. I guess that's the basic reason. I mean, they did not commit any crime; but at that point their actions were perceived as a crime." Chamorro interview, 28 February 1991.

29. The Nicaraguan Communist Party (PCdeN, formerly the Socialist Workers' Party) was formed as the result of a 1967 division in the ranks of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN). The PCdeN represented the accommodationist wing of the PSN - a wing that historically had a close relationship with the Somoza dictatorship. In one of the many ironies of Nicaraguan politics, the PCdeN contested the 1990 elections as part of Violeta Chamorro's UNO coalition. *Avance*, founded by the PCdeN as a weekly shortly after the 1979 revolution, today is linked to the faction of the Chamorro government overseen by Vice-President Virgilio Godoy. Circulation throughout the 1980s and continuing today has been sporadic, apparently owing more to internal political disputes and material shortages than state suppression. Interviews with Juan Alberto Henríquez, 8 April 1991, and former PSN militant Onofre Guevara, 2 April 1991. On the PSN's historic links with *Somocismo*, see Diederich, *Somoza*, p. 33.

30. "We censor that which goes against the interests of the majority," interview with Nelba Blandón, *Pensamiento Propio* No. 34 (July 1986), p. 41.

31. The decree was signed by Nelba Blandón, who stated that such excessive language "has created confusion among the Nicaraguan people"; see *Barricada*, 17 March 1982. *El Nuevo Diario* returned after the one-day ban with no direct comment on the closure, but reiterated its editorial support for the emergency measures, which it said threatened only those who sought the "destruction" of the revolution.

32. Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991. Chamorro made regular pro-forma declarations during the 1980s that *Barricada* was subjected to the same prior censorship as Managua's other two daily papers. See, for example, his comments in Peter Davis, *Where Is Nicaragua?*, p. 217: "*Barricada* is censored, too. I have to submit every piece of copy to the censor's office the same as my brother" - a reference to Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Jr. across town at *La Prensa*. But Nicaragua's chief censor at the Ministry of the Interior for much of the 1980s, Nelba Blandón, confirmed that a unique relationship of trust in fact existed between *Barricada* and the censoring authorities, sometimes combined with post-facto disciplinary measures (usually chiding or warning). "It would be a total lie if I told you [the censorship policy] was applied to them [*Barricada*] in the same way it was applied to *La Prensa* or *El Nuevo Diario*." Question: "*Barricada* did not have to submit each day's copy to the Office [of Communications Media] for approval, but *La Prensa* and *El Nuevo Diario* did. Is that correct?" "That's correct." Blandón interview, 15 April 1991. Several

Barricada staffmembers confirmed this preferential treatment for *Barricada*, though none was willing to be quoted for attribution.

33. Blandón interview, 15 April 1991.

El Nuevo Diario also figured in another press controversy during the Sandinista years, that surrounding one of the paper's editors, William Grigsby On February 5, 1987, an article commissioned by Grigsby appeared. an interview with Alan Bolt, leader of a Matagalpa-based theatre group. Bolt, an early Sandinista militant, had an ideological falling out with the Front's leadership in 1976. In the *Nuevo Diario* interview, he criticized the Front's verticalism and bureaucratism, and issued a call for a more horizontal apportioning of power The criticisms were close to Grigsby's own, which were well-known by that point. In January 1987, Grigsby was expelled from Sandinista ranks. He subsequently wrote an article of his own for *El Nuevo Diario* entitled, "Fear of Democracy" which further riled the Sandinista leadership, Grigsby says, "because of its honesty, and because it was a challenge to the official line."

In May 1987 Grigsby was fired from *El Nuevo Diario* and turned to fulltime work at Radio Primerísima, eventually becoming director of the station. Subsequently, he asserts, he was offered reinstatement in the party. "But I'm not interested in returning, because I want to continue being a journalist I don't want that work to be subject to Party dictates. I'm a Sandinista But I'm a journalist first and last." Grigsby interview, 28 February 1991. He told Michael Massing in 1988 that "I still support the Sandinista revolution. But I have a different idea [than *El Nuevo Diario*] of how to do journalism. I believe that being critical is intrinsic to journalism Everyone, everything, can be criticized." Massing, "Nicaragua's free-fire journalism," p. 30

It is not clear in all this precisely what role the Sandinista leadership may have played in putting pressure on the editorial staff of *El Nuevo Diario* to have Grigsby fired. For his part, Chamorro contends, "William was very aggressive, but not always with the type of aggressiveness that is good for a newspaper. So I think he was perceived by the director of the paper as someone who was created problems. So at a certain point in time, Xavier Chamorro decided Grigsby should get out. But the FSLN didn't have anything at all to do with that" Chamorro interview, 12 April 1991. For more on the Grigsby controversy (which continues), see Jones, *Nicaragua, 1991.*

34. The publication was particularly popular among young people: one survey found 77 percent of Managua university students were carrying the paper in their bag at the time they were interviewed! See the interview with Sánchez in "My caricatures are belligerent, fiery," *Pensamiento Propio* No. 42 (May 1987), p. 27.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Irías interview, 22 March 1991.

37. See Stephen Kinzer, "Magazine Using Nude Photos Is Dressed Down by Managua," *New York Times*, 28 August 1988. This account is also based on interviews with Sergio De Castro, Sofía Montenegro, Carlos Fernando Chamorro, and Noel Irías, all of whom knew Sánchez well and some of whom (De Castro, Montenegro) played an active role in his defence.

38. William Grigsby and Sofía Montenegro. In both cases, factors beyond journalistic behaviour were involved in the expulsions.

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VIII. *Interviews Conducted, February-May 1991*

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Cerna, Pablo. Staffwriter at *Barricada* supplement, *Gente*; author of thesis on Nicaraguan caricaturist and former *La Semana Cómica* Director Róger Sánchez. Managua, 4 April 1991.

Chamorro, Carlos Fernando. Director and Editor-in-Chief, *Barricada*; head of FSLN's Department of Agitation and Propaganda, 1984-87; son of former *La Prensa* director, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, and current Nicaraguan President, Violeta Chamorro. Managua, 28 February, 19 March, 3 April, 12 April, 17 April, 18 April, 28 April 1991.

Cortés, Guillermo. *Barricada* senior writer and columnist; former war correspondent; former journalist with *El Pueblo* (1979-80); co-author of dissertation on objectivity and professionalism at

Barricada. Managua, 9 April, 15 April, 9 May 1991.

Cuadra, Pablo Antonio. Director of *La Prensa*; Nicaragua's most prominent poet. Managua, 26 April 1991.

Curschmann, Jane. Staffwriter and translator, *Barricada Internacional*. Managua, multiple interviews.

De Castro, Sergio. Member of *Barricada* editorial council; former editor of *Barricada Internacional*. Managua, 22 April 1991.

Flakoll Alegría, Daniel. Editor-in-chief, *Barricada Internacional*. Managua, 25 February 1991.

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Fonseca, Roberto. Editor of *Barricada* section, *De Todo Un Poco*. Managua, 9 May 1991.

Grigsby, William. Managing Director of radio station *La Primerísima*; former reporter at *El Nuevo Diario*; functionary at FSLN's Department of Agitation and Propaganda in mid-1980s. Managua, 28 February 1991.

Guevara, Onofre. *Barricada* senior writer; former journalist with pre-1979 Socialist Party press. Managua, 2 April 1991.

Henríquez, Juan Alberto. Co-editor of *El Pueblo*. Managua, 8 April 1991.

Irías, Noel. Editor of *La Semana Cómica*; former *Barricada* journalist. Managua, 22 March 1991.

Kreimann, Max. *Barricada* Business Manager. Managua, 4 April 1991.

Martínez, Rene. Production Manager, *La Semana Cómica*. Managua, 22 March 1991.

Montenegro, Sofía. Director and Editor-in-Chief of *Barricada* supplement, *Gente*; *Barricada* International Editor, 1980-84; *Barricada* Editorial Page Editor, 1985-88. Managua, 8 March, 10 March, 15 March, 2 April, 3 April, 11 April, 1 May, 6 May 1991.

Murillo, Rosario. Director of former *Barricada* cultural supplement, *Ventana* (ceased publication 1991); poet; former director of Sandinista cultural union (ASTC); companion of ex-President Daniel Ortega. Managua, 24 April 1991.

Reyes, Xavier. *Barricada* Sub-Director and member of Editorial Council; Managing Editor, 1984-87; former *Barricada* war correspondent. Managua, 13 April 1991.

Rothschuh, Guillermo. Communications theorists, Department of Sociology, University of Central America (Managua); advisor to *Barricada* Editorial Council; former advisor to Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Managua, 16 April 1991.

Selser, Gabriela. Staffwriter, *Barricada Internacional*; former *Barricada* war correspondent. Managua, 9 May 1991.