

**POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN SANDINISTA NICARAGUA (1979-90):
A CASE STUDY OF TWO RURAL COOPERATIVES**

**BY
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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides a detailed examination of the processes of participation which developed during the years of the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua (1979-90) and is based on extensive fieldwork on two rural cooperatives. Whereas the predominant analysis of the experience of popular participation during the period has emphasised structural level phenomena, here an attempt is made to combine actor-oriented and structural-historical approaches in order to identify the key factors which operated to shape the development of local participation. In such a way the thesis stresses how micro-level factors - life experiences, subjective meanings and group dynamics - interacted with macro-level processes.

The thesis starts by identifying the dimensions and theories of popular participation which relate to its objectives, intensities and outcomes, in order to frame the research questions. The period studied is then contextualised with a history of Nicaragua, establishing the authoritarian conditions which marginalised the majority of Nicaraguans from economic development and political processes. Next, the thesis examines Sandinista political theory, the channels of popular participation and the macro-level factors which restricted its development. It also describes how the cooperative movement evolved during the period of Sandinista rule as an expression of the peasant movement in the context of state paternalism.

The main analytical body of the thesis starts by providing background details about the two case studies. Then it details and compares the participatory processes underway within the cooperatives, focusing on the assembly, leadership and women; the different intensities of participation; and the social factors influencing it. These processes are evaluated qualitatively and it is demonstrated that despite apparent limitations, participation enhanced the social, political and psychological power of cooperative members although in different, uneven and contradictory ways.

The thesis concludes that although the participation of peasants in national level structures was restricted, the objective conditions created by the FSLN contributed to the qualitative empowerment of individuals incorporated into cooperatives. International comparisons, theoretical and policy implications are finally noted.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMNLAE	Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Association of Women
AMPRONAC	Association of Women Confronting the National Problem
ANDEN	Teachers' Union
APP	Area of People's Property
ATC	Agricultural Workers' Union
BND	National Development Bank
CAE	Electoral Activist Committee
CAS	Sandinista Agricultural Cooperative
CC	Community Committee
CCCA	Confederation of Cooperatives of the Caribbean and Central America
CCS	Service and Credit Cooperative
CDC	Centre for Peasant Development
CDC	Civil Defence Committee
CDS	Sandinista Defence Committee
CEPA	Educational Centre for Agrarian Advancement
CEPAD	Evangelical Committee for Assistance and Development
CIERA	Centre for the Investigation and Study of Agrarian Reform
CONDECA	Central American Defence Council
CSM	Dead Furrow Cooperative
CST	Sandinista Workers' Union
CT	Work Collective
CZDARA	Zones for Cooperative Development and Centre for Agrarian Reform Assistance
DN	National Directorate
ECODEPA	Cooperative Enterprise for Agricultural Producers
ENABAS	Nicaraguan Enterprise for Storage
EPS	Sandinista Patriotic Army
ERA	Agrarian Reform Enterprise
FDN	Nicaraguan Democratic Front
FENACOOOP	National Federation of Cooperatives
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front
GPP	Prolonged People's War Tendency
IAN	Institute of Land Reform and Colonisation
INRA	Institute of Agrarian Reform
INVIerno	Institute for Peasant Welfare
JGRN	Government of National Reconstruction
MED	Ministry of Education
MIDINRA	Ministry of Agrarian Reform
MINSA	Ministry of Health
MPU	United People's Movement
PLI	Independent Liberal Party
PROAGRO	Agricultural Products
PROCAMPO	Peasant Programme
PSN	Socialist Democratic Party
RAS	Sandinista Agrarian Reform
TC	Peasant Shop

TP	Proletarian Tendency
UCA	Union of Agricultural Cooperatives
UDEL	Democratic Liberation Front
UNAG	National Association of Farmers and Ranchers
UNO	National Opposition Union
UPANIC	Union of Agricultural Producers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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INTRODUCTION

Democracy has been a central issue in political struggles and controversies since the concept and practices were first devised in Classical Greece and has since been subject to numerous ideological interpretations and political mutations. Never were its definitions more polarised or entrenched than during the Cold War when regimes either appealed for legitimacy in terms of the democratic objectives they allegedly upheld, or justified foreign intervention in terms of the need to safeguard "democracy".

In the West, the dominant hegemonic notion of democracy has become conflated with a representative system of government. It is based on theories of democracy, in particular that which was advocated by Schumpeter (1943), which defined democracy as a "political method" and saw democracy as:

".. that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."

Here democracy is understood as "access to government" and the emphasis is placed on the selection of representatives. Participation is assigned a minimal role; rather, the political participation of mass society is reduced to the periodic assertion of electoral preferences in the choice of leaders. The primary concern of those ascribing to such classical elitist theory (elitist because they opt for an entrenchment of elite caucuses) is the maintenance of political stability. Consequently, they emphasise those decision-making processes and structures which favour efficiency above popular equality in participation (Fagence, 1977:28). The underlying assumption is that society as a mass is politically naive, incompetent and apathetic. Overlooked in this perspective are the ways in which political power is exerted, how governing elites use formal democratic institutions to serve their own class interests and the possibilities for citizens to influence decision-making. Moreover, this notion of democracy is restricted to the political domain and politics is conceived as a sphere of activity autonomous from the economy.

The socioeconomic systems in these Western representative democracies are based on the principles of private ownership and competition of the free-market. This has in turn facilitated the equation of market equals democracy (Amin, 1991:87). Thus, in the ideological confrontation between capitalism and socialism, the West appropriated exclusive rights over the use of the term "democracy" and the conflict between the two

opposing systems was reduced crudely to that of "democracy" versus "socialism". Those countries not operating with the free-market principle were thereby characterised as "undemocratic".

Historically, socialist countries have also proclaimed themselves as democratic but unlike the representative model of democracy where the notion of individual liberty is given priority, in general terms the socialist concept of democracy emphasises the idea of equality between individuals (Held, 1991). Here democracy is rooted in socioeconomic equality since it is perceived that once freed of economic alienation new social relations give rise to an equality based on cooperation among workers, rather than their subjugation (Amin, 1991:87). Harking back to the classical tradition of democracy - a mooring from which liberal discourse and practice has long been severed - Marxist theory also emphasises the importance of participation. Participatory democracy is seen as central in order to reduce the gap between government and governed, between state and society (Marchetti, 1986) and to influence the direction of official decisions. Consequently, Marxists propositions are generally pro-participationist even though Marxist philosophy also conditionally accepts the inevitability of involving representatives in decision-making structures (Fagence, 1977:44).

In practice, political democracy has been the Achilles heel in the construction of socialism and was most explicitly absent in cases of those authoritarian eastern bloc models which stifled democratic liberties and obstructed the development of genuine socialist democracy (Lowry, 1986:267). Moreover, as with all political systems its development was subject to the particular objective conditions and historic circumstances.

Nicaragua: a special case

Until 1979, Nicaragua, a country in the Central American isthmus with a population of just under three million, was ruled by the Somoza family dynasty which had monopolised power since 1934 and resisted all forms of political, social and economic modernisation (Weeks, 1986:48). It excluded all but an elite group of cohorts known as the *Somocistas*, from the political process and from access to the wealth of the country's resources. Landownership was concentrated amongst this small minority. The hallmarks of the Somoza rule were its authoritarianism, lack of democracy and a coercive hegemonic apparatus. The regime met opposition with violence, oppression or cooption, violated the

constitutional order, rigged elections and maintained absolute control of the country's army, the National Guard. Reform was impossible through anything but the trauma of civil war.

On 19 July 1979, the Popular Sandinista Revolution swept the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) into power. The following experiment in power broke the orthodox socialist mould because the Sandinistas aimed not just for structural transformation but also for political pluralism. Moreover, they wanted to establish popular democratic control over the state and society, ensure democratic freedoms of speech, assembly and petition and adopt western-style representative institutions; that is, guarantee individual liberty. This was all the more remarkable considering the objective conditions the Revolution encountered as well as the historic legacy of Somoza rule where even the principle that governments are based upon general consent was novel. As Molyneux reminds us, its task represented an "extreme case" in the capitalist periphery of having to construct a socialist society in the context of severe poverty and underdevelopment while having to confront counter-revolution and external intervention (Molyneux, 1986:286). Nonetheless, the FSLN effectively refreshed the ongoing and entrenched debate about the theory and practice of democracy. It attempted to transform the historically diverging views and practice of democracy by declaring its intention to combine social revolution with pluralism and to establish "participatory democracy" alongside western-style representative democracy. The FSLN created, in the words of the social scientist Coraggio, "the possibility of a new way of thinking about democracy and socialism" (1985:xvi).

According to Sandinista theory, if the revolutionary project was to benefit the poor it had to promote direct popular participation as a way of ensuring that the interests of the hitherto excluded "majority" were represented. Participatory democracy was deemed necessary to enable the least privileged sectors to organise themselves and develop their political consciousness, to become more effective in competing with other sectors and to improve their ability of negotiating their demands within the state's formal political institutions. The Sandinista Government also saw representative democracy as a way of institutionalising political pluralism and of facilitating the incorporation into the political system of those other social sectors which had joined with the FSLN in the revolutionary

alliance to topple the dictatorship. This included sectors of the middle classes whose class interests had been frustrated by the Somozan monopoly of economic activities.

The political system which emerged in Nicaragua following the overthrow of Somoza became the focus of critical examination. Some scholars examined the theoretical contradictions and practical implications embodied in the Sandinistas' declared commitment to create a popular democracy aimed at benefitting the poor sectors of society while seeking to unify the multi-class alliance in a policy of national unity. Amongst these are Coraggio (1986), who together with Irvin (1985) produced excellent works. Other scholars focussed their analysis on the nascent expressions of popular participation channeled through the mass organisations which had developed during the insurrection and multiplied in response to the overthrow of the dictator. These mass organisations were officially encouraged by the Sandinista Government. Reporting in the journal NACLA, the observations of Burbach and Draimin (1980) were typical of the immediate impressions of visitors to Nicaragua following the fall of Somoza:

"The entire country is intense with activity. Throughout the cities crews on government-sponsored public projects repair the enormous destruction caused by the Somoza regime. On weekends, thousands of volunteers head into the countryside on buses and trucks to work on state-owned farms and plantations. Both neighbourhood mobilisations and massive demonstrations are commonplace. The causes can be domestic - the inauguration of the literacy campaign, or international - the assassination of Archbishop Romero in neighbouring El Salvador."

The historic significance of this new and evolving political system which provided the Nicaraguan masses with unprecedented opportunities to participate in the political process was not lost on academics. Of these Burbach and Draimin (1980) must be credited for suggesting - even in the early days - that there would be practical and political difficulties arising from the incorporation of the masses into the decision-making process. Their illiteracy, lack of organisational experience, limited political awareness and the country's absence of any democratic tradition were identified as presenting potential problems. Despite these acknowledgements, little systematic attention was paid then nor since to the political obstacles created by the country's dictatorial legacy and the political culture it generated.

During the Sandinista years in government, the literature produced examined the experiences of the mass organisations which had emerged as the principal channels for

popular participation for neighbourhood committees, agricultural workers, women, industrial workers and students. Serra (1985), Ruchwarger (1987) and Lowry (1986) examined their various functions and their relationship with the revolutionary authorities. The extent of autonomy of these popular organisations - which appeared possible during the initial years of the revolution - was seen by some (Coraggio and Irvin, 1985:30; Vilas, 1986a) as a barometer of the healthiness of participatory democracy, if not of the entire democratic project itself. Only a few commentators, including those noted below, studied other developments and expressions of participatory democracy in Nicaragua. For example, Lobel examined the processes by which the National Constitution (finally promulgated in 1987) and its accompanying Autonomy Statute were drawn up. These involved prolonged and extensive consultation with different social groups and citizens and their outcome provided legal guarantees in the institutionalisation of participatory democracy (Lobel, 1988:845-853). Serra (1991), provided a detailed documentation of the political participation of the organised peasantry in national politics. Ortega (1985), in a brief article outlined the developments of workplace participation in the management of state enterprise and Vance (1987) studied the participatory experience of women in an urban housing project.

This literature on the experience of popular participation during the Sandinista Government has three distinct characteristics. Firstly, it is dominated by a concern with mass organisations as the main vehicle of participation, their role in the democratisation of political life and their position within the political system. Secondly, given the above emphasis, the examination of popular participation in the literature is dominated by macro-level structural analysis, in particular it focuses on the politico-institutional relationship between the mass organisations, the FSLN and the state, or the ideology of the FSLN, known as *Sandinismo*. With the exception of Vance (1987), none of the literature mentioned here was concerned with the practices and processes of participation at the local or grassroots level nor with the significance of it in the transformation within the institutions of civil society.

These structural, macro-level concerns have given rise to a third, conceptual feature of the literature. Defining participation as the access to resources through decision-making, commentators have implicitly adopted for their analysis an approach which sees participation as an outcome. In these instances participation is evaluated according to

whether it has led to the redistribution of power and resources. This approach however, fails to appreciate participation as a dynamic process through which fundamental transformations in organisation, skills and consciousness can increase the power of individuals, therefore enabling them to operate as more effective political actors. That the literature on the Nicaraguan experience of participatory democracy has largely ignored analysis of the processes of participation is consistent with the absence of consideration for this dimension of the subject in the general literature of participation. Yet, an examination of these processes will serve to identify how various forces operated to influence participation at different levels of analysis, translated into daily practices and gave rise to different participatory experiences. It is precisely this process of participation which this thesis sets out to examine.

This is a relevant dimension to study as regards the assessment of the Sandinista experiment since the objective of developing popular democracy is not just the transformation of the structures of power but the creation of and changes within institutions of society. It remains a legitimate and pertinent inquiry even in the context of the defeat of the FSLN in elections held on 25th February 1990 by the UNO (National Opposition Union) coalition, since it raises questions about the obstacles to the implementation of democratic models in the context of Nicaraguan society. A study of the grassroots participatory process will serve to contribute to an evaluation of the nature and extent of transformations underway during this period and to identify the limitations the Sandinista project encountered.

The literature written contemporaneously to the period of Sandinista government is unequivocal in recognising that the creation of various channels of participation facilitated the incorporation of the masses who had previously been excluded from the political processes under the Somoza regime. Commentators also agree that the opportunities for authentic popular participation were increasingly constrained as a tendency emerged for the FSLN to centralise its control over the mass organisations. This process reportedly became most pronounced from mid-1982 onwards as the war of attrition progressed and the economic crisis deepened (Vilas, 1986a:22). Different authors sought to identify the precise causes. The tendency for mass organisations to become subordinated to the interests of the party (FSLN), government and state was identified by Serra as a consequence of politico-institutional arrangements (1988). Also, together with Marchetti

(1986), he noted the onset of bureaucratisation of both the party and mass organisations as inhibiting the development of effective participation. Dore and Weeks (1992), in a contentious reinterpretation of the Sandinista years, attributed this to the consequence of the FSLN's recourse to a political discourse which was dominated by nationalist ideology and lacked clearly delineated class-based concepts. This, they believe, impeded the development of class politics and created a barrier to effective mass participation.

In the light of the predominant approaches and evaluations of popular participation during the Sandinista Government, I set out to start fieldwork in August 1989 convinced that a micro-level study of participatory processes would reveal other dimensions of this experience of participatory democracy and might lead to a re-evaluation of the FSLN's experience. The main questions I wanted to pursue were: how did groups and individuals interact with structural factors; how were individuals constrained by the country's legacy of authoritarianism and how did these circumstances translate into daily practices of participation? Indeed, how far did the new mechanisms created under the auspices of the Sandinistas account for local level responses? Such questions inform my research approach.

Research objectives: identifying agents and evaluating practices

Analysis which emphasises the role of external forces in determining participation, hitherto the predominant characteristic of the Nicaraguan literature, provides an incomplete appreciation of participation. This is because it tends to overlook other local or micro-level factors which shape participation. Nor can it explain how participation translates from the macro-level (or remote social forces) into everyday life experiences and practices. It also underplays the role of individuals and groups, that is "actors", and how their action and consciousness contribute to determining the nature of participatory practices. What is needed is an approach which stresses the interaction of these macro-processes and phenomena with those at the micro-level and one which places more emphasis on the role played by the individual in shaping participation. As Gledhill (1994:150) states, understanding how these levels mutually articulate also serves the wider analysis of the processes of social and historical change.

With its primary concern on the processes of popular participation this thesis aims to identify the various factors or agencies - at different levels of analysis - which influence participatory practices. Consequently, the thesis seeks to examine the historical and structural aspects which shape life experiences and the role of intervening institutions in developing participation. It also identifies micro-level phenomena including beliefs, group dynamics, leadership and social differences (such as education and gender) which influence the participatory process. How these different factors interacted and shaped political practice is a key concern. The study also examines the nature and extent of popular participation. It analyses practices on the one hand and subjective interpretations and political consciousness on the other and evaluates popular participation according to its intensities and the skills and awareness it generates. Finally, the thesis illustrates the critical issues and the ambiguities and contradictions of the Nicaraguan rural experience of participation.

The analysis of the socialist-state sponsored experience of participation requires that specific analytical attention be paid to the historical reality of the conditions under which radical transformation of society takes place. This includes consideration of the objective conditions of underdevelopment and the lack of resources this entails and the subjective features of the political model adopted, including the nature of class alliances. Examination of participation in the transition to socialism in the capitalist periphery also means examining the effects of counterrevolution, military intervention and economic embargoes, since a brief look at Latin America alone reveals that the US has either overtly or covertly intervened militarily to overthrow every government which attempted to institute radical socioeconomic changes since World War II (Guatemala 1954; Cuba 1961; Dominican Republic 1965; Chile 1973; Grenada 1983 and Nicaragua 1982-90). This means that any serious enquiry into the experiences and processes of participation in countries undergoing socialist transition necessitates consideration of the aggression and economic pressures from the capitalist bloc. War, is the context in which socialism is born and must develop and as Marchetti (1986:304) reminds us, has to be considered centrally in any analysis of the experience of popular participation in young socialist societies of the Third World. Examination of the effects of externally imposed influences of military and economic aggression on the participatory process becomes crucial.

I chose the cooperative sector for study above other social sectors for several reasons. Firstly, its constituents - the rural poor and landless - as beneficiaries of the Sandinista Agrarian Reform had experienced fundamental objective material and social changes during the Sandinista Government. This was particularly the case with those organised in production cooperatives known as Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives (CAS) who had gained access to land, credit and technical assistance, education and training. As the most collectivised type of cooperatives, members organised in these were also confronted with new organisational, production and management methods. Secondly, more than other cooperatives, CAS articulated more integrally into the structures of the state and party and, as the prioritised model of cooperatives, experienced the highest levels of direct intervention. They were also the main source of military recruitment and thus were formally linked to the national army. Finally, since CAS were affiliated to a producers association, the Association of National Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG), and later into the emergent cooperative movement they were also incorporated into rural mass organisations and the national peasant movement.

Although it is necessary to perceive the cooperatives as an expression of the peasant movement, the CAS sector generally had been confronted with extreme instances of intervention by external agents. Thus, above other sectors the issues of "top-down", "bottom-up" processes and social change were condensed. So, it seemed a particularly appropriate sector for a study examining the processes, agents and contradictions of participation.

While cooperatives comprise the sector researched, the wider debates about the role of cooperatives in agrarian development and transitions are not primary concerns of the thesis. However, the research findings do raise questions about the viability and appropriateness of cooperativisation in socialist agrarian transition. In fact, these more general issues are germane to the thesis because they reveal the multi-dimensional contradictions of the project of promoting popular participation in the Nicaraguan countryside.

Methodological note: cooperative case and membership data

This thesis is based on a detailed case study analysis of two cooperatives. This provides a comparative basis from which to identify the various factors which influenced

participation and follow the connections and relationships between a number of variables as they related to its processes.

I planned to select cooperatives from within the Pacific region of Nicaragua where the CAS were concentrated and ultimately opted for the country's Region IV which lies south of Managua. Both cooperatives were located within this region, providing a degree of consistency concerning historical experiences, rural social structures, regional and administrative arrangements and party and mass organisational leadership (see Figure 1 for map indicating the location of the two cases). No attempt was made to select a "typical" cooperative for methodological reasons since I did not intend this to be a study from which to infer statistically significant statements about participation. Rather, the cases were used to identify the complexity and interplay of different social phenomena in influencing processes. Consequently, I adopted the use of "case study" as advanced by the anthropologist Mitchell (1983), who indicated that they can be used to establish the validity of a particular theoretical principle, not by achieving statistical significance but through testing them with the complexity of empirical reality. Therefore, I did not select the case studies because they were illustrative but on the basis of particular characteristics which suggested that they would be theoretically compelling.

The first cooperative, German Pomares (henceforth GP) was suggested to me by Mariano Leal, President of the UNAG Tola in the department of Rivas, in southern Nicaragua. The GP cooperative had been prioritised during the mid-1980s for state assistance and was renowned as a "vanguard cooperative" in the region because of its military commitments. This indicated that it articulated to a high degree with the revolutionary authorities, a characteristic which rendered it a good candidate for study. A brief visit and initial introductory discussion with the cooperative's council (one of its decision-making bodies), verified that it also met my preliminary shortlist of criteria, again compiled for their theoretical implications. This included the following factors: that it produce both agroexport crops and basic grains, because I wanted to select cooperatives which were affected by a range of national and international macroeconomic factors; have a substantial membership (of approximately 40 members) because smaller cooperatives were typically dominated by families; and should include women.

The initial research findings from GP confirmed the cooperative's high level of "vertical integration" *vis a vis* the state, party and government (to the exclusion of

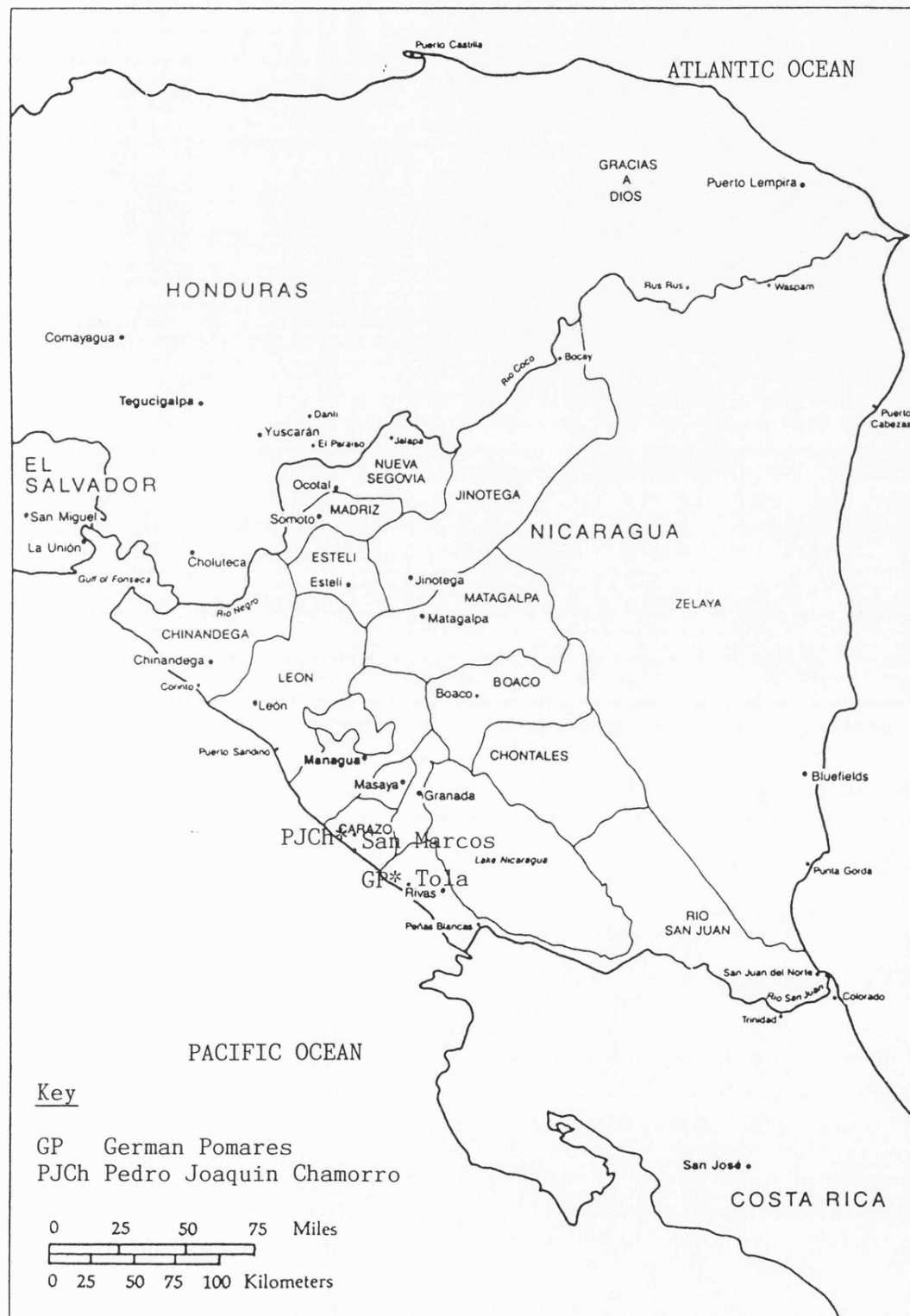


Figure 1: Map of Nicaragua and location of cooperative case studies.

horizontal relations with other cooperatives) and indicated that this exerted a strong influence on the processes of participation. I therefore decided to select a second cooperative on the basis of its relatively weak articulation with the authorities. It seemed logical to consider one which was integrated with other cooperatives into an UCA (Union of Agricultural Cooperatives), a second level cooperative structure which undertook basic technical, financial and commercial functions.

The largest and oldest UCA in Region IV was in Carazo and although the majority of its affiliated cooperatives were coffee producers, it seemed particularly promising not least because it was in the midst of a dispute with state agencies regarding control over a retail shop, the *Tienda Campesina* or Peasant Shop, in fact the dispute subsequently developed into one of national significance. I visited eight of the twenty two affiliated cooperatives after which I was able to select the Pedro Joaquin Chamorro cooperative (henceforth PJCh) on the basis of the key characteristics it shared with GP. On the one hand this included my original specifications: the production of agroexport crops and basic grains, similar-sized membership and inclusion of women; on the other hand, this also included other organisational characteristics, namely collective production combined with individual plots, length of time established and proximity to local communities.

The research is based on primary data: on qualitative and quantitative data collected during ten months of fieldwork which was carried out between 1989 and 1990. Secondary material was collected from public records, policy statements, media sources and published secondary literature. The methodological approaches adopted (described here in brief and in more detail in the Annex 1) are those of participant observation, "flexibly structured" (Whyte, 1979) informal interviews and surveys.

Participant observation, an interpretative method appropriate for gaining access to the subjective perspectives of each social "actor" was facilitated by extended residence in the locality of the cooperatives, specifically in the homes of cooperative members and residents from the surrounding communities. This enabled me to take part in productive and social activities. My time was divided between the cooperative buildings, the fields and homes which served to create a degree of familiarity and confidence particularly amongst a group of key informants. The various meetings involving the cooperatives, in particular their own assemblies, provided a source of material on political practices, individual behaviour and leadership styles. Informal interviews were conducted with

cooperative members in order to clarify information obtained, seek opinions or document personal histories. Local government officials, union representatives and rural inhabitants were interviewed for objective information relating to the area, community and cooperative.

Quantitative data on social "facts", such as socio-demography, economic activities and organisational experience of individuals was collected with the use of surveys. These had additional sections for the leaders and for women members. Questionnaires also sought data on opinions, beliefs and subjective interpretations. This served to indicate the location of the individual in the group and assisted in the identification of their involvement in actions or decisions (van Velsen, 1979). It also served as a basis by which to make statements of statistical significance concerning the cooperative's constituent members. Survey material indicated relationships between factors which might otherwise have been overlooked and which merited exploration via qualitative methods. Combined with qualitative data, the surveys also provided the opportunity of verifying observed phenomenon and guarded against any bias resulting from reliance on a limited number of informants.

A final note concerning the period in which the study was conducted is required. That research started two months before preparations for the national presidential and congressional elections (held on 25th February 1990) presented specific research opportunities and difficulties. The run-up to the elections involved the cooperatives and particular individual members in political activities. These activities generated debates within the cooperatives concerning the FSLN, the government and the problems of the cooperative sector. Such discussions became intensified in the aftermath of the defeat of the FSLN in these elections at which point, faced with the loss of state support, the cooperatives were forced to reassess their own economic strategies.

After the UNO victory, political identities became polarised and a situation of instability prevailed nationwide. In the rural areas it was expressed in conflicts of differing intensity between sectors defending their specific interests. Thus the anti-Sandinistas - including the UNO leaders and activists, ex-contras, landowners and producers adversely affected by the Sandinista Agrarian Reform (RAS) and ex-Somocistas - aimed to re-establish the pre-revolutionary social order. Having won the elections, they sought to re-appropriate power and resources which they now considered their exclusive

prerogative. Opposing these efforts were the Sandinistas, their supporters, the beneficiaries of the RAS and the national army soldiers who had been demobilised in the dramatic reduction of armed forces which followed the elections. These sectors claimed they were defending the changes of the revolutionary period. Thus lands comprising the reformed sector including the state sector and cooperatives, were invaded by ex-Contras, disaffected and UNO led-peasants, while the landless and workers from state farms invaded private lands demanding that they be favoured in privatisation of land (CIPRES, 1990; Amador y Ribbink, 1991).

As regards the two case studies, contradictions between the cooperatives and the local communities became acute and violence erupted. In separate incidents in GP, one member was temporarily imprisoned and two hundred armed contras arrived to take the cooperative by force in July 1990. Members became seriously concerned that they would be attacked by those from their own communities. Although such conflict did not occur in and around PJCh, tensions were high as local UNO supporters threatened to invade. Members with families in the nearby UNO stronghold of Dulce Nombre did not return home fearing attack from extended-family members.

The FSLN electoral defeat presented a methodological problem given my concern with the development of participation under the auspices of the Sandinista Government. This I resolved by deciding to concentrate on developments before the elections. Prior to them, I had divided my time between the two cooperatives and had managed to complete both sets of questionnaires before 25 February. This rendered the core of qualitative data of the research consistent. Following the elections, I continued research, directing it towards seeking complementary information relating to historical and personal data. Where information relating to the subjective experiences of participation has been used from this post-electoral period it is indicated in the study.

Thesis outline

The thesis starts by providing an analytical and theoretical framework for the examination of participation. Chapter 1 explores the concepts and dimensions of popular participation and identifies the theories and controversies as they relate to the main questions and approach of this study. It also establishes the basis by which participatory processes can be evaluated.

Chapter 2 contextualises the Sandinista period of government with a description of socioeconomic and political conditions facing Nicaraguans and in particular the rural population on the eve of the revolution. An historical overview, this chapter shows how rural resistance against marginalisation and the conditions imposed by the development of agroexports has characterised Nicaragua since the Spanish Conquest. It also indicates how this was matched by political exclusion accompanied by overt repression, cooptation and ideological hegemony. As such, the chapter not only serves to historicise the Nicaraguan Revolution but also starts the analytical task of disaggregating the process of participation by taking into account the historical, structural and regional aspects of Nicaraguan development which shaped the immediate life circumstances of its population.

Chapter 3 examines the theory and political practices of the FSLN, identifying the role assigned to popular participation and tracing the evolution of the concept and practice within the FSLN from political movement to government. It focuses analysis at the national level because the conditions, institutions and mechanisms created by the Sandinistas established the parameters for participatory action. The chapter details how participation was operationalised and examines the factors which constrained participation at a structural level, including the contradictions embodied in the policy of national unity, the subordination of mass organisations to the FSLN and the effects of external aggression and the economic embargo.

Chapter 4 describes the development of the cooperative movement in the Sandinista years, its organisation, representation and relationship to the FSLN and state. It examines the prevalent notions concerning the peasantry which informed agrarian reform policies towards the cooperative sector and identifies the precise nature of state intervention. It also documents the emergence of the cooperative movement and examines the relationship between rural organisations and the FSLN and their influence on rural policies.

Having indicated how these different levels contributed to shaping local expressions of participation, the thesis moves on to the analysis of grassroots factors and processes. Chapter 5 serves as an introduction to the two case studies, describing the cooperatives, their geographical location, their history and relationship to surrounding communities. This provides a basis from which to understand how the cooperatives collectively responded to economic, social and political phenomena. Chapter 6 comprises an examination of the productive and economic activities of the two cooperatives. Discussion

focuses on the material conditions of the cooperative, raising the question about the economic motivation for membership and the contradictions of collectivised production as regards the aspirations of the constituent members.

In Chapter 7, the political aspects of cooperative organisation, decision-making and participation are described and then examined in relation to internal group dynamics and external intervention. They are also analysed in relation to past political experiences and are evaluated according to the intensities of the participatory processes. Chapter 8 goes on to examine the leadership as both a significant element in the determination of the nature of participation and product of opportunities created by the Revolution which enabled leaders to emerge from a previously marginalised social sector. It describes precisely how leadership exerted its power and establishes the importance of seeking explanation for political behaviour from external sources and influences, as much as internal legitimacy and group dynamics. Beyond this, the chapter also highlights the critical issues of participatory democracy and the role of leadership in securing the economic viability of the cooperatives. Finally, Chapter 9 reveals the individual differences in participation and identifies the constraining and facilitating factors which account for this. In particular, it examines the influence of socio-cultural and psychological factors and focuses on the practical and psychological constraints imposed by the gender division of labour.

The thesis concludes with a discussion and evaluation of the rural cooperative experience of participation. It places the discussion in a wider context with reference to international experiences and indicates the arising theoretical and policy implications.

Chapter 1

POPULAR PARTICIPATION: CONCEPTUALISATION AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In a long tradition of concentration on single issues on the development agenda, "popular participation" emerged during the 1970s as a key issue at the international level. Within the UN and its member agencies, popular participation was identified and encouraged as a fundamental goal and policy instrument to achieve sustained economic growth and social progress. This in turn generated a substantial literature which scrutinised the multi-dimensional aspects of popular participation, its theory, implementation and practice in the various contexts to which it was applied.

Scholars have advanced various socio-political factors to explain the interest in participation in the debate about the development process. Midgley (1986), Oakley and Marsden (1984) and Hall (1986) consider that it came from the search for an alternative strategy of development to the modernisation model which emphasised economic growth in the context of centralised planning through capital intensive projects and industrialisation. This strategy has been adopted by numerous developing countries in the post-war period. Since the 1960s its failings have been all too evident: the supposed beneficiaries of this economic growth turned out not to be the rural poor but the urban upper and middle income groups and the rural elites. It produced high unemployment, exacerbated urbanisation and aggravated social inequalities (Todaro, 1982:125). Worldwide rural poverty has remained pervasive and rural populations comprise an estimated 85% of those living in absolute poverty (World Bank, 1975).

The failure of the modernisation model to eradicate rural poverty was largely attributable to two factors. Firstly, rural development was a low priority on its agenda¹ and secondly, the centralised and bureaucratic policy process it generated excluded the intended beneficiaries from development activities. This neglect of the agricultural sector was perpetuated by the erroneous notion that the rural poor themselves were a major "obstacle" to development: they were perceived to be resistant to the changes which modernisation brought. Their lack of education, organisational weakness and physical isolation from urban-based politicians and planners translated into a lack of political

representation and power which meant that such policies went unsuccessfully challenged by the rural poor themselves².

A fundamental aspect of the development "rethink" was the role that agricultural production should assume in national development. Ideas about how this should occur evolved over the decades. The so-called "green revolution" illustrated that merely targeting investment at agricultural production would not automatically benefit the poorer sectors. When agriculture was commercialised and technology improved, the larger landowners came to monopolise agricultural inputs (fertilisers, insecticides and irrigation), credit and other agricultural extension facilities (Hall, 1986:91-92). The fruits of development did not "trickle down" to the masses as initially anticipated.

That benefits ought be directed to the poorer sectors was eventually recognised by organisations including the International Labour Office (ILO) (Hall, 1986:92). The ILO identified the centralised and bureaucratic policy process, which excluded the beneficiaries from the implementation and evaluation of planning, as causing the failure of development schemes. Consequently, the ILO advocated the incorporation of local rural populations into development activities. Hence the idea of "participation" - and specifically that of rural populations - emerged as a central element in the reconsideration of how development could be achieved.

The situation in Central America - the region of the country case study in this thesis - was different in many respects as regards the perpetuation of extreme rural poverty and gross social inequalities. Here, the traditional oligarchy whose landed interests were based in the agroexport sector, resisted all pressures for liberal reforms as they related to economic modernisation and created effective barriers to capitalist development. Even the expansion of coffee production and commercialisation in the region was not accompanied by the transformation of labour relations according to "usual" capitalist logic whereby peasants become "free" labourers able to sell their labour. Instead, it led to a system of coercive labour enforced by the intervention of the governments while its expansion was facilitated by the states' removal of the peasantry from the land.

As late as the nineteenth century, Central America was in the early stages of "country formation" and consequently its political organisation and institutions of state were weak. This rendered it essentially vulnerable to external intervention while the ruling elites were also prone to vying for the support of the US government in order to

bolster their power in internal disputes. While Washington proved itself willing to use force to keep certain groups in power, the elites could remain immune to the demands of middle or lower classes for economic or political reform. The resultant regimes were characterised by their despotic and anti-democratic nature and use of coercion and ruled by obtaining consensus through ideological hegemony. After the Second World War, when US military advisers created armies within the region, military force then became an additional bulwark to elite power (Weeks, 1986:31-51).

Even the attempts promoted by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s to steer the region into the modern economic, social and political world through via industrialisation failed. Through their total monopoly of political affairs, the dominant social groups resisted attempts to develop economic power divorced from property in land and ensured that the economies throughout the isthmus remained dominated by agriculture. Thus, the possibilities to stimulate income distribution which could have facilitated the expansion of internal market for industrialisation were thwarted and the capitalists and oligarchs continued to live off an oppressed rural population (Weeks, 1986:37-39; Bulmer-Thomas, 1988:20). This exacerbated social inequalities. Economic marginalisation of rural populations and political exclusion were inextricably related.

In effect, these political regimes predated the Age of Liberalism as experienced in Europe during the seventeenth century and rejected even the idea of a secular state as one based on the principle that governments rule by the consent of the governed and that people are equal before the law (Weeks, 1986:49-50). The absence of alternative means for reforming these regimes generated political and social crises which erupted as war and civil disturbances during the 1960s and 1970s. The hegemony of the oligarchs was challenged by revolutionary movements which proposed alternative economic models and political systems to redress the social inequalities. Historical legacies would not only present major obstacles to the development of new political regimes but would give those forces who opposed the "reactionary despotic oligarchy" an essentially modernising political role (Weeks, 1986:50; Torres-Rivas, 1992:134).

Participation is not a new concept. It first appeared during the rise of Athenian political culture when the theory and practice of "democracy" arrived on the political landscape. Although this initial practice excluded the majority of the city's residents, its

central feature was the direct personal participation of the citizen body in all aspects of government (Arblaster, 1991). The characteristics which made the direct democracy of the Greek city-state feasible namely, the small numbers of citizens and the absence of formal political parties, are inappropriate for adoption in contemporary complex societies without major adaptations. Since then the notion of participation has been radically transformed and has occupied a central role in the discourse of political theory.

Modern theories of participation as they relate to the notion of democracy, are predominantly derived from the contributions of Rousseau, Madison, Calhoun, Mill and de Tocqueville (Fagence, 1977), who wrote about the ideological and philosophical bases of systems of government during the liberal enlightenment. Recurrent preoccupations of these scholars are reflected in the work of contemporary authors and relate to the role of forces raised above society (an enlightened despot, supreme legislator or revolutionary elite) in transforming society (Lowy, 1986:265) and the relationship between representation and the interests of the people³.

As we saw from the Introduction, many of the modern commentators such as Schumpeter, have conflated democracy and representative government and this has become the dominant hegemonic notion of democracy. This schema emphasises the election of representatives and reduces participation to the election of them (Lobel, 1988) and it is precisely the recognition of the limitations of the West's notion and practice of democracy which has contributed to the surge of interest in popular participation and planning in the 1960s. Indeed, a brief glance at the participation literature in the areas of planning, service provision or development reflects a common concern that significant sectors of the community are denied an effective role in the decision-making process at local levels.

By contrast to dominant western notions of political democracy participation is central to the theory of socialism. In Marx's The German Ideology emphasis is placed on the role of revolutionary struggle not only to remove the ruling class but in the practical process of the reconstruction of the new democratic society. In his early work, Marx also identified political activity as the "universal" duty of every citizen, close to the classical form of total citizen involvement. In the context of class struggle Marx saw participation as a way of redressing the inequality of power and through the process of participation itself, of generating knowledge and consciousness for class struggle (Fagence, 1977:31-34). In an ideal situation where pre-existing political structures have been

overthrown, the creation of new social relations to provide an equality based on cooperation amongst workers is prioritised as the basis to guarantee participation.

There is also an idea in Marxism that the individual accrues certain socio-psychological benefits through active involvement in political events which enhance the individual's sense of worth, self-esteem and control. The *praxis*⁴ of participation is seen as crucial as a subjective factor which permits human potential to be realised. For Marx, this *praxis* is also important to break the old division of labour and fulfil multiple objectives for cultural revolution, namely the involvement of workers in management, political education, communication and recreation (Marchetti, 1986).

Marx, along with Hobbes, Rosseau and Burke, emphasised the need to educate the participants to adequate levels of competence and responsibility and to develop appropriate instruments or organisations capable of reaching meaningful levels of participation. It is the difficulty of meeting these requirements which strengthens the case of the elitists for representatives and explains the priority assigned to political leadership in socialist models (Fagence, 1977:34). However, the creation of democracy based on mass organisation and politics in the transition to socialism in small peripheral countries was presented with a series of other problems which deformed practices. These relate to the objective conditions inherited, transformations of the state apparatus and the tendencies towards bureaucratic degeneration.

The breaking of an oligarchical-capitalist state and its police and military apparatus at the time of violent overthrow of a regime represented the beginning of the transition to socialism, but the legacy of authoritarian rule creates various obstacles. In such a context the population is predominantly illiterate and is consequently prevented from participating consciously and critically in the creation of a democratic society until equipped with appropriate educational skills. The popular sectors also lack organisational cohesion, which combined with their cultural backwardness, weakens their capacity to represent and protect their own interests. While national literacy programmes and organisational efforts can redress these problems there are more profound implications of a transition from authoritarianism regarding the underdeveloped nature of "civil society".

The term "civil society" while an inherently problematic theoretical concept is a useful description with which to identify all those institutions and mechanisms which remain outside the boundaries of the state system proper (Gramsci, 1991). Amongst the

institutions of civil society are schools, the family, the church, businesses and trade unions: that is the ensemble of organisations or associations commonly called "private". However, the line of demarcation between civil society and the state or "political society" fluctuates according to the extent to which it is able to retain autonomy from the state. The conceptual dualism also comprises the two respective "sites" in which power is asserted or challenged within society.

Writing on these oppositions from observations of how political power is exercised in the capitalist social order, Gramsci (1991) in the Prison Notebooks identified that a dominant social group asserts power through the state via mechanisms of domination and coercion while power in civil society is exercised through hegemony and consent. In fact, these sets of oppositions were later modified by Gramsci to indicate that although the state retains the function of coercion but is also an apparatus of hegemony. The opposition with civil society is thereby maintained with the adoption of the nuance of "political hegemony" to refer to the consent-coercion function of the state (Anderson, 1977).

To speak of the underdeveloped nature of civil society in aftermath of an authoritarian regime in part refers to the paucity of institutions located within civil society, be they organisations representing different groups, such as students, women, ethnic minorities or sporting or cultural associations. Without such institutions groups are unable to further their particular interests, compete with other groups for resources or protect themselves against a potentially encroaching state. It also refers to the historical circumstances whereby power is imposed predominantly through a coercive apparatus in order to ensure that the popular masses conform to the dominant type of production and economy within the system. In such situations, although instruments of political hegemony may also be used, the principle of consensus remains novel and the practices and selection of representatives are unfamiliar.

The pertinence of this latter point gains greater significance in the issue of political change if we consider the theoretical conceptualisation of *habitus*, as devised by Bourdieu (1977). This explains how social agents are imbued with a disposition to behave and think in ways which are shaped by the action of historical social forces which generate particular practices. This - essentially an explanation of the process of socialisation - contributes to our understanding of how systems of domination are reproduced over time. It applies even under conditions where objective political and economic circumstances

change since individuals from different social groups share the same historical conditions which shape collective cognitive constructions about power, class and group identity (Bourdieu, 1977:78).

There were other problems confronting the attempts to construct a democracy based on popular participation in the capitalist periphery. The conditions of underdevelopment and the concomitant lack of resources, including sufficiently trained technical personnel as well as the aforementioned absence of democratic traditions, combine to exert pressure towards bureaucratisation: a tendency which plagues most third world countries. Given the role assigned to the state in the transition to socialism the state apparatus is expanded in order that it fulfil the new tasks of service provision, planning and development. A layer of functionaries, administrators and managers emerge and come to authoritatively monopolise decision-making and political and military power, thereby excluding the people from access to the decision-making processes and material resources (Lowy, 1986).

Beyond the immediate state apparatus, bureaucratisation also occurs within both political parties and ultimately in mass organisations. This tendency has been analysed by Bourdieu (1991:174-188), who identified how the political field becomes professionalised, particularly in respect to subaltern classes who lack both the leisure time and cultural background or capital and ultimately have to cede power to the political leadership of permanent organisations which represent their class interests or to political parties. The cultural and economic deprivation of the people these organisations represent means that the political sphere becomes autonomous and a social layer of bureaucrats develops with its own interests, different from those of the popular sectors. These organisations become more like apparatuses of mobilisation than as a means to express the will of the base they formally represent (Gledhill, 1994:136). Moreover, this degenerative process is exacerbated when the political model of vanguardism is adopted.

Theoretically the revolutionary party, as Lenin insisted, is assigned the historic task of providing a leadership role in order to steer the workers and peasants through the transition by gaining hegemony from within their popular organisations but this can only be achieved where it has confidence in the expression of these masses. However, where these sectors express other currents of thought which do not coincide with the vanguard's own vision, these are easily repressed. At this point the popular organisations lose their autonomy in relation to the party and state and their effectiveness as institutions of civil

society (Lowy, 1986:272).

Returning now from this theoretical and conceptual excursion of the essential issues at stake in the historical, political and social conditions of transitions to democracy in the small periphery countries, we move on to consider how to operationalise the analysis of participation in the grassroots. However, at once we see that despite shared theoretical antecedents, the body of literature on participation and democracy remains resolutely separate from the literature concerning the relationship between participation and development. Although the latter area contributes to our understanding of the political and ideological aspects of participation, they are largely avoided by contributors concerned with development because they are not seen as helpful to their concern with tangible socio-economic improvements⁵.

In this chapter I make no attempt to reconcile these distinct theoretical bodies (a task of sufficient magnitude to justify an entire thesis). Instead, I draw on the theories and the literature from the two areas since they are both relevant because: the issues of democracy and development are integrally related since power and the control of resources are germane to both; and because popular participation was a central concept to the FSLN's theory and practice of creating new democratic practices and stimulating national development. Consequently, if we are to understand the experience of participation under the FSLN it is necessary to consider the issue as it relates to both development and democracy. Rather than review the literature which relates to the different dimensions of participation, discussion in this chapter is limited to those critical issues of participation which are pertinent to the context of the study, its approach and specific research concerns⁶.

Researching popular participation is no easy matter given the complexity of the topic, its intangible characteristics and its numerous dimensions and contending interpretations. There is not even agreement about what to call it since popular participation is also referred to as political participation or peoples' participation and, in the context of some development projects, it is called community participation. Although this latter term is slightly different because it specifies the community as the vehicle of participation, the literature on these experiences is pertinent to the wider questions of participation⁷. From the outset it is also important to emphasise that the different perspectives on participation do not simply reflect ideology since they are also determined

by views on the planning process and intervention.

The chapter follows here with a description of the various objectives for which participation is advocated from different perspectives. This leads to a brief discussion about how participatory processes and activities will be evaluated in this study. The constraints to participation are then examined and for analytical purposes are identified as macro-level structural phenomena and micro-level phenomena. The recognition of these constraints not only informs decisions about prescriptive measures adopted to encourage participation but is crucial for its heuristic value to this thesis.

I Grasping the notion

A convenient way of understanding the amorphous notion of popular participation is to start by identifying the different objectives of participation as advocated by the academics, promoters or actors involved.

II Participation for instrumental objectives and empowerment

In some contexts the objective of popular participation is perceived as meaning increasing the "efficiency" of a development project or scheme. Here, its virtues are seen to lie in facilitating the promotion of consensus among beneficiaries and between them and the implementing agencies. Its value lies in the reduction of delays and overall costs through the most productive use of available resources: material, financial and human. A second objective of participation is "cost-sharing", whereby the beneficiaries of a development project contribute their labour and resources and reduce the costs of the project to the sponsor, be it a public institution, non-governmental organisation (NGO), or international agency. The contribution of intended beneficiaries subsequently generates a sense of ownership and commitment to the project and thereby enhances project success (Paul, 1987). Yet a third perspective defines participation in terms of increasing "effectiveness" in relation to specified goals. This allows people access to decision-making in determining the objectives of a project and involvement in its administration. According to this perspective, the primary function of participation is to provide an effective means of mobilising and channeling available local resources into fulfilling material needs such as shelter, clothing and the non-material needs of employment and political liberty. The

contribution of local knowledge, skills and resources that beneficiaries bring to project results in more effective projects since they become congruent with beneficiary needs (Oakley et al, 1991:16). This perspective of participation was adopted by the ILO in 1976 during its World Employment Conference when it incorporated the concept of participation into the basic needs approach to development⁸.

Participation is also used for the objective of facilitating the development of "beneficiary capacity" in such a way that the people involved may take an active role in the management and operational responsibilities of a development project. Capacity building would therefore be aimed at strengthening the skills and knowledge of intended beneficiaries to enhance their abilities and competence (Paul, 1987:3,18)).

Common to all these above objectives is an instrumental view of participation which places the focus on the means to the achievement of development objectives. However, there is also a view that sees participation as a final objective. This has gained increasing support amongst the international institutions and agencies since it was endorsed officially by United Nations Research Institute of Social Development (UNRISD) and the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Development in 1979. This view sees participation as an end where the objective of popular participation is identified as:

"..to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements of those hitherto excluded from such control.." ⁹

According to this perspective, participation should be an instrument of empowerment that leads to the transfer of power and increased political awareness as social groups attempt to control their lives and improve their living conditions. This objective implies a new sharing-out and then transfer of decision-making power because only through achieving power can individuals or groups determine how and what resources are to be distributed and thereby improve their livelihoods. It is this equation of participation with achieving some form of power which distinguishes it from the other objectives and constitutes an element which reflects its Marxist political legacy because it is primarily concerned with redressing the material and political inequalities.

The view of participation as meaning access to the decision-making process is used by several contributors to the literature as the criterion by which to distinguish "true" participation from its lesser imitations in order to exclude those circumstances where participants have no effective influence or power. According to this perspective

participation has no meaning unless the people involved have significant control over the decisions concerning the organisation to which they belong. The term "pseudo-participation" is then applied to participatory practices which are confined to implementation or ratification of decisions already made by external sources (Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Paul, 1987). Although this mechanistic dichotomy is useful for distinguishing whether the objective of empowerment is present it excludes most experiences of participation and therefore has limited analytical utility.

Another distinction in the quality of participation is made by the Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire (1972). He distinguishes "meaningful participation" which applies to situations where individuals have political awareness and consciousness from "pseudo-participation" where they do not. This dualism reflects the Marxist conviction that a deep understanding of society is essential for meaningful participation and is consistent with the Marxist emphasis that social or class consciousness is the most important ingredient for popular participation¹⁰ (Fagence, 1977:31-34). Unlike the previous dichotomy this one does not preclude the capacity of participation to develop or progress. Indeed, Freire points to the non-formal educational potential of participation as *praxis*, through which a knowledge of reality is attained and through which the poor discover themselves as its:

"permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement." (Freire, 1972:56)

According to Freire the active involvement of the poor in the organised struggle transforms consciousness, thereby providing the basis for further political action. Once the poor have become aware of their subordination they reach the "point of liberation". This level of consciousness, although problematic in its methodological value because of its essentially subjective quality, is used in this thesis as one criterion of empowerment.

The redistribution of power that empowerment implies is an inherently conflictual process arising from the situation where groups hitherto excluded from the process of participation try to increase control over resources and enter into competition with other groups or the state. This is acknowledged by international institutions, including UNRISD¹¹. Consequently, it is perhaps informative to reflect on the polemic remark of one contributor to the Inquiry into Participation (Pearse and Stiefel, 1980)¹², who suggests that the term popular participation is in fact a "sanitised" term, a euphemism substituted

for "struggle for power" which has been used in an attempt to disassociate itself from "sensitive Marxist terminology".

There is little disagreement amongst writers that organisation is central to this concept of empowerment since it is the mechanism which brings together individuals who are individually powerless and transforms them into a social force (Pearse and Stiefel, 1981:53). Hence the emphasis of sponsors on the creation or stimulation of an organisational basis and the development of groups, be it small beneficiary groups or social movements in which individuals within the rural sector might achieve their participation (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:10,74).

At this point enter the "agent" of participation who may support the group through the assumption of two key roles: first, by stimulating awareness within the group to build an organisational base which enables it to begin the active process in development; second, by facilitating the group's access to resources for development. These functions may or may not be fulfilled by same person, by professionals, outsiders or *cadres* or, in more radical situations, they may be fulfilled by emergent local or peasant leadership (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:75). The quality of their methods and skills in building the organisational base of the group, consolidating internal solidarity and encouraging active intervention are crucial to the participation process. Hence, in the analysis of the rural participatory experience attention must be accorded to the influence of such agents or leaders in the participatory practice.

While advocates of popular participation are bound together in the belief that involving the poor in decision-making and implementation of development programmes will radically improve their social conditions and that organisation is a major task within any rural development project, precisely who amongst the broad category of rural people is supposed or expected to participate depends on the situation. They have been variously identified in general categories as "the rural poor", "the landless", "small producers" or "the last" with increasing recognition that rural development should be directed at discrete but homogeneous socio-economic groups. This is because development previously aimed unspecifically at "the community", resulted in benefitting only the most powerful and better-off sections (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:72). During the last two decades the importance of orienting efforts to incorporate women more fully into the development process has been increasingly recognised. This is not only because of their nominal rights

to participate in the decision-making process but also because women occupy a crucial role in the development process as producers and as reproducers primarily responsible for the welfare of the household and because - as an extension of their domestic role - they often assume responsibilities in community organisation (Moser, 1991).

Those interpretations which see participation as increasing efficiency, sharing costs, improving effectiveness and building beneficiary capacity can also be defined as the means approach. Typically, this participation is conceived as an intervention in the development process for instrumental purpose to achieve predetermined development goals and is generally equated with a form of mobilisation to "get things done". It is seen as a kind of planning process which has the accompanying mechanisms and control (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:17). As a result, it can be characterised as a "top-down" approach where the sponsor of the project or programme, the government or the political party is the chief protagonist.

The type of intervention prescribed by this means perspective was seen in the community development programmes which were internationally endorsed during the 1950s and 1960s. These were formulated by urban planners and were aimed at preparing the rural population through formal education programmes, to communicate development objectives to prepare beneficiaries to collaborate with official programmes (Midgley, 1986). Other forms by which the means perspective is implemented can include the creation - by governments - of formal organisations such as cooperatives and farmers associations (Oakley and Marsden, 1984; Hall, 1986). Indeed, cooperatives in the developing world, including Nicaragua under the Sandinista Government, have constituted an integral strategy for the agricultural transition to socialism¹³ and as a means to provide a structure in which rural people can have some say in development. However, peasants don't necessarily want to be organised in collectivised agriculture and as Hall notes, the experience of officially established cooperatives indicates that they often become used by the state as mechanisms through which to promote top-down policies and to control production and the rural areas (Hall, 1986:54-56,95).

By contrast to the instrumental means approach, the interpretation of participation as empowerment sees it as an end in itself. Here, participation is not a fixed development goal but is a process which results in increasingly "meaningful" participation in the development process. It is attained either through the creation of political space on the

one hand or on the other, through the movement or pushing out and demanding of space through concerted group action or class struggle. As such, it is essentially a bottom-up process and is identified by some as the only "authentic" participation because it is created by the people themselves (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:27). For community participationists¹⁴ it is associated exclusively with the non-government sector.

I2 Participation as a dynamic process

Oakley and Marsden consider that participation as "means" and "end" cannot be unified in any practice of participation because:

"(w)here "participation" is the means to achieving previously established development objectives, its strategy is to reform and improve. Where "participation" aims at achieving power in order to demand meaningful participation, it implicitly demands some kind of structural change." (1984:29)

However, this distinction is contended by Paul who, in a report on the experiences of community participation in World Bank development projects, provides an important contribution to the general debate about participation and indicates that means and end objectives are not mutually exclusive (Paul, 1987). He presents the objectives of participation as a five-fold continuum from participation for the "lower level" objectives which includes efficiency, cost-sharing and effectiveness, to the "higher level" objectives of participation for capacity building and empowerment. This approach is useful since it facilitates an appreciation of the dynamic nature of the process of participation and the ability for activities instrumentally linked with participation to lead the poor to seek participation in other spheres of life and even ultimately increase their power. Also, as Paul indicates, it provides for several objectives to be pursued simultaneously. For example, the higher objective of empowering individuals can often incorporate lower level objectives such as efficiency and cost sharing.

Paul's continuum also accommodates the view presented by Pateman (1970), that participation can serve as a learning experience during which individuals may come to redefine their "interests", gain confidence and skills which can ultimately empower participants for future encounters. Paul himself notes this tendency in his observation that earlier projects may strengthen the capacity for cooperative action of the groups which may subsequently go on to achieve higher levels of participation (1987:5). This understanding of participation implies that participation for instrumental purposes has the

capacity to move towards participation for empowerment.

Therefore, although the notion of empowerment is central to participation, the definition of participation as power is inherently problematic. This is because power is an outcome of an activity or encounter and cannot be established before-hand. Richardson notes the analytical implications:

"(p)articipation should not be defined in terms of the degrees of influence it brings about, this must be studied as one possible effects of participation, not its essence." (Richardson, 1983:28)

People are influenced by different encounters and experiences, they can and do influence each other in varied ways: who gains what emerges only after particular activities have occurred or decisions have been taken. Therefore, implicit in this view is the recognition that participation is a dynamic process and that the output of participation is not just the policies (the decisions reached) but also the development of social and political capacities of each individual which occurs during the process (Pateman, 1970). This is the concern of those defined by Richardson as the "developmentalists" and is an aspect addressed by Marxists from Marx through to Freire. It is also explored in this thesis.

Throughout the participation literature little attention has been paid to the concrete processes involved. Yet, the processes are particularly relevant to the inquiry into the practice of participation since there is nothing automatic about it. The creation of institutions and mechanisms which encourage or are conducive to the development of popular participation do not immediately translate into a participatory society. Participation cannot be guaranteed by formally legislating for it, by creating mechanisms for it or by injecting it into a group.

An appreciation of the dynamic nature of participation and the benefits accruing from it for human developmental in general are also emphasised by the Marxist tradition. They perceive that the sense of control accruing from participation helps to break the mentality of dependence and leads to empowerment because it enables rural people to examine their collective problems and seek constructive solutions (Oakley, 1991:13-18).

I3 Constraints to participation

A consideration of the obstacles which constrain participation is important to the understanding of it, to the analysis of its practice and to the search for prescriptive measures. Constraining factors can be most easily conceptualised as "external" in origin,

relating to aggregate structures and trends and "internal", relating to socio-cultural and psychological factors. This distinction is of course crude since the former factors may generate the latter. Scholars (informed by their respective levels of analysis), governments, mass movements and other sponsors (informed by ideology and notions of planning) place different emphasis on the significance of these elements.

"External" constraints comprise those economic and political structures which reproduce inequality. These consist of the dominant relations of power and production, the existing class structure and the ideological values which legitimize them. They are denoted "anti-participatory" by authors such as Streeten (1981) and by the ILO which was concerned with securing the basic needs of poor populations. Commentators, including Oakley and Marsden (1984:63), emphasise these constraining factors and claim that tangible improvements in welfare result not from the mobilisation of local resources but from wider social and economic changes in society. They stress that participation cannot by definition be obtained in capitalist society since the primary impediment to participation is the capitalist system itself. Consequently, they call for profound social structural changes at both the national and international level to provide conditions for popular participation, without which the possibilities for real participation look bleak. However, in the recognition that existing socio-political frameworks inhibit meaningful grassroots participation and prevent the pre-conditions to participation from occurring in the foreseeable future, many analysts have tempered their approach to participation. They have consequently decided to concentrate on ways to achieve participation in the context of existing capitalist socio-political and economic structures by focussing on how local level initiatives may be fostered to improve the material and social conditions of the poor.

The significance of the socio-political system necessitates that any analysis of popular participation be made within the framework of its political context. However, this should be done with caution since it is overdeterministic. As Walton (1978) correctly reminds us, conceptualising participation from a purely structural perspective assumes that participation is constrained entirely by the political space it is afforded. This denies its potential to challenge existing power structures and create its own political space. Nonetheless, since the characteristics of the macro-level socio-political system establish the parameters for participation, including those at micro-level, any analysis of its practice need be placed firmly within the socio-political context, as does this thesis.

The administrative structures of government, namely the territorial, spatial and socio-economic divisions of the country into administrative units are also external factors influencing the potential of local level participation. This is because the degree of delegation of power to local authorities and the retention of control over decision-making, resource allocation and information by administrators can also prevent rural people from being incorporated effectively into development activities (Majeres, 1985; Oakley, 1991:12). The significance of these constraints has led to the consideration of the potential of restructuring the politico-institutional framework to facilitate the incorporation of local people in the decision-making process. In particular, the ILO set out to examine the potential of such decentralised political and administrative institutions as a mechanism by which to incorporate local participation in formal decision-making institutions to meet basic needs.

Socio-cultural factors also comprise powerful barriers to participation and fall into the "internal" category of constraints. One such constraint is the poor's apparent "fatalism" to their situation and their "mentality of dependence" (Oakley, 1991:13). Whereas, in the early development literature this was erroneously attributed to the poor's inherent "docility", Freire showed this to be a superficial interpretation. He forced a reappraisal by indicating that the poor's apparent resignation to his/her situation was in fact the manifestation of an historical and social situation and not an "essential characteristic of a people's behaviour" (Freire, 1972:48). Introducing the concepts of marginalisation, dependency and oppression, Freire explained how culture operates as part of the structural and ideological infrastructure which systematically excludes the rural masses from participating in development. In such a way, the dominant cultural and social order generated by the social relations of production, influences attitudes and behaviour and subordinates rural poor to local elites. Hence the link between external and internal factors which limit participation.

Freire expanded his thesis by examining the socio-psychological process which complements the notion of *habitus* of Bourdieu (1977). Freire explains how peasants internalise the opinion the oppressor (the landlord or state official) holds of them. While peasants can be variously defined, it is understood that Freire referred to individuals who produce from the land and may or may not possess adequate amounts of land to meet family needs and are enmeshed in social relations of exploitation with a landlord through

rentier arrangements or seasonal employment. In such circumstances they repeatedly hear that they are good for nothing, are ignorant and incapable of learning anything and that they are lazy and unproductive. Peasants consequently become convinced of their own failings and become self-deprecating (Freire, 1972). Thus, the poor become unaccustomed to taking decisions or challenging existing power structures and this accounts, as Godelier observes in another context, for the consent of the dominated to their domination (Godelier, 1986:157).

This idea of peasants as passive subordinates to oppressive social orders is challenged by the contribution of Scott (1985), who indicates in his study of "everyday forms of resistance" the numerous ways in which peasants struggle against exploitative conditions. According to Scott, these daily confrontations may not be expressed publicly or constitute serious challenges to the dominant order but they nonetheless serve to delegitimise the dominant political and moral order and demonstrate that peasants are able to challenge the ideological hegemony of ruling elites. However, the conflicting perspectives on peasant acquiescence, represented by the Freire and Scott interpretations are perhaps less a theoretical problem than an empirical issue: dissent may be less overtly expressed where repression is more intense or is calculated to be intense. Therefore, any study of participation at the grassroots needs to establish the extent to which dominant ideology constitutes an inhibiting factor and the content of peasant consciousness itself. However, perhaps it is more useful to identify what peasants know than whether they know they are repressed or not since only the former can provide the basis for effective political action (Gutmann, 1993).

The existence of these internal constraints means that the creation of new institutions or the removal of anti-participatory structures alone will not automatically evoke immediate and mass participation. Ways have to be found to equip the rural poor with abilities which enable them to influence the forces which control their livelihood and to assist people to identify and deal actively with their problems. To enable the disadvantaged to overcome what sponsors of various kinds perceive to be socio-cultural and psychological constraints which perpetuate their isolation and inactivity in development, consciousness-raising becomes an important dimension of participation and a preliminary step towards empowerment. Hence the emphasis on pedagogy: an aspect which has been most systematically conceptualised and implemented by Freire. Seeing

the role of education as an essential ingredient to the development of radical self-awareness, Freire devised an educational method known as "education for liberation" or "*conscientización*" which seeks to liberate individuals from the environment which constrains them. This facilitates a reflexive response and reinterpretation of life experiences which complements *praxis* and the experiences of active participation and assists the dominated in becoming aware of the illegitimate nature of the domination which they endure.

The concern to overcome internal constraints and develop consciousness also appears in the literature on community participation which assimilates the ideas of Freire and assigns community workers (the entrusted agents of community participation) to role of leading education programmes that seek to make the rural poor aware of their life situation. Such programmes aim to help the poor analyse why it is so and what alternatives they have in order to reinforce the capacity of the community to deal with its own problems by drawing on its own initiative and effort. The Latin American and Nicaraguan experiences of "participatory research" and "popular education" which incorporated reflexive methods have shown that these contribute to the development of political participation (Fals Borda, 1985).

Women encounter further obstacles in their efforts to incorporate themselves in development and political activities or gain more prominent roles in local activities. Here, cultural values which are generated by the predominant male-dominated culture and society assign to women prescribed roles and subordinate them to men (Oakley, 1991:13-14). In Nicaragua, as elsewhere in Latin America, this male dominance finds expression in *machismo*: a set of values which defines gender roles, generates explicit prejudice against women, prevents their attempts to gain greater access to development resources and creates hostility towards their full participation in public life. In fact, it is not uniform for all women and is differentiated according to class, ethnicity and race as well as in time (Stephens, 1993:33). The sexual division of labour within the domestic unit means that women have a double role as reproducer and producer. Where women are involved in community tasks in order to obtain access to basic services this becomes a triple role: a burden which renders their working days long and leaves women no "free" time. Also, psychological forces, perpetuated through cultural sanctioned norms, are mediated by the conscious or unconscious and can inhibit women's own advance (Molyneux, 1982).

Attempts to overcome the constraints on women are addressed within the two approaches embodied in "gender and development" planning. These are conceptualised by Molyneux (1986), who distinguishes between the "practical necessities of gender" and the "strategic necessities of gender". Policies relating to the practical necessities of gender treat women separately and aim to improve the concrete conditions imposed on women by their position in the sexual division of labour. These consequently focus on the home, reproduction, income generation and basic service provision. By contrast, strategic planning is oriented to overcome the broader structural and socio-cultural dimensions which subordinate women. Measures include, amongst others, the abolition of the sexual division of labour; the reduction of domestic roles; the elimination of institutional forms of discrimination (rights to property and credit); the establishment of legal-political equality between men and women; and rights of control of reproduction. Gender awareness becomes an integral part of either strategy since this can enable women to overcome their own feelings of inferiority.

II Evaluating the participatory process

Having established the importance of conceptualising participation as a process it becomes clear why I am concerned not with quantitative results but with qualitative processes. However, a means or technique by which to make a judgement about the type of participation which occurs at the grassroots has to be operationalised.

III Participatory intensities

Paul (1987) can assist us here since he has made the most significant contribution to-date to the operationalisation of the concept by distinguishing between different observable activities of participation. Here we see that there are discrete participatory activities which vary in "intensity" according to the degree to which control or voice of intended beneficiaries are incorporated. There are four levels.

The first level of intensity is "information sharing", where administrators and managers share information with the group to facilitate the action of an individual or a group. This comprises a "low level" of intensity but may have an important impact on the outcome of popular participation to the extent that it can help to educate beneficiaries.

In fact, for family planning or nutrition projects this information alone is crucial. A second level is "consultation", where beneficiaries are not only informed but are also consulted on key issues and have the opportunity to interact with and provide feedback to the corresponding sponsor. A third still higher level of intensity occurs when beneficiaries have a "decision-making" role and thereby have a greater degree of control or influence on the specific project or development process. Such decisions may be made exclusively by beneficiaries or jointly with others on specific issues or aspects relating to a project. The fourth intensity is when beneficiaries are able to take "initiative" in terms of action or decisions relating to a development project or scheme. This is where Paul considers intensity is at its peak because initiating action implies a proactive, decision-making capacity and the ability to make a start on one's own. In this respect it is qualitatively different from the other levels where decisions or tasks are proposed or assigned by others.

Given that these intensities correspond to incremental degrees of personal involvement, they can be conceived as integrally related to the objectives of participation. In such a way, if efficiency is the objective then information sharing may be all that is necessary. Similarly, if empowerment is the objective of participation then decision-making or initiating action is most appropriate. At the same time, it is necessary to recognise that different intensities may co-exist in the same project, exist at different stages of its development and vary according to the nature of the development project. The intensity of participation may also be dependent on the capabilities of the beneficiaries themselves: for instance, they could well find it difficult to assume decision-making responsibilities without prior experience of collective discussion and organisation. This schema is a useful evaluative tool for the researcher because it provides an operational instrument for distinguishing between the gamut of participatory activities, provides a hierarchy of participatory behaviours and indicates what type of participation may be achieved. For instance, where decision-making and initiative activities occur it implies that high levels of empowerment can be achieved.

However, the quality of participation itself is not the only aspect which determines the outcome of a particular development project or programme but is merely one of several since the location of a programme, its resource base and commercial prospects also influence its viability and success. Thus, a major issue in the examination

of participatory processes arises from the problem of how to disentangle it from those other aspects which operate to determine its success or failure. This is particularly pertinent in cases of participation in productive projects, such as cooperatives. This is because their viability is also dependent on technical, production and market conditions and services. The influence of these other factors renders the direct link between participation and cooperative viability tenuous. These factors are dubbed "complementaries" by Paul (1987). For analytical purposes their influence on a project has to be identified so that the participatory processes alone are not attributed to determining overall cooperative performance.

II2 Dimensions of empowerment

A particular consideration of empowerment is warranted on account of it being the most meaningful type of participation and one around which processes will most significantly be judged. Here Friedmann (1992) serves us excellently when modified to consider the particular circumstances of the peasantry, as the subjects of this thesis, by distinguishing three dimensions of the notion: social, political and psychological empowerment.

Social power can be conceived as being based on the access to elements of household production, including information and skills, social organisation and material resources. Where the household can increase its access to improve the basis of its production so can it be seen to lead to social empowerment. For women in particular, other aspects of social empowerment are gained from alleviation from household chores, through improved health care and expanded income opportunities. Thus for the peasantry we are concerned about the extent to which they have secured access to the means of production, to land and technical equipment and knowledge.

Political power is understood as resting on the household's capacity to gain access to decision-making processes as they relate to those areas which directly affect the lives of household members not only through formal voting but also through increased power of voice and collective action. Thus, political empowerment increases as individual voices are channelled through political associations such as the party, trade union or cooperative movement. Here, emphasis is placed on the importance of "speech", as representing the consciously articulated political voice in order to distinguish situations which are more related to mere frustrations with a political situation or circumstances, such as spontaneous

eruptions of street violence.

While such organised and conscious forms of political action constitute Friedmann's definition of political power, for the purposes of this thesis it will be expanded thanks to the observations provided by Scott (1985) to facilitate a more nuanced appreciation of the political action. For the analysis of subaltern groups it is important to examine those expressed in less overt oppositional practices or acts of resistance. Such actions may not cause dramatic political change but may be effective in preventing the domination of peasants by external agents, be it the landlord, mass organisation, party, government or state. They are also relevant because they may reduce the negative effects of policies and may lead to further action. It will also include consideration of the subjective dimensions, namely the content of peasant consciousness because this is an important pre-condition to political action and empowerment.

The other dimension of empowerment, clearly reminiscent of Freire, relates to psychological dimensions and corresponds to situations where individuals begin to be able to express and assert themselves with confidence. This can be achieved either as a consequence of subjective inputs aimed at consciousness-raising or as an outcome of positive action in the social and political areas. Psychological empowerment for women occurs when they begin to question subordinate gender constructions which can enable them to overcome prejudices and their own fear of defying culturally sanctioned patriarchal norms. These barriers have to be conquered in order that they may be able successfully to translate their social power into political power such that the interests of their households can be defended by them in the public domain of wider political arenas.

According to Friedmann all three dimensions should be considered. He also states that they should be manifest through "socially and politically relevant actions" as expressed through collective action by the poor themselves because - in common with the advocates of popular participation - Friedmann emphasises the importance of collective action as a necessary component of the empowerment process. However, a less idealist and more subtle appreciation of politically significant action has to be developed in order to detect small steps which might suggest how peasants are qualitatively more empowered as political subjects.

III Research approach: multi-level and actor perspective

The examination of participatory processes requires that analytical attention be focussed on the role played by individual action and consciousness. This is because it is at this level that participation is manifest: it is individuals and groups who participate and their beliefs, strategies and awareness translate into human action and shape the nature of the participatory process.

Enter the "actor", analytically promoted in the "actor-oriented" approach (Long and Long, 1992) which emphasises the importance of taking into account the role of "human agency". This notion, advanced by Giddens (1979), means recognising that individuals as social actors are "knowledgeable" and "capable" and that they attempt to understand and operate their life worlds cognitively, that is, on the basis of knowledge and consciousness and organisationally, in relation to their interaction with other people and groups. The methodological implication of this theoretical emphasis is to give more attention to the role played by individual action and consciousness. It also provides a more dynamic approach to understanding participatory processes because it facilitates an appreciation of how individuals and groups interact with the system and shape the modes, processes and structural outcomes themselves. It also aims to provide an explanation of the processes by which external phenomena enter their life-worlds and are mediated and transformed by these same actors. As Scott (1985) reminds us, "remote" social forces alter the behaviour of individuals through the moulding of daily life experiences and perceptions. Therefore, an actor perspective which places analytical focus on the strategies, actions and awareness developed and evolved by individuals and groups, enables us to identify the impact of external phenomena, policies and interventions on the local level (Long, 1988).

For the analysis of participation in this thesis it will be used to stress the interaction of forces and relationships which are "internal" and "external" to individuals and groups. By adopting this approach the researcher can account for variations because it emphasises how different actors will respond to the situations they encounter. Analytically, this entails detailed analysis firstly, of the life experiences, struggles and meanings that individuals and groups assign to their life-worlds; and secondly, of internal group dynamics as they relate to the mediation between structural and internal group dynamics.

While an actor perspective emphasises the importance of taking account of the role of "human agency" it is crucial at the same time to establish the conditions which

constrain the individuals' options, strategies and their potential for action since what an individual does cannot be explained without reference to the wider structures, processes and forces (Gledhill, 1994:134). Therefore, the actor perspective needs to be combined with an analysis of forces at different levels. This combination can then account for different responses to similar structural circumstances and is useful in identifying the influence of various forces, agents and institutions.

Hence the logic of the particular structure of this thesis which seeks to disaggregate the participatory processes by examining local level participation in cooperatives as well as the historical, structural and regional aspects of Nicaraguan development. This is because factors at all levels influence the life experiences of individuals, their consciousness and their action. As such, the thesis constitutes an attempt to combine a structural-historical and an actor perspective¹⁵ in order to identify the key factors which operated to shape the development of local participation.

Conclusions

The concept of empowerment which includes gaining access to decision-making processes, control of resources and political awareness is crucial for authentic participation. However, participation is not just an outcome nor cannot it be assessed purely on the basis of decisions reached, rather it is a process of activity and encounters in which the social and political capabilities of the individuals involved develop and are transformed. The dynamic nature of participation enables it to progress towards higher level objectives as the people involved consolidate their organisations and gain operational skills and political awareness. The potential role of participation in rural development has been identified by rural inhabitants, their organisations, governments and NGOs alike. Ideas differ about the relative importance of the various constraints which inhibit it, the potential roles of peasants and external agents in developing participatory activities and the mechanisms by which it can be achieved.

This thesis focuses on qualitative processes of participation and its evaluation is aided by the identification of various participatory activities which reflect different levels of "intensity" regarding individual commitment and involvement. These can be used to identify what type of participation might be achieved and to suggest whether

empowerment in its social, political and psychological dimensions is occurring.

The analysis of participation is best achieved through the adoption of an actor-oriented approach which enables us to understand how external intervention influences participatory practices and how different responses emerge between individuals and groups whose experiences and actions shape the processes. This approach is complemented in this study with a multi-level analysis which incorporates other structural and historical aspects into the analysis and enables us to identify the respective role played by different forces and actors.

Notes to Chapter 1

1.Evidence from the World Development Report 1983 indicates that investment was directed towards industrial areas and agricultural output remained stagnant. During the 1965-82 period, which saw an average rate of increase in gross domestic production of between 2-8%, agricultural output remained stagnant (Hall, 1986:89).

2.See Scott's seminal Weapons of the Weak (1985) for a discussion on the everyday forms of peasant resistance which indicates how the powerless struggle against exploitative conditions.

3.There are many matters around which the concept and operation of democracy are contended however, amongst them are these elements.

4.By praxis is meant an activity which is both practical and symbolic involving an action of change or reproduction of reality that contributes to the modification or reaffirmation of the consciousness of the participant.

5.Indeed, some commentators such as Marsden and Oakley (1984), believe the two sources to be irreconcilable.

6.The following sources provide comprehensive reviews of participation. A detailed and comprehensive analysis of the debates relating to political participation are found in Pateman (1970) and Fagence (1977). See Richardson (1983) in relation to participation and planning in the west; Oakley and Marsden (1984) for the role of participation in rural development; and Midgley et al (1986), in relation to the state.

7.Community participation has developed as an issue alongside the wider debate on popular participation and is differentiated in its focus on the direct involvement of ordinary people in local affairs and its concern with establishing local level institutions which create procedures for democratic decision-making. Its advocates consequently focus attention on effective institution building and to teach people how to use their own resourcefulness in dealing with those institutions beyond their communities.

8.As Streeten (1981) stressed:

"Such needs as health, education, safe water and sewerage can only, or more efficiently, be provided for through public effort.. The role of nonmaterial basic needs both as an ends in their own right and as a means to meeting material needs that reduces costs and improvea impact is a crucial aspect of the basic needs approach."

9.Pearse and Stiefel, 1979:80-108.

10.Other ingredients considered important in Marxism for participation include a understanding of political theory, an organisation capable of articulating the aspirations and preferences of its people and a commitment to work towards goal objectives.

11.UNRISD (1981) Dialogue about Participation (Geneva), No 1:3, quoted from Oakley and Marsden (1984:25).

12.Comment made by Soon Young Yoon.

13.They have also been promoted in capitalist societies for distinct development objectives.

14.Such as Hall, 1986.

15.This was the objective of Long and Roberts (1984) in their study of the Peruvian peasantry.

Chapter 2

NICARAGUAN HISTORY: RURAL RESISTANCE, OPPRESSION AND REVOLUTION

This chapter contextualises the inquiry of this thesis by presenting an overview of Nicaraguan historical development, the economic and political conditions prevailing on the eve of the revolution and details about the "rural poor" as the subjects of this thesis. It also describes the emergence of the FSLN and the organisational relationship between it and the rural organisations. This relationship is key to the understanding of the nature and expression of participation as it developed during the period of the Sandinista Government.

It is of particular analytical relevance in this chapter to establish how political power was imposed during Somoza since this will provide an indication of the legacy of authoritarianism as it relates to the underdeveloped nature of civil society and prevalent political practices. In addition, we need also identify the nature of peasant resistance in order to understand the relationship between the FSLN and the peasantry and establish its limitations or potential for autonomous political action.

The first section of this chapter describes the economic development of Nicaragua which generated extreme conditions of poverty and a political system which itself reinforced social inequalities and excluded the majority from participation in the political process. The second section describes the political, ideological and organisational characteristics of peasant struggles which have characterised the Nicaraguan countryside. The factors which finally led to the integration of *campesinos* (peasants) into the war for liberation are also identified.

I Development of agrarian capitalism: land and labour

The particular conformation of agroexport capitalism as it developed in Nicaragua led to the retention of a sizeable peasant sector. It also generated the conditions of extreme socioeconomic deprivation.

During the colonial period, raw materials from Nicaragua, initially cacao and later indigo not only supplied the conquerors of Spain but also European and the North American states (Black, 1981:10; Vilas, 1986:49; Wheelock, 1986:20). In this way, an irreversible process was set in motion which sealed Nicaragua's fate as a primary export economy.

II Coffee: the "quiet revolution"

The introduction of coffee, cultivated extensively from about 1870 (later than other Central American states), is widely attributed to have marked Nicaragua's entry into the capitalist world economy. Although commentators generally attribute the expansion of coffee cultivation to the measures implemented by the Liberals, coffee had become the principal export by 1890 (Booth, 1985:20) in response to the favourable conditions provided by his Conservative predecessors¹. Coffee production had been encouraged through a series of financial incentives, credit and infrastructural development and guaranteed access to land through reforms which reduced the area of land under church control and eliminated Indian *ejidos* (communally owned and farmed lands).

Coffee continued its expansion during the presidency of Jose Santos Zelaya (1893-1909), who was inspired by a Liberal vision of transforming the national and regional economy into an export region of primary products and who aimed to overcome economic stagnation, consolidate regional integration and create a new social order in the form of an emergent agrarian bourgeoisie. Since coffee production could achieve these desired ends he built the appropriate infrastructure and in 1902 introduced measures to facilitate the reorganisation of land ownership to favour private property. Thus, large scale coffee production extended to incorporate the Pacific highlands (the departments of Granada, Managua, Masaya and Carazo) and to the North-Central highlands (the departments of Matagalpa, Jinotega, Nueva Segovia and Esteli). Exports doubled in the first decade of Zelaya's regime in response to expanding markets in Europe and the United States and they continued to expand between 1920-40 when coffee came to represent 50% of Nicaraguan export earnings (Black, 1981:10; Enriquez, 1991:28).

Coffee production transformed the Nicaraguan economy. It established the groundwork of an economy based on primary goods production and dominated by agroexport. The precariousness of this situation would become painfully evident during

the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s when Nicaraguan exports were devalued dramatically (Wheelock, 1986:20). Coffee also marked the take-off of agricultural capitalism and induced profound social and political changes to the character of Nicaraguan society. Hence its qualification as a "quiet revolution" (Dore and Weeks, 1992).

Zelaya's Agrarian Reform Law, introduced to encourage coffee cultivation, put up for auction indigenous communal landholdings, removed public and church rights to land and expropriated the lands of those without official land titles. Landownership became more concentrated in an emergent agrarian bourgeoisie and the dispossessed sharecroppers, renters and independent peasants were forced to become a rural labour supply which had to seek work in order to survive. Vagrancy laws, labour draft and a coercive system of labour were enforced and compelled rural people to work on the *latifundios* during the harvest period (Enriquez, 1991:30; Dore and Weeks, 1992:11). Yet, coffee production did not eliminate non-capitalist relations of production nor did it result in the establishment of modern capitalist production in the countryside although it contributed to the growth and modernisation of the state.

However, the promised transformation of production in the countryside by the innovative developments of the new agrarian bourgeoisie were "truncated" by a US invasion in 1912. Clearly, Zelaya's liberal reforms had threatened the interests of US capital which was looking to construct a pan-oceanic canal through Nicaragua and was antagonistic to the growth of vigorous independent national capitalist class in Nicaragua (Vanden, 1982:43). When the US marines intervened it was to ensure the resumption to power by the Conservatives whose social base lay primarily with the traditional livestock *hacendados* and *latifundistas*, that is landlords (Kaimowitz and Thome, 1985:224).

I2 Cotton: consolidating agrarian capitalism

The transformation of Nicaragua's economy to capitalism was hastened during the cotton boom of the 1950s, at a time when the demand for materials was stimulated by the Korean War (Kaimowitz and Thome, 1985:224). Cotton, which was concentrated around the Pacific coastal plain in departments of Leon, Chinandega and Masaya, increased production fivefold between 1950-51 to 1954-55. It became the central axis for the model of agroexport and accounted for 39% of export earning (compared with 35% for coffee

during that period). At its maximum acreage it occupied 25% of the country's cultivated lands (Enriquez, 1991:34).

As with coffee before it, cotton production dramatically changed the social structure of rural Nicaragua. Land tenure became more concentrated as land prices rose and small-scale grain producers were forcibly removed. Most of those displaced either became temporary wage labourers or moved out towards the agricultural frontier in the north and east regions of the country where lands were still in the public domain, while others moved into the urban areas (Vilas, 1986:50). Once relocated, those on the agricultural frontier led a precarious and marginalised existence without the security of land titles (Luciak, 1987a:120). Cotton production had the effect of accelerating the transformation of the peasants into wage labourers. In those areas under its production, non-capitalist rental arrangements (found in share-cropping, tenancy and debt peonage), were largely - but not entirely - replaced by cash rental payments (Enriquez, 1991:34-40; Dore and Weeks, 1992:10). However, most of these workers were only seasonally employed since the progressive mechanisation of cotton cultivation during the 1950s meant manual labourers were required only during the harvest period² (Gould, 1990:134).

Other export crops such as sugar, seafood, tobacco and bananas - produced increasingly after the 1950s - rendered agroexport a dynamic growth sector but exacerbated the spatial and social inequalities which had hitherto characterised the development of agrarian capitalism in Nicaragua. For example, beef production which became the fourth most important agroexport in the 1960s, displaced *minifundistas* who had already been pushed to the agricultural frontier during the cotton boom. These were *campesinos* who produced mainly for subsistence and extracted surplus with payment either in labour or kind to the *hacendado*. Moreover, sugar production only created a seasonal demand for work and thereby exacerbated the seasonal labour requirements since together with coffee and it was harvested in the period from December to March meaning that only part of the workforce was employed throughout the year. These agricultural products also increased the economy's dependency on what amounted to highly vulnerable products and on volatile world markets, rendering the economy in the words of Jaime Wheelock, who became Minister of Agrarian Reform, "unable to sustain stability, lurching between years of plenty and crisis" (Wheelock, 1986).

I3 The persistent peasantry

While the extent of capitalist penetration in Nicaragua is both theoretically and empirically disputed, commentators agree that on the eve of the revolution the expansion of capitalist relations of production into the countryside was only partial since non-capitalist relations remained (Kaimowitz and Thome, 1985; Weeks and Dore, 1992). This co-existence of non-capitalist relations of production with a capitalist sector is described by de Janvry as "functional dualism", whereby the capitalist sector produces commodities on the basis of hired waged labour while the peasant sector produces use values and petty commodities on the basis of family labour and provides cheap labour to the capitalist sector (de Janvry, 1981:80-84). The persistence of a large peasant or *campesino* sector of tenant farmers of various forms remained until 1979 and gave the Nicaraguan agrarian economy its unique characteristics.

Lets now take a brief look at the predominant characteristics of the different groups within the agrarian social structure in 1978, as illustrated in Table 1. The first group was the rural bourgeoisie, a group which can be differentiated on the basis of size of landholdings. Large bourgeoisie landowners, identified as those with over 500 *manzanas* (one *manzana* equals 0.7 hectares), typically specialised in export crop production and to a lesser extent in commercial food production³ and tended to occupy prime agricultural land. They comprised only 0.4% of the rural economically active population (EAP) but owned 36% of the land (Deere et al, 1985:77-78).

Medium-sized producers, those with between fifty and five hundred *manzanas*, concentrated mainly on export production although they also grew crops for the domestic market. They were capable of organising and directing the productive process and hired seasonal workers. They occupied 16% of the land, but were more numerous than the large producers, representing 4.5% of the rural EAP.

The largest grouping of the rural class structure is the *campesino* sector. This group accounted for 58% of the rural EAP and occupied only 15% of agricultural land. It was very heterogeneous and can be divided between the rich and middle peasantry and the poor peasantry, according to landholding size. Although this is a simplistic criterion it serves to reflect general characterisations⁴. The farms of the rich and middle peasantry were between ten and forty nine *manzanas* and produced most of the country's commercial crop of basic grains. Some produced a limited amount of export crops,

particularly coffee. Whereas the middle peasants were able to satisfy their basic necessities and as a result are also categorised as "subsistence peasants", the rich peasants typically employed workers.

Table 1. Structure of land tenure in Nicaragua 1978		
Sector	area mzs*	%land
Agrarian bourgeoisie and landlords		
farms over 500 mz	2,920,000	36
farms 200-499 mz	1,311,000	16
Middle and petty bourgeoisie producers		
farms 50-199 mz	2,431,000	30
Subsistence peasants		
farms 10-49 mz	1,241,000	16
Poor peasants/ semi-proletarians		
farms less than 10 mz	170,000	2
Totals	8,073,000	100

* mz is an abbreviation for manzana, the most common measurement of land in Nicaragua. 1 manzana = 0.7 hectares = 1.75 acres.

Sources: derived from CIERA, 1989e:39.

The poor peasants are those rural households that farmed a small plot of land of less than ten *manzanas* which was inadequate land to meet basic family subsistence. This group was the largest peasant producer group, representing 36.4% of the total rural EAP⁵ (Deere et al, 1985:77-78). As a percentage of the rural EAP with access to land the group represented a total of 58% which farmed only 2% of the arable land (Dore, 1990:101). These poor peasants produced mainly for basic grain production with little or no surplus for commodity exchange and were forced to supplement income by selling their labour leading to their dependency on seasonal wage labour. They moved from the cotton, coffee, sugar cane plantations during the respective harvest and then either went back to their own peasant plot as *parcelistas*, worked on plots as paid *colonos* or as *medieros* (those who gained access to land in exchange for half the harvest) (Matus et el, 1990:79;

Houtart and Lemercinier, 1992:22). Hence these peasants were transformed into what scholars have referred to as "semi-proletarians" or "peasant labourers".

The final group, which is not included in Table 1 because it did not have access to land, consists of the landless agricultural labourers and included permanent and seasonal workers who represented a total of 37% of the rural EAP. The latter were either rural-based or joined urban based semi-proletarians who returned to the city where they struggled for survival or remained unemployed (Nunez, 1981:10-11).

These pressures on the Nicaraguan peasantry towards temporary employment and peasantisation, gave its struggle a dual character as a struggle for both land and for better working conditions (CIERA, 1989c:35-6). Whether categorised as peasants who sold their labour power at harvest time in order to subsist or as rural proletarians who survived the rest of the year on a *minifundio* remains a subject of academic debate. However, aside from semantics, the definition was crucial and was ultimately wrongly conceived by the Sandinista Government for the purposes of the agrarian reform policies and as it related to the cooperative movement in particular.

Although the centrality of the family-household had been diminished by the emergence of new forms of dependency on the local landlord during the twentieth century, in 1979 it was still an important social and economic unit of production and the base of everyday life⁶. The absence of stable salaried work secured the fusion between the unit of production and the family unit and the low grade of monetarisation led to the establishment of highly personalised solutions as a way to secure the basic necessities of life. These were sought either through the family or other social networks (Faune et al, 1990; Houtart y Lemercinier, 1992).

I4 Social inequalities and deprivation

The economic development Nicaragua created distinct regional differences in rural social structures. The north Pacific region, dominated by tobacco and sugar mills, was characterised by a concentration of salaried workers. Other areas within the Pacific region (including those of the two cases studies of this thesis) and the poor lands of the northern interior were characterised by the prevalence of peasant labourers or semi-proletarians who retained access to small plots of land. By contrast, the eastern agricultural frontier and interior were predominated by medium and rich peasant production (CIERA, 1989c:35).

Other inequalities typified the agroexport model. The export sector not only had prime lands but also received most governmental assistance, including infrastructural and financial assistance, as indicated by the 1973 figures which showed that 70% of the area under cotton production was financed with credit by the national bank compared with only 5% for maize (Nunez, 1987:53). Domestic food production became concentrated in hands of small producers who lacked resources to produce capital-intensive export crops or to modernise their production. This remained in extreme backwardness, relying on traditional tools and methods: in fact, 75% of basic grain production was carried out with a handspike. These producers were pushed onto the poorest lands and onto the agricultural frontier where they remained isolated from roads and lacked access to drinking water and electricity (Kaimowitz and Thome, 1982:225).

Nicaragua's agroexport system lacked modern technology and instead operated on the super-exploitation of labour as the basis of its competition in the world market (Kaimowitz and Thome, 1985:225), meaning that poor peasant producers shared with other seasonal labourers extremely low salaries. Conditions for the seasonal workers and poor peasants were worse because they were condemned to search for work in migratory movements during the harvest calendar, entailing an existence of hardship and insecurity. Women were exploited even more than their male contemporaries. Their unequal incorporation into productive tasks, with a marked sexual division of labour, contributed towards ensuring a cheap labour force for the agroexport economy⁷. Women's names did not even appear on the payroll: they were paid instead via their male partners as were their children. Consistent with patriarchal ideological which devalues women's productive work, theirs was depicted as "assistance" to the men and they were paid less than their male counterparts (CIERA, 1989d:18-28). This was legitimised by the purported notion that men "maintain" their families despite the reality that in 1970, a total of 50% of households were headed by women⁸.

Consequently, rural social structures were characterised by a highly skewed distribution of assets and income: in 1961 the richest producers, representing 1% total producers, received US\$18,000 while the poorest 65% earned around US\$400. By 1971, the poorest were earning as little as one hundredth less than their patrons. The extent to which they were "submitted to misery and poverty" (Wheelock, 1986:20) is evident from the social indices. In 1979, the national the expectancy of life was 55.2 years and infant

mortality was 130 per 1,000 live births. Without sex education or access to family planning, women became pregnant from an early age and continued reproducing until late: average fertility rates were 7.8 children and were higher for rural women. Rates of spontaneous abortion were also high. Only 3% of the population received electricity and 94% of the rural population lacked drinking water. The national average illiteracy rate was 70% and was greater in the countryside where as many as 90% of the women were illiterate (Wheelock, 1986:22; Nunez, 1987:55). The statistics indicate that Nicaragua - even compared with its neighbours - was a wretched place. Such were objective conditions against which the peasants themselves had struggled in different ways for centuries as the following section illustrates.

II Resistance and rural organisation

As in other Central American countries, the development of capitalist agriculture was resisted by Nicaragua's peasants whose central motive for protest was the defence of land.

III1 Rebellions against agro-capitalist expansion

Indian revolts against the Spanish and creole class of large landowners occurred throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Local insurrections, associated with extreme exploitation, also took place during the 1800s when Indians armed with sticks and machetes attacked Spanish outposts in Masaya, Leon, Granada and Rivas. Although Indian-European racial mixing occurred extensively during colonial Nicaragua, the remaining Indian populations (settled mainly in Masaya and in Subtiava, Leon) were at the bottom of the economic and status system (Black, 1981:15; Booth, 1985:13-14). With the secession of Spanish and British colonial control over the Pacific and Atlantic regions, Nicaragua rapidly moved under the influence of the increasingly assertive and newly independent North American states who issued a warning to European colonial powers to keep their hands off the American continent in the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 (LaFeber, 1984:23). The particular interests of the US government in Nicaragua were not primarily economic but were geo-political since it offered a potential location of an isthmian canal to link the two oceans.

Nicaragua, as with the rest of Central America, also became the target of private and professional adventurers who aimed to claim the small states for their own personal gain and to extend the slave states. It was against one such filibusterer, William Walker (the US citizen who invaded Nicaragua in 1856 with territorial aspirations and proclaimed himself its president), that peasant insurrections also took place in and around Ometepe. Subsequent waves of indigenous uprisings occurred in response to the expropriation of traditional farmlands from peasants which were taken to facilitate the expansion of coffee. Notably, there was a prolonged offensive by peasants in Matagalpa in 1881 after which five thousand dispossessed campesinos were massacred ((Black, 1981:15; Collins, 1986:16). These brutal responses to peasant rebellions became a characteristic of the next hundred years as successive Nicaraguan governments acted to protect the interests of the oligarchy and growing bourgeoisie.

Insurrections and armed uprisings increased during the US military occupation between 1912 and 1933 when the marines arrived to bolster the Conservative regime. This intervention had been facilitated by the fragmentation of the propertied classes (a feature which continues to the present day), who vied for support from external power in order to serve their own interests (Dore and Weeks, 1992). The first engagement of the US forces was a confrontation with "*El Indio*" Zeledon who fiercely opposed the subordination of Nicaraguan sovereignty to the US and was fighting at the time against the Conservative oligarchs and Diaz, their president, who had been installed by Washington. The coalition of social forces constituting Zeledon's followers, which included patriotic peasants and poor artisans, suggests that this was an incipient expression of popular resistance. Zeledon and alongside his followers were massacred by US forces who subsequently responded to the ten uprisings against Conservative rule which took place between 1913 and 1924 by imposing martial law (Black, 1981:9-16).

During the 1920s, the peasant struggle became increasingly aimed at the invading Yankees and the bourgeoisie landowners. This period saw the emergence of Sandino, the Hero of the Sergovias, as a serious threat to the elites. Sandino, the son of a mechanic, was born in Carazo in 1895. He had worked for Standard Fruit and US-owned mines throughout Central America (LaFeber, 1990:66): experiences which, together with the witnessing of the defiled public display of Zeledon's dead body, fuelled an anti-US sentiment within him. He had stayed in Mexico, where he joined the working class

movement, participated in strikes and trained as a spiritualist and mystic (Gilbert, 1988:20). Sandino fought successfully with his Army for the Defence of National Sovereignty against the US marines from 1927 until they were forced to withdraw in 1933. He was based in the remote mountains of Las Segovias: an area affected by expansion of coffee cultivation.

His army was composed mainly of peasants and relied on widespread collaboration of thousands of other campesinos who operated as an "irregular" army, providing crucial logistical support networks and intimate knowledge of vital terrain. At its peak this peasant army comprised 21 columns and 6,000 soldiers (Selser, 1981) and operated throughout ten of Nicaragua's sixteen departments: Zelaya, Chontales, Matagalpa, Jinotega, Nueva Segovia, Esteli, Managua, Leon, Chinandega and Rivas (Black, 1981:22). Although there was extensive popular sympathy for the Sandino throughout Nicaragua that support did not translate into organisational solidarity or rebel recruitment elsewhere in the country (Gould, 1990:36). The inclusion of miners who had taken part in the major strikes against US mining companies, agricultural workers and artisans created a popular force and gave the army its distinct class character. It meant that this war was the closest thing to a class war that Central America had ever seen and the US was allied to the class that was under siege (Ramirez, 1981:431; LaFeber, 1984:67).

Consistent with the general tendency of scholars to focus on the occasions of overt peasant resistance⁹, Nicaraguan historiography characterised in the work of Vilas (1986b) and Ruchwarger(1987), has emphasised the dramatic confrontations between peasants and the state. This perspective is fuelled by the lack of information on the period and consequently, we know little beyond the details of General Sandino's leadership qualities which enabled him to recruit supporters against all objective odds and his strategic combination of well planned political and organisational work¹⁰. There is no information concerning the peasant perspective at this time.

The issue of land was central to Sandino's notion of social justice but this is less evident from what he wrote - since Sandino was no political theorist (Ramirez, 1981:433-4) - than from the organisation of the areas controlled by his army. This area extended from the Honduran border to the north, Lake Nicaragua to the south, Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic eastern board and Chichigalpa in the west. Here, land was redistributed for the first time in the country and was given to peasants whose farms had been expropriated

during the expansion of coffee. Also, agricultural cooperatives were formed and taxes were levied on landowner¹¹. This project of Sandino's conflicted with the interests of the bourgeoisie. Sandino was assassinated in 1933 by the National Guard, a constabulary created by the US State Department during the 1920s as a way to accomplish for less cost what the Marines had been trying to do, namely pacify the country and protect private property (LaFeber, 1984:66). Prior to the departure of the US forces, Anastacio Somoza Garcia was made the National Guard's first Nicaraguan commander. The day after Sandino's murder, the National Guard slaughtered 300 of Sandino's unarmed followers and their families in his base camp in Wiwili (Selser, 1981). Somoza then ordered the systematic destruction of crops, farms and cooperatives in a savage attempt to eliminate Sandino's legacy. Over the next few years the remnants of the guerilla movement were wiped out and the *latifundio* system was restored (Black, 1981:24).

This brutality contributed to ensuring that for decades no peasant protest would be overtly expressed although other factors also impeded peasant rebellions. Peasants were physically dispersed, were divided by conflicting local interests and by traditional political parties and their leaders were coopted by the Somoza regime. Nonetheless, new forms of *campesino* resistance emerged in the decades prior to the revolutionary insurrection. These took place within the parameters of existing jurisdiction and were expressed through indigenous authorities, unions or cooperatives. Typically, violence occurred when repression was employed by landlords and National Guards or on occasions when peasants responded angrily to unfavourable outcomes which subjected them to worsening economic conditions (Serra, 1991:45-50).

During the 1960s peasant struggles were concentrated again in the north, in Matagalpa and Jinotega, where the first outbreaks of union organisation and peasant associations had opposed the second cycle of expropriations of peasant lands for the coffee *latifundio* and the brutal exploitation of plantation workers. The basis of these incipient organisations had been established by the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN), a Moscow-line party which was formed in 1944. Through these initial organisational activities the PSN, although unable to provide effective opposition to Somoza, created conditions that would serve the FSLN guerilla who themselves later operated in the area (CIERA, 1989c:48). Significantly, the communities which were renowned for their actions of resistance were indigenous communities whose collective identity and culture was rooted

in communally shared resources, including those in Mozonte y Teplaneca in Las Segovias, in Uluce in Matagalpa and in Jinotega (Serra, 1991:46). During the 1950s, in response to the expansion of cotton, the Subtiavas of Leon launched protests against local *hacendados* concerning claims over land which the Indians had customarily used. They employed direct action against newly imposed land boundaries known as *pique de alambre* (wire-fence cutting) which came to symbolise campesino resistance against agrarian elite. Other groups in Chinandega and Leon expressed their resistance to expropriations by seizing plantations, thereby contributing to the total of 240 land invasions which were recorded in these areas between 1964-73 (Collins, 1986:22; Gould, 1990). Although rural resistance until the mid-1970s remained essentially local and sporadic it was clear that extensive agro-export expansion in western Nicaragua had generated powerful contradictions and had created social forces which were represented by new forms of organisation.

Before examining the factors which stimulated the peasants' organisational and political consolidation and their ultimate incorporation into the war of liberation, the following section describes the nature of repression and hegemonic control in the countryside. This will also serve to inform us of the political experiences of peasants before the insurrection.

II2 Somozan repression

Since Sandino, the peasantry was the most repressed sector of Nicaraguan society. It suffered systematic brutality imposed by the National Guard which operated to protect the interests of the Somozan dictatorship (1936-1979)¹² against its opponents. The first dictator, Anastacio Somoza Garcia, came to power in what was the first major violation of the Nicaraguan Constitution: a *coup* which established him as president. He ensured his absolute power over the state and military by rewriting parts of the Constitution to enable him to decree laws single-handedly¹³. His control over the electoral legislative machinery provided conditions for a permanent dictatorship and denied all possibilities of alternative parties coming to office via the electoral box (Black, 1981).

While essentially a repressive apparatus, the Somozan dictatorship was able to consolidate its power through the weakness of the state he had inherited and the division between the bourgeoisie (Black, 1981:4). The selective adoption of populist policies and

cooptation also proved powerful instruments with which to ameliorate opposition. In 1945 he made an official accord with the incipient labour movement by granting a Labour Code which created the conditions for Somozan sponsored unions. That this agreement was made in the context of ongoing Conservative opposition and was abandoned once the 1950 Pact of the Generals was agreed, indicates that it was aimed less at real concessions than to ameliorate the socioeconomic contradictions generated by the dictatorship at a time when the party was threatened by the Conservatives. The Pact of the Generals signed between Somoza Garcia and the Conservative leader, Emiliano Chamorro, secured internal unity between the two parties and Somozan hegemony within it. From this time onwards popular demands were managed most typically with repressive methods (Vilas, 1986b:86).

Anastacio Somoza Garcia was killed (or "*justificado*", that is brought to justice, as Nicaraguans say) from shots fired by a poet and type-setter, Rigoberto Lopez Perez, in Leon, Nicaragua. He subsequently died despite the efforts of the best US surgeons who were flown to Nicaragua by Eisenhower to save him (Smith, 1993:112). According to the Sandinista military strategist Humberto Ortega, his death was politically significant because it succeeded in showing that the dictatorship was neither as omnipotent or eternal as the myth it had perpetuated implied. His murder also symbolised the beginning of the loss of Somozan control over the popular masses (Ortega, 1978:81).

Somoza's elder son Luis Somoza replaced him and ruled between 1958-64. Although attributed by some observers to be a relatively moderate dictator, this moderation extended only to his decree of press freedoms and reduction of the military budget. He also resorted to occasional populist tendencies: peasant demands were sometimes acceded and on occasions land disputes were resolved favourably for the peasants. This policy served to coopt peasant leadership, thereby dividing it as a social force (Gould, 1990:96).

The dictatorship of Luis Somoza coincided with Washington's new strategy for permanent counter-revolution, launched in the context of post-Batista Cuba. Nicaragua became a test-case for a new US policy which combined social reform with counter-insurgency and was considered necessary since the country's increasing rural agitations implied that potential conditions for a "Castroite subversion" existed (Black, 1981:42). In conjunction with the US Alliance for Progress, operating during the 1960s and comprising economic investment and aid conditioned on political and social reform,

Somoza passed an agrarian reform in 1963. The aim was to reduce the negative economic impacts of agroexportation and to partially appease socioeconomic demands¹⁴. Between 1964-1976, under the auspices of the reform agency Nicaraguan Agrarian Institute (IAN), itself financed by US Agency for International Development (USAID), displaced *campesinos* were relocated from the populated Pacific region; peasants on the eastern frontier were granted land titles; and squatter-proprietor conflicts were legally resolved. The agrarian reform also stated in its Article 19 that all lands of more than 300 hectares were subject to expropriation where land hunger existed.

In reality little land was redistributed (Gould, 1990:249). However, these essentially non-distributive policies reduced pressure on land in the Pacific region and temporarily appeased class tensions. In addition, the divisive technique of crediting peasants with more than ten *manzanas* was effective in neutralising the struggle of the peasantry as a whole group (CIERA, 1989c:36). Yet, despite the obvious shortcomings of Somoza's agrarian reform it was not necessarily rejected by potential beneficiaries. Evidence from western Nicaragua suggests that the sectors of the rural population initially believed in it to the extent that they gave Somoza their support. This was less the consequence of their uncritical acceptance of Somoza, but rather because at that time, they calculated that their interests could best be served by supporting him (Gould, 1990).

In 1975, Anastacio Somoza Debayle, who was the second son of the first Somoza, commander-in-chief of the National Guard and president between 1967-79, created the Institute for Peasants Welfare (INVIERNO). This was also financed by the USAID and was directed toward integrated rural development. It offered low interest credit for basic grain production as well as training and technical assistance. In reality it benefitted the medium and rich peasants and ultimately most of the foreign funds were deposited in private banks which financed the agrarian bourgeoisie (Vilas, 1986:85b).

Whereas the USAID had appealed to Luis Somoza before him, the institutional preference of this anti-reformist and militaristic brother was Central American Defence Council (CONDECA) which was created by the Pentagon as a regional defence system against internal insurgency. With the failure of INVIERNO - evident from the rural masses' ever closer movement towards the emergent FSLN guerilla movement - Anastacio Somoza Debayle unleashed to the full the counter-revolutionary terror of the National Guard to confront protest and popular activism (Black, 1981:42-8)¹⁵. The brutality of the

National Guard was most intense during the 1974-77 state of siege. On counter-insurgency operations in the north the Guard were permitted to rob peasants, confiscate the homes of peasant suspects and were given bonus payments on the basis of a head-count of those killed: making it adept at massacring *campesinos*. Napalm and defoliants were also used in search and destroy missions of the Nicaraguan Air Force. During this period the National Guard slaughtered 3,000 people in suspected guerilla zones (Black, 1981:50-58). As it became increasingly nervous of the civilian population during the 1970s, any man beyond the age of twelve or fourteen (depending on his size) was likely to be killed on the spot on the mere suspicion of being an FSLN sympathiser: actions which led to Somoza being declared the worst human rights violator in the western hemisphere in 1976¹⁶. However, contrary to achieving its objectives, the repression was instrumental in integrating more *campesinos* and urban residents into the liberation movement (CIERA, 1989c:37-38).

Political control in the rural areas was also maintained by the dictatorship by local networks of collaborators who were linked to the National Guard. These included the *Capitan de Canada*, usually a prominent landlord and the *Jueces de Mesta*, who operated to keep local peace as part local magistrate and part informant. They were nominated by political powers in the departments' capital town although not all undertook their tasks in a repressive manner (Houtart y Lemercinier, 1992:24¹⁷). Local detachments of the Guard, private guards of local landowners and various armed collaborators also protected the property and the interests of bourgeoisie and state (CIERA, 1989c:37).

Under the dictatorship the state became a politico-economic agent of capital and an instrument of enrichment and accumulation for the Somozas and their loyal allies, amongst whom were an extended network of families and high ranking guard officers. They used public resources, foreign financial aid and technical assistance for their own benefit and accumulated spectacular wealth (Vilas, 1986b:87). Even following the 1972 earthquake which devastated Managua and caused an estimated 20,000 casualties, foreign aid and assistance were appropriated by Somoza and construction contracts restricted to the dictator's own companies. In 1979, *Newsweek* quoted US government sources as placing the personal fortune of the last fleeing Somoza at US\$900 million (Black, 1981). The illegal activities and blatant abuse of power, led even the US State Department to privately

castigate the dictatorship for its "negligible consideration of economic and social problems" (LaFeber, 1984:103).

The Somozas exercised exclusive state power, controlled the National Guard and the Liberal Party. The authoritative political system offered no possibility for alternation of parties in office nor legal means by which to satisfy the interests of the popular sectors. Even the discussion of politics was a politically curtailed activity: until the 1960s it was the privilege of only the elites, professional classes and students (Gould, 1991:9). Somozan Nicaragua was internationally notorious for its brutal suppression of human freedoms (Midgley, 1986:40). Despite knowledge of corruption and human rights crimes, the dictatorship maintained friendship with a succession of US presidents and ambassadors and enjoyed economic support and military assistance. Such support guaranteed Nicaragua as a loyal political ally: Luis Somoza offered troops to send to Korea and granted the US use of territory from which to launch the 1961 Bay of Pigs attack on Cuba (LaFeber, 1984:226). Somozan loyalty also proved lucrative for private US interests whose companies were granted tax free concessions to exploit the country's mineral and forestry resources.

II3 Ideological hegemony

Although the system under Somoza rested upon coercion, the political hegemony of the ruling elite was also maintained through a network of patron-client social relations. These were manifest in certain rights and duties and symbolically expressed through personal relationships such as those of *compadrazgo* (godfatherhood), *amiguismo* (friend favouring) and *protectorado* (guardianship). These established a system of reciprocal obligations and rights between *campesinos* and *hacendados*, reproducing the exploitative nature of relations of exploitation which subordinated the poor to their patrons. That peasants came to view the *hacendados* or *latifundistas* as generous benefactors reflects how such social ideologies served to fulfil landowners interests in engineering consent for their rule. Nicaraguan landlords also used the term *campesino* as synonymous with other derogatory terms such as *indio*, *bruto*, *ignorante*, *vago* and *atrasado* (respectively, indian, rough, ignorant, stupid and backward) (Serra, 1988:45,48), thereby inculcating in *campesinos* negative images of themselves as worthless as noted by Freire (1972) elsewhere. This reinforced the idea that existing social relations were a natural and unchangeable order.

The Nicaraguan Church, influential on account of being rooted amongst the popular classes, also contributed to ideological repression in the countryside. With the exception of some young priests, Catholic leaders either collaborated with the governing elite or by inaction tolerated its excesses. This was noted by the US Catholic Press Association in 1962, which reported that priests were the least prepared in the continent, were "blind about social problems" and aligned with a government which was "hated by the people" (Dodson and Montgomery, 1982:162). The Christianity these priests spread was one of submission to the temporal order. It presented the dictatorial power as a product of divine will and so by definition efforts to dissent or rebel represented insubordination to God (Vilas, 1986b:86-87). The Evangelical Churches were scarcely different although, unlike the Catholic's explicit alignment with the regime, they tended to be "apolitical" (Dodson and Montgomery, 1982:162).

Despite the inability of the Catholic church to provide ministry to the rural areas because of its insufficient number of clergy, religion pervaded popular culture. Religious notions informed the *campesinos'* cosmology and their interpretations of the natural life and social reality (Palma, 1978). Religious concepts also provided the symbols for the mystification of the social order: perceptions of the diabolic sources of accumulation of wealth and the identification of wage labour with bestiality were common (Gould, 1990:28-29). Whether this suggests that the religious order legitimised exploitative capitalist relations or was a classic expression of daily forms of resistance (Scott, 1985) in a context of repression remains unclear. The point is that these interpretations did not provide ideological scope for social change.

Patriarchy and the sexual division of labour comprised an integral part of social ideology in Nicaragua as elsewhere in Latin America. It operated to legitimize the double exploitation of women at the hands of both capital and men (within the family and in society at large). The sexual division of labour and its embodiment in the ideology of *machismo* subordinated the status of women within the familial hierarchy. Whereas women were relegated to the domestic sphere to fulfil the reproduction tasks of looking after children and home and the husband/partner, the responsibility of the man was identified as obtaining the means to maintain the home. The man was granted maximum authority in the decisions which affect the household and he alone planned productive tasks, authorised children's migration and decided if the woman should seek work. Before

the community it is traditionally the man who represented the authority of the family (CIERA, 1989d; 40).

The sexual division of labour takes form in the man-woman relationship and manifests itself in the unequal relationship within the home, production, institutions and political activities and maintains the separation between public and private (Perez, 1990:74). In Nicaragua it restricted women in their opportunities for social and personal development and political participation. Men and women alike saw the domestic roles of women as a "natural" and integral part of womanhood and as the "inevitable" role they should assume. That is, the notion of women's inferiority was reproduced within the family and was generated as much by women themselves as men.

The idea of women's inferiority to men was incorporated into the work code in the agroexport sector in Nicaragua during Somoza. As described previously, only the man-worker had the right to be registered on the payroll. He received the salary of his "woman" and children and decided for himself the destiny of the combined salaries (CIERA, 1989d:19). The incorporation of women into productive work in the fields did nothing to alter the mutually held perception: it was considered as "support" and labelled "secondary production" (CIERA, 1989f:170). Beyond the agroexport sector inequalities were also evident. Inheritance was not equally divided between children of different sexes: it was in favour of the male offspring. Despite the high rates of abandonment, economic security for females was perceived to be derived from their husbands (CIERA, 1989d:43-45).

Such ideologies legitimized the social order and the social and gender inequalities it perpetuated. The following indicates how, aided by the contradictions of the repression¹⁸ and the "vicious exploitation of the rural masses" this symbolic miasma was broken.

II4 The FSLN as an alternative movement

The sporadic protests of the popular sectors against the state since Sandino were limited in their potential to resist or effectively oppose Somoza, although some represented sustained confrontations with the state. This includes the important struggles during the late 1950s and 1960s in the rural areas of western Nicaragua and the intermittent strikes of industrial workers which were widespread throughout the period. That these movements were essentially local in focus and reactive or economic in their demands

did not make them stupid nor lacking in awareness about their oppression or class conscious. However, they were unable to articulate their wider interests or generate a national movement to represent their sector. Until the emergence of the FSLN there was no force which could direct the disparate and spontaneous struggles present a coherent political programme nor offer an alternative vision of society.

The general population was limited by its lack of political organisation in either opposition parties or unions. Existing political parties were either co-opted or unrepresentative. The Conservative Party, with whom the Liberal Party had been in constant state of civil war since Central American independence in 1821, had effectively been bought off by Anastacio Somoza in 1940¹⁹ and was co-opted by Somoza in 1967 with the offer of 40% share of government power. In fact, ideological distinctions between the two parties had been eliminated in the late nineteenth century when the Conservatives adopted tenets of economic liberalism. After this, party allegiance had become based on regionalism, socioeconomic power structures and family networks (Black, 1981:32; Booth, 1985:98-100).

Opposition forces, albeit ineffective, did exist in Nicaragua and increased during the 1970s. The Democratic Union of Liberation (UDEL) was founded by a disaffected conservative, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. It brought together in a loose political coalition Conservative and Liberal party dissidents, the Independent Liberal Party and the Social Christian Party. It had no agreed political programme nor designs to create a new society (Black, 1981:65-66). Nor did the Moscow-line Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) offer a militant challenge to the regime: its Soviet orthodoxy taught that revolutionary action could not proceed before the historical conditions had matured sufficiently to produce the militant proletariat that Marx had predicted (Gilbert, 1988:19). The PSN had even declared its support for the Somoza Government when it was founded in 1944 and was later coopted during Somoza's popularist period. It joined the UDEL coalition in 1974 but did so proposing a progressive demand for labour reform. Nonetheless, it failed to provide effective political leadership to the working people it purportedly represented (Ruchwarger, 1987:44).

The absence of effective opposition in the form of political parties was mirrored in the lack of popular organisations, whose development had been stymied by several factors. The country's historically low level of industrialisation and urbanisation meant that not

only was the industrial sector small, it also had the most poorly organised urban proletariat in all Latin America: less than 6% of all workers being members of trade unions and their demands were typically economic in nature (Ruchwarger, 1987). Moreover, these unions were also fragmented into five main confederations including the PSN-led General Confederation of Workers-Independent and one under the direct control of the Somoza dictatorship²⁰. Autonomous institutions within civil society were absent and political organisations in particular.

Moreover, the National Guard's brutal repression of strikers prevented union organisation and the widescale massacres of peasants had deterred efforts to organise in the countryside. Exacerbating these factors was high illiteracy and low levels of political consciousness. Hence, Coraggio's (1985) characterisation of the Nicaraguan people during this period as "masses", was an appropriate reflection of how unstructured and unorganised these people were. The consequence of all this was that the activities of an avaricious and repressive dictatorship went unchecked.

The FSLN was founded in 1961 by a group of students: Carlos Fonseca (the main theorist and once member of the PSN), Silvio Mayorga and Tomas Borge. Only Borge survived to become a major figure in the new regime. From the beginning, the FSLN rejected the traditional methods of opposition to the dynasty. Instead it recognised that a political initiative ought to be built from below. It favoured a popularly based guerilla struggle. The FSLN took inspiration from the example and thoughts of the anti-imperialist national hero General Sandino, who provided the new Sandinistas with the central components in its struggle against Somoza. This included Sandino's perception that the people of Nicaragua were oppressed as a consequence of the coincidence of political interests of the national elites and the US. The close association between the Somozas and US political interests meant that the anti-dictatorial struggle the FSLN aimed to conduct was integrally bound to the struggle for liberation from foreign domination. The FSLN also inherited Sandino's recognition that an alliance of classes was necessary to overcome the dictatorship and that only the urban proletariat and peasants were the dependable new forces. Like Sandino, they shared a nationalism which was distinctly anti-US. It was the suggestion of Carlos Fonseca, who fervently studied Sandino's manifestos, that the liberation movement take the General's name.

Although most of these early Sandinistas had studied Marxism at university, their initial socialist inspiration came from the 1959 Cuban revolution and from its guerilla hero Che Guevara. According to Borge, this dramatic Cuban event was like "the lifting of innumerable curtains, a flash of light" (Gilbert, 1988:5). Although the Sandinista Government would later studiously avoid identifying itself as Marxist, Marxism was an integral component of *Sandinismo*. For the Sandinistas, Marxism was treated less as a fixed theory than as a scientific method of analysis of the specific conditions of the Nicaraguan reality. Indeed, Foncsea repeatedly stressed that "sterile dogmatism" ought be avoided and went as far as to suggest that it was better if Nicaraguan radicals knew little about formal political theory (Gilbert, 1988:23). Other components, including *Sandinismo's* essentially Christian ethics, would develop during and after the struggle for national liberation, as the next chapter indicates.

The initial FSLN strategy of *foquismo* centred on guerilla warfare and consisted of units operating from the mountainous regions²¹. During this period the guerilla built up support from the *campesinos* in areas where Sandino had operated and where a lingering sympathy remained. The FSLN encountered limited success in organising the peasantry and so the strategy was later abandoned in preference for consolidating its relationship with the general population: with the students, Christians, women, agricultural workers and the peasantry. With the exception of the FSLN's victorious battle of Zinica in 1970, which was conducted by an army composed exclusively of peasants, few peasants participated in these early years as combatants, although they were later incorporated more successfully into the armed struggle from 1976 onwards (Ruchwarger, 1987:38). At this stage the FSLN asserted itself as a politico-military organisation whose objective was to take political power. Since issuing its 1969 Historic Programme, the FSLN identified its role as the leader of the "Nicaraguan people" which would lead the popular sectors to the victory of the Sandinista Popular Revolution through guerilla combat (FSLN, 1969). This notion was developed more systematically in the 1977 *Plataforma General* where the FSLN explicitly identified itself with "the Marxist-Leninist cause" and as the vanguard which must direct the revolution and organisation of the masses given "their backward nature" (DN-FSLN, 1977).

The dynamic between the political movement and popular sectors was specific to each and consequently the FSLN interacted with the different social sectors in different

ways²². In the case of the student movement - generally attributed to have emerged after university students from Leon were attacked by the National Guard during a demonstration in 1959 - it essentially developed in parallel to the FSLN. In 1966, the FER (Revolutionary Student Front), which was most closely identified with the FSLN, emerged as a strong force within the student movement and led the first student-led strike to protest against the corruption of Nicaraguan party politics. This was joined by the Christian Youth Movement which grew independently from the Christian student protests against human rights abuse in 1970. Through study circles in which Sandinista documents were read, common principles and social goals were established and the movement increasingly identified itself with, and eventually came under the leadership of the FSLN. Its networks within youth clubs and base groups developed by the Christian communities in the *barrios* (suburbs or quarters) of Managua provided indispensable support. The involvement of Christians, who participated in grassroots and within leadership positions, rendered Christianity an organic component of the FSLN: not just a tactical or strategic ally (Lowy, 1993:37)

The Association of Women Confronting the National Problem (AMPRONAC) was a radical political front which formed spontaneously by predominantly middle class women following the 1972 earthquake. It maintained a militant and visible profile: protesting at National Guard atrocities committed against women and children and conducted investigations on cases of torture and disappeared persons (Black, 1981:101; Ruchwarger, 1987:45). Its demands also reflected incipient gender concerns such as pronouncements against prostitution, despite the fact that ideas about women's liberation had only just begun to diffuse as in the rest of the Latin American continent (Olivera et al, 1990:60). Only later did the women's movement develop a Sandinista character, following internal divisions in 1979 and its rebirth as the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Association for Women (AMNLAE). For the purposes of this thesis a description of the FSLN's organisational relationship with the peasants warrants greater detail.

II.5 Towards revolution in the countryside²³

After its first attempt at guerilla warfare in Pancasan, when the FSLN was forced to acknowledge that the alliance of the peasantry was not automatic²⁴, it began to place

greater emphasis on the organisation and political work with peasants. This task was facilitated by the important work of Christian groups. Theological developments occurring within the Catholic Church, following the 1968 Medellin Conference of Latin American Bishops, resulted in a fundamental shift within church doctrine. This was approved by the Council of Vatican II which subsequently called the church to defend the rights of the oppressed and "to make preferential option for the poor", thereby authorising bishops, priests and sisters to seek new pastoral methods. In Nicaragua, new Christian practices generated by this emerging "liberation theology" were initiated by the Jesuit Fathers who founded Educational Centre for Agrarian Advancement (CEPA) in 1968. Its initial activities were oriented to training *campesinos* in appropriate agricultural techniques and, within the context of Christian readings, to develop an awareness of the social and political implications of the Christian gospel for those who worked the land. With so few priests in Nicaragua the Catholic Church also sought to train lay persons to conduct religious functions in rural areas. These people were called "Delegates of the Word" and they formed Christian "base communities" in which *campesinos* and landless workers discussed their problems in the light of the readings from the Bible (Collins, 1986:23-25).

With the recognition that there were structural origins to poverty and that only organised collective political action could improve their conditions, these delegates, base communities and CEPA activists became radicalised. They also became effective at stimulating an indignation amongst the peasantry of the injustice of the political system (Montgomery and Dodson, 1982:17). They also promoted notions of the peasant as an active subject of his and her own destiny and they began organising peasants to ameliorate their impoverished living conditions. CEPA also published a comic book, "*Cristo, Campesino*", whose message within was "You have the right to land". Thousands of copies were distributed throughout the rural areas (Perez, 1990:111). The potential threat of this socially interpreted gospel was not lost on Somoza, who branded the Delegates "subversives", banned their activities and ordered the National Guard to murder some (Collins, 1986:24-25). Thus, through its work with the peasants, the radicalised church instilled a social conscience in the *campesinos*, matured the nature of its struggle and provided a "common language" which bridged peasant aspirations to the Sandinistas' political message (Gould, 1990). The resultant organisational structures the church also created favourable conditions in which the FSLN could work (CIERA, 1989c:47-48).

Other processes effectively sapped the legitimacy of *Somocismo* and made evident the limitations of Liberalism as a political ideology in which peasants traditionally expressed themselves. Also, *campesinos* and rural workers who had embarked on legislative processes as a way to claim land under Somoza's Agrarian Reform, found themselves repeatedly deceived through their numerous confrontations with landlords, reform institutions, officials, politicians and the National Guard. Thus, the rural poor, as noted by Gould in western Nicaragua, came to identify the limitations of Somozan reforms and the inability of the dictatorship to represent their interests (Gould, 1990:270-291).

In 1975, the Sandinistas, informed by a conception of this rural workforce as a mass of semi-proletarians with homogeneous interests and political demands (an interpretation over-emphasised the proletarianised nature of the semiproletarians²⁵), started to work with plantation workers and began to organise them into Committees of Agricultural Workers (Kaimowitz, 1986:102; Ruchwarger, 1987:30-40). At first these incipient committees which formed in Carazo and Masaya organised protests and strikes to demand better working and living conditions and to renounce National Guard repression. Studying in groups at night, members also learnt about the history of Nicaragua and how it related to the conditions they endured. Thus, the *campesinos'* subjective and critical reflection on their condition was nurtured and given a national context (CIERA, 1989c:57-8).

Despite the National Guard's attempts to destroy these organisations by torturing, killing and imprisoning members, the committees multiplied. With the aim of uniting around demands for improved living conditions, they extended to encompass the Department of Rivas to the south and Chinandega to the north: areas dominated by coffee, cotton and sugar estates. By 1977 there were sufficient committees to form a national organisation and following a major strike at the San Antonio sugar refinery, the Association of Rural Workers (ATC) was created. It grew immediately in both strength and militancy, incorporating semi-proletarianised peasants and agricultural workers (Ruchwarger, 1987:40). Inspired with the displays of support from other national political organisations the ATC was propelled into political alliance with the FSLN: reflecting its recognition that its struggle was essentially political and that fulfilment of economic demands could only occur with the defeat of dominant political power, namely *Somocismo* (CIERA, 1989c:60).

Although the FSLN was unequivocal in the view that revolution had to be rooted in a worker-peasant alliance, the issue of organising the rural poor was a major debate within it. Whereas the Proletarian Tendency (PT), led by Jaime Wheelock who later became Minister of Agrarian Reform, placed emphasis on organising the agricultural and industrial workers as the leading class of the revolution, the Prolonged Popular War (GPP) faction stressed the need to work with the peasant sector. The Tercistas, or Third Way, represented a call for broadening the base of the revolutionary movement (Gilbert, 1988:29-30). These differences, perhaps more strategic and tactical than ideological, were sufficient to cause the FSLN to split in 1977, although it finally reunited as a Front in 1979 prior to the final insurrection. Nonetheless, its 1977 General Platform is characterised by the view that the rural worker was an advance over the peasant smallholder:

"The working class because of its direct involvement in capitalist production has acquired the collective habits, working discipline, manual and mental ability and other traits which put them (sic) in the vanguard of the organisation and leadership of the masses." (DN-FSLN, 1977:39)²⁶

Rural women also resisted Somoza, even though written history has not done justice to their contribution. Here, the testimony of the prominent national peasant leader Benigna Mendiola is revealing:

"We began to work in the union, in the first union in La Palma in 1962. After this union, others formed. We struggled for the demands of the agricultural workers: better salaries, work-free Sundays and public holidays. Whereas the workers were paid five *cordobas*, with the union struggle we succeeded in getting ten. I liked working in the union because it meant fighting to help the poor class and I represented the men as much as the women. I was treasurer and had an identity card. In that same union there was an organisation of democratic women²⁷. Later the group of women from the union joined the guerilla movement.. men and women integrated into the files of the FSLN."²⁸

Essentially, the involvement of women in the struggle represented a natural extension of their role as protector of family, as wife and mother (Molyneux, 1987). It took them beyond the domestic realm: they became Christian representatives of syndicates or associations or integrated into the guerilla forces and contributed to the high proportion of women in the movement (30% were women). Few peasant women stood to the fore of the mass organisations since, as Benigna Mendiola again recalls, few were prepared for such organisational tasks. Many supported the struggle in traditional roles by cooking or

maintaining security houses. Although this contribution has typically been defined as "supportive" not "political", women were integral to the development of rural organisations (Perez, 1990:32). In whatever capacity women incorporated themselves into the liberation movement, it involved them in extreme personal hardship. The tasks they assumed were undertaken on top of their normal productive and domestic responsibilities and they also had to endure criticism in the face of prejudice (Perez, 1990:30-34).

Peasants were convinced by the FSLN that their demands would be represented by it. Since 1969, the promise of agrarian reform was recurrent in the proclamations of the FSLN and its cry of "Land to whoever works it!", assured the support of the campesinos and rural workers in the overthrow of the dictator.

III Overthrowing Somoza

A brief overview of the events leading to the final insurrection is appropriate here, since this further illuminates the relationship between the FSLN and the popular sectors. From 1970, the task of strengthening its relationship with the popular sectors was particularly difficult for the FSLN because it had to go underground. Clandestinely, it was able to build base-support by directing its activities mainly to recruiting factory workers and university students. Nonetheless, this amounted to an accumulation of forces which resulted in increased urban militancy as expressed by the mounting numbers of demonstrations and hunger strikes against trade union harassment, the treatment of political prisoners, working and living conditions and costs of consumables (Black, 1981:90). In 1977, as a result of international pressure - notably from the Carter Administration which shifted its human rights policies - Somoza lifted the state of siege he had imposed in 1974. An explosion of popular protest resulted, including widespread demonstrations, mass meetings, seizures of churches and schools, armed confrontation with National Guard and the destruction of Somoza-owned property. This presented the FSLN with the opportunity to harness the spontaneous protests and promote the participation of the people in new forms of broad based organisations. By late 1977, the mass movement had gained momentum and in mid-1978 twenty popular organisations, including political parties, trade union federations and grassroots organisations founded the United People's Movement (MPU) as a national political organisation equivalent to a left-wing political

coalition and mass insurrection front (Black, 1981: 120). Following clear indications from autonomous mass action that the popular sectors throughout the country were ready for an all-out confrontation, the FSLN called for an insurrection in 1978. The result - a military defeat for the popular forces - left no question that the FSLN was at the leadership of the Nicaraguan Revolution. It also highlighted the need to increase the political, organisational and military capacity of popular sectors. FSLN attempts to consolidate base support were intensified.

Urban neighbourhood organisations²⁹ were organised and were strategically crucial since the structures of Somoza power were in the urban areas, making control of the cities crucial to the FSLN. The formation of these organisations was initiated by the newly created MPU, whose representatives began to visit the *barrios* in order to organise Committees of Civil Defence (CDC) by residential block. The CDCs organised around practical tasks of securing water supplies, paving streets, building schools and made social demands concerning the construction of medical centres and reduction of prices. The CDCs also organised for the "defence of life"³⁰: gave instructions on how to deal with the National Guard (since residents were being murdered indiscriminately); stored medical supplies; and trained residents in first aid skills. They set up "Sandinista dining rooms" where combatants could eat during fighting and established "security houses" where FSLN leaders could meet. The progressive pauperization of the popular classes which began in the second half of the 1970s, may well have contributed to swell the ranks of these popular organisations (Vilas 1986b:97).

Through their activities the CDCs created a clandestine civilian and political force which spread throughout the country from January 1979. Some formed popular militias to oppose the National Guard and others played a major role in running those cities which were briefly liberated. They were particularly advanced in Leon where they undertook military preparations and developed a real parallel power structure, organising food distribution and health provisions (Black, 1981:137; interviews with residents of Leon, 1989-1991)³¹. In this way, it can be seen that while the FSLN promoted the popular organisations during the struggle against the dictatorship for specific military and organisational objectives, the impetus for civilians to participate within the CDCs or other popular organisations came from the popular sectors themselves. As such, these popular organisations can be seen to have emerged from below, with the dual function of

searching for solutions to practical problems of social life and expressing anti-Somoza sentiments. This expression of participation was less popular than revolutionary. Similarly, the FSLN's organisational input served to consolidate the strength of these organisations and provided a political objective and cohesion to their demands: creating an organic relationship between the FSLN and the popular sectors. This suggests, as Vilas points out, that the history of the FSLN has to be seen as a history of peasant and worker organisation as much as armed confrontations (1986b:126).

As regards the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, from mid-1977 the FSLN defined a strategy to incorporate its democratic sectors - found predominantly from the middle sectors, not the large capitalists - who would play a secondary role in the popular struggle. Their disputes with Somoza were not political but related to the issue of "disloyal competition" caused by Somoza's privileged use of international credit, monopoly in construction and government corruption earthquake (Vilas, 1986b:128-129). One outcome of the FSLN's approach to the business and middle classes was the Group of Twelve which formed in 1977. This was comprised of intellectuals, professionals, priests and businessmen, some of whom had already collaborated with the FSLN or had family members within it. Its aim was to extend support for the FSLN internationally and forge links between the FSLN and the official opposition in Nicaragua. The Group of Twelve denounced the repression of Somoza, voiced the desire for a new form of democracy and called for the broad coalition of anti-Somoza forces, making it the first time that these sectors had openly declared support for the revolutionary aims of the FSLN (Vilas, 1986b:135; Gilbert, 1988:9). Then in 1978, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, leader of the UDEL opposition coalition, was assassinated by the National Guard. His murder proved instrumental in bringing the country's business organisations into direct confrontation with the National Guard, giving the liberation forces its multi-class character and stimulating widespread demonstrations and riots (Gilbert, 1988:9).

The insurrections of September 1978 and June 1979 were mainly urban affairs but combatants in some parts of the countryside also played a significant role³². Here, ATC peasants and farmworkers organised in popular militias united with the FSLN and were able to mobilise and barricade main roads throughout the country to impede the movements of Somoza's troops (Black, 1981:129). In these situations their participation was essentially military. The rapid development of a revolutionary situation meant that

there was still a low level of revolutionary consciousness amongst the popular sectors. Their visible expression of extreme frustration with the political situation was not necessarily matched with political "speech" which as Arendt (1965) reminds, is a prerequisite for involvement in the political process.

Nonetheless, the widespread involvement of the population in these and other popular organisations was a notable characteristic of the overthrow of the dictator³³ and their role in defeating the National Guard surpassed even the FSLN's expectations. Indeed, as stated by Humberto Ortega, a member of the party's National Directorate and later Nicaragua's Defence Minister, contrary to their idea of receiving logistical support by the masses, the FSLN guerillas on numerous occasions found themselves providing tactical support to the people. The spontaneous armed uprising of the indigenous *barrios* of Monimbo and Subtiava are classic illustrations of this (Ruchwarger, 1987). It was only the unity of popular organisations - incorporating tens of thousands - with the FSLN which created an effective counterweight to the highly trained and well-equipped National Guard and was able to achieve victory³⁴.

On 19 July 1979, the arrival of the triumphant guerillas aboard captured military tanks in Managua's main plaza heralded the disintegration of the Somozan state. Victory had been secured with enormous human losses: an estimated 35,000 people were killed in the year leading to the victory (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:7). However, the personal sacrifice and loss of human life during the insurrectional struggle were also instrumental in consolidating the support and commitment of members of the popular organisations to the FSLN and its programme of liberation (Serra, 1988). Also, the FSLN's two decades of struggle through those who had incorporated themselves into its armed and political fronts legitimised it before the population and as a force in the aftermath of the overthrow of Somoza.

Conclusions

Under Somoza the rural population was marginalised and exploited by the deformed type of agrarian capitalism which had developed in the country. The dictatorship ruled through coercion and maintained political hegemony through monopolisation of power, cooptation and ideological domination. Social relations between social groups were hierarchical and

were linked vertically through various socio-cultural institutions which disguised relations of subordination.

The history of peasant protests attest to their knowledge of the injustice of the system and their oppression: that aspect is not in question. However, while not devoid of ideas about resistance as the FSLN has tended to portray, neither were peasants on the eve of the Sandinista Revolution calculating individuals capable of directing a concerted national movement. They lacked an alternative ideology or discourse and the organisational capacity and networks.

Against this historical context the FSLN emerged as a political alternative which gave peasants an opportunity to overthrow an authoritarian political system and to end the conditions of subordination. The FSLN directed political and organisational efforts at the incipient rural organisations, informed by a theoretical interpretation which underestimated the producer aspirations of poor peasants and saw the peasantry as backward.

The incorporation of peasants into the liberation movement gave their demands a national political coherence. Alongside the urban based popular sectors, groups of organised peasants in some parts of the country contributed to the defeat of Somoza. Clearly, the FSLN was the key agent of the revolutionary upsurge and its leadership was legitimised by its commitment and struggle. While the dictatorship remained as the common enemy of the diverse groups incorporated within the revolutionary movement there were no apparent contradictions between their specific sectorial and class interests. This would change as we shall see, once the FSLN were established in power.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Whose social base lay among the traditional livestock *hacendados*.
2. In western Nicaragua seasonal labourers increased from representing a fraction of the rural labour population in 1940, to over 90% of the agricultural labour force in 1960.
3. Their proportionately low production outputs compared with the high concentration of land in their hands, suggests that there was a high degree of idleness and absenteeism amongst the large landowners (Vilas, 1986:76).
4. There is an absence of systematic data relating to other factors such as land quality, access to water and control of the means of production which also determine difference between strata of peasantry (Dore, 1990:101).
5. These figures vary, for example Matus (1990:83), states that at the time of the triumph the peasant sector in total constituted 66% of the economically active population and claims that it produced 80% of the production for internal consumption.
6. Of course, these family units should not be seen as "traditional" family, since the penetration of capitalist economy into Nicaragua was not a recent phenomenon.
7. In addition to their temporary employment alongside their male partners, women were also employed on a permanent basis as cooks and caretakers for the workforce and young women were employed as servants in haciendas or the towns.
8. A situation created by temporary but regular absence of the male partner and typically becoming a reality when he abandons his partner (CIERA, 1989d:28).
9. It was this academic emphasis that was influential in informing Scott to write in Weapons of the Weak about "everyday forms of resistance".
10. Such as that described in Vanden, 1982:50.
11. A provisional government operated with an independent currency and a communication system was also established.
12. Which ruled for all but two years of this period.
13. Through major redrafts he extended the presidency by two years to a six year term and empowered the president to decree laws concerning the National Guard without consulting congress. See Black (1981) and Booth (1982) for more details of the political, economic and social conditions under the dynasty.
14. Conforming to the conditions imposed by USAID as founders of the agrarian reform, the dictatorship assumed a civilian facade of during the Schick administration. Schick was a Liberal president who served between 1963-67.
15. It is logical to conclude that it was devised for counter- insurgency since it took no part in international conflict in the region, such as the 1969 El Salvador - Honduras "Soccer

War", and its operations concentrated in Nicaragua and Guatemala, which both had the strongest guerilla movements (Black, 1981:48).

16. For specific details of its human rights investigation in Nicaragua see Amnesty International, 1978 Republica de Nicaragua: Informe incluyendo las recomendaciones de una mision enviada a Nicaragua entre el 10 y el 14 de mayo 1976. Amnesty International, London.

17. This is supported by evidence from my fieldwork, during which residents of Sanchez II, in Tola, Rivas, claimed that Don Espinoza, the *Juez* at the time of the insurrection, never reported the activities of the FSLN as it passed through the rural communities.

18. Vilas (1986b:87), for example states that not even this form of repression could contain the contradictions embodied in agroexport model.

19. With the offer of certain economic safeguards for political allegiance to Somoza.

20. The others included Council of Trade Union Unification (CUS) linked to the American Institute of Free Labor Development; Workers' Federation of Nicaragua (CTN), linked to the Social Christian Party; Federation of Trade Union Action and Unity (CAUS), loyal to the Nicaraguan Communist Party; and the General Confederation of Workers-Official (CFT-O), which was loyal to the Somoza regime. See Ruchwarger (1987:44-45), also Booth (1985) for full account of labour unions.

21. This strategy was an important phase and successful in ending the ideological silence that stifled Nicaragua.

22. Details of the formation of mass organisations are found in Ruchwarger (1987).

23. This sub-heading has been taken from a chapter in Gould (1990).

24. Some interpretations, such as those expressed in Vilas (1986b) and CIERA (1989c:59) tend to present this alliance as an unproblematic and logical development of the peasant struggle.

25. This was consistent with capitalist agroexport model, an interpretation of Nicaraguan historical development which emphasised the extent to which agricultural capitalism had penetrated and transformed rural social relations and emphasised the extent to which poor peasants had become wage labourers.

26. This was issued by the FSLN's Tercerista Faction in mid-1977, and was apparently authored by Humberto Ortega (Gilbert and Block, 1990:viii).

27. In this period the first women's organisation emerged, the Organisation of Democratic Women of Nicaragua, which was initiated by the PSN but only lasted one year.

28. Quoted in Perez (1990:29-30), my translation.

29. Preliminary efforts to organise the neighbourhoods prior to insurrection took place in 1972 and involved students who organised committees in marginal neighbourhoods, and

priests and other religious groups who worked with the poor and homeless following the earthquake. They achieved only a limited and localised success (in Managua and Leon).

30. The distinction between these two fold functions was made by Leticia Herrera, personal interview, Managua, January 1991.

31. Herrera also made the interesting observation that this history of the CDCs differs significantly from the Revolutionary Defense Committees in Cuba which formed after the Cuban Revolution and were created from a top-down initiative.

32. For detailed accounts of the insurrection see Black (1981); Chavarria (1982); Booth (1985).

33. For more information see Booth (1985); Black (1981); Vilas (1986b).

34. Those who did not fight directly as combatants organised supply lines; constructed barricades to halt the movements of the National Guard, ambushed and harassed them when they penetrated the communities and provided sanctuaries for the guerilla (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:6-7).

Chapter 3

AN FSLN PROJECT: PROMOTING DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION

A description of the national political characteristics is necessary for this thesis because the analysis of the processes of popular participation at the local level - the focus of this thesis - requires an appreciation of the political context which defines its parameters. Consequently, this chapter explores the characteristics of the national political system created by the Sandinista Government once it was established in power because it influenced the nature of local political and participatory processes but was not immediately observable at the micro-level.

The chapter examines Sandinista theories and practices of democracy as they developed during the period in the context of its global political objectives. This is because the FSLN's own political project: its political models of vanguardism and pluralism; its relationship to the state and the popular organisations; and its class alliances established the political framework within which popular participation could develop. The examination of the dynamic between the FSLN, state and mass organisations also serves subsequent analysis by establishing the concomitant power relationships created between these entities and ultimately contextualises the development of the peasant cooperative sector.

More specifically, the chapter also identifies the role assigned to participation within the context of these wider political objectives and commitments and examines the nature of the emergent channels of participation which were created to promote the active involvement of hitherto marginalised sectors of society into the political process. Finally, based on observations of the fate of popular participation at the structural level, the chapter identifies the various political developments (within the party and its multi-class alliance, the state and mass organisations) and military and economic factors which ultimately restricted the opportunities for participation and the political space it was afforded.

I Democracy and participation: FSLN theory

The tasks the Sandinista Government faced on taking power were enormous¹. The most immediate were to reactivate the economy and to construct a new state structure, including government, legal apparatus, civil service and military to enable it to fulfil the FSLN Historic Programme and to construct a new democratic and just society. The FSLN was explicit in identifying who these transformations were intended to benefit. In the words of Daniel Ortega, the FSLN National Directorate member who became President of the Republic, this would be for:

"the vast majority, for the workers and peasants who produce all the country's wealth"²,

Before learning more about the features and nature of this democracy, the role assigned to participation and the political practices which developed we need to know more about the theoretical components of the FSLN's ideology.

II Ideological composition of Sandinismo

There are several identifiable components to the ideology of the FSLN, *Sandinismo*, which evolved with the development of the armed and political movement itself. From the foundation of the FSLN in 1961, there was a strong association with Sandino and his struggle. His national and anti-imperialist stance was inherited by the FSLN who recognised, as Sandino had done before, that economic deprivation and political oppression faced by the majority of Nicaraguans was the result of a political system created and supported by an external power: the US. The original founders also gained inspiration from Sandino's adoption of armed struggle as a means to defend his cause and from his national pride in asserting the right to fight for self-determination. Sandino also provided a symbolic link between the FSLN and native traditions of popular rebellion, an association which was strengthened by the FSLN's personal links to his movement³. The identification with Sandino was manifested by the incorporation of many symbols of this hero into party propaganda and slogans, including the adoption of his red-and-black flag and the mottos "Fatherland and Liberty" and "*Patria Libre o Morir*" (Free Country or Die). This assimilation of the thoughts of Sandino and the strategies of his struggle provided an inherently national dimension to the early FSLN movement and grounded it

firmly in the specific conditions of Nicaragua. In the words of Humberto Ortega, *Sandinismo* for the FSLN:

"..is the concrete expression of the development of struggle in Nicaragua.."

While this element may have prevented the FSLN from adopting crude dogmatic Marxism, Marxist thought was the basic component of *Sandinismo*. Marx's class-based notion of history with class conflict as the motor of change and progress provided the FSLN with a crucial revolutionary theory. Humberto Ortega's following statement illustrates how the two traditions were synthesised:

"Some Marxist-Leninists would love us to drop Sandino because he was not a Communist. But in Nicaragua one cannot be a revolutionary without being a Sandinista. The same as it is necessary to refer to Jose Martí to be a Communist in Cuba, or Lenin in the USSR ... In this sense the scientific doctrine of Marxism guides us. But from the historical point of view we nurture our own traditions. To put it another way: the impetus of the current struggle gives us own living experience in Nicaragua, after more than a century of struggle for independence and for a free country. It doesn't provide a fixed doctrine. The political constituent of our ideology is the programme for national liberation."⁴

This blend of Marxism and revolutionary nationalism was the essence of Sandinista thought.

From Fonseca onwards, the leadership of the FSLN also recognised that the specific features of Nicaragua's economic and political system - its distorted capitalism - did not fit the classical Marxist theory of history since its development had been derailed by imperialism. Their analysis of the development of Nicaragua under its domination as a dependent and underdeveloped state, with a backward proletariat and a bourgeoisie incapable of fulfilling its historical role, led them to identify the need for a vanguard to advance the country through historical change. The central role assigned to the vanguard would be to represent the interests of the workers and peasants through a strong state apparatus that would be able to conduct the structural transformations that it saw necessary. In reference to itself as the revolutionary vanguard, the FSLN accord in 1979 (marking the reunification of the three tendencies) declared that:

"Marxist-Leninism is the distinct feature of the revolutionary activities of the FSLN." (DN-FSLN, 1979).

Explicitly within most party documents, implicitly within others, the FSLN subsequently identified itself as the "leader in the class struggle".

Christianity was another ingredient of the ideology that inspired the revolution and provided many of the images of Sandinista culture. Christianity is most evident in the strong ethical content that permeated the revolution and although Christianity has no monopoly on ethical concerns, the frequency of explicit references to Christ, the Gospel and the Bible reflect a Christian presence. Christians also assumed an active part in the war of liberation and occupied key positions in the new revolutionary government.

The practice of the FSLN was also influenced by Christian ideals: the Popular Sandinista Revolution became the first modern revolutionary movement since 1789 not to execute opponents after its triumph. Rather, it adopted the principle proclaimed by the only remaining founding member, Tomas Borge: "Our vengeance will be our forgiveness". While the convergence between Christianity and Marxism is clearly not without its contradictions, the concern for the liberation of the oppressed providee a sufficient theoretical and practical coincidence of interests between revolutionary Christians and atheist FSLN members (Lowy, 1993:39-40).

Party documents written since Fonseca authored the 1969 Historic Programme and including the 1979 reunification document, identified that "socialism" was the ultimate goal of the Sandinista Popular Revolution. This objective was reiterated in speeches delivered between 1983 and 1986 by members of the FSLN National Directorate: Tirado, Wheelock and Arce, each a representative of the three factions (Gilbert, 1988:38). The characteristics of the form their proclaimed "socialism" took are described below with particular reference to its components of democracy and the notion and practice of participation.

I2 Socioeconomic and political democracy

The FSLN endorsed a socialist concept of democracy and considered the primacy of socioeconomic equality as the basis of real democracy as the following statement from the party's national directorate (DN) shows:

"Democracy is initiated in the economic order, when social inequalities begin to weaken, when the workers and peasants begin to improve their standard of living".(DN-FSLN 1980)

Accordingly, the primary task in the creation of democracy was the elimination of material deprivation to benefit the popular sectors who were defined by the FSLN as the "popular majority" which comprised of the peasantry, agricultural and industrial workers, artisans

and urban poor. To ensure that economic development served the popular needs the state controlled the financial system, foreign trade, key industries and created state farms from properties abandoned by fleeing Somocistas. In such a way, social control over surplus production was achieved through state monopoly over the financial system and foreign markets and not through large scale expropriation of the means of production, as characterised previous socialist experiments. Measures were immediately implemented to eliminate the relations of exploitation and redistribute state resources. In the rural areas the land tenure system was radically transformed through the agrarian reform with the objective of providing poor and landless peasants with access to land; land rents for tenant producers were reduced; rural credit was made available to small producers; the working day was reduced and salaries for industrial and agricultural workers were increased, as was the security for squatters.

Literacy and health campaigns were also launched, social welfare services provided and schools were built to provide a free and national coverage of popular education. Freire's pedagogy of critical and participatory learning was adopted as the method for the national literacy campaign although limited resources meant that in practice this was abandoned for less effective learning methods. Together, these social and economic transformations established the basis of what the social scientist Coraggio (1985) has referred to as a "substantive democracy".

The FSLN also announced its intent to promote the rights of women to economic, political and cultural equality with respect to men. It proclaimed a two-pronged attack to address the practical and strategic gender interests of women to improve their conditions (Molyneux, 1986). It claimed it would promote programmes to improve women's training, political and cultural opportunities. It created integrated institutional assistance for women and children, including childcare centres and health services. Since women take the main responsibility for maternity and the care of children they were the main beneficiaries of these social programmes. The FSLN also implemented a series of anti-discriminatory laws and formed national institutions to provide legal advice concerning abuse, divorce and childcare (Olivera et al, 1990:60:61).

If the Nicaraguan case was a deviation from orthodox theories of socialist transitions on account of the reduced significance of state ownership of the means of production as a defining feature of its economy, so too was it unprecedented in its notion of political

democracy. Here, the predominant western interpretation of democracy as restricted to the political domain or to holding of elections was rejected outright by the Sandinistas (DN-FSLN, 1980):

"For the Sandinista Front democracy is not measured only in the political terrain and is not reduced to the participation of the people in elections." (my translation).

While the FSLN at this stage opposed the notion of representative democracy as the definition of democracy, it was explicit in its commitment to the notion of political pluralism. Pluralism emerged from the objective and subjective conditions of the FSLN's struggle against Somoza and its theory and practices of pluralism evolved during its years in governmental office. Given the effects of political pluralism within the FSLN, the state, the popular sectors and mass organisations on the development and processes of popular participation, the concept warrants closer inspection.

Commentators have advanced various interpretations to account for the FSLN's predisposition to pluralism. Some such as Nolan (1984), point to the internal characteristics of the FSLN as being the source of its commitment to the principle. They state that it originated from the "ideological pluralism" of *Sandinismo* itself, being derived from a combination of anti-imperialism and military strategy inspired by Sandino; political theory from Marx and the spiritual influence of Christian Liberation Theology. Others, including Gilbert (1988) and Jonas and Stein (1990) emphasise the practices of the FSLN which is composed of a coalition of three political tendencies which united formally in 1979 and had a collective form of leadership which reached decisions through consensus. Others still, including Coraggio and Irvin (1985:33) and Vilas (1986b), consider that the FSLN learnt that a plurality of forces was crucial in order to engage in successful political practice.

As identified in Chapter 2, the FSLN repeatedly emphasised that these tendencies represented strategic not ideological differences and rejected the notion of internal "ideological pluralism" within the party (Arce, 1980). However, differences within the movement were significantly great that its insurrectional unity was assured only once a collective leadership had been agreed which incorporated three members of each tendency: itself a pluralist resolution of previous conflicts.

Following the triumph, the unity between the tendencies was formally secured within the leadership by each being allocated direction of one of the three key ministries. As a

result, the Terceceristas came to head the national military, the GPP was assigned internal security and the TP was made responsible for the ministry overseeing agrarian reform. While the particular implications of the prevalence of the TP perspective on agrarian and cooperative policies are examined in detail in Chapter 4, the point here is merely to note that agrarian reform was marked with the indelible signs of it.

The first FSLN reference to the concept of pluralism appears in the 1977 General Platform, a document written by the Terceceristas which called for "a common front of national unity" (FSLN, 1977). This referred not just to those organisations of the left but also to the "democratic sectors of the bourgeoisie" who opposed Somoza. This reflected the FSLN's recognition that a plurality of forces was crucial in order to achieve victory for the liberation movement (Coraggio and Irvin, 1985:33). Early FSLN documents identify that political pluralism would be manifest in the "freedom of thought" and the "right to organise" (FSLN, 1969). These principles were later reiterated as they related to all organised social groups except for the armed opposition⁵ and specifically to the popular sectors (including workers, peasants, youth, students and women).

Although the FSLN asserted itself as the vanguard which would represent the class interests of the worker and peasant sector, it emphasised that an integral part of this pluralism was that:

"(they).. ought be able to express autonomously the demands of the social sector they represent" (Nunez, 1980).

In order to ensure this, party members were urged to use criticism and self-criticism within the party when this autonomy was being threatened (Borge, 1980). Here, the meaning of pluralism, coupled with the FSLN emphasis on popular participation which is described below, implies a recognition that pluralism entails the representation of different interest groups within civil society and through a complex structure of political inputs.

Since the importance of maintaining a broad-based multi-class coalition was reaffirmed in the post-triumph era when national recovery became the goal, the FSLN sought a policy of national unity in order to commit these sectors to the general principles of development of the economy and the country's national independence (Harris and Vilas, 1985:232). National unity meant an alliance to enlist all sectors of society in support of the new relations of production and as such sought to incorporate those large capitalists

who had not liquidated their assets and abandoned the country, as other had done. The importance of alliance with these sectors was manifest from the beginning manifest in the membership of the Government of National Reconstruction (JGRN), which was led by Daniel Ortega of the FSLN and throughout its existence (1979-1984) included representatives of middle class and business interests⁶ and as responsible for developing the legislative base for the new state during the first year of the revolution.

In its broadest possible expression, pluralism was also manifest in the creation of a mixed economy: a feature which represented a significant departure from traditionally orthodox socialist principles and practices. A mixed economy served as a recognition of the alliances of class and, as a transitional strategy, gave those social classes who wanted to maintain their economic privileges an opportunity to participate while speaking of reform. It also overcame the problem presented by the complexities of economic management and enabled the newly established government to harness the administrative capacity of the middle classes while avoiding the loss of productive capacity (Fitzgerald, 1991:237).

Given the economic participation of these sectors in the restructuring of the country's economy, the policy of national unity also required that the Sandinistas remain accountable to these constituent social forces and necessitated a political practice which ensured that they also be responsive to them. According to the FSLN, the party would ensure the interests of the popular sectors while the wealthy middle classes needed their own parties to represent them, as is indicated by the following statement by Bayardo Arce, the member of the FSLN National Directorate responsible for the political affairs of the party:

"The Sandinista Front knows that it cannot represent all sectors of the country equally because we prefer (*privilegimos*) the worker, labourer, *campesino* sector. In a society such as ours which is based on political pluralism and a mixed economy, we know that there have to be other interests that need political expression." (Invernizzi et al, 1986:90)

Pluralism became enshrined as a principle in the New Constitution (Article 5), where rights were established to political participation, universal suffrage and the organisation and functioning of political parties without ideological discrimination. These concepts were given concrete form in 1981 when a co-legislative body, the Council of State, was extended to include representatives of different interest groups from all social, political

and economic sectors including mass organisations, business groups and political parties. Assuming executive functions, the Council served as an initiator of national legislation and together with the JGRN, it ensured that the initial direction of the new state would reflect the multi-class alliance.

Having destroyed the old structures of the Somozan state, a new state was created in order to execute the socioeconomic transformations and fulfil the unprecedented functions to which it was assigned including planning, services and structural reforms. This necessarily required an extensive state apparatus and although employees from the previous regime were retained at middle and lower levels, numerous new posts were created. The FSLN claimed that it would not "substitute the state" nor become its executive but would orientate it through its team within the JGRN. It would ensure a Sandinista influence (in order to negate that of the "ideology of the petty bourgeoisie and *Somocismo*") by forming party base committees for employees throughout the state apparatus (Wheelock, 1981).

Sandinista control of the army was strict in relation to the Revolutionary Popular Army. Indeed, in a statement which attracted unwanted attention at a politically sensitive time, Defence Minister Humberto Ortega said that a fundamental concern for the army forces was its ideological unity and political commitment to the FSLN's National Directorate (Ortega, 1981). By contrast, the popular militias which formed were essentially pluralist forces and were open to all.

From 1984, pluralism with Sandinista discourse became increasingly synonymous with formal institutional guarantees such as constitutional provisions and competitive party politics. This shift reflected the creation in 1984 of a multi-party political system of parliament, following the implementation of a new Electoral Law and the Constitution of Political Parties. This established for the first time in Nicaraguan history the right of opposition parties to compete - not just cooperate - with the government (Jonas and Stein, 1990:15). The adoption of western style elections might have earned the Sandinistas legitimacy both nationally and internationally, but they were not just a tactical ploy or a compromise to western critics. According to Carlos Fernando Chamorro, editor of the FSLN newspaper Barricada, it was entirely consistent with Sandinista logic:

"If we have a mixed economy, we must have a political system that corresponds to that, .. we want to institutionalise dissent and opposition."⁷

Elections were also considered within the FSLN leadership as a useful mechanism to enrich revolutionary debate and consolidate revolutionary power through the building of consensus and recourse to dialogue (Coraggio, 1984). They also served as a "healthy correcting force", providing useful constraints to abuses of power (Lobel, 1988; Marchetti, 1986:320) and their institutionalisation demonstrated that the Sandinistas had avoided the error of believing that middle and upper class opposition or bourgeois ideology disappears after a revolutionary triumph or can be destroyed by suppression.

Representative-electoral democracy came to dominate importance above direct democracy and the following statement illustrates its increasing significance within the FSLN's discourse on democracy and pluralism. The party's 1990 electoral platform stated that:

"(w)e will continue to consolidate the democratic process to secure the implementation of political pluralism won by the Revolution, based on the right to vote and the freedom of political parties to operate.." ⁸

This was the culmination of the Sandinista Government's response to the internal contradictions, external pressures and alliances and a costly, prolonged and bloody war that had become a major obstacle to economic and social development. The following statement by Daniel Ortega, conceding the UNO victory after his party's defeat at the elections on 25 February 1990, indicated that the desire to end the war - and the peace and opportunities it would bring to stabilise the economy had become the greatest priority:

"From the moment when we defended this pluralist project, we accepted the challenge to put into practice the exercise of popular will through the vote of the people in periodic elections, which are duly ratified in the Constitution of the Republic. We went to these elections on the 25 February 1990 convinced that this battle in the electoral field had to determine the end of the war and secure the arrival of peace, stability and tranquility for the Nicaraguan people." ⁹

Under conditions of external threats the FSLN did not abandon pluralism within the political system, rather the meaning of political pluralism became synonymous with competitive party politics and opposition parties continued to function. However, as we shall see later, these modified meanings and practices also meant that expressions of pluralism which would have allowed for a diversity of views to enrich political and social practices within the mass organisations and the party became restricted. Before examining this we need to consider in more detail the importance of participation in the FSLN's conception of democracy and socialist transition.

I3 Popular participation to guarantee popular interests

There are few specific references to the notion of popular participation within official FSLN documents. The concept first appears in the Historic Programme of 1969, where the FSLN stated that on coming to power the revolutionary government would implement:

"..a structure which facilitates the full participation of all the people at the national level and local level.." (FSLN-DN, 1989)

The historic exclusion of the general population from the political processes guaranteed that participation was a priority issue for the Sandinista vision of a new society and it was perceived as a central component to the creation of a democratic and just society. Indeed, here it appeared as the first in a series of measures that would be adopted.

After the triumph of the revolution Sandinista ideas about participation had developed in response to the involvement of the population in the struggle against Somoza. Participation became conflated with the definition of democracy itself. The government's first proclamation states:

"Democracy ...means participation of the people in political, economic, social and cultural affairs. The more people who take part in this the more democracy there is.. in a more advanced phase, democracy will mean the participation of the workers in directing factories, farms, cooperatives, the cultural centres. In synthesis, democracy is the intervention of the masses in all aspects of social life."¹⁰

One year later, participation was also identified as a crucial component to secure political democracy, as is demonstrated by the following statement from Sergio Ramirez, Vice-President of the Republic during the Sandinista Government:

"..the effectiveness of a political model depends on its capacity to resolve the problems of democracy and justice. Effective democracy, like we intend to practice in Nicaragua, consists of ample popular participation; a permanent dynamic of the people's participation in a variety of political and social tasks..¹¹

This emphasis on widespread and ongoing citizen participation is evocative of the democratic traditions found in Rousseau and Mills, who argued that public participation in all aspects of public life was a fundamental component in the creation and maintenance of democratic society (Fagence, 1977). The FSLN's view of democracy as popular participation within governmental affairs was later reflected in the Nicaraguan Constitution. Article 2, states:

"The people exercise democracy by freely choosing on and participating in the construction of the economic, political and social system"

and its Article 48 commits the state "to remove obstacles that impede effective participation". The problems of relinquishing power to the various popular sectors and of reconciling this with the notions of vanguardism become clearer later.

While operating within a framework of pluralism and a policy of national unity, the objectives of the Sandinista Revolution remained to restructure the socioeconomic and political conditions for the so-called "popular majority". This was to be achieved by the control of these popular classes over the political system and was expressed in the notion of "popular hegemony", which occupied a central role in Sandinista theory¹². This differs from the Marxist-Leninist concept of "dictatorship of the proletariat" in that it does not refer to the predominance of one class over another but to the predominance of the interests of the popular majority¹³ over those of the privileged minority who had benefitted from the exploitation and oppression of the Somoza dictatorship (Harris, 1985:6).

The concept of hegemony works in explaining how particular classes or social groups function within social orders beyond those relating to formal state power in the context of social, ideological and political relations. Seen this way, control by the dominant class is exerted through "direct rule" which maintains the dominant relations of production as well as through civil society, a notion identified in Chapter 1 as referring to the various sophisticated channels of social and cultural influence (Gramsci, 1991). By controlling civil society, Gramsci explains, the dominant class is furnished with the possibility of defining the parameters of social and political action: in capitalist systems hegemony is exercised by the dominant economic groups, the bourgeois class; in socialist systems hegemony is maintained by the working classes.

So, while the FSLN adopted representative forms of democracy it did not ignore the ways in which the governing elite use formal democratic institutions to serve its own class interests. For the Sandinistas, representative forms alone were unable to guarantee democratic and popular involvement in the hegemonic project because of the limited opportunities available to the majority for replacing that elite and because the relations of exploitation and domination had permeated the institutions of civil society as much as in state institutions. The FSLN also recognised that the structures of power are reproduced not only in and from the state apparatus but also in the interior of civil society, including

schools, businesses, the church and the family. Thus, a key to their revolutionary project was the democratisation of civil society through the creation of popular organisations in order to prevent the institutions of representative democracy from becoming an instrument of political domination for the large property owners.

To achieve these ends the FSLN envisaged a process of raising the political awareness of the popular sectors in order to enable them to identify, express and protect their own interests against other social sectors. This required a profound transformation or development of consciousness of the popular sectors who had been influenced through time and custom by values and ideologies which subordinated them. However, when applied to the peasantry in particular who the FSLN considered in need of "modernising", this meant ignoring their own aspirations and values (Coraggio, 1985). The *praxis* of popular participation was perceived as important to enable the masses to develop as political subjects of the revolution and society and to prevent political and economic elites and the masses from "accepting the blandishments of anti-democratic ideologues" (Booth, 1989:16).

Education was an essential component to assist this process, the underlying assumption being that literacy confers on learners the ability to identify social reality and assists them in becoming agents of social change. Commenting in 1979, Fernando Cardenal, the national coordinator of the Literacy Crusade, presented the official view of the link between literacy and participation:

"Literacy is fundamental to achieving progress and it is essential to the building of a democratic society where people can participate consciously and critically in national decision-making. You have to read and write so you can identify the reality in which you live, so that you can become a protagonist of history rather than a spectator."¹⁴

Also, the popular sectors had to be organised because the ground rules in a pluralist system are that no-one wins all of the time and those who are best organised have the better chance of obtaining favourable results. Consequently, the least privileged sectors of the old system had to be organised if they were to become full participants in the new system (Wright, 1990:48). It was important that if ordinary people were to be given the opportunity to build their own representative institutions and practices within society to be more effective in negotiating their demands within the formal political institutions of

the state, they needed time to consolidate their organisations. As a result, the government decided in 1980 not to hold elections until 1985¹⁵.

In addition to the intrinsic political value of popular participation, the FSLN recognised the potential contribution of the participation of local people in order to mobilise local resources, save on costs and increase efficiency of socioeconomic projects. Participation was thus an integral dimension of its development model. On reaching power the new Government of Reconstruction, in the section of economic organisation in its First Proclamation, called for popular initiatives to seek collective solutions to socioeconomic problems and to substitute these for "traditional paternalistic principles" of government (DN-FSLN, 1989). In the face of a weak state which lacked the administrative capacity and scarce resources, popular participation provided an important instrument by which the basic needs of the popular sectors could be met because it mobilised local resources and surplus labour and was economically logical because it reduced the burden of the foreign exchange commitment (Fitzgerald, 1991:239).

According to the FSLN popular participation was a key to revolutionary change, to the creation of a new political system and to national development. It was also inherently problematic because of the contradictions this presented concerning the role of the vanguard party endowed as it was by the FSLN with the historic task of leading the marginalised groups through transition. Using the classifications identified in Chapter 1, it would seem that the objective of popular participation for the FSLN was as an "end" to achieve empowerment and to develop the beneficiary capacity of those previously marginalised sectors of society in order to transform them into active political subjects of the revolution. It was also seen as a "means" by which predetermined national political and economic development goals could be achieved. However, while popular participation was a central notion in Sandinista discourse it remained theoretically and semantically ill-defined and was not distinguished qualitatively from political mobilisation under the direction of the FSLN.

The following section describes the creation of mechanisms for channeling participation in various political, military, economic and social functions and identifies the different intensities of the activities involved.

II Emergent participatory channels

The emergence of popular organisations in Nicaragua in the pre-revolutionary struggle was important in creating the foundations for new participatory political practices in Nicaragua and marked a new era for the people of Nicaragua because they provided an unprecedented channel for responding to individuals' interests. Their involvement in the struggle against Somoza also suggested that these embryonic associations were prepared to assume a role in the revolutionary process and earned them a political space in the post-triumph scenario. They became the main vehicle for the promotion of popular participation.

On coming to power the FSLN repeatedly emphasised the importance of mass organisations. Within days of victory the official party organ Barricada, called on Nicaraguans to:

"Mobilise yourselves politically, educate yourselves to overcome your political and cultural deficiencies and cultivate revolutionary values."¹⁶

and an official call urged mass organisations to:

"..prepare themselves to run the state, through all the channels which the Revolution is creating".¹⁷

Yet, here there was a serious contradiction. Although the Nicaraguan masses had played a decisive role in the victory against Somoza, Nicaragua's popular movement was backward: the low level of political consciousness and weak organisational base would not enable the popular sectors to consolidate their political position and compete with other social sectors (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:5-7). Thus, the FSLN's resolve was to set about the task of organising "the masses" more systematically, a task facilitated in the euphoric atmosphere of a victorious insurrection. In many cases people rushed to organise themselves spontaneously in factory unions and communities. Most subsequently sought affiliation with the appropriate national organisation (Burbach and Draimin, 1980).

In response, mass organisations grew rapidly and most of these declared their support for the revolutionary "process" and recognised the FSLN as the legitimate leader of the social forces. The largest organisations included the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS) which transformed from the pre-triumph CDC and by the end of 1980 had a membership of 220,000; the ATC (Rural Workers Union) incorporated 106,000 members, also by the end of 1980 (representing a third of the economically active rural population, including permanent and seasonal agricultural workers) and AMNLAE (which

replaced AMPRONAC) grew to a membership of 25,000. Likewise with the trade unions, in July 1979 there was a total of 133 with 27,020 affiliates and by the end of 1983 this had increased to 1,103 unions with a registered membership of 207,391, of which the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST) was the largest (Serra, 1985:66). Later, as we shall see in Chapter 4, UNAG emerged from the ATC in 1981 to represent rural producers - including large scale producers - and was the only revolutionary organisation to be founded after the triumph. These popular organisations assumed various functions in areas of political, socioeconomic and military activities which involved different types and intensities of participation.

On several occasions during the early years the mass organisations asserted their independence from the FSLN. Amongst the oft cited cases is that of the ATC, which in 1980 organised a demonstration in Managua when an estimated 30,000 peasants and landless rural workers converged on the streets to demand that confiscated land not be returned to their owners but be transferred to the APP. Another relates to the conflict which arose during the drafting of the law establishing compulsory national conscription. Until 1984 this had been voluntary but AMNLAE demanded the right that women be included in order to recognise their contribution to the struggle against Somoza, since they had accounted for between 33%-50% of the voluntary militia and 30% of the reserve battalions (Ruchwarger, 1987).

The incorporation of mass organisations into the Council of State provided them with direct participation in the national decision-making process. This was established in May 1980 and, as we have seen, was a co-legislative body of national policy. It operated until 1984 when it was replaced by the National Assembly. It embodied the convergence of popular interests - represented through the mass organisations - and the machinery of government¹⁸. The Council of State had fifty one members who represented twenty nine institutions, including eight political parties, ten trade unions and other mass organisations and eleven other professional associations and organisations. Mass organisations held 47% of all members. As the largest popular organisations the CDS had nine representatives, ATC and CST both had three (CIERA, 1983:96) which gave them a built-in majority over political parties and professional organisations. Importantly, it gave the popular organisations an opportunity to articulate - autonomously from the political parties and

from the FSLN in particular - their particular sectorial interests. Of the bills introduced by mass organisations 83% became law after modification (Serra, 1985:67).

Mass organisations also influenced national policy through their consultative inputs on advisory councils established in the different sections of the large state machinery. In each ministry these delegates were able to contribute to planning social projects and draw attention to the ministries' shortcomings. In Education, the National Advisory Council on Education was established in which students, teachers, the teachers union ANDEN, CST, ATC, UNAG and the Sandinista Youth (JS de 19 Julio) were represented (CIERA, 1983:82). In 1981, these and other mass organisations were involved (together with political parties, parents associations, unions and business groups) in a process of national consultation concerning the goals and objectives of the New Education system. They played a key role in devising the national curriculum and structuring the New Education System (Vilas, 1986:219-221)¹⁹.

In agriculture, the Agrarian Reform Council was created as a consultative body responsible for organising the Agrarian Reform. At both national and regional levels it included UNAG and ATC representatives and was coordinated by INRA (later, the Ministry of Agrarian Reform, MIDINRA). As is suggested by the following statement made to an assembly of the ATC by Jaime Wheelock, minister of MIDINRA, popular organisations enjoyed a degree of moral authority:

"The ATC has a permanent position in INRA on its Council. And you are a power there. For us, what you say in INRA is practically law.." ²⁰

Other structures were also formed to facilitate a participatory input of less intensity and included the creation of national, regional and local production commissions of all the major products as part of the structure of what became the MIDINRA. In these, workers and producers representatives elaborated agricultural policies (CIERA, 1983), thereby fulfilling the objectives of making production plans more efficient and effective.

Mass organisations and members of the general public also had the opportunity to participate in the process of creating the National Constitution. The first draft, initially prepared by the appointed Constitutional Commission and composed of twelve FSLN members and ten opposition parties, was then discussed throughout the country during 1985 in meetings and forums with twenty four political parties, religious groups and with labour and professional unions. This was followed by twelve televised debates and

seventy three town meetings incorporating 100,000 citizens. Resulting changes were significant on substantive issues and were often resolved in favour of opposition proposals. Similarly, the Autonomy Statute was also the result of an extensive and prolonged process of consultation and debate which began in 1984 and involved representatives and communities of the Atlantic Coast region. As an outcome the final statute - incorporated into the New Constitution in 1987 - was internationally acknowledged as an unprecedented recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples for autonomy within their region (Jonas and Stein, 1990:20).

Mass organisations also operated as informal channels of participation through open forums such as "*De Cara al Pueblo*", a televised public meeting in which a member of the FSLN leadership met individuals from specific sectors in different locations of the country; in "*Los Cabildos Abiertos*" public meetings where the leadership met local communities. On the radio "*Linea Directa*" served as an outlet which provided a two way exchange between the authorities and the public and enabled them to express sectorial problems directly to governmental representatives and resolve some collective problems immediately. The absence of a systematic or institutionalised follow-up to the agreements reached through these channels rendered their function essentially one of a communicative vehicle for information sharing between the bases of the organisations and the government (Serra, 1985). This is perhaps reflective of a populist form of participation.

Popular participation was also channelled via the popular organisations to implement tasks of socioeconomic development in the areas of health, social welfare and education. Indeed, many of the projects of the JGRN and the FSLN, including the national literacy and health campaigns of 1980 and 1981, were dependent on the voluntary inputs of intended beneficiaries and the active involvement of the mass organisations. Their participation fulfilled a various instrumental objectives, including efficiency, cost-sharing and effectiveness. The Literacy Crusade, which involved 65,000 youth, mostly volunteers and other professionals, was able to reduce the illiteracy rate from 50.35% of the population over the age of ten to approximately 23% in a period of five months. This contributed to liberating the rural populations from their previous isolation²¹. In addition, mass organisations promoted production and guaranteed the supply of basic goods, providing a voluntary workforce organised in coffee brigades in the conflict zones which compensated for the loss of workforce²². They also provided recruits for the defence of

the revolution and became the prime actors as defenders of national sovereignty and against the counterrevolution.

The involvement of mass organisations in the national education and health campaigns, while fulfilling national objectives and meeting some of the basic needs of their own sectors, also served to strengthen their own organisations. In particular it enabled them to penetrate most of the populated areas with the exception of the Atlantic Coast and to enlarge their membership. During the literacy campaign, the ATC unionised workers and organised landless and peasant farmers into cooperatives while the teachers union (ANDEN) and the Sandinista Youth (JS de 19 Julio) increased their membership and enhanced their militancy. Popular organisations also benefited to the extent that they were able to demonstrate the power of local popular organisation, their capacity to mobilise and the willingness of the people to confront the problems inherited from the dictatorship (CIERA, 1983). By promoting sectorial interests, identifying ways of articulating these with the state and FSLN and developing methods of participation they developed abilities in management and organisation thereby enhancing their own beneficiary capacity (Coraggio, 1986:43).

Beyond popular organisations, new opportunities for participation were also institutionalised through the creation of management, administration and production committees in the workplace, including factories and agricultural enterprises within the nationalised sector of the economy, the APP. In some cases, workers had begun to control enterprises even during the insurrection. Here, self-managerial administration was encouraged by the guerilla columns and in over a dozen plants continued to be controlled by workers for several months after the FSLN took power. They were able to increase production as much as 66% (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:27). On other properties where there was no previous union organisation, unions were hastily formed to enable workers to begin coordinating production but decisions ultimately rested with the administrators: workers' participation was restricted to the participatory activities of consultation and implementation. The creation of cooperatives, described in detail in the following chapter, was also encouraged by the government with the dual function of democratising production according to its own theoretical model and to incorporate producers into the local decision-making process, management and administration.

III From participation to mobilisation

In practice popular participation developed in response to the new challenges faced by the reconstruction of the country with a devastated economy, in the context of a policy of national class alliance and from 1981 onwards, while confronting a war of aggression. The effects of these interrelated economic, political and military factors, internal and external to the FSLN, operated to diminish the opportunities for authentic "bottom-up" participation and constrain participatory initiatives.

III1 Bureaucratic tendencies

The first few years of Sandinista rule in government not only saw the expansion of the FSLN as a political party (evolving from a politico-military movement) and the mass organisations but also the state apparatus. Under the prevailing conditions of Nicaragua, as with other small peripheral Third World countries (as noted in Chapter 1), the lack of resources and the absence of democratic traditions objectively exerted a pressure towards bureaucratisation. The new functionaries, administrators and managers came to monopolise planning and power and became a powerful technobureaucracy which blocked the realisation of participatory ideals in Nicaragua. Added to this was the effect of the retention in some spheres - in the absence of trained substitutes - of former Somocista managers who brought with them the authoritative and exploitative attitudes towards workers which was most evident in the area of service and production. The following illustrates the types of problems which evolved in this case involving the State Productive Units (UPEs). Here the ATC found that its efforts to increase the workers' control of the units and defend production of the APP brought it into direct conflict with state appointed directors and technicians, some of whom were employees under Somoza. Even for the new administrative personnel, work in an office was an attractive alternative to the main revolutionary tasks of the ideological struggle, the promotion of popular participation through base-level programmes and life in the neighbourhood or countryside. These state officers became inherently averse to radical changes and reproduced through their *habitus* their example the styles of leadership of the past system of alienation and exploitation (Lowy, 1986).

In this way, a bureaucratic layer began to form as a social category removed from the interests of the popular sectors, a tendency recognised by Bourdieu (1991), and which

had exclusive access to material resources. This process also took place within the party and mass organisations where professional *políticos* and activists consolidated positions through their direct management of resources. The party's policy of recruiting new *cadres* from state functionaries²³ served to increase the bureaucratisation of the party, rendering both it and the state resistant to change. Material privileges to leaders of the party and state and political *cadres* were provided either directly through their salary or indirectly through their access to cars, housing and special shops and consolidated the tendency towards bureaucratisation. In effect, these individuals developed as a social category with interests which were different from those of the workers and peasants, who the state and vanguard purportedly served (Lowy, 1986:273-277).

The onset of the war had several political effects, one of which was to exacerbate bureaucratisation. The war against Nicaragua was unleashed with the arrival of President Reagan to the White House in 1981. It was conducted by the counterrevolutionaries, the Contras, whose leadership was comprised of ex-National Guards. The Contras operated from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica, were funded by US Congress, trained in the US and fought a war of attrition that was ruled illegal by the World Court in 1987. Their primary targets included agricultural cooperatives, health workers and teachers because these represented the revolutionary government's programmes of social and welfare reform. Between 1980-89 there were over 50,000 human casualties including people killed, maimed and abducted. Material and infrastructural damage during the ten year period was formally estimated by Nicaraguan government to be US\$18 billion. Production in the war zones was severely affected and between 1982 and 1985 a third of the harvests were lost, alongside fishing, mining and forestry activities. The defence of national sovereignty meant that increasing resources had to be directed to the war effort and by 1988, 50% of the national budget was destined to defence (Perez, 1990:46-47). The war worsened the fiscal deficit and contributed to the disequilibrium which was to characterise the country's economy from 1982 onwards. The economic embargo imposed by the US in 1985 exacerbated the economic crisis through its effects on markets and the increased costs on import and export transport²⁴.

III2 Subordination of mass organisation to FSLN

The relative autonomy of the mass organisations was an important aspect of the effectiveness of popular participation in Sandinista Nicaragua. To commentators, such as Vilas, it was the determinant by which to access the "healthiness" of popular participation. The FSLN were aware of this and in 1980 its leadership expressed concern that the mass organisations might end-up carrying out a "top-down" revolution and appealed to them not to become transformed into mere appendages of the FSLN. Reflecting on the party's understanding of its relationship to the mass organisations, Carlos Nuñez, a member of the National Directorate, said in April 1980:

"I ask myself the following question: When the mass organisations are being ignored, when all doors have been closed on them and when no replies have been given, ought they resort to their own forms of expression and mobilisation? We think that they ought." (Nuñez, 1980:18)

The fact that the revolution was in power did not mean that unions could stop defending their class interests, rather it was necessary for them to defend themselves not just against both the middle class whose alliance the FSLN sought within the policy of national unity, but also against the state bureaucracy.

However, there was increasing evidence of the tendency for the popular organisations to be subordinated to the interests of the FSLN. From 1982 onwards, observers noted that a process had begun whereby the mass organisations had moved from being popular decision-making bodies to operational (decision-implementing) organs for the FSLN/state (Robinson and Norsworthy, 1988:44). For example, organised producers were required to hand over produce at low prices to the government and workers were requested to meet production goals while postponing their demands for better conditions (Serra, 1985; Gilbert, 1988:33).

The relationship between the FSLN and the mass organisations was at the root of this problem. The FSLN as a *cadre* party was comprised of members selected because of their proven activism within the popular organisations: hence the dual character of the mass organisations as "seed beds of the vanguard" and later "suppliers of combatants" and political cadres in the state and army on the one hand; and on the other hand organisations representing the sectorial interests of members (Marchetti, 1986:322). Once incorporated into the party fold an individual had to fulfil the functions of both representative of the

"bases" and party militant. This might appear unproblematic in theory but in reality it presented serious contradictions.

The lack of operational guidelines about how to translate popular participation into practice or how to distinguish it from the notion of mobilisation denied activists the appropriate political skills. It meant that each individual was burdened with the contradictions between the specific sectorial demands of their organisation and the national political project of the party²⁵. Since the FSLN required greater discipline from its militants than the mass organisations, the interests of the party gained political priority. The party's practice of rotating its party *cadres* within organisational positions undermined the organisational strength of the mass organisations in the longer term because mass organisations were constantly losing their most experienced leaders for FSLN functions (Serra, 1988). Moreover, the relationship perpetuated the subordination of the mass organisations through the clientalist political system it engendered. The organisations created were recognised by the FSLN as the sole representatives of the sector and were offered material and symbolic goods and resources in exchange for the political loyalty of their leaders and membership (Serra, 1993:40).

The dissolution of the Council of State in 1984 effectively denied mass organisations their direct representation to national legislative power and access to their most significant input to the decision-making process. It also meant that their specific sectorial demands had to be articulated through the logic of political parties although in an attempt to redress this problem the FSLN selected some of its parliamentary candidates from non-FSLN representatives within mass organisations. With this change, a conception of the legislative branch of government as the source of "popular sovereignty", supplanted the emphasis on "popular power" rooted in the mass organisations (FSLN, 1984; FSLN, 1990a).

The prioritisation of the defence effort exacerbated the irreconcilable class contradictions embodied within national unity and ultimately robbed mass organisations of their political space. The increasing necessity to maintain production levels gave the bourgeoisie producers a political lever, accommodated by the FSLN's "populist ideology" which lacked a coherent class content (Dore and Weeks, 1992) and which effectively enabled them to obtain favourable economic concessions from the government. Meanwhile, the tasks of the mass organisations became increasingly oriented to the major

contradictions facing them, namely the defence of the Revolution in political, economic and military spheres (Perez, 1990). Their sacrifice was constantly being requested since the state had no other resources on which to rely (Marchetti, 1986:309). This secured the defence of national sovereignty but had a political cost.

Members deserted the organisations and so from 1985 attempts were made by the FSLN and the organisations themselves to maintain a greater belligerence in their demands and to improve their internal democracy. National assemblies, internal elections and the emergence of new styles of leadership went some way to readdress the problems and to make them more responsive to their membership. Nonetheless, under no condition is war ever conducive to the development of democracy or the freedom of expression. More specifically as Vilas reminds us, war prevents all those necessary conditions for participatory democracy, namely "decentralisation, spontaneity, testing and experimentation" (Vilas, 1986a:23). In Nicaragua, the circumstances of foreign aggression made trusting "bottom-up" responses increasingly impossible. Granting political space to domestic opposition - any opposition - could have jeopardised the revolutionary project itself. Consequently, the political space for criticism, discussion and dissent was closed within the popular organisations and without, because as Serra (1988) observes, "criticism was interpreted as counter-revolutionary" and so was not tolerated. If the war was detrimental to the general environment for political discussion, it also affected the development of the FSLN as the leading party. In particular, the war reduced its capacity for self-criticism and the "imperialist enemy and its lackeys" provided a tempting scapegoat for the errors it committed (Marchetti, 1986).

III3 The weight of history

While the political practices of the FSLN and the political system it established created an obstacle to popular participation, its political and democratic project was also subject to the limitations of historical circumstances and the underdeveloped nature of Nicaraguan society in general. If the organisations were not responding to their sectorial demands because they lacked internal democracy, this was also because these political organisations and the procedures they were developing constituted new and unprecedented experiences. Authoritarianism had been the predominant political characteristic of pre-revolutionary

Nicaragua and the principles of consent were innovative yet crucial for the success of the FSLN's project.

The historical significance of these experiences as well as the obstacles they presented, cannot be underestimated in the development of democratic practices in Nicaragua and was one of the problems of creating a revolution in the context of a barely developed civil society (Coraggio, 1985). Nor could this process towards new forms of representation come about by formal decree since it was the result of a social process which had its own rhythm and was dependent on the development of the sectors themselves (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:21-22).

Apart from the historical legacies of authoritarianism, in the context of external aggression in Nicaragua the task of developing new political practices was profoundly distorted. As the conflict intensified it became the army not the factory which provided the primary school of socialist politics. Under these circumstances the second generation of leaders and the voluntary and conscripted youth had:

".. as their principle tutor the war effort against imperialist aggression".
(Marchetti, 1986:316)

This meant that the military had a key role in influencing the models of organisation and ideology, both of which would influence the levels of popular participation. While the Sandinista Popular Army (EPS) directed its most talented *cadres* to the tasks of creating consciousness amongst the rank and file of the military, the threat of a US invasion made urgent the requirement that the military expand its forces rapidly making it difficult for the army to adopt less conventional military organisation (Marchetti, 1986:316). Thus, the social mobilisation of the population was translated into organisational methods within the popular organisations in which the military logic of vertical command, strict discipline and obedience to one's superiors were reproduced (Serra, 1993:26). In recognition that the organisational methods of the FSLN had become permeated by militaristic characteristics, the FSLN in its post-electoral party conference cited the problems as:

"Authoritarianism. Lack of sensitivity to the problems put forward by the grassroots. The absence of self-criticism. Bureaucratic forms of leadership and the imposition of leaders and organisational structures." (FSLN, 1990b).

The *campesinos* were amongst the most affected by the war and the economic crisis. Social services, childcare, health and education programmes were progressively limited not only in the war zones where state employees were attacked, but nationally as the

economic crisis deepened (Perez, 1990). This had the effect of worsening living and health conditions and was particularly detrimental to women. Moreover, limited state resources and cuts in the budgets of the mass organisations reduced the education and technical training opportunities that could have helped prepare women for organisational and leadership roles. The effects of this on their participation will be examined later.

Conclusions

The Sandinista's combination of socialist democracy and political pluralism was its solution to accommodate the interests of different and competing social groups within its broad alliance and represented its unique attempt to transform historically diverging views and practices of democracy. Thus, the objectives of improving the socioeconomic conditions of the majority poor were ensured through structural transformations and the extension of services directed by the state. Private ownership was retained within the mixed economy in order to maintain productive levels. In the political sphere representative features of democracy were implemented as part of the policy of national unity and mechanisms for participatory democracy were created because they were central to the notion of popular hegemony and facilitated the involvement of the popular sectors in social, economic and political activities.

According to the FSLN, popular participation - which developed within its political agenda in response to the practices evolving during the insurrection - aimed to incorporate the masses into the political process in order to empower the hitherto excluded popular sectors, develop and strengthen civil society and fulfil development tasks. Their autonomy from the FSLN was crucial for them to retain their function as representatives of their sectors. The resultant participatory activities involved a range of intensities of participation and included tasks involving decision-making processes at the national and local levels, consultation, information sharing and the implementation of governmental policies.

After the initial years of the revolution, participatory initiatives became increasingly restricted by a tendency towards bureaucratisation of the state, party and mass organisations. Popular organisations became increasingly subordinated to the party/state apparatus and their role as representatives of their sectors was replaced by their role of

operationalising FSLN policy. In such a way "participation" was reduced to "mobilisation" and became a mechanism by which the party communicated its ideas to the people. These tendencies were exacerbated by an economic crisis and externally imposed aggression. The defence of sovereignty became the priority issue, opportunities for criticism were closed and the demands of sectors were suspended as production and state resources were diverted to maintain war effort. Thus, we can see that although the FSLN accepted pluralism in the political system, it was less tolerated within the party itself or within the popular organisations. As a vanguard the FSLN had aimed to liberate and empower the oppressed but once the old regime had been defeated and political power had been assumed it came to control them.

Details about how the *campesino* sector, and specifically those organised within cooperatives, were affected by FSLN's political project and - importantly - how they responded to it are presented in the following chapter.

Notes for Chapter 3

1. Aerial bombing of major cities by the National Guard had devastated most cities causing infrastructural damage estimated at US\$481 million; the loss of productive capacity estimated at US\$1,246 million and capital flight representing US\$518 million. The Sandinistas also inherited a US\$1.6 billion foreign debt (Wheelock, 1986:27).

2. In October, 1979 (Burbach and Draimin, 1980:3).

3. The father of the Ortega brothers (Camilo, Daniel and Humberto) fought with Sandino.

4. Interview with Humberto Ortega in Solidarite Internationale, October, 1987:27. Quoted from Smith (1993:137), Smith's translation.

5. A common feature of western systems such as the US excludes the Communist Party from government office. This issue is examined by Petras and Fitzgerald (1988), who identify that all political systems have boundaries which exclude those who attempt to overthrow the system. The establishment of a new social system following a revolution necessitates that a boundary be established between those included in the project and those opposing it.

6. Other representatives within the JGRN included Sergio Ramirez of the Group of Twelve and Rafael Cordoba Rivas of the Democratic Conservative Party. It had previously included Violeta Chamorro, the widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro (who was assassinated by the National Guard) and Alfonso Robelo of the right wing Nicaraguan Democratic Movement, both of whom resigned.

7. Quoted in Lobel (1988:841).

8. FSLN (1990a:6-7).

9. Daniel Ortega "Discurso", in Barricada, 26 February 1990.

10. The first national government proclamation in 1979 (DN-FSLN, 1989).

11. Quoted from Ruchwarger (1987:4).

12. The concept of hegemony which is associated with the work of Gramsci, appears in Sandinista political discourse without any direct reference to his thought (Wright, 1990:38-39).

13. In Nicaragua the political subjects of the revolution were not just the workers as identified by Gramsci, nor the workers and peasants who have comprised the subjects of other third world revolutions. They were the multi-class popular majority composed of the peasantry, agricultural and industrial workers, the urban poor, ethnic and social movements, middle-class intellectuals and those sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie who supported the revolution. Given the composition of popular sectors the FSLN's definition of political behaviour as being hegemonic and not dictatorial is particularly significant and indicated that it "ha(d) not confused reality with revolutionary ideology" and was an explicit recognition that the impetus for change can come from this

"third force".

14. Quoted in Robert van Niekerk (1991:158).

15. Which were brought forward to 1984.

16. Barricada, 3 August 1979. Quoted in Gilbert, 1988:37.

17. Jaime Wheelock of the National Directorate and Minister of Agrarian Reform, quoted in Black (1981:231).

18. The Council of State also represented an innovative institutional response to the process still to be resolved in Europe: namely the articulation between political parties and social movements.

19. See Vilas (1986) for the centrality of popular education in the revolutionary transformation and for details of participation of the popular sectors in the new system.

20. Quoted in NACLA (1980:29), Vol XIV, Number 3, May-June.

21. Between 23 March and 23 August 1980 a total of 406,056 Nicaraguans had learnt to read and write (Arnove, 1986:28).

22. The revolution and Contra War discouraged Salvadorean and Honduran workers from migrating to Nicaragua for the harvest.

23. This was particularly marked in its mass "Second Promotion" where party activities largely from the state sector received their party card as a recognition of their status as fully-fledged militants.

24. Increased transport costs were the consequence of Nicaragua's success in diversifying its trade to non-traditional partners to include Canada, West Europe and Japan which were further away (Smith, 1993:255).

25. Serra points out that analysis of discussion with leaders reveals an unresolved confusion between their respective roles as party militants and as leaders of social sectors.

Chapter 4

THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT: PATRONAGE AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter describes how cooperatives developed during the Sandinista Government and to identify the role of various external agents including the peasantry in cooperative development. The aim is to identify how the FSLN's practices and theoretical conceptions applied to the peasantry and how the peasantry responded organisationally and politically. Since cooperatives are the meeting ground between external forces and the peasants who have their own agendas and motives, the chapter identifies the precise nature of external intervention as well as the interaction between the state, FSLN, UNAG and the grassroots cooperative movement. It also describes the organisational characteristics of the emergent cooperative movement. As such, the chapter examines the nature of the cooperative movement in order to identify the extent to which it represented an authentic peasant movement and how it developed in response to FSLN and state intervention, the war and economic crisis.

Given the distinct phases in the development of the cooperative movement the chapter is organised chronologically in accordance the corresponding shifts in the priorities of the Sandinista Agrarian Reform (RAS). These occurred as a result of the ideological and political debates concerning agricultural development and socialist transformation which raged within the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA); in response to economic, political and military circumstances; and to the increasing strength of the peasant organisations and cooperative movement.

I Agricultural cooperatives during Somoza

Before 19 July 1979 there had been few attempts to organise the peasantry. Although Nicaragua's very first cooperatives emerged in the early 1900s and involved the tertiary sector, the first agricultural cooperatives for peasants were created by Sandino during the 1920s and 1930s as part of his struggle against imperialism and to defend an alternative social project. These appeared in the zones liberated by his Army for the Defence for National Liberation deep in the mountains in Wiwilí and incorporated agricultural workers and peasants. The cooperatives were then systematically destroyed on the assassination

of Sandino and their members were slaughtered. Unlike previous cooperatives, these were clearly perceived by Somoza to have conflicted with the interest of the dominant class (Matus et al, 1990). As noted in Chapter 2, the level of repression that characterised the dictatorship subsequently inhibited the consolidation of the peasant movement and no further efforts were made to organise cooperatives.

Under the tutelage of the Somozan dictatorship and as part of the US Alliance for Progress policy, attempts of another kind were made to establish cooperatives in 1966 in the form of Nicaragua's first service cooperatives. These were funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Bank of Nicaragua and their formation was accommodated in the Law of Agrarian Reform (1963). In the context of extreme poverty and following the Cuban Revolution, the objectives of these cooperatives (as with efforts elsewhere in Latin America) were to pacify rural protest, prevent unrest and create a clientele of dependent producers (Young et al, 1982). Yet, by 1970 there were only twenty two cooperatives with 1,240 members. These were followed by what were known as "limited responsibility" cooperatives, created by non-governmental organisations¹ and were dominated by large commercial producers although some poorer farmers also benefited from the services provided. In 1978, there were still only forty two cooperatives which incorporated a total of 9,270 members (Kaimowitz, 1988:47; Matus et al, 1990), reflecting the limited impact of cooperativism on the general population.

However, during mid-1979 as the revolutionary insurrection escalated, a spontaneous upsurge of the cooperative movement appeared as peasants and agricultural workers occupied lands in informally created collectives, particularly in and around Leon where *campesinos* had been especially decisive in the struggle and had organised in operations directed by the FSLN leadership. These collectives became known as Sandinista Agricultural Communes (CAS) and acquired new forms of democratic direction (Kaimowitz, 1988:47). They maintained the production of agroexports and food crops and served as refuges for the revolutionary forces (Deere et al, 1985:78-79). As the insurrection and the Sandinistas advanced, poor groups spontaneously occupied land in an expression of their struggle for access to lands which had been lost by their ancestors in the expansion of agrocapiatalism. In other cases guerilla forces which had occupied farms

owned by Somocistas turned them over to local groups (Matus et al, 1990:128). They adopted heterogeneous forms of organisation (CIERA, 1985).

The FSLN's commitment to cooperatives first appeared in the Sandinista Historic Programme of 1969 and was declared in the first proclamation of the Sandinista-led Government of National Reconstruction (JGRN). However, the Sandinista notion of a mixed economy also foresaw economic development based on different modes of production, including the maintenance of private production alongside a state and cooperative sector (Fitzgerald, 1989:29-30). This placed conflicting political and economic issues on the agenda. After the initial months of the revolution when the FSLN began implementing policies as acts of state - rather than expressing policy preferences as a guerilla movement - it demanded that land be handed back. The ambivalent, if not contradictory attitude of the FSLN towards the peasantry and cooperativisation became apparent.

II Creating a state sector (1979-81)

The economic significance of the agricultural sector rendered it a primary focus of the Sandinista's post-triumph objectives to reactivate and transform the national economy and society. This meant that developments in the countryside were central to the political and economic project of the FSLN. The Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA) was created to execute new agricultural policy² and Jaime Wheelock, a member of the FSLN's National Directorate and one-time leader of the Proletariat Tendency, became its minister.

The initial phase of the agrarian reform occurred between 1979-81. It was characterised by the creation of a state sector from properties confiscated immediately from the Somoza family and its cohorts, authorised in Decrees No 3 (30.7.1979), No 38 (8.9.1979) and later in Decree 329 (29.2.1980). This facilitated the transfer to the state sector of the equivalent of a quarter of the country's cultivatable land from approximately two thousand farms and ranches in which capital intensive agroindustrial complexes were concentrated (Collins, 1986:31; Baumeister, 1985:18). This newly created state sector, named the Area of People's Property (APP) was also privileged by preferential terms of credit, public services and assistance. During this initial phase only eight percent of the

expropriated land was distributed to the non-state sector. Recipients included some of the peasants and workers who had struggled for the land.

Adhering to the land policy of non-redistribution for the interests of creating a state sector and in order to calm the middle classes required the Sandinistas to convince those land-hungry peasants and rural workers to hand back lands which had belonged to the Somocistas and necessitated that they call restraint to limit further takeovers. Expelled groups were either relocated on other lands or accepted the prospect of becoming workers on production units administered by the state. Others successfully resisted attempts to remove them, thereby indicating that cooperative organisation was perceived by the peasantry as an effective collective defence of access to land (Serra, 1991:100). They were subsequently loaned or provisionally ceded use of the land by the state (CIERA, 1989c:63-67). The demand for a return of occupied land also made it clear that the agrarian reform would not be based on the organisation of peasants in cooperatives. It caused a serious setback to the nascent cooperative movement, excluded the *campesinos* from a role in the agrarian reform and reduced the peasant movement's possibilities of fomenting class struggle in the countryside (CIERA, 1985:15; Envio, 1987:19). It also meant that the FSLN had reneged on its insurrectionary call to the *campesinos* of "Land to those who work it" and was a policy which carried a heavy political cost since it led many peasants, particularly in Leon and Chinandega, to accuse the Sandinistas of having deceived them (Matus et al, 1990:134).

The prioritisation of the state sector and the emphasis on capital-intensive technology was based on the notion that progress and development can only take place with the replacement of peasant production by capitalist or state forms of production and with the adoption of advanced technology. The dominant view within MIDINRA was that socialism was synonymous with modern large-scale production. According to this interpretation, the peasantry was seen as being trapped in an economy of consumption, as backward and incapable of understanding the transformations required to facilitate the ascendancy of the new popular power. They were thought to lack the organisational and productive capacity to manage the confiscated lands. The Sandinista Government feared that the redistribution of properties to individuals or cooperatives would reduce production levels and create a shortage of labour for the harvesting of agroexports: a suspicion supported by evidence which indicated that once permanent access to land was gained by

agricultural labourers, they withdrew from paid employment (Baumeister, 1985:20-21). As far as MIDINRA was concerned *campesinos* could destroy the carefully planned process of transformation in which the state enterprises occupied a central axis of the new model of development (Ortega, 1989:202). Redistribution was also undesirable for political objectives since it was feared that a rural elite would emerge and that it would encourage further land takeovers which would ultimately endanger the class alliance (CIERA, 1989c:63-67).

Despite state policy, the peasantry was prepared to defend a model of organised production through the Rural Workers' Union (ATC). Following the triumph, the ATC represented the cooperative sector, alongside a diversity of interests of permanent and seasonal workers, peasant labourers and peasants who employed labour. By 1979 it had a membership of 100,000, out of a total of 350,000 of the economically active population in the agricultural sector, rendering it one of the largest mass organisations at the time (Kaimowitz, 1986:102,110). In December 1979, the ATC announced the existence of 392 production cooperatives, incorporating 13,202 members; eighteen credit and service cooperatives with 629 affiliated members for whom, in its 1980 Plan of Struggle, it demanded credit provision. In February 1980, the ATC also led a massive demonstration in Managua to oppose government policy and to demand: "Not one more inch of land back". Supporters rallied under the slogan:

"We're not birds who live from the air nor fishes who live from the sea, but men who live off the land."

They also demanded the legalisation of several land takeovers of non-Somozan farms and improved land rent arrangements for poor and landless peasants. Their protest served as a clear expression of the *campesinos*' primary demand for land and for the agrarian reform to resolve the problems of rural poverty, unemployment and basic grain production (Deere et al, 1985:82).

The government responded. It permitted the survival of the cooperatives already established and implemented measures which did not depend on land distribution, including the reduction of ground rent tariffs, improvement in tenant security and elimination of sharecropping and the *colonato* system of payment for use of land through work (Baumeister, 1985:26). Also, the national institute Products for Peasants (PROCAMPO) was established to provide assistance particularly for small producers

(Wattel et al, 1989:168-169). Although the state was reluctant to redistribute land for the formation of cooperatives at this stage of the agrarian reform, it encouraged the organisation of cooperatives formed by peasants with their own land. This included what became known as Service and Credit Cooperatives (CCS), where peasants organised around access to services and another model of cooperative, the Sandinista Agricultural Cooperatives which shared with the insurrectional collective the acronym CAS. Here productive activities were carried out collectively.

As in other countries in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World, the FSLN expressed a preference for cooperative organisation for a series of economic and political objectives (Verhagen, 1980). Consistent with a Marxist perspective, cooperative development was seen as a way of democratising productive relations in agriculture and offered the opportunity of modernising peasant production via state attention and inputs of technology. The FSLN also considered collectivisation important in order to haul the peasantry from their backwardness, incorporate them into the instances of revolutionary power at the local level and provide structures to facilitate their participation in the economic management of production (CIERA, 1989b:37; Ortega 1989:205; Matus et al, 1990:37). Consequently, collectivised production, as represented by the CAS model was favoured by Sandinistas. The CCS were thought to be inferior because they maintained the isolation and individualism of the peasantry and purportedly exacerbated the socioeconomic inequalities amongst the peasantry organised within them. They were seen as important as a "transitional" stage. The preference for CAS was reflected in the credit facilities which offered them seven percent, eight percent for CCS compared with individual producers who received eleven percent (Deere et al, 1985:83). MIDINRA also provided training to all cooperatives, including courses relating to organisation and basic accounting which were attended by officers of the cooperatives.

By early 1980 there were 1,397 CCS cooperatives. There were also 584 CAS, of which about two-thirds had been formed by *campesinos* collectivizing their own lands (Kaimowitz, 1988:48). These became known extra-officially in agrarian reform circles as "real CAS" to distinguish them from those production cooperatives which were later formed on redistributed land and became known as "false CAS" (Ortega, 1989:206-211). These early CAS were relatively small, exhibited heterogeneous forms of organisation,

were based around kinship structures and produced mainly basic food (Kaimowitz, 1988:48).

However, this growing peasant movement was not well represented within its union, the ATC, since this was dominated by agricultural workers. Although the union reorganised itself in an attempt to accommodate the needs of its disparate membership, this proved impossible and the peasants within the ATC began to call for their own organisation. This coincided with the interests of the FSLN which had been concerned about the lack of a Sandinista organisation for producers since medium and large peasants - who were a significant sector in the central areas of the country - were being successfully recruited by a non-Sandinista association: Union of Nicaraguan Agricultural Producers (UPANIC). This led to the creation of UNAG in 1981, to which the ATC yielded its *campesino* membership.

Appearing under the banner "*Patria, Unidad, Produccion*", UNAG proclaimed its commitment to the principles of national unity, internal democracy, anti-imperialism, respect for "traditional cultures" and recognised the FSLN as the "people's vanguard". It identified its objectives as to: protect efficient production; defend the interests of the producers, including the rural bourgeoisie on the condition that it did not work actively for the counterrevolution; strengthen the revolutionary process; and participate in the tasks required to secure peace and national sovereignty (UNAG, 1981). Its membership was composed mainly of small and medium producers and later included large "patriotic" landowners: a heterogeneous representation which embodied the FSLN's policy of national unity and which also carried within it the resulting contradictions (Luciak, 1987a). It would evolve to become the most influential grassroots' organisation in Nicaragua.

III Cooperative institutionalisation (1981-84)

This second phase of cooperative development is marked by the proclamation in 1981 of the Agrarian Reform Law and the Law of Cooperatives which together provided a systematic framework for the development of cooperatives. The laws comprised the legal instruments for the transformation of agrarian structures; defined the role of cooperatives within agricultural development; identified the rights for cooperative creation and operations; and identified that land would be redistributed to poor *campesinos* who were

collectively organised (Deere et al, 1985:92). Both laws were created in consultation with the representatives - not rank and file membership - of the ATC and UNAG.

The laws also established the legal pre-conditions for incorporating rural women into production and granted women equal rights to land. The Law of Cooperatives also stated that women should be fully integrated into cooperatives under the same conditions as men and ensured that men and women had equal rights and duties. It required that women's incorporation be independent of their family status and not depend on them being heads of household or having adult male children, rendering these reforms unprecedented in Latin America (Padilla et al, 1987:129). This state policy would subsequently facilitate a higher proportion of women cooperative members in Nicaragua than in any other Latin American country which did not have an explicit policy favouring their incorporation. This was important in providing the basis for their participation in production and as we shall see later in decision-making processes (Deere and Leon, 1987:11).

The Agrarian Reform Law was intended to bring idle lands in the private sector into production, increase basic grain production and meet the peasant demand for access to land, thereby increasing their commitment to the revolution. It also aimed to "resolve" the land issue by allaying the fears of a nervous bourgeoisie. Its implicit tenet was a recognition that various land tenure patterns were appropriate for revolutionary Nicaragua, including state farms alongside independent peasant and entrepreneurial production and CAS and CCS cooperatives. The Agrarian Law also recognised mixed production arrangements which had emerged beyond the direct control of the state during the first two years (Deere et al, 1985:91).

At this stage the RAS facilitated the expropriation of land (which was compensated for) from owners who had remained in the country but whose farms were above five hundred *manzanas* and were idle; where property and crops had deteriorated or, in the case of ranches, where there was a low density of cattle; and where those with more than fifty *manzanas* were relying on the extraction of ground rent (Baumeister, 1985:21-22). Of the land captured only a small proportion was assigned to the state sector and to individuals, including combatants of the war of liberation and the families of the Heroes and Martyrs who had died (CIERA, 1989a:246). The main beneficiaries were the poor or landless *campesinos* and seasonal workers who had organised themselves into various associative forms of production. The emphasis on redistribution to the CAS model meant

a prioritisation of semi-wage labour above the middle peasants and the CCS model. Given the geographical inequalities of the social structure in Nicaragua this meant that CAS came to characterise the Pacific region because of the concentration of rural poor and landless there. The CCS which were created from producers who owned land were more typical of the interior and north of the country. Other measures were also implemented to improve economic conditions and production levels, including improved prices and supplies and the issuing of property titles.

This shift in agrarian reform policy towards distributing land to production cooperatives from 1982 onwards had been devised previously in order to stimulate basic grain production for internal consumption and to overcome the shortcomings of the state sector (Fitzgerald, 1989:38). However, it coincided with increased pressure from rural organisations and from the military situation since throughout 1982 the country faced an escalation of Contra attacks.

From 1984 more CAS were created in the areas of conflict, incorporating more than 10,000 peasants. For the state these concentrations of population facilitated the provision of social services. Settling people on the land also fulfilled the military requirement by strengthening the defence capacity of the war zones. At the same time, the creation of these defence cooperatives demonstrated the peasantry's disposition to defend the revolutionary achievements as they related to access to land, technical assistance and credit. Under the constant threat of attack, self-defence reinforced social and ideological unity amongst the members (Chamorro and Fitzgerald, 1987).

Although the Law of Cooperatives facilitated the distribution of land to cooperatives it was a rigid guideline for cooperative development. It established only two types of cooperatives (CCS and CAS) and thereby imposed an organisational criterion on cooperatives independently of the will of the members. In effect, by making land distribution conditional MIDINRA was violating the golden principle of cooperative "voluntarism" and was in danger of creating "pseudo-cooperatives". Studies elsewhere have shown that where producers are not themselves convinced of the advantages and merits of cooperative organisation they have a high failure rate (Worsley, 1971; Verhagen, 1980).

MIDINRA viewed cooperatives as entities to be subordinated to the logic of national planning and to be dependent on services offered by the state. This was also reflected in

its instruction that PROCAMPO-MIDINRA be jointly responsible for the promotion, training, technical assistance and registration of cooperative members. MIDINRA stressed the importance of maintaining the economies of scale within cooperatives. It obliged agrarian reform beneficiaries to sow the crops it specified - prohibiting cultivations that were not integral to its technical plans - and to use the technology it deemed appropriate. MIDINRA's control over cooperatives extended to the obligatory commercialisation and sale of produce at official prices through state channels, often at prices below those available on the parallel market (Ortega, 1989:200). In such a way the costs of the war and the state's ambitious investment projects were passed on to the peasants, particularly those in the CAS, where control was more complete and surplus could more easily be recovered (Blokland, 1992:2).

From 1983, MIDINRA expanded its cooperative training programme by providing a new "Basic Course of CAS Cooperative Organisation". This was an eighty six hour course directed to benefit all cooperative members but was coordinated by the presidents of the cooperatives who were previously trained. These courses successfully reached 50% CAS. A similar course was provided for the CCS. The ministry also extended the cover of its courses on organisational, accounting management, planning, diagnosis and agro-technology which were similarly provided to the leaders of the cooperatives. Apart from the immediate knowledge imparted from these courses it has been suggested elsewhere that they served to enhance the leaders' ability to deal with the institutions of the state, to forge a new identity and to overcome the divisiveness arising from their allegiance to either the Liberals or Conservatives. Then in 1985, MIDINRA relinquished the responsibility of training to UNAG. The association subsequently organised a series of workshops relating to economic, political and organisational aspects of cooperatives with the assistance of funds from international sources (Serra, 1991:118). As with the courses before them, these were also directed at the leaders and, as the study demonstrates later, this inadvertently contributed to the concentration of power in a few individuals.

Although UNAG initially shared the view that collectivised production was the most advanced model, it opposed state conceptions of cooperative development. In a 1982 document UNAG called for greater autonomy from the state and proposed that the state redefine its role as that of a "stimulator" of an independent cooperative movement, asserting that:

"A cooperative is not just a production unit but a grassroots organisation of the peasantry."³

It also called for the expansion of cooperativism to include agroexports as well as traditional basic grain production and for an integral economic policy which assigned cooperatives greater resources and investments.

Some of these concerns were subsequently incorporated by the government into the emergent Strategy for Cooperative Development in 1982 which aimed to intensify the process of cooperativisation. Its principle components were the Zones for Cooperative Development and the Centres of Cooperative Development which directed state investment to prioritised cooperatives. Of the total of two thousand five hundred CAS at the time, it selected five hundred to receive investments, including the Tola cooperative of this study. These cooperatives became integral to MIDINRA's rural programme since they were used for experimenting new strains and promoting through diffusion, the use of agrochemicals (in keeping with the ministry's emphasis on agrotechnology) (Serra, 1991:93). Maintaining the concept of the superiority of the CAS, the Cooperative Strategy introduced limited measures to induce CCS to convert to CAS although it also extended assistance to other types of cooperatives including the Dead Furrow Cooperatives (CSM), where individual families had responsibility for a particular plot but collectively conducted some tasks, such as ploughing. It also included Work Collectives (CT), run in a similar way to CAS by workers on land loaned from state farms to enable them to produce for self-sufficiency (Serra, 1991:106).

The effect of the Cooperative Strategy was to create more dependency on the state and prevent the consolidation of autonomous management of the cooperatives, suggesting that perhaps it aimed to gain control of a decentralised cooperative movement which had until then developed outside the auspices of state control. However, the prospects for cooperatives to achieve autonomy looked bleak in the context of the escalation of the war. This increased the state's intervention in the economic and organisational aspects of cooperatives, particularly in those in the zones affected by military conflict. Here, state presence extended beyond technical attention and resource allocation to production planning. This represented a serious setback for the cooperative movement and the democratic organisation of affiliated members (Ortega, 1989:210).

As with other Third World cooperative movements which become heavily dependent on government backing and are subject to state intervention and direction (Young et al, 1982:14), the Sandinista state was guilty of limiting the autonomy of the cooperative movement: another fundamental principle of cooperativism as recognised by the International Cooperative Alliance. Similarly, by insisting that hitherto individual producers or poor *campesinos* collectivise immediately also denied members the opportunity to advance on a gradual process of cooperativisation and prevented members from consolidating their organisational, productive and social experiences and their management skills (Matus et al, 1990).

The war affected cooperatives throughout the country in other ways. They became the most important bases of recruitment for the militia and comprised most of the war's casualties: 61% of the deaths; 71% of the wounded and 77% of the kidnapped were cooperative members (Ortega, 1989:204). By 1989, a total of 5,177 cooperative members had been killed in military defence and an additional 3,086 members had been kidnapped (UNAG, 1989:8).

If the cooperative movement was weakened by state paternalism and the war, it was also constrained by its own organisational limitations. The cooperative movement was integrated into local instances of UNAG structure at municipal, departmental and national levels, as were individual producers. Yet, although the sector numerically dominated UNAG, it was under-represented: particularly within the higher levels of its leadership⁴, since UNAG's leadership was dominated by rich peasant and middle bourgeoisie classes. Here, attitudes concerning the poor peasantry could be as paternalistic as those which gained prominence within MIDINRA, as the following statement of Juan Galan, UNAG president of the IVth Region, demonstrates:

"It's just that the *campesino* never understood that this imposition (of an organisational model of cooperative and production plans) was intended to benefit him. Since they didn't understand, it had to be imposed.. From the beginning of the triumph the peasant sector was the most underdeveloped of all sectors in Nicaragua.. which you can equate with a child who doesn't know anything."⁵

Typically, cooperative leaders in the grassroots of UNAG were "natural leaders", namely those who volunteered to present the demands of the base (taken here to mean individual cooperatives) to the municipal structures of UNAG and transmit orientations and directions from higher levels: they were not elected. These individuals received

training programmes directed to improve the organisational and productive capacity of the cooperatives as well as the ability to deal with state institutions. However, the critical and participative teaching methods on which these workshops were based were contradicted by the vertical styles cultivated within the FSLN and were ultimately abandoned for less reflexive, more explicit and agitational forms of activism.

Leaders at intermediate levels were generally nominated from within the ranks of the FSLN and national leaders were selected by the National Directorate of the FSLN. During the first years, UNAG promoters - subordinating specific sectorial demands to those of the FSLN - executed government policies alongside state technical specialists. Given the confusion of individuals concerning their dual function as leaders of a rural organisation and as party militants (as noted in Chapter 3) frequently meant that UNAG personnel placed greater emphasis on conducting tasks of the party and not on those activities relating to the promotion of the sectorial interests of the union (Serra, 1991:104-118). As social militarisation increased with the war effort, war-related tasks took priority and rural military recruitment drives were conducted by UNAG personnel who sometimes resorted to coercion in instances where individuals attempted to evade military service or militia mobilisations (Serra, 1993:26). Changes at the national level, namely the aforementioned abolition of the Council of State in 1984, also restricted the opportunities of the cooperative sector to assert its demands autonomously from the party.

Nevertheless, a significant step towards the cooperative movement's economic independence was achieved in 1984 when UNAG formed the Nicaraguan Enterprise for Storage (ECODEPA). This had a chain of retail outlets called *Tienda Campesina*, which operated as consumer cooperatives to affiliated producers. They provided products acquired from international solidarity and distributed basic consumer products and agricultural inputs (UNAG, 1990). Between 1985-90 ECODEPA had channelled to peasants the value of US\$30 million (Blokland, 1992). This represented a challenge to state-controlled trade and was criticised by officials at the time (Hernandez Pico, 1989:70).

IV Responding to the peasantry (1985-88)

The third stage of the agrarian reform is characterised by a radical change towards an increased distribution of land to individual producers, mainly small and medium sized, and the active role of organised peasants in the agrarian reform process.

By 1985, nearly three quarters of the country's landless and land poor families had still not received land (Kaimowitz, 1988:50). Under the conditions of inflation during the mid-1980s the value of agricultural salaries on which these families depended was eroded and there was a deterioration in the countryside-city terms of exchange and supply of goods to rural zones. The demand for subsistence plots increased (Wattel et al, 1989:174-180). Moreover, peasants were deeply - some irreparably - dissatisfied. Marginalised producers had not been placated with the receipt of land titles alone and landless and poor families resented the policy of distributing land only to collective organisations. Although CAS provided members with higher incomes than those of poor rural families, they were not meeting other important household needs (CIERA, 1985). Unlike the tenure model of CCS, which was more in accord with *campesino* reality because it incorporated family members into production, CAS had no facility for utilising family labour. Also, the absence of land titles meant that there was no clear provision for inheritance or guarantees of membership for members' offspring. Many individuals organised within the cooperatives also resented the imposition by the state on what they could produce and the obligation to participate in the militia (Chamorro and Fitzgerald, 1987).

Peasants registered their disaffection in several ways. In November 1984, in the country's first-ever free elections, peasants, particularly those in the north and interior of the country, voted against the FSLN expressing the political empowerment that formal electoral democracy had endowed them with. This included some historic collaborators, reflecting the extent to which those who had not benefited from the RAS felt betrayed by the new government (Luciak, 1987b). The vacuum created by the distrust of the Sandinistas was filled by the Contra. Peasants also expressed their resentment through opting for armed opposition and the Nicaraguan Democratic Front (FDN) was successfully recruiting medium and rich peasants, whose support provided a strategic link between the political project of the US Administration and the mass or poor *campesinos* who subsequently joined (Bendaña, 1991). In other expressions of overt political protest peasants also demonstrated against the government. In 1985, hundreds of land hungry

peasants took to the streets in Masaya to demand that they be given land as individual farmers. Afterwards, armed peasants seized several private properties and state farms. They were led by Juan Galan, who subsequently lost his party militancy although this was later revoked⁶.

The government yielded to these pressures. It immediately increased the unconditional redistribution of land in Masaya and in northern regions of the country. It was also forced to reassess the direction of the agrarian reform: the outcome of which was a more pro-peasant policy in which land would be distributed without requiring benefactors to join cooperatives. Thus, for the first time since the Sandinistas came to power, land was distributed to producers irrespective of their organisational preference (see Table 2 for the pattern of land distribution as it developed over the years). These lands were obtained from the state sector, from large landowners (following negotiated agreements) and from the wider application of legal expropriations concerning underexploited lands (Kaimowitz, 1988:51). Other measures were implemented to reduce administrative controls in the countryside and benefit sectors other than the cooperative sector. Markets for food were freed; credit and prices were reduced to favour small producers; and the services of state firms were widened to include assistance, support and investments for small producers (Harris and Vilas, 1985:3; Fitzgerald, 1989:37-38).

Beyond these issues, UNAG, whose political influence was increasing largely as a product of the increasing economic significance of its affiliated producers, challenged the state's collectivised model of cooperatives and its heavy-handed intervention in cooperative affairs. It proposed that collectivisation be determined by the *campesinos* themselves and not by the politico-ideological interests of the state or FSLN (Ortega, 1989:214-215). These points of difference, expressed increasingly from within the cooperative movement, represented a counter-argument in the debate about the direction of cooperativism. It was not resisted by the state: on the contrary, it was perceived as an essential dimension of a cooperative movement.

In March 1987, a process was initiated which involved the principal technical staff and cadres from MIDINRA, FSLN and UNAG. It aimed to change the verticalist and paternalist nature of the state's relationship with the cooperative movement and strengthen the organisational base of the movement. This comprised a series of seminars,

Table 2 Basic data of cooperative movement, years 1982, 1986, 1988, 1989						
Type	CAS	CCS	CSM	CT	Other	Total
1982						
No coop	512	1,616	12	643	66	2,849
No socio	7,276	52,711	208	4,353	1,272	65,820
Area (mz)	117,517	895,762	4,476	92,544	31,630	1,141,929
1986						
No coop	1,093	1,487	104	344	nd	3,028
No socio	22,035	47,055	2,459	2,638	nd	74,187
Area (mz)	615,602	828,257	30,560	59,094	nd	1,533,513
1988						
No coop	1,170	1,509	85	330	57	3,151
No socio	23,083	45,443	2,496	3,893	1,800	76,715
Area (mz)	650,432	760,009	41,823	92,882	31,079	1,576,224
1989*						
No coop	1,221	1,528	112	391	111	3,363
No socio	25,044	54,125	2,967	3,471	2,478	88,085
Area (mz)	589,796	917,461	39,776	46,201	29,329	1,622,564

Sources: CIERA, 1989e; *UNAG, 1989.

nd = No data available; mz = manzanas

a. Socio is member;

b. Years 1982, 1986 and 1988 do not include cooperatives from the Special Zones I and II.

c. Numbers of socios (members) and area totals for year 1989 do not include Special Zone III.

discussions and analysis of the role that each institution had assumed in cooperative development, in order to clarify and differentiate between the various roles of UNAG, the party and the state. Here, specific mention of the notion of cooperative autonomy was heard for the first time (Envio, 1987). During the final national conference, Jaime Wheelock of MIDINRA called on participants to prepare a plan:

".. which takes into account the suggestions and concerns of the *campesinos*. This plan should respect the *campesinos* as our main source of solutions to the problems of agrarian reform, abandoning any type of bureaucratic, highly administrative approaches."⁷

In response, MIDINRA relaxed its criterion on cooperative models. Subsequently, intermediate forms of cooperative organisations multiplied, including the CSM and CT models. The government also increased support for the CCS and enabled producers to create alternative marketing and processing cooperatives with government support (CIERA, 1989b; Matus et al 1990). In addition, UNAG's role in the agrarian reform was increased and throughout the country its leaders were granted greater influence in assigning land and titles.

Despite these developments, MIDINRA's own report of 1987 acknowledged that the state continued to intervene in cooperatives by: filling the membership quotas of the CAS; imposing work rules; elaborating production plans; and imposing organisational models. The state-cooperative relationship was still characterised as "verticalist, paternalist, bureaucratic" (DGRA, 1987). Evidently, the "flexibilization" of the state's verticalist approach had amounted merely to its acceptance of different land tenure.

However, during this period new peasant organisations emerged which responded to the needs of *campesinos* and cooperative members. One such organisation was the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (UCA). These were organised to increase efficiency of production territorially by MIDINRA and UNAG, together with other relevant state institutions involved in cooperative production (Espinoza and Plantinga, 1990). They were seen as a way to resolve the problems of supply and to help cooperatives improve their services. In many cases, these UCAs were imposed from above and excluded ordinary cooperative members from involvement in the preparatory discussions, as was the case in the San Marcos cooperative of this study.

This period also saw the strengthening of the ECODEPA's *Tiendas Campesinas* (TC). By 1988, there was a total of 197 TC outlets with a membership of 50,300, many

of whom were cooperativists. Another peasant organisation to emerge was the Community Committee (CC), which was initiated by the FSLN in 1985 and was later organised by UNAG. These emerged as new forms of local power in the countryside and occupied the space left vacant by the dissolution of the insurrectional CDCs (Matus, 1990:158). They organised and carried out local development projects, distributed seeds to producers and typically incorporated teachers, nurses and doctors and cooperative members.

The cooperative movement was also incorporated into other participatory channels, providing it with organisational experiences. This included the "*De Cara al Pueblo*" meetings, mentioned in Chapter 3, which gave it direct access to national leaders (CIERA, 1989b) and the "*Cabildos Abiertos*", the public meetings organised to discuss the draft of the National Constitution during its public consultation stage (Lobel, 1988).

Despite the legal redefinition established for the incorporation of women into the new social relations of production, few women joined cooperatives. Between 1982-88, the membership of women rose from 6% of the total national cooperative membership to 9%, although a 1989 census indicated that in CAS the proportion of women rose to 12% (UNAG, 1989). Less than half the cooperatives had women although there were regional differences. In the war zones women's incorporation was greatest in all forms of cooperatives since defence activities - in which women also participated - increased the necessity and opportunities for women to integrate into production in order to support their families. Women were also better represented within the CCS because of the high incidence of women-headed households with small property and because they were able to join cooperatives and recruit a male family member to assist in productive tasks. By contrast, the CAS incorporated fewer women because they were unable to recruit family labour to assist in production since as members only they were permitted to appear for productive work (UNAG, 1989; CIERA, 1989d:127). The absence of infrastructural support to reduce the burden of women's domestic responsibilities and childcare prevented women from joining the cooperatives (Padilla, 1987).

Those cooperatives which had a significant proportion of women members provided greater opportunities for them to occupy leadership positions: elsewhere they did not fill officers' posts. By 1989, a total of 1,200 women managed to occupy leadership positions in the grassroots and this led to their greater representation within the leadership structure

of UNAG at regional and national levels. This increased representation of women was largely a response to the Women's Section of UNAG which formed in 1987 and insisted that more women be incorporated into leadership structures in the base as well as the regional councils. The Women's Section also initiated a series of projects including training workshops and provided credit in order to incorporate women into productive activities and to improve the technical capabilities of existing women members⁸. These projects were funded from external sources. In 1989 it organised the First Assembly of Peasant Women to provide a national forum for women to discuss the problems they faced, share experiences and seek collective solutions (CIERA, 1989d).

By 1988, the cooperative movement under the leadership of UNAG had grown to incorporate 77,000 members (representing 61% of *campesinos* families); occupied 22% of the cultivable land and produced 21% of national agricultural production (see Table 2 for data on the cooperative movement). Although it had increased in demographic and economic weight, it lacked the corresponding political representation. Consequently, initiatives were taken by the cooperative leadership within UNAG to promote a process which would strengthen the movement at the grassroots to enable it to overcome some of the problems it confronted. Plans were made to form a national commission to promote the cooperative movement.

The political context of the last phase of cooperative development under the auspices of the Sandinista Government was defined by the agreements between Central American presidents in Esquipulas (October 1987) and the ceasefire agreed between the FDN and the Sandinista Government in Sapoá (March 1988). The subsequent reduction of military activities encouraged expectations that conditions for the peasantry would improve, especially for the cooperative members who would now be able to put down their arms and dedicate themselves to production.

V Strengthening the cooperative movement (1988-90)

This period is marked by the implementation of Economic Reform. This occurred in response to the economic crisis which was rooted in the enormous fiscal deficit caused by the adoption of expansive economic policies of the Sandinista Government which had made credit and subsidies widely available and had distorted prices. The solution was

sought in February 1988 (when inflation reached 13,000%) by the implementation of a monetary reform which devalued the *Cordoba* in order to stem hyperinflation and correct relative prices. This was followed by a drastic policy of adjustment and stabilisations (June) which resembled an IMF structural adjustment except without the availability of external funds. These fiscal and economic measures devalued the *Cordoba*'s exchange rates and restricted credits, salaries and state expenditures.

These measures had an profound impact on cooperatives and particularly on agroexport producers. The restricted credit policy resulted in a process of decapitalisation as cooperatives tried to meet increased production costs. For coffee and cattle producers, especially in the CAS sector, this led to a rationalisation of resources and became manifest in the reduced use of inputs and increased use of labour intensive methods (Mendoza, 1991:26-29). Production decreased as smaller areas were sown and fewer machines and agrochemical used. Cattle stocks deteriorated for lack of veterinary attention. The result of these measures, which castigated inefficient producers and favoured traditional *campesino* production, rendered those small and medium producers who were able to adapt the most efficient users of inputs. Their survival depended on how they were able to adjust to the new costs of production (Stahler-Sholk, 1988; Blokland, 1992). The policies also reduced the liquidity of cooperative funds available for its "payroll" to members: there was a fall in family income (Spoor et al, 1989:339) and the period was initially characterised by high desertion rates (Rodriquez, 1991:36). The effects were exacerbated by the impact of hurricane *Juana* which tore across southern Nicaragua in October 1988, even though those producers who had been affected were granted some credit assistance.

During this final stage of the Agrarian Reform, the only land that was captured for redistribution was that which had been underutilised by the state or cooperatives or had been recuperated from areas under Contra control. After more than ten years of Sandinista rule a fundamental change in the structure of land tenure in the countryside had effectively eradicated *latifundistas* as a social sector from the agrarian structure (see Table 3 for changes in land tenure). However, there was a strata of poor *campesinos* whose hopes for obtaining access to land remained frustrated. Increased unemployment exacerbated land hunger and in 1989 land invasions began to take place in the zones of high population density, such as Regions II and IV (Serra, 1991:82). In 1989 there were

approximately 60,000 *campesinos* without guarantees of permanent access to land (Ruben, 1989). Data obtained for September 1990 also indicates that in Region IV alone there was a demand for land from 1,558 heads of family (Rodney, 1990:8).

Table 3
Structure of land tenure (1978-1988)

Sector	1978		1988	
	area	%	area	%
<u>Private farms</u>				
	2,920,000	36.2	514,633	
>500 mz	1,311,000	16.2	725,505	6.4
200-500 mz	2,431,000	30.1	1,401,591	9.0
50-200 mz	1,241,000	15.4	929,361	17.4
10-50 mz	170,000	2.1	137,404	11.5
<10 mz				1.7
<u>subtotal</u>	<u>8,073,000</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>3,708,496</u>	<u>45.9</u>
<u>Reformed Sector</u>				
State enterprise			948,230	11.7
Cooperatives*			1,115,680	13.8
Individual allocation			209,974	2.6
Special titling			1,459,996	18.1
Titling to indigenous communities			170,914	2.1
<u>subtotal</u>			<u>3,904,794</u>	<u>48.4</u>
Abandoned areas			459,710	5.7
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>8,073,000</u>	<u>100.0</u>	<u>8,073,000</u>	<u>100.0</u>

Sources: CIERA (1989e).

*This includes only those areas surrendered by the Agrarian Reform.

a. The table does not indicate where subsistence peasants joined CCS cooperatives. They remain included in the category of subsistence peasants.

b. Ivan Gutierrez (1989) gives cooperatives as 22% of land area, of which CAS occupied 12% and CCS 10%; UNAG (1989) states that 20% total agricultural land was under cooperatives.

c. There are discrepancies found in the figures from other sources. The Boletín mensual del CIERA of September 1989, gives the 1978 total area as 7,068,304.

Instead of redistributing land measures were taken to consolidate the cooperative movement. Coordinated efforts between MIDINRA and UNAG were made to fill their membership quotas and, in the context of a reduced state budget, a new scheme was implemented to replace MIDINRA offices with Centres of Peasant Development (CDC). These aimed to improve the attention directed to the peasantry; coordinate between producers and the state; and promote forms of peasant organisation and cooperativisation (Matus et al, 1990:169).

Despite the UNAG's insistence that its representatives from the Cooperative Councils and Associations be elected to be incorporated into the appropriate commissions, the MIDINRA minister rejected the proposal. This reflected the priorities of the CDC, which proved less concerned about the direct participation of producers and cooperativists in the management of its services and more interested in directing economic resources to the sector. As such it awakened bitter memories of the imposing behaviour of state functionaries. In response, peasants and cooperative members rejected the CDC. In their assemblies, cooperative councils and "*De Cara al Pueblo*" they denounced the CDC, lamented their exclusion from its management and claimed that it failed to respond to their needs as a sector (Hernandez Pico, 1989:64).

Then in 1989 came UNAG's most comprehensive challenge to the state's development model yet, in the form of a proposal for an alternative peasant model of agricultural development. This stressed the importance of devising an integral development policy which did not depend on expensive agricultural inputs and technology. Its key elements were the involvement of *campesinos* in economic decisions and the recovery of traditional peasant knowledge and technology (Serra, 1991:126). In support of these recommendations, UNAG presented the government with documentation of the discussions and analysis which had taken place between the cooperative bases and UNAG leaders. In an immediate response the government granted important credit concessions for producers (Blokland, 1989:73-96).

The UNAG also stressed the importance of strengthening the cooperative movement at all levels in order to be able to confront the new challenges presented by the economic conditions. This coincided with MIDINRA's suggestion that the peasant cooperative movement have its own identity distinct from UNAG. Although this proposal was initially rejected by the association as an attempt by the state to increase its control over

the movement it was agreed that a national assembly process should be organised (Serra, 1991:149). This began in April 1989 with the objectives of generating discussion at the grassroots level of the cooperative experience and to improve an understanding of cooperative reality. It was anticipated that this experience would enable the cooperative movement to elaborate a diagnostic of its own history, problems and economic significance within the national economy and outline proposals and solutions for a programme for the development of the cooperative movement.

The assembly process, documented in detail by Serra (1991), was intended to generate discussion within the bases⁹. Initially it involved trained municipal and regional commissions who visited cooperatives to explain the principles of cooperativism, the cooperative movement and the objectives of the national assembly process itself. In fact, for various reasons including practical difficulties and the poor motivation of individuals concerned, few cooperatives were visited. However, this stage did serve to strengthen the critical analysis and participation of the cooperative leaders in discussions with the leadership of UNAG and within the Municipal Councils (Serra, 1991). This process culminated on 12th and 13th September 1989 in a two day national conference in which the leaders of 875 cooperatives attended. The programme eventually adopted the "Platform for Struggle of the Cooperative Movement", which identified objectives for the consolidation of cooperatives as economic entities and for the development of a national organisation of the cooperative movement. It contained the following key components which were intended to provide guidelines to assist the Municipal Cooperative Councils to devise appropriate action.

The Platform identified the main problems the sector faced, distinguishing between those of "external" and "internal" origin. The former included the war, the national economic crisis, the inadequate respect for the movement's autonomy, the absence of integral policies directed at cooperative development and legal problems relating to the lack of definitive documentation concerning the legal constitution of land titles. The internal problems the assembly identified referred to the lack of prior cooperative experience, illiteracy, bad administration, weak democratic practices, lack of internal regulations and poor collaboration between cooperatives.

The Platform urged that the Law of Cooperatives be changed to facilitate the registration of all types of cooperatives, including the TC, as legal entities. With regard

to financing, the Assembly recommended that the government establish a fund for cooperative development; approve a special crediting system for its members; and establish a fund within the movement to be financed with contributions from national cooperatives and from the international cooperative movement. The Platform also urged that the cooperative movement contract its own agronomy technicians and implement technological services for use of its affiliates. It recommended a more efficient system to guarantee prices and commercialisation, the creation of mixed agroindustrial businesses (involving government and the cooperatives) and the formation of second level cooperatives to export and market locally produced agricultural products (FENACOOOP, 1989).

The Platform stated that the cooperative movement should be united through a democratic process under the auspices of one organisation which would respect all types of existing cooperatives as well as the principle of autonomy. It subsequently elected a Cooperative Movement National Council to represent the different types of cooperatives. This Council included seventy six individuals, including only one woman and a high proportion of professional UNAG leaders (22%). The rest were cooperative leaders, many of whom were also members of the Municipal and Regional Councils.

The assembly process reflected the strength the cooperative movement had accumulated over the ten year period. Expressed within the Platform were assertions which attested to the cooperative movement's demands for self-determination and a growing awareness of itself as a political subject. This was reflected in its awareness that amongst the challenges it faced was the need to strengthen internal organisation and develop a distinct identity as a sector with its own specific needs and problems. Its strength was also evident from its explicit demands for increased autonomy from the state, FSLN and within UNAG itself. Its demands for greater control over decision-making processes, resource allocation and the management of production services and marketing as they related to its sector, suggest that its organisation had developed sufficiently to enable it challenge effectively, the interests of the state for more power. Over the ten years its political power had increased.

However, evidence from the pre-assembly and assembly processes suggests that the notion of participation was implemented for instrumental objectives. It was used as a "means" by which to obtain pre-established objectives namely a diagnostic, work plan, and election of a council and commission bodies. The disrespect for grassroots initiatives are

detailed by Serra (1991:161), who observed that some of the themes which had been proposed from the cooperative bases were ultimately excluded from the final Platform. This included those relating to the interests of women members or partners of male members. Also, criticisms expressed towards the imposition of external agents, including the state, the FSLN and the UNAG leadership were modified for inclusion in the final document following the interventions of the (FSLN) Party Commission which was incorporated into the organising body of the National Commission of Cooperative Movement.

Evidently, state conceptions towards the cooperative movement had not shifted as dramatically as the change of direction of state policy in 1985 might have suggested. In his speech presented at the Assembly, the minister of MIDINRA stated that:

"..with cooperative development, the Nicaraguan peasantry was incorporated into the most modern and progressive of rural transformations.."

Here the notion of the peasantry as backward and resistant to change appears live and well. Also, cooperatives were presented in the same discourse as "a pillar of the mixed economy" which were "born at the triumph"¹⁰, comments which effectively deny their history as an expression of peasant struggle and their character as a political and social movement. A process of restructuring UNAG was also underway during 1989-90 which aimed to rejuvenate and democratise the association, which the association feared was becoming moribund and increasingly perceived as irrelevant to its affiliates. In late 1989, proposals to restructure the organisation were submitted by UNAG's Organisational Section to the national directive in a document which called for elections of leaders at all levels of the structure. This allegedly caused acrimonious debate from within the national leadership, themselves un-elected representatives¹¹.

Following consultations with the regional committees of the UNAG, representatives decided to make Region IV a test case for organisational restructuring and elections promptly took place for the UNAG promoters in the grassroots and for presidents of the UNAG Municipal Councils. This endowed them with a sense of legitimacy hitherto denied them, as Mariano Leal from Tola indicates:

"I've been president of UNAG Tola for four years and now I'm elected it feels good to know that I have the support of the people: before they nominated me with the finger. "

These elected local leaders then formed municipal councils which could then elect regional and national councils. A parallel reorganisation took place within the various UNAG producers' associations (UNAG, 1990:16).

With the arrival of the UNO Government of Violeta Chamorro, the future of cooperatives looked uncertain. This accelerated the creation of a national level entity. Back in September 1989, during the Cooperative Assembly in Managua, delegates had agreed that such an organisation ought exist, comprising elected representatives. Although no details of the structure had been agreed, the situation demanded a rapid response: in April 1990, the National Federation of Cooperatives (FENACCOOP) was constitutionalised. This promptly affiliated to the Confederation of Cooperatives of the Caribbean and Central America (CCCCA), to which Daniel Nunez, National President of UNAG, had been elected as its first president (Blokland, 1989:77).

Conclusions

Despite the FSLN's commitments to satisfy peasant demands on coming to power in 1979 the Sandinista Government initially restricted the peasant cooperative movement as a spontaneous expression of peasant aspirations and struggle. Informed by a theoretical conceptualisation which denied the contribution of peasant production in the economy and saw them as objects to be transformed, MIDINRA gave priority to the creation of a state sector and sought to protect property of the rural bourgeoisie within its class alliance. This gave the cooperative movement its character as a *campesino* struggle against the interests of the state and bourgeoisie.

Legal provisions created in 1981 facilitated its systematic though contradictory development. It subsequently expanded in the context of a technobureaucratic state which perceived it as an object to control for national political and economic objectives. It struggled for resources in competition with other sectors and was weakened by the economic impact of the war and its poor representation within UNAG. Responding to the war, overt forms of national peasant political protest, and evidence that peasants were integrating into the armed opposition, Sandinista policy became less rigid and repressive. The government was forced to reassess its support for the peasantry and the cooperative

movement in particular by meeting its demands and moving towards the notion of a more independent cooperative movement.

As the cooperative movement increased its economic weight and UNAG earned greater influence concerning economic and agrarian policy-making, the cooperative movement began a systematic process aimed to strengthen its base through a national consultation processes. By 1989, it had created a national organisation and - although not completely autonomous - had achieved greater levels of independence from external agents.

Sandinista intervention in cooperative development in its attempts to control *campesino* production amounted to a bureaucratisation of cooperatives whereby grassroots initiatives were restricted and their autonomy was disrespected. Nevertheless, the legal institutionalisation of cooperatives provided the conditions in which a peasant cooperative movement could develop and a positive state policy and an ideology of gender equality was necessary to ensure the incorporation of women into the social and productive processes. As the cooperative movement consolidated its organisation nationally and protested through political action, it was able to challenge state policy. The organisational weakness of the cooperative bases were precisely the manifestation of heavy handed intervention and led the UNAG leadership to reassess the state of its own organisational structure and search for a more representative organisation for cooperative members. We now turn to examine the processes of participation at the grassroots of the cooperative movement which were set in motion by the influence of the various agents and actors involved.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Including Evangelical Committee for Assistance and Development (CEPAD) and the Nicaraguan Institute for Human Promotion (INPHRU) and directly by medium producers themselves.

2. MIDINRA was created in 1980 from a combination of existing institutions including the Ministry of Agricultural Development and the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform, which had replaced the Somoza IAN and INVIERNO.

3. UNAG (1982) "Inquietudes y surgenencias de la UNAG en torno a una definicion de estrategia de desarrollo cooperativo", mimeo, 24 abril, Managua. Quoted in Serra (1991:105).

4. Between 1981 and 1985, UNAG's membership rose from 45,498 to 106,179. The entire cooperative sector represented 65% of this membership, of which the CCS represented 44%. Yet, in the National Council of UNAG, only 23% were cooperativists (Luciak, 1987b).

5. Juan Galan, personal interview, 2.11.90.

6. Calls for the withdrawal of his militancy were led by Frederico Lopez, the FSLN party official for the IVth Region, who was nicknamed "Stalin".

7. Quoted in Envio (1987:30).

8. Interview with Benigna Mendoza, National Co-ordinator of the Women's Section of UNAG, 3.2.90.

9. It took place in seven of the country's nine regions. The north and south Atlantic regions were excluded because of a weak cooperative movement there and poor communications.

10. Quoted in Serra (1991:158-160).

11. Wilfredo Barreto, Coordinator Organisation Section, UNAG, personal interview, Managua, February 1990.

Chapter 5

SETTING THE SCENE: THE COOPERATIVES

This chapter serves to contextualise subsequent analysis by providing background information about the two case studies. It describes the location of the cooperatives which determines the nature agricultural activities and serves partially to explain the social experiences of constituent members. It also describes the cooperatives's histories and is essentially concerned to establish the respective roles of the peasants themselves, the rural organisations, the FSLN and the state in facilitating their creation. This is important since cooperatives are not just the sum total of individuals but are collective histories which translate into different social experiences and are conserved through collective memory. How a cooperative forms also has a strong influence on its subsequent decision-making processes and responses to social, economic and political phenomena. The recording of histories is also important for what it reveals of the subjective meanings individuals attach to these social experiences.

The chapter also presents details about the cooperatives' relationship to the local communities in order to identify the nature of intra-community relationships. This will also be useful as regards consideration of the wider implications and contradictions of the cooperative experience of participation.

I Cooperative German Pomares

I1 Location

The cooperative German Pomares (GP) is located in the municipality of Tola, within the Department of Rivas. This has an extension of 2,159 km², is south west of Nicaragua and its town, which bears the same name, lies 112km to the south of the country's capital Managua. The PanAmerican Highway crosses the department connecting it with Costa Rica to the south. To the west of the department is the Pacific Ocean; to the east, Lake Nicaragua and to the north, the Department of Carazo (where the second cooperative case study is located). According to the last national census in 1971, the department had 92,439 inhabitants, representing 4% of the national population. This total increased by 6,595 following the 1972 earthquake.

The climate is typical of the Pacific zone of Nicaragua and is characterised by a rainy season of six months between May and October and a dry season with almost no rain between November and April. Annual rainfall in the department averages between 1,000mm -2,000mm and the average annual temperature is 26.7C. The main economic activities of the region are agricultural, mainly cattle rearing, sugar cane and basic grain production. In 1980 land use was dominated by pastures which occupied 79% of the land surface; 7% was cultivated and 14% was forested. Since then greater areas have been converted to the cultivation of perennials and annuals. The principle products are basic grains, sorghum and plantains (CIERA/ MIDINRA, 1980b).

Tola is the largest of the ten constituent municipalities of Rivas and covers 454 km², representing 21% of the department's area. At the time of research it had a total population of 20,505 dispersed throughout 42 *comarcas* (communities)¹. The population is predominantly rural with 17,130 rural inhabitants and an urban population of 2,375 concentrated around Tola and Nancimi, the latter being the second largest town (FSLN Tola, 1988). Women comprised 52% of the population although there is no comprehensive data concerning their occupations.

Although the department of Rivas is predominantly flat, a series of hills, the Pacific Range, transects Tola from north to south rendering the municipality's land surface broken and irregular. It averages 200 metres altitude. Roads within Tola were diabolical and it was notorious for having the worst infrastructure of all the municipalities in Rivas (CIERA/ MIDINRA, 1980b). Except for a few hundred yards in the town of Tola itself, all the roads were unpaved including the 13 kilometres which linked Tola to Rivas. Many routes connecting the rural communities within Tola were defined only by the course of rivers or streams and could only be transversed by ox and cart in the dry season, prohibiting the use of lorries for transport. During the rainy season routes to 32 of these communities became impassable and road maintenance was a priority concern for most producers.

A frequent bus service connected Tola with Rivas and brought the three national newspapers Barricada, Nuevo Diario and La Prensa². The National Telephone Communication Corporation (TELCOR) operated in a small room off the main square with access to only two public telephone lines. These were shared by TELCOR with the only direct telephone lines in Tola, all of which were situated on the town's square

including the townhall, the FSLN party office, National Development Bank (BND) and in the house of Ever Herrera (a council delegate).

What had been an illiteracy rate in the municipality during Somoza of 60% (representing 38% of the urban population and 63% rural) which was greater than the 35% average for the Pacific zone, the Sandinista Government had reduced by 1988 to 17% illiteracy (8% urban and 18% rural), which was more impressive than the national average of 23%. (CIERA/ MIDINRA, 1980b; MED Tola, 1988). Since 1979, thirty nine primary schools had been built throughout the municipality giving universal education coverage. There was a secondary school in Tola; two pre-schools funded by the Ministry of Education (MED); nine popular centres for pre-school provision; a technical Rural Working School³ and two schools operated Adult Literacy Programmes which gave priority to cooperative members. The town of Tola had a health centre and health posts in Nancimi, San Ignacio and Las Canas, which were open a couple of times a week. The municipality's medical personnel included two doctors, a dentist, an auxiliary dentist, ten nurses, an auxiliary nurse and twelve trained midwives⁴. The nearest hospital was in Rivas but Tola had no ambulance.

Branches of state institutions in Tola included the "popular shops" of Nicaraguan Enterprise for Storage (ENABAS) which sold a range of sixteen basic goods at the cheapest prices; an ENABAS "popular agricultural deposit" to which producers sold their produce⁵; Agricultural Products (PROAGRO), which supplied producers with seed, fertilizers and insecticides and finally the National Development Bank (BND). The nearest office of the Ministry of Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA) was in Rivas, although a representative of the Cooperative Development Centre (CDC) visited once a week to attend to related matters. There was also a "Tienda Campesina", run by Cooperative Enterprise for Agricultural Producers (ECODEPA), located in Nancimi.

Rivas did not have an historically entrenched political identity as either Conservative or Liberal: both groups co-existed and had prospered with the expansion of cattle and then sugar production. Nonetheless, during the Somoza dictatorship the Liberals dominated when as, locals describe, power in Tola "was in the hands of *latifundistas* who were supported by the Somoza regime". However, from the mid-1970s Christian base communities and *Delgados de la Palabra* (Delegates of the Word) began to operate in the municipality. Their organisational networks were forged and strengthened by the arrival

to Tola of a Spanish priest, Gaspar Garcia Liviana, in 1974. *Padre* Gaspar had a profound influence on the rural communities and - through his own actions - put Tola on the political map of Nicaragua, gaining it a special place in national history.

Padre Gaspar took the popular church to the rural communities, encouraged the formation of Christian base communities and Delegates of the Word and introduced the local residents to the ideas embodied in the new liberation theology. He also organised the communities to build schools and successfully harnessed the popularist tendency of the dictatorship in order to secure the access of rural residents to electricity. He was remembered affectionately by rural inhabitants because of his identification with the poor which was manifested in his practice of arriving by foot to the remotest of communities to give Sunday Mass: an effort that not one local priest before or since has even attempted. Above all, *Padre* Gaspar was revered locally and nationally because he sacrificed his life for his adopted country. In 1976 he left Tola to join the guerilla for reasons he outlined in a letter written in 1978:

"My faith...forces me to take an active part in the revolutionary process with the FSLN, since the liberation of an oppressed people is an integral part of the full redemption of Christ."⁶

He became a *Comandante* of the Southern Front and was killed by the National Guard later that same year.

In the absence of other mass organisations during the insurrection (the ATC organised in Rivas but was not present in Tola until after the triumph) Gaspar had a politicising influence. Local residents, reflecting on the impact of his ministry, comment that, "Gaspar's people had been radicalised." Although there had not been widespread militant support for the FSLN during the civil war in the immediate locality, there had been a handful of collaborators. They provided support to the guerillas as they passed through Tola along the strategic "corridor" on which it lay between Rivas and the southern frontier.

During the Somozan years, Tola had the highest concentration of land of all the municipalities in Rivas. Out of a total of 407 producers, some 187 (representing 46% of the total producers) had less than 10 *manzanas* (mzs)⁷ and occupied only 0.78% of the total productive land area. By contrast, the 23 largest producers with over 500 mzs (representing 6% of producers) held 83% of the productive land (CIERA/ MIDINRA (1980b:67). The high level of land exploitation in the municipality eliminated the

possibility of expanding the area under production. Consequently, as elsewhere in Nicaragua, poor peasants were forced to sell their labour at harvest time to local landlords or worked seasonally on plantations. Here, they joined the landless who also migrated seasonally - some of them permanently - to the banana plantations in Liberia, Costa Rica, or to those areas within Nicaragua oriented to agroexport production such as Chinandega and Leon. The sugar refinery in Rivas (named Benjamin Zeledon after the insurrection) had provided a local source of employment until 1989 when the international price of sugar fell. Between 1979 and 1988, the Sandinista Agrarian Reform (SAR) distributed and formally legalised 13,914 *manzanas* in the municipality. Poor and landless peasants who had organised into cooperatives were the main beneficiaries, although ten individual producers had received titles. A further 1,000 *manzanas* were also distributed but these still lacked official titles in 1989 (FSLN Tola, 1988). Tola was no exception in that the Agrarian Reform dramatically altered its social structure and at the time of research the cooperative sector dominated all other sectors in terms of agricultural production and occupation of people.

In 1989 the economically active population⁸ of the municipality was approximately 8,000. Of these 1,700 were cooperative members; approximately 250 subsistence producers; 30 middle producers and 4 large scale producers. There were also 400 employees in the state owned enterprise Gaspar Garcia (dedicated to the rearing, development and fattening of cattle) and an equine project; approximately 600 salaried agricultural workers and a few hundred poor peasants. The only industrial activity in Tola was a salt project (commercialised regionally and in Costa Rica), formed by a group of six cooperatives. Other activities in the municipality included fishing, which involved three cooperatives⁹ and accounted for 35% of the regional fishing production. The cooperative sector also dominated agricultural production within the municipality. Within the cooperatives there were 3,600 head of cattle (compared with the 1,380 animals under individual ownership) and the sector produced marginally more sorghum, rice and corn than individual producers. There was a total of 36 cooperatives in Tola (including 32 CAS) which incorporated 621 members, including 21 women. Combined, their area covered 16,912 *manzanas* and included 13 tractors, two harvesters and two irrigation systems (one of which was in GP). The five lorries which belonged to the municipality were lent to UNAG affiliated producers (UNAG Tola, 1988; BND Tola, 1989).

The GP cooperative was located some four kilometres from the hot dusty town of Tola and was reached along a windy, dry and open road that passed the school and the silos of the ENABAS storage depot. The entrance of the track for the cooperative was at a dip in the road which once taken gave immediate and welcome relief from the scorching heat because it offered a fresh shade and a cool breeze was created by the woods. The track crossed a stream, whose bed in 1989 was still moist even in the dry season, indicating the density of the vegetation. Innocuous as the stream appeared in 1987, when Hurricane Juana devastated the Atlantic Coast region of the country, it had flooded vast areas and had destroyed several houses. The main river which passed along the outskirts of Tola had risen 30 feet and had killed five residents, including two children of one of the cooperative's members.

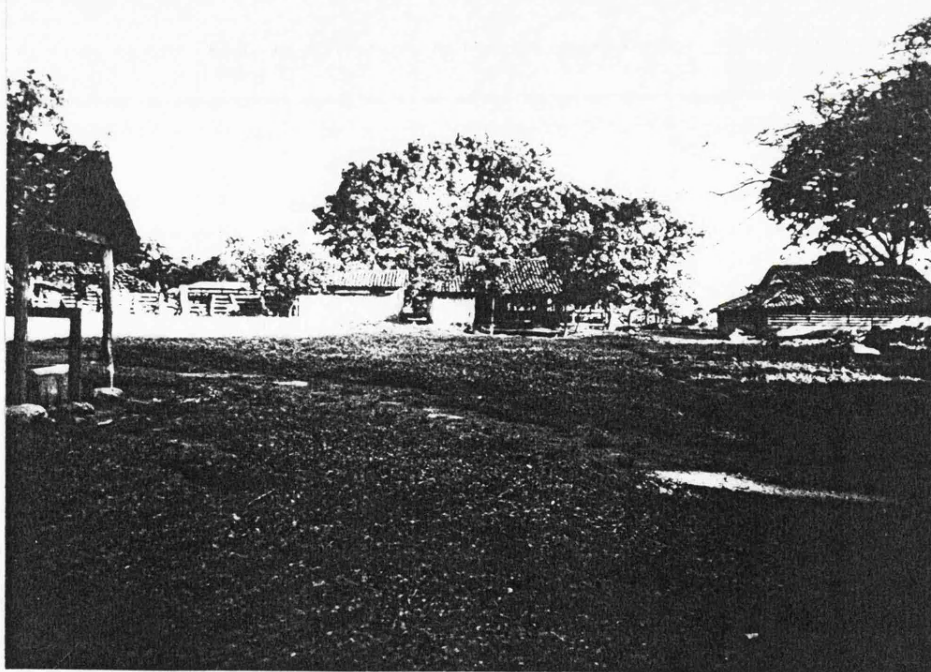


Figure 2: Cooperative buildings in clearing

After the river the track opened up to the beginning of the cooperative's cultivatable land: an extensive field filled with sorghum, beans or cows, depending on the season. The first house encountered was simple and evidently in the process of construction. This

belonged to Santos Nicoya, who was the cooperative's current president. His former house had been destroyed in the hurricane and he now lived on higher ground. Two years later the house was completed and looked a model humble house, complete with shutters at the spaces called windows. Santos' wife was always in the vicinity of the house, fulfilling the labour intensive domestic duties which befall Nicaraguan women. In her case this involved caring for their three children; cooking, cleaning dishes, washing clothes in the stream which ran behind the house and attending the pig and chickens and crops in the small surrounding plot, which included maize and vegetables. As with other wives of the members, Maria was rarely seen in the cooperative buildings and she knew little about how it operated.

Further up, the track passed through a tunnel of trees and then opened into a clearing which contained the buildings of the cooperative (see Figure 2). This had also been expropriated from the previous owners. Here, was the main house: a square, single-

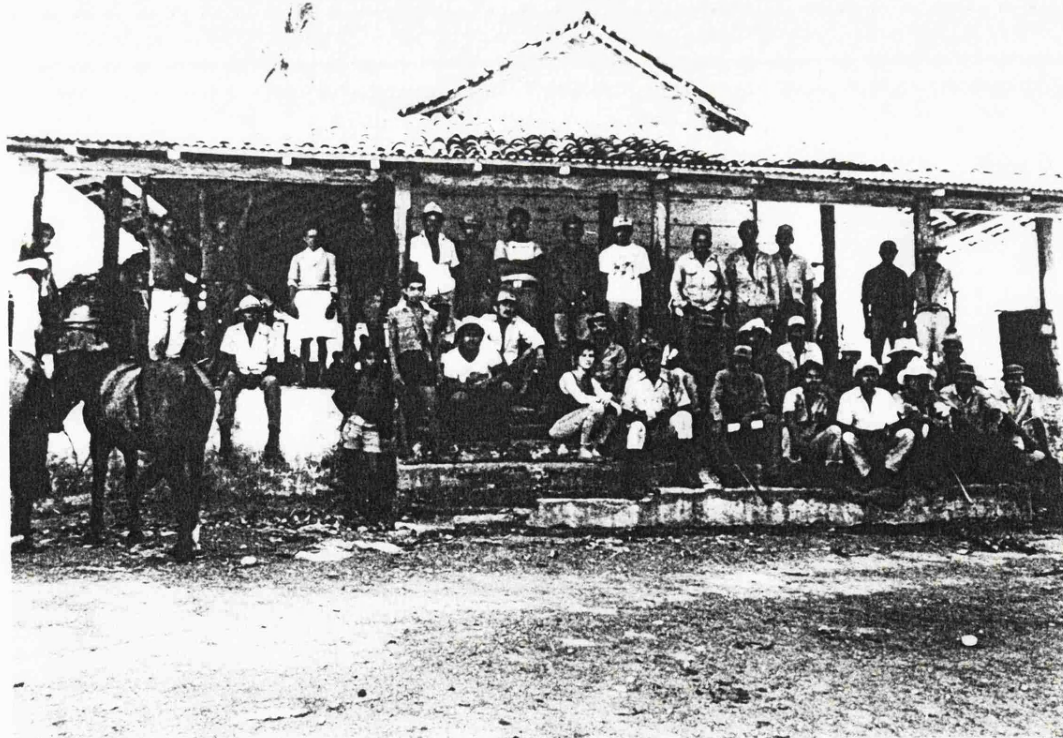


Figure 3: Original *hacienda*, GP

storey wooden building with a pyramidal roof which overhung to provide shade for the

palisade-less veranda. This is where meetings took place (see Figure 3). At the front, wide stairs spanned the width of the building and were used by members to sit on and talk in the cooler afternoons. Members reached the *hacienda* by striding onto the veranda at the side of the building where it was only a couple of feet high from the ground and was nearer to where they tied their horses. The house had deteriorated but still served perfectly and its three rooms provided a water-tight storeroom for grain, an office and a home for the family of one of the members. The kitchen, a concrete square enclosed by wooden slats and lined with bench seats, was set aside from the main *hacienda*, connected by a roof. Inside, the fire was enclosed by bricks which formed the cooking area. In a corner an enormous gourd stood. This stored clean drinking water which was consumed throughout the day by thirsty *socios* (members) as they came and went.

Amongst the other buildings grouped in the clearing there was a low lying open outhouse which housed another family, that of Santos' brother, but which was also used to store dry grain. Another structure, a long supported zinc roof, protected the tractors from the elements and the barn behind the *hacienda* was used to store other large equipment. In the middle of the clearing there was a tall wind pump which provided resident families with water: after being drawn, water was sloshed into the accompanying trough. To the right of the *hacienda* were two large corrals alongside which ran a parallel fence, creating a narrow corridor leading to the cow dip. This was a deep concrete trough where animals were de-ticked twice annually.

Although the cooperative was located on the Pacific Range, the land was flat between the *hacienda* buildings and the neighbouring communities of San Jose de la Montana and Panama (see Figure 4). However, the land rose approximately 150 metres in the direction of the Los Sanchez communities - the collective name given for Sanchez I and Sanchez II - which bordered the cooperative at its western border. To the north of GP lay another cooperative, the Comandante Ezquiél. The other perimeter was delineated by streams which were overhung by trees but became increasingly parched during subsequent seasons as a consequence of effects deforestation (see Figure 5). The population of each these surrounding communities was less than that of Sanchez II which had 742 residents (FSLN Tola, 1988).



Figure 4: View from cooperative, GP

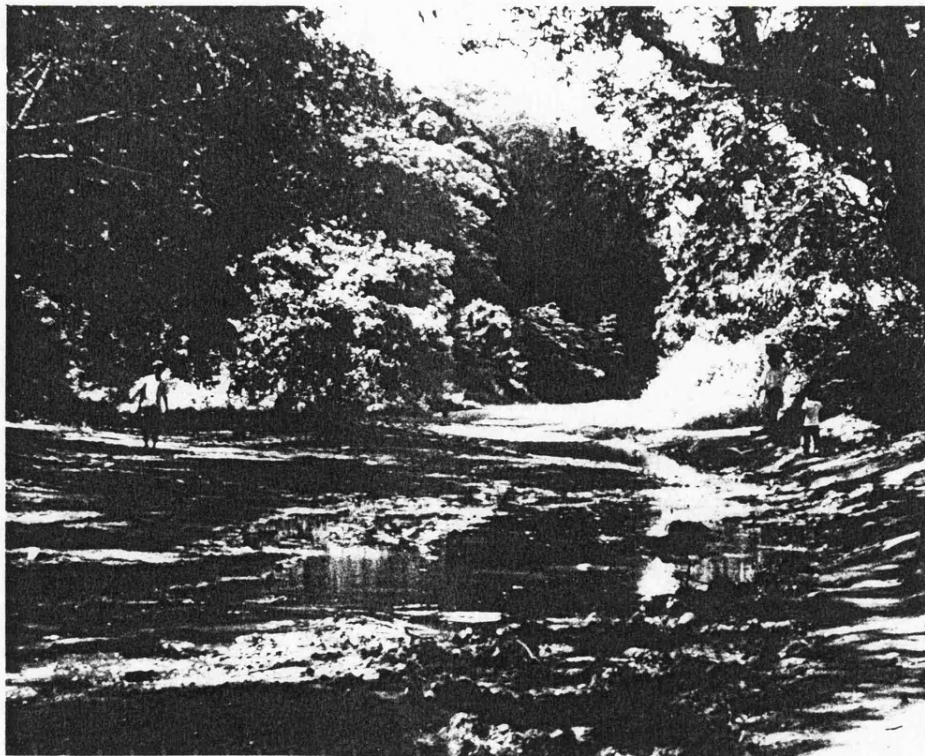


Figure 5: Sanchez, stream with children playing

I2 The creation of German Pomares

The original *finca* or farm on which GP was created was known as "Cuacuajoche". In 1989 it was believed that its area was 2,539 *manzanas*¹⁰ although this was not correct since its boundaries had been subject to confusion and dispute since the last century. Corresponding to the fluctuations in national Conservative and Liberal power, local landlords had either annexed adjacent lands of their political rivals to their own or yielded it to others¹¹.

At the time of research, official MIDINRA records indicated that "Cuacuajoche" had been divided for use in the following way: GP was designated a total of 876 *manzanas*¹² for which a Land Reform Title was issued in July 1983; the communities of Sanchez I and II were designated the use of 600 *manzanas* (not titled) and the neighbouring cooperative, the Comandante Ezquiél, was titled with 250 *manzanas*. Contrary to this official allocation, the leaders of GP and local officials alike, including the BND, quoted the cooperative's area as being 1,834 mzs (BND Tola, 1989). This included the area which had been assigned for use by the Los Sanchez community creating a situation where the cooperative assumed exclusive rights of access to an area beyond that which it had been originally assigned. Whether this was a genuine error on the part of the cooperative and revolutionary authorities remains unsubstantiated but the community was never clear about the legality of this. It was not until 1991 that the community contended the legal basis of the cooperative's right to the land they had been assigned.

The estate formerly belonged to a very rich landowner, Adolfo Pastora Molina¹³ (an absentee landlord) and was managed by an administrator. It had produced banana and cattle and seasonally employed poor *campesino* men from the adjacent communities, who constituted a fixed workforce, selling their wage labour to the *hacendado* while seasonally renting land from him. After the triumph of the revolution the Rural Workers Association (ATC) visited the communities surrounding the *finca* in order to organise residents to take the land. The receptiveness of residents to the organisation's radical message is attributed locally to the preparatory work of the Christian base communities, Delegates of the Word and Padre Gaspar. The ATC initially organised fifty nine men to take the land. However, as founders explain, some proved "shy about taking the owner's land" in the face of this radical action against the *patron*. Clearly not all local residents had the same level of consciousness or were equally prepared to struggle for access to land.

In the event only twenty seven men, all ex-workers of Pastora, organised into five discrete groups from the different adjacent communities to occupy the land. They started to produce basic grains for family consumption. Initially the land occupation was not confrontational: on the contrary, during the first season of the occupying peasants wrote to Pastora to state their intention:

"..not to jeopardise the productivity of the land, only to work it."

They even paid Pastora the corresponding rent. They also requested permission from him in order to be able to sow on more than the small amount of land they had initially occupied. At this point a legal battle began after which Pastora's attempts to evict the nucleus of *campesinos* failed because, in the words of members:

"the tide of history was against him and the revolution was in power."

This element of struggle entailed in the cooperative's creation was a major factor which influenced members' identification with the land, as we shall see later. The *campesinos* direct struggle against the landlord also gave it its character as an internally derived initiative and expression of their struggle.

Before continuing with the chronological documentation of the establishment of the cooperative it is worth noting that embodied within the references of members to the reluctance of neighbours to renounce loyalty to Pastora in order to occupy the land, their struggle for the land and the confrontation between the founders and the owner, was an awareness of the opposition between peasant and landlord. These were the experiences from which a relational class-based discourse of themselves as *campesino* (Smith, 1987) emerged. The recounting of this history by cooperative members - either as a group or individual - indicated that members had reconstructed their past with an emphasis on their collective history and with an acute awareness of the class antagonism between themselves and their former landlords. Although it has been noted elsewhere, that this was a new historical phenomenon in the Nicaragua and was observed elsewhere in the countryside (Houtart and Lemercinier, 1992), it is wrong to think that the peasants were unaware of their suppression beforehand. What perhaps changed is that they were able to articulate it in these explicit terms. Years later, this tension remained between some of the cooperative members and other local producers for whom the *socios* had previously worked. During the research period there was an outright brawl in town in day between one member Pedro and his ex-employee: interestingly, both were FSLN militants. It is

relevant to our inquiry because when individuals start to understand their collective history, the process of delegitimation of the old system begins, at which point individuals begin to become aware of their subordinated condition. This brings us to the important point, as emphasised by Freire (1972), whereby peasants can overcome the psychological constraints which inhibit their political action.

Returning now to the cooperative's emergence, in 1981 the entire estate was confiscated (the first in the IVth Region) under Decree 329 and Pastora left for Costa Rica. Given the shift in state policy towards the distribution of land, the local MIDINRA made plans to distribute the land in order to benefit the poor and landless residents in the vicinity of the estate. It granted usufruct to the five incipient cooperatives which corresponded to the communities surrounding the *finca*, each of which was named after local heroes who had been killed in the insurrection. The newly emergent UNAG then began the process of uniting the five groups into one cooperative in order to accommodate a greater number of peasants given the maldistribution of quality lands within the *finca*. Unification was strongly opposed at the time by the groups. Although informants attributed this euphemistically to the "different ideology and sets of leadership" which distinguished each unit, the history of the respective communities suggests that their resistance was related to the longstanding family feuds which in the past had even been resolved with the use of machetes and guns. Evidence of these conflicts within the communities concerning intra-family feuds, arguments with neighbours and intra-community suspicion are reminiscent of those observed by Lewis (1966) in Mexico and clearly contradicts the view of harmonious community life. It also provides the historical context from which to appreciate subsequent cooperative/ community animosity.

The united cooperative then adopted the name of German Pomares, nicknamed "*El Dante*", who was a prominent FSLN guerilla and national hero who fell in battle against the National Guard in June 1979 in Jinotega. This was important in establishing a new identity for the cooperative which attached it to the national struggle.

An integral part of the official procedure for creating the cooperative was the establishment of its terms of reference and regulations for productive, economic and social organisation. These were drawn up by the cooperative's first leadership group, alongside officers from the UNAG and MIDINRA. In essence, these regulations were based on principles established in the Cooperative Law but were subsequently approved by the

assembly and were modified over time in response to specific social and organisational problems which arose. The regulations committed the cooperative to the principles of open membership for men and women, democratic control by its members, relative equality of share capital and a return to *socios* proportionate to work done. The minimum age was seventeen years, except where individuals already had dependents. If younger than twenty five the men had first to complete their Patriotic Military Service and otherwise be available for reserve army duties when called up (except for those over forty): a factor which proved a major deterrent to those considering joining. These regulations embodied the internationally recognised "irreducible characteristics of cooperatives", enshrining the principles of equality and democratic rights between members. Each potential member had to read and agree to these before they were granted full membership.

Founders recounted the difficulties associated with the initial years which involved sustained and strenuous work. This coincided with the 1980-83 period which was characterised by the lack of state patronage and meant that they faced extreme hardship. Yet, this served to cohere members by forcing them to overcome obstacles collectively and, motivated by the opportunity to create a new productive project, they worked long and hard¹⁴. Founders and subsequent members were required to attend courses on cooperative organisation provided by MIDINRA. In the words of the members themselves, this training complemented their practical experience and constituted an important process whereby:

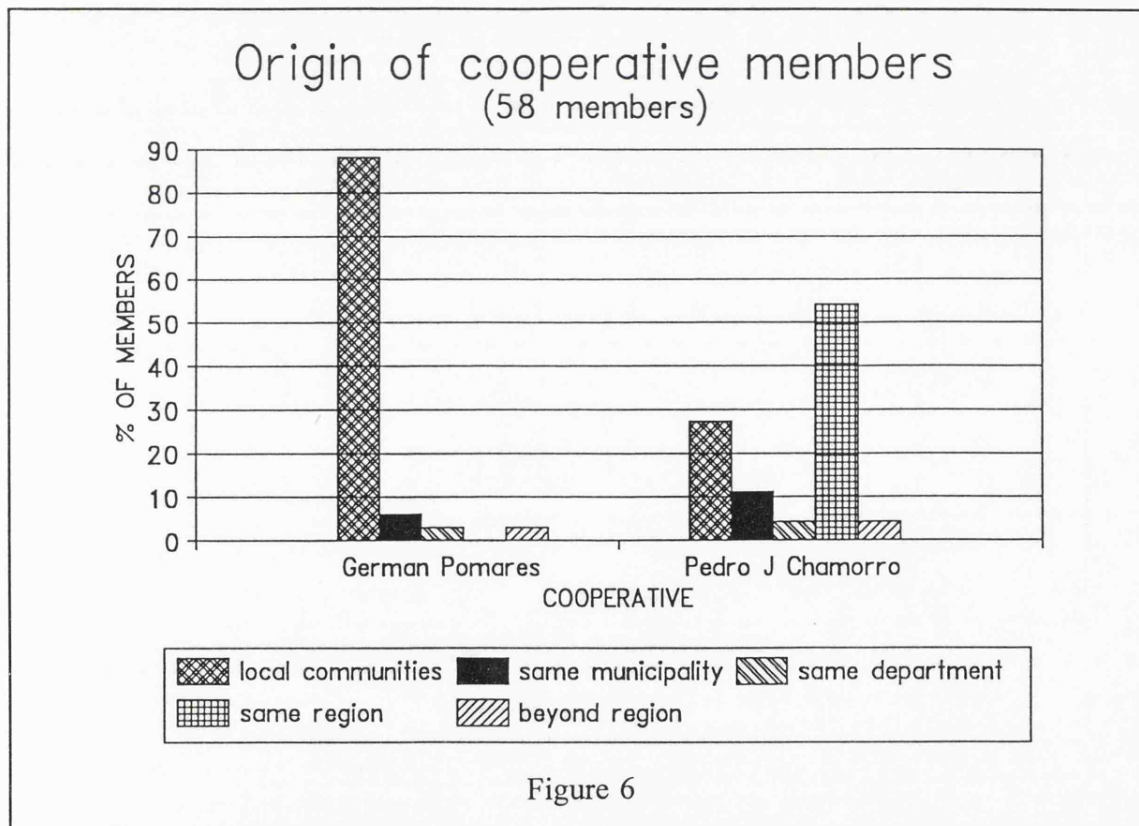
"..we had to unlearn being salaried workers and learn how to be members of a collective."

New members were admitted after submitting a letter requesting to join, together with a recommendation from UNAG and one existing member and following approval by the cooperative's assembly, to which all members attended. Within the first few years membership of GP rose to 84, although by 1989 it had a membership of 69, including two women.

During the initial years there had been as many as ten women members or *socias*¹⁵. Several *socios* simply accounted for this by stating that women "didn't like collective work", however, the fact remained that women's incorporation into extra-domestic productive activities of the cooperative meant an obligation of a double working day:

factors which effectively inhibited women from accepting full-time productive work. Moreover, the observation of one man that "men don't like women to work" was reinforced by a woman ex-member who explained that they had been forced to leave because of intimidation, fights and sexual jealousies which had erupted between respective partners. Despite the formal and legal frameworks to facilitate the incorporation of women, ideological factors remained a serious impediment to rural women's incorporation.

The cooperative was characterised by a high degree of familial relatedness, mirroring the interconnected family structures of the small surrounding communities. Amongst its membership were fathers and sons and in one case a daughter, as well as brothers, cousins and uncles. The presence of family networks within the cooperative constituted one of the bases of social cohesion amongst members.



The cooperative's membership was stable: in 1989 there were a core of 46% members who were original founders and the average length of integration was six years five months. Most members originated from the immediate locality although over the years others from beyond Tola had subsequently joined the cooperative. This is illustrated in

Figure 6 which shows the geographical origins of the members.

Reflecting their solidarity, members used not only the revolutionary terminology of *compañero* and *compañera* (companion or comrade) when talking with each other but also kinship terms amongst themselves independently of whether they were related or not. While it is consistent with rural culture for *campesinos* to refer to each other as *cuñado* (brother-in-law) and *tio* (uncle) as they did in the cooperative, members also used other kinship terms including *hermano* (brother). They also appropriated the terms *compadre* (co-father) meaning godfather, as a term of endearment even where the formal relationship did not exist. In some cases friendships between members were reinforced with the system of *compadrazgo* (godfatherhood) whereby members selected their *compadres* from amongst other members. Reflecting on this tendency Wilfredo noted:

"Now you generally select a best friend, someone on whom who can rely, whereas before it was someone who had money."

In the context of such poverty the obligations of a godfather could only be fulfilled by the intermittent gift of food following an abundant harvest. Such an application of *compadrazgo* represents a dramatic departure from the previous custom of selecting *compadres* from amongst the privileged classes with the clear objective of securing material benefit for the offspring¹⁶.

All members identified themselves as *campesino*. Of the thirty two interviewed, the majority (twenty three), were poor peasants who had rented land and worked seasonally either for Pastora, other local landlords or the local sugar refinery. Only two of these reported that they had access to a small plot of family land, the others rented. A further four previously worked by assisting their parents on their own plots, including one of the women; four worked as agricultural workers, including the other woman, who had worked as a seasonal wage worker; one members had been an industrial worker from Managua before joining although he too had previously worked as an agricultural labourer; finally, one had worked as a teacher.

13 Community Foes

With the creation of GP, local peasants who had worked on the *hacienda* and who did not join the cooperative lost their source of temporary employment and access to land. They also lost access to the extraction or use of other resources from the *finca* such as plantains

and wood and grazing, practices which the *patron* overlooked by way of ensuring the reproduction of his workforce. With establishment of the cooperative, unless permission was sought, local residents were denied access to wood for domestic fires or land for grazing their animals. As we shall see later in this chapter, joining the cooperative which many in the communities had done at some time, was not a solution which suited them all.

During the initial years of the cooperative's formation it was constantly being invaded by other local peasants who took the FSLN's insurrection motto of "Land to those who work it" in good faith. Amongst the members themselves there was a clear recognition of:

"..the genuine demand for land in the community and that it is the cause of social and political tension.." ¹⁷

One member, Adan, recounted the dilemma they faced:

"We were afraid to tell them to go because there was little land available to work." ¹⁸

The contradiction of having to evict poor and landless neighbours who pleaded "that they had nowhere to sow", was painfully obvious to them. Recourse to the authorities provided an immediate solution whereby MIDINRA and the police came to evict them and a medium term response was also sought. According to Adan this comprised of:

"..doing political work with the community to prevent the emerging conflict. This meant explaining that the land had been assigned to the cooperative for the purposes of a large scale project of national importance and benefit." ¹⁹

This experience of concerted organisational action, necessary in order for them to secure their access to the land and prevent land invasions, was perhaps another factor reinforcing mutual solidarity between members. Yet, within the cooperative there were differences in opinion about how to resolve the problem. Some, including Adan, were:

"..always in favour of giving the land to those who would work it and where there was genuine need."

Others, such as Santos the current president, were reluctant to relinquish control of the land. Finally, a compromise solution was found in granting local residents from the surrounding communities seasonal access to land. By 1989, some 400 *manzanas* of pasture were "loaned" to individuals in the community. In exchange beneficiaries were requested to clear 300 yards of ditch: the equivalent of one full day's work and the failure to do so jeopardised their possibility to renew "permission". The loan restricted sowing

to the wet season because the land was required for grazing in the dry season and meant that these peasants were unable to grow plantains or graze animals throughout the year.

There was one exception to this policy. Jose Dolores and his mother, Doña Maria Rivera, had been granted in 1987 a five year loan of a plot of cooperative land because, in the words of Santos:

"Jose Dolores has always behaved well and so we make a special case for him".

This would suggest that the cooperative was rewarding those local residents who remained friendly to it. By implication this declaration reflects a practice which was criticised by a long-serving regional MIDINRA official who stated that the "cooperative had become a political instrument"²⁰, granting land for the purposes of political leverage.

Yet, the cooperative permitted villages access to the land in other ways. It had agreed to allow forty villagers to build houses on the periphery land of the cooperative and villagers were allowed to collect dead firewood on condition that they sought prior permission. Although local residents, particularly from Los Sanchez, demanded land from the cooperative the legal basis of the cooperative's use of the land was not contested until 1991 when INRA²¹ intervened to resolve once and for all the conflict between the community and the cooperative concerning access to land²².

At the beginning of the election campaign the issue of land exploded as a cause of local conflict. Even Adan who was no stranger to the community's animosity to the cooperative was surprised at the level of discontent he encountered during the election campaign:

"..some just don't see what the government has done for them and speak as if it's against them".

Initially, grievances were expressed in complaints and acts of non-compliance: those sowing on a plot of the cooperative's land increasingly complained that "they make us work" or "pay" for the use of the land. They nostalgically referred to the days when Pastora was landlord and they were given "access to good land". Some refused to clear the ditches, wouldn't repay the seed loaned to them by the cooperative and put their animals to graze on the cooperative's crops. The land increasingly became the issue which ignited local drunken brawls.

The socioeconomic development of the cooperative with its privileged access to state resources was resented amongst the landless, poor and medium peasants who increasingly

accused the *cooperativistas* of being "land thieves". Although it has been well documented how CAS cooperatives in the war zones became identified as enemies and prime targets of the counter-revolution precisely because of their association with the revolutionary authorities (CIERA, 1985), so it seems that cooperatives had become objects of grievances elsewhere in the country particularly where land hunger had not been satisfied. Some "favoured" local residents attributed this animosity between the members and non-members to jealousies since they themselves were victim of petty theft of produce from their own plots. However, the strategy of theft amongst the poor is also rooted in material need.

Although the success of the politico-ideological work and influence of the FSLN and the mass organisations in the municipality was manifest in a local victory for the party in the first national elections in 1984, the town of Nancimi eight kilometres from Tola remained a bastion of political opposition to *Sandinismo*. It was won by the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) as a reflection of the political affiliation of the *latifundistas* who had remained after 1979. The FSLN gained second place and the National Christian Democratic Party (PCDN) gained third place (FSLN Tola, 1988). The telephone operator in Tola confirmed that since the overthrow of Somoza these landlords maintained frequent contact with those abroad including Pastora, whose extensive lands had been confiscated. Consistent with the national coalition these local parties had affiliated within the UNO for the 1990 electoral contest. Locally they unleashed a strong propaganda campaign to elicit support from - amongst other social sectors - the poor peasants who remained land hungry and other subsistence producers who were dissatisfied that the state and CAS cooperative sectors were prioritised to their detriment²³. The conflict between GP and the poor peasants in the cooperative's vicinity provided a fertile recruiting ground for the UNO during its election campaign and through local campaigning, it was able to harness local sentiment for its own political objectives: economic grievances became translated into political opposition. The most fervent UNO activist in Los Sanchez was Nicholas Espinoza (the cousin of Wilfredo and Gilberto Espinoza) who rallied support for the UNO alliance on the anti-cooperative card. On one occasion Nicholas goaded Gilberto, who subsequently hit him and as a result was imprisoned for two weeks. Afterwards, reflecting on the political contradictions created by the cooperative, Wilfredo Espinoza, noted that:

"As a political project the cooperative failed, although we did manage to

resolve the problem of land for a few."²⁴

For some cooperative members the contradictions created deep divisions within their families. For José, a cooperative member who lived with his extended family and his brothers who were all agricultural labourers, the tension became intolerable. Since the cooperative was sympathetic to the personal suffering of members who had to endure the cooperative/ community contradictions in the daily experience of family life - and that no quarrel is as bitter as a family quarrel - it agreed to assist José build a home. Similarly, two brothers Wilfredo and Gilberto were at loggerheads with another brother, who was an original founder of the cooperative but had voluntarily left and was active in the anti-cooperative campaign led by their cousin: the aforementioned Nicholas. Evidently, cooperative membership forced a hard choice for members faced with a split of loyalty between their extended family or the cooperative. This contradiction was also the basis for other notions of collective identity, forged amongst the members and in opposition to the community. In such a way members referred to themselves as *cooperados* or, in a more politically charged self-reference, as *organizados* (organised).

Animosity between the cooperative and community was not ameliorated until INRA intervened and an agreement was made to cede land to the community. Although Sanchez II was marginally won by the Sandinistas, the other communities were won by the UNO and overall within the municipality residences registered their disaffection with the Sandinistas: Tola elected an UNO municipal council. By the end of 1990 tensions were acute and the cooperative came under military threat from 200 armed Contra arrived in Tola to forcibly evict the *cooperativistas*. This period was characterised by members as a time of fear, when they were afraid to leave their houses in case of attack from other villagers. The evident strength of the cooperative's own military capability was perhaps a successful deterrent to the cooperative actually being attacked, although ultimately tensions only abated once the UNO Government announced that the Sandinista Agrarian Reform would be respected²⁵.

Despite these antagonistic contradictions, through its efforts and concrete practices in forging links with the poor and subsistence members of their communities, the cooperative also contributed to resolving some of its needs and operated as an important agent of local development and welfare. For instance, GP contributed to the municipality's pre-school milk programme by donating liquid milk to be distributed with

the powdered milk. It used its lorry and loaned members' horses to transport nurses to vaccinate children in the remotest communities. The cooperative also gave funds, donated material and contributed the workforce for the construction of water pumps, schools and a community centre. It also sold cheaply or donated agricultural produce to villagers when they faced particularly hard times and at the time of research a recently widowed woman was assured a regular supply of plantains. The cooperative also acted on behalf of UNAG in a seed scheme directed at providing grain for poor producers who would return the equivalent amount following their harvest. These initiatives were not state imposed policies but represent the cooperative's own efforts to help their local communities. Whereas a Machiavellian interpretation might suggest that the interest to assist was motivated by a concern to ameliorate tensions, most members were personally committed to assist their communities.

Cooperative assistance to the communities was directed through the Community Committees (CC). These were rural, predominantly Sandinista mass organisations, coordinated by UNAG and linked to the municipal government and had the responsibility to implement local projects, arbitrate in local conflicts and channel local demands. Half the interviewees of GP had been involved in the activities of the CCs, either by occasionally "helping out" in construction or, as in the case of four interviewees who also held leadership roles within the cooperative, were their elected coordinators. One of them, Wilfredo, expressed his interest in the CC:

"I do all these things in the community because I want to, because my family lives there too, although in my mind there is always a political objective, that is, to show the people that the FSLN is a good force."

The GP dominated the leadership of adjacent CCs and brought to them their organisational and political skills as well as some of the resources available to them.

The cooperative was also a significant actor in the organisation of local cultural events. In particular, it supported patron saint festivals by donating money, material and sometimes contributed animals for the feasts. Once during the research period it even hosted a *Fiesta de Toros* (a traditional bull festival), to which an estimated 1,500 residents from the municipality came and were provided by this and other cooperatives (who had contributed) with food and fruit squash. Cooperative members also integrated into the social, cultural and religious activities of the community. Several members played in the community's baseball team and one was the guitarist in a popular band which played at

all local political and cultural events. Another man, Auscension, who was a veteran Delegate of the Word and had worked alongside Padre Gaspar, still spent his Sunday afternoons walking the communities to talk about Christianity and its potential as a liberating force for the *campesinos*. The cooperative's high local profile was also asserted through the integration of some of its members into the rural police force whose mandate was to maintain public order, intercept in private grievances, report thefts of property and illegal activities such as felling of live trees. Of those interviewed 12, including the older members and those unfit for defence duties, were active volunteers in this force.

II Cooperative Pedro Joaquin

III Location

The cooperative Pedro Joaquin Chamorro (PJCh) was located in the municipality of San Marcos, one of the eight municipalities comprising the Department of Carazo which lies between Rivas and Managua and the Pacific Ocean to the west and the department of Masaya to the north east. It measured 1,032 kilometres square, representing 2.0% of the national land area (CIERA/ MIDINRA, 1980a). The municipality of San Marcos covered 113 square kilometres and had a total of 35,000 inhabitants, 18,565 of whom lived in the urban area concentrated around San Marcos the town and 16,435 distributed throughout 28 rural communities. The town of San Marcos lies 45 km south of Managua and is one of the hill towns of the region known as La Meseta (FSLN San Marcos, 1986).

San Marcos lies between 320 metres and 850 metres above sea level and receives approximately 1,500 mm rainfall. Temperatures oscillate between 18C during the wet period and 37C during the hot dry period, with an average of 24C. It is cooler and fresher than Rivas. It has fertile soils and at the time of research agriculture occupied 48% of its total land surface. The climate renders it particularly suitable for coffee, the principle agricultural product in the municipality which also had the highest coffee production in Region IV. Basic grains were also produced. Citrus fruits and cabbages were cultivated in the areas of the municipality affected by the gases from the volcano Santiago (in the neighbouring department of Masaya) which produce favourable acidic soils. Agriculture, hunting and fishing were the principle economic activities (CIERA/ MIDINRA, 1980a; FSLN San Marcos, 1992).

In 1979 land distribution in Carazo was classified as "medium concentration" with 62.9% of its producers working plots of under 10 *manzanas* and occupying only 5.8% of the land; 21.7% of producers worked on plots between 10-50 *manzanas* and occupied 16.1% of the land; 14% of producers worked between 50-500 *manzanas* which occupied 62.6% of the land and finally 0.7% of producers worked on more than 500 *manzanas* and occupied 15.5% of the land. Those with less than 10 *manzanas* also worked as agricultural labourers, employed in the seasonal work of coffee picking. San Marcos was the birth place of Anastacio Somoza Garcia, whose family on the eve of the revolution owned some 2,000 *manzanas* in the municipality alone. It was also where the ATC had been active after 1978 organising the mass of poor salaried coffee workers and in neighbouring Diriamba it had also organised the historic "*Marcha de Hambre*" (Hunger March) in the same year. During the insurrection, Civilian Defense Committees (CDC) had been created in La Concepcion and San Marcos²⁶.

The beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform in the Meseta were predominantly from the neighbouring department of Masaya and 30% originated from the municipality of La Concepcion alone, which lies on the Masaya border and is adjacent to San Marcos. Before the revolution Masaya had an even lower average area of exploitation than Carazo: 85% of its producers had less than ten *manzanas* and occupied only 27% of the total land exploited. This a high number of small producers gave Masaya one of the lowest average areas of production in the country. This was ten *manzanas*, compared with the national average of sixty six *manzanas* but in fact these plots were rendered unsustainable because the pervasive volcanic gases reduced soil fertility.

Before the revolution illiteracy in Masaya was higher than the national average at 47% (65% rural and 35% urban) and compared unfavourably with the situation in Carazo which at the time had one of the lowest illiteracy rates of 41% (65% rural and 25% urban) although in both areas rural literacy was equally low. Since the revolution the creation of schools provided an estimated 95% coverage throughout the municipality had reduced illiteracy according to national trends (MED San Marcos, 1990). The institutional state presence in San Marcos included the Nicaraguan Institute of Water and Aqueducts (INAA), Nicaraguan Energy Institute (INE), Ministry of Health (MINSa), Ministry of Education (MED), Ministry of Work (MITRAB), BND, TELCOR, MIDINRA, ENCAFE, a Centre for Nursery Development (CDI) and the National Police. It had one health

centre in the town and three health posts, five doctors and twelve nurses.

The cooperative PJCh had two sites, including the *fincas* which were originally called Santa Maxima and San Jorge. These names had been retained in order to distinguish between the two areas. Santa Maxima was the main and largest site in the *comarca* of La Chona and was located on the extreme edge of the municipality some twelve kilometres from the town of San Marcos and near the border of the Department of Managua. San Jorge was situated five kilometres away, closer to the town of San Marcos.

Santa Maxima was located on the slopes of a massive escarpment which faced west, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The coast was visible from the cooperative thirty kilometres away. It was three kilometres from the main PanAmerican Highway in the *comarca* of La Chona, which had a population of 372. The cooperative shared its borders with small producers and two other cooperatives. The cooperative was reached by turning off the main road on to a narrow sandy, dirt track. After a hundred yards the track passed a humble brick and wooden house which was the home of the family of the oldest member of the cooperative. This house currently belonged to the municipality and had been donated during the Sandinista Government for use of the cooperative²⁷. The track then descended, passing through a sparsely forested area (see Figure 7). Following heavy rainfall, the track became a slippery slope and the runoff created gullies, rendering transit difficult and presenting a serious transportation problem for the cooperative. The route could be dangerous from another point of view: a year before one of the women had been raped there during daylight hours. Since then women avoided walking the path alone.

Further down, the track passed through a sturdy wooden gate, marking the entrance to the cooperative. Here was the original warden's house and although now inhabited by two other founding members and their families, it maintained its strategic importance in controlling access to the cooperative. The house was made of stone and concrete with rough solid wooden doors and window shutters. The occupants included Juan aged 65 and his wife Marlena aged 36 and who also a member. They lived with their four young children as well as with Don Juan's eldest son by a previous union. This was Lorenzo, the cooperative's president who lived with Maritza, his newly acquired partner who had come as a teacher to the cooperative the previous year and had recently had his baby.



Figure 7: Descending towards PJCh

From then on the track was lined with yucca plants, through which the coffee plantations could be seen falling away at either side from the path and extending into the dense vegetation. Enormous trees and intermittent plantains created a fresh and dark shade. The main and former *hacienda* building was still further down the track: a simple, modest building now in disrepair (Figure 8). The house was occupied by two other founding members: a couple, Rosa and Jeronimo and their offspring. Two of Rosa's daughters from a previous union had coupled with the other adult sons of Juan and they lived in separate rooms of the house each with their own young families. One of her daughters Karla, was also a member as were Doña Rosa's two sons. The house also served as a storeroom for sacks of coffee and basic grains and one small room was used as an office.

To the back of the *hacienda* was the cooperative's underground water tank which was visited frequently throughout the day by women and children who came to draw water through the small square hole in the enclosing slab. The original water pump used by the previous owners lay in disrepair in the storeroom. The tank would be refilled weekly with fresh water transported in a portable tank by tractor from the town of

Diriamba, ten kilometres away. After the change of government, when credit was restricted and transport costs became prohibitive, residents had to resort to drinking filthy water²⁸. Also behind the house there were well maintained wooden latrines and even a cubicle which served as a bathroom. Such facilities rendered the house the best place on the cooperative in which to live. That these families lived on higher ground than others in Santa Maxima, led them to be referred to collectively as "*ellos encima*" (those up above), a term which - as we shall see later - was symbolic of the control they had previously exercised over the cooperative.

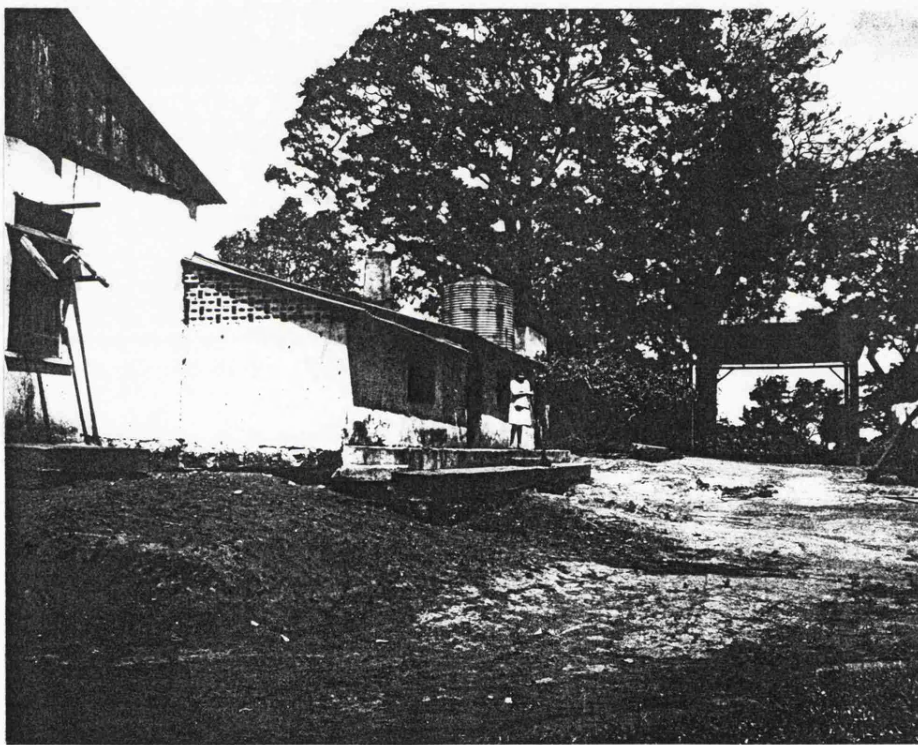


Figure 8: Original *hacienda*, PJCh

In front of the *hacienda* a couple of old trees created a delightful shade and the presence of the trailer frequently left there made it an ideal place to meet, chat and for the children to play. It was also where the cooperative congregated before and following the day's work. Opposite and visible through the mango tress outstretched two large flat patios, enclosed by a foot-high wall. Here, newly picked coffee was spread to dry during the harvest when it became the object of night vigilance to prevent theft of the precious

beans. Below the *hacienda*, where the land flattened out for a few hundred metres was the so-called "encampment". It was a twenty-year old construction which offered the most primitive of housing, consisting of three low, wooden blocks roofed with zinc and divided into tiny individual units which backed onto each other (see Figure 9).



Figure 9: Fidelia and daughters in cooperative encampment

Inside there was room only for the double platform frame which served as beds for the resident families. Just over half the cooperative membership lived in the encampment here with their families.

A long thin wooden structure with a zinc roof alongside two sides of the encampment provided each woman with an individual cooking area. These were later abandoned because the women who cooked here at night were vulnerable to attack by drunken male colleagues. The latrines were located behind and consisted of a series of concrete seats set on concrete slates. The dilapidated remains of wooden doors hung uselessly. Nearby were two vast deep concrete water collectors, which resembled swimming pools, open to collect rainwater (see Figure 10). The water was reached using buckets attached to ropes

which were dropped down the fifteen feet into the murky green liquid.



Figure 10: Pedro and Miguel against watercollectors

Those resident in the Santa Maxima *finca* shared not only a common workplace but also lived in proximity, factors which reinforced mutual solidarity. Not all members lived on Santa Maxima and walked daily to cooperative from their houses. Every other weekend half of those who were resident on Santa Maxima took turns to visit the places of their origin. For security reasons half were required to remain to ensure that the *hacienda* and its equipment were not left unattended.

The other *finca*, San Jorge, was situated near the PanAmerican Highway (about 150 metres for the road), in the *comarca* of Marvin Corrales. Immediately after leaving the main road there were three small solid concrete houses belonging to the cooperative and which were home to the families of four other cooperative members. A few other cooperative members lived elsewhere within Marvin Corrales. On San Jorge the land was flat and the coffee bushes, in neat pristine rows, lay in the sparse shadow of short trees. Those members who lived on or near San Jorge were saved the journey to Santa Maxima on the two days a week that the cooperative worked on the San Jorge site. On the other days they were collected by the lorry and trailer or occasionally had to make their way

on foot to Santa Maxima: a journey that took more than an hour and a half.

II2 The creation of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro Cooperative

In 1981 Santa Maxima was expropriated by the Decree 329 of the Agrarian Reform Law because its owner, Elba Gonzalez, had failed to invest in the land, workforce and infrastructure. It produced coffee and employed a permanent workforce of thirty men who lived in the encampment and a seasonal workforce of several hundred during the harvest. At first the *finca* was administered by MIDINRA while the original employees continued as salaried workers. During the same year a group of thirty agricultural labourers arrived from La Concepcion (just over the departmental border in Masaya), who had been organised by the ATC and had agreed to leave their family homes in pursuit of access to land offered them by the Agrarian Reform. This history gives the cooperative its character as an external initiative. Unlike GP, this cooperative was created to benefit poor and landless peasants from areas beyond the immediate vicinity of the *hacienda*. On arrival to Santa Maxima they were organised by UNAG into a CAS, which was named after the national figure and Conservative opponent to Somoza who had lived in Carazo and was assassinated by the National Guards in 1978²⁹. The notion of collective production as a model of cooperative was opposed by the original workers, who all subsequently left, with the exception of two who remained as members. Nonetheless, for the founders of the GP, the cooperative's creation did represent a continuation of their struggle for improved conditions and access to land and this was reflected in their strong identification with the land, which as we shall see, was based on this element of struggle.

In 1982, PJCh was designated 274 *manzanas* of land which was legally constituted and titled in 1984. The departing agricultural workers were replaced during the first years by a further twenty to thirty people who came from within the department of Carazo itself, including Diriamba and Ninquinomo or from the neighbouring communities of La Chona, San Pedro de las Molinas and Dulce Nombre, that is outside the original target area³⁰. The origin of the members in 1989 as shown in Figure 6 presented earlier.

As with GP, this cooperative had to survive during the years of relative state neglect of the cooperative sector. During this period individuals endured physical deprivation while working intensively for long hours to establish and renovate cooperative lands. For the first five weeks founders had to work without any financial assistance or payment at

all:

"..until the credit came through from the BND, but we continued working nonetheless."

The positive aspects of this shared experience of hardship was not lost on the members themselves, as Juan's comments suggest:

"It was a way of recognising who was really conscientious amongst the group and was a good way to test who of us was really committed to the project."

As with GP, the regulations of PJCh established the economic, political and social rights of members. Each member had the right to: access to profits in accordance with the days worked; be able to produce crops for self-sufficiency; have voice and vote; elect and be elected for the posts of the leadership directive; receive economic and production reports by the leadership; receive support from the cooperative in cases of emergency; and receive training on cooperative organisation. The regulations also specifically guaranteed the incorporation of women on the basis of non-discrimination and pre- and post-natal economic assistance. The age limit was sixteen, less than in GP, and was less in cases where individuals already had dependents. Also, as in the case of GP, male applicants had to show evidence of having completed their Patriotic Military Service and be available for military duties when called upon.

In 1984, a request for more land was made to MIDINRA and in 1986 the cooperative received a further 86 *manzanas* from the San Jorge *finca*, an estate that had been confiscated from a badly managed cooperative. In 1986, the cooperative also petitioned - for the first of many times - a request to the authorities to allow it to convert into CCS but was repeatedly refused by MIDINRA and UNAG. It would not be until after the elections that the cooperative was able to organise in the form its members deemed most desirable. In the same year, the cooperative affiliated to the "Eddy Guzman" Union de Cooperativas de Area (UCA). This is a second level of cooperative association based in San Marcos covering the La Meseta zone. As with other UCAs in Nicaragua, the "Eddy Guzman" was created by a group of relevant state institutions represented within the Zonal Council for Development and Assistance for the Agrarian Reform (CZDARA) with the objective of organising agricultural production territorially to increase the efficiency. In the case of "Eddy Guzman" the BND, PROAGRO, ENABAS and ENCAFE were incorporated into the CZDARA. UNAG was also included and had promoted the creation of the UCA by initiating the process with an assembly in which

twenty CAS cooperatives were represented (CAPRI, 1991). During this preliminary meeting, when the formation of an UCA was proposed, the advantages of belonging to the UCA were outlined and included: access to credit, supply of inputs, machine services, technical and administrative assistance and training, although not all these objectives were fulfilled³¹.

The UCA was formally constituted in June 1986 as a supply and service cooperative. In 1989 it had increased in size to incorporate thirty two cooperatives within the zone and covered an area of approximately twenty two square kilometres. It contained seventy five *fincas*, 3,064 *manzanas* and had 700 members (representing 652 families) and supported a total of 3,079 dependents. It was predominantly a coffee producer, coffee covering 42% of the land of its affiliated cooperatives, basic grains accounted for 28% and forest 15% (CAPRI, 1991). However, the efforts of the UCA to expand its service provision on behalf of the affiliated cooperatives and their members, took it into direct conflict with the state over its proposal to have direct access to state resources, instead of them being channelled through other state agencies. It requested control of a retail outlet for produce which had hitherto been sold by the state monopoly PROAGRO but the proposal had been rejected by local MIDINRA officials. They expressed concern that relinquishing control of the state monopoly to the UCA would diminish the role of MIDINRA in the region: thereby illustrating the bureaucratic tendency of a ministry which blocked the initiative of this producer-run organisation. This was understood by cooperative leaders who saw that local officials were concerned to "protect their own personal interests": a suspicion fuelled by class and sectorial mistrust since local MIDINRA officers were educated urbanites whose distance from *campesino* reality was symbolically manifest by their smart clothing. Eventually, the issue of the UCA's control over the products of the state monopoly was resolved in their favour when the national leadership of MIDINRA intervened. From then on disgruntled local leaders distinguished between local and national MIDINRA and its representatives. Whereas local officers were seen to block the producers' democratic aspirations to control their own retail outlet, national leaders were identified as being supportive of the *campesino* cause.

Until 1984, Rosa had been the only female member of PJCh. Her duties at that time were confined to cooking for the male members who then ate communally at the *hacienda*. In 1986, other women who joined as members to participate in agricultural

production. Since then there was a stable number of women, totalling between twelve and fifteen. Although the membership in PJCh had risen to as many as sixty in previous years, in 1989 there was a total of fifty two, including fifteen women. As with GP, new members were admitted once they had made a written request to join, together with a recommendation from UNAG and following a vote in the cooperative's general assembly. As with GP and other CAS cooperatives, men under twenty five had also to have completed their military service and agree to be available for reserve duties. A three month trial period preceded the granting of full membership. Once one member of the family had joined others tended to follow.

A characteristic of this cooperative was that a proportion of the membership was unstable, a factor which lowered the average length of time incorporated into the cooperative which was three years, seven months. Amongst the interviewees, only seven founding members (26%) still remained (of whom two were original employees of the estate). Since they had subsequently been joined by their respective offspring, this group represented more. According to UCA records there were approximately twenty members who came and went annually from the cooperative (UNAG San Marcos, 1989), although for the year corresponding to the research period this had reduced to a departure of only ten. This meant that a total of 45% of the members had been integrated for less than two years although amongst this group four members (representing 11%) had established stable relationships with residents who had been there for longer. Nonetheless, there were expressions of social solidarity between members who also typically referred to each other with the use of the term *compañero* and *compañera* and friendships between longer-term members (as in GP) were also reinforced by the system of *compadrazgo*.

While cooperative analysts have advanced various theories to account for desertions from cooperatives in Nicaragua, there are contradictory interpretations. Some³² explained that individuals who have become habitualised wage earners go from one cooperative to another with the objective of maximising their income, that is in search of a better "salary". Others stressed that the experiences during the insurrection and immediately afterwards, thereby suggesting that it was precisely those individuals who were the most suitable for collective production (CIERA, 1985). Perhaps this causal link is misplaced since other objective and subjective factors interacted and influenced the extent to which members came to feel that the cooperative was theirs, thereby determining the extent to

which they were prepared to invest their energies into such a collective enterprise. In fact, of the twelve members who left the cooperative during 1989-90 period, only three left voluntarily, the rest were expelled for indiscipline. The most obvious causal link concerning desertions may be related to the extent to which the individual felt that the land belonged to them. This is supported in the case of one of those interviewed who left stating that he did not feel the owner of the land. However, he was also the most educated member of the cooperative and subsequently left to train in accountancy, suggesting that the problem was also an occupational one. Similarly, it is appropriate to note that the three in GP who stated that they did not feel owner of the land had been members for three, five and nine years respectively, a finding which would suggest that this was not the only factor.

As with GP, all members in PJCh had peasant backgrounds with the exception of two. Of the sixteen men, ten (62%) had previously worked as agricultural labourers, of whom two had transferred from other cooperatives which had formed after the triumph, having heard that "PJCh was better organised". Four had previously been employed as permanent agricultural workers, one came directly from working as a professional soldier in the national military (EPS) and another one had come directly from school although both these latter ones had also helped their parents on their plot of land. As with GP, a few members had changed occupations: amongst those interviewed, one had also been a permanent agricultural worker, one agricultural worker had also worked as an industrial worker and one had been studying for his priesthood. Of the women, four had not previously worked outside the home but had helped their parents attend their small plots; three had finished school to start productive work alongside their parents in the cooperative; two had been employed as domestics and one had worked as a seasonal wage earner.

II3 Amongst strangers

In common with GP, disgruntled poor, subsistence and medium peasants resented the cooperative because of its privileged access to state resources, a feature which qualified it in their eyes as a "Sandinista project". They complained that the establishment of the cooperative meant that they could no longer take plantains and wood from the *hacienda*, since these practices were stopped by the cooperative by guarding its perimeters vigilantly.

Similarly, they and local medium peasants complained about others coming from beyond the area and that:

"..they robbed the land and it's not really theirs, they have no right to work it."

The assertion by several cooperative members that "we are the new patrons", referring to their access to the means of production was perhaps an ironically reflection of their new role as employers of a local seasonal labour force (for the coffee harvest). This may have fuelled local resentment³³. Animosity towards the cooperative was less evident in the immediate *comarca* of La Chona than in Dulce Nombre, a small town which was also an UNO stronghold. During the electoral campaign the contradictions created by the cooperative also became condensed and local UNO supporters stressed the injustices manifest from the availability of resources for the "land-robbers" but were less concerned that the land be divided to benefit poor *campesinos*, than that the previous order be restituted³⁴. Also, members originating from Dulce Nombre reported how their own extended families constantly criticised them and following the elections they did not return home for fear of harassment or attack.

The cooperative had fewer social links with community than GP and this was mainly because its membership largely originated from beyond the adjacent communities. However, the cooperative did contribute to several local development projects directed by the CC by donating funds and materials for the construction of a drinking water system and school in La Chona and San Pedro de los Molinas. Unlike in GP, here only seven interviewees had assisted by providing labour. The cooperative had also supported the wider community by surrendering one of the houses on the San Jorge *finca*, together with its accompanying plot of land to MINSA for the purposes of a health centre. During traditional patron saint festivals the cooperative donated cash or products towards the festivities. A few individual members, mainly the young men from the cooperative "who like to get up to no good", as their partners stated, would join these activities and invariably return home drunk. The founder members from La Concepcion preferred to return to participate in celebrations of their home town. Limited social contacts with the residents in the neighbouring community occurred through the church, to which three interviewees reported going regularly and through sport since three of the men in the

cooperative played in the basketball team of San Pedro de los Molinas and had games every weekend.

Conclusions

The two cases, both located in the Pacific zone had memberships dominated by labouring peasants who in common with others elsewhere in the zone had worked on small plots and been employed seasonally. The histories of the cooperatives were different. GP was created as a product of a prolonged period of struggle for the land which involved the *campesinos*' in direct confrontation with the *patron*. Founders had benefitted from the support of both ATC and MIDINRA which had intervened ultimately to resolve the issue of the land in their favour, a factor which - as we shall see later - led to a strong identification with the revolutionary authorities. By contrast, the founders of PJCh had been organised around a proposal of the Agrarian Reform to distribute the land. Although founders had previously been involved in the activities of the ATC, there was no element of struggle over access to this particular piece of the land. This external initiative meant that the state was able to impose a specific organisational model against the wishes of the membership. While it is clear that the conditions of the insurrection and revolution created the opportunities for the founders to gain access to land and fulfil their demand for work, it is also obvious that peasants responded differently to these circumstances. Evidence of different consciousness amongst peasants in the same community and sharing similar economic circumstances is provided from the history of GP where some *campesinos* were prepared to invade the patrons lands while others were not. The willingness of those who occupied land also suggests that they were well advanced in their understanding of resistance strategies. Similarly with PJCh, a few original founders stayed while others left at the beginning, demonstrating that despite confronting the same material circumstances, individuals opted for different strategies.

The GP cooperative had formed to benefit poor and landless peasants in the immediate locality of the *hacienda* while the PJCh was founded to benefit those from another area. Yet both cooperatives, as beneficiaries of the Agrarian Reform, encountered degrees of hostility from amongst other sectors of the communities. This became expressed as an antagonistic political contradiction between the cooperative and the

community and reinforced the identify of the cooperatives as essentially political entities.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. An administrative division coinciding with the local rural community divisions.
2. Barricada, was the official organ of the FSLN; Nuevo Diario, the country's only independent daily and La Prensa belonged to the Chamorro family, the incoming president was its Director.
3. This was partially financed by the Swiss Support Committee for the People of Central America, who initially donated US\$5,500.
4. There were also an administrator, one laboratory technician, one popular educator, two dispensing chemists, seven hygienists and thirty six health workers (MINSA Tola, 1989).
5. Sale to the state agency had been obligatory, but this changed during the research, when the market was liberated and producers were then able to sell on the open market if they were able to find buyers.
6. Quoted in Lowy (1993:38).
- 7.1 *manzana* = 0.7 hectares.
8. Defined as between sixteen and fifty years old.
9. These included twenty eight members and eighty four individuals. The production of the cooperatives reportedly increased following a donation of a motorboat from OXFAM Canada.
10. Public Registry, Rivas, 7.10.1991, in reference to property number 4,890.
11. This ambiguity about the precise extension of the lands and the location of its boundaries remained until 1991 when INRA arranged for it to be measured by a topographer.
12. Public Registry Rivas, relating to Property Number 4.890.
13. Pastora owned a phenomenal total of 4,424 *manzanas* in the Tola, according to the Public Register Rivas, relating to property number 4,890.
14. This period of relative independence from the state has been identified by Kaimowitz (1988), as an important factor in securing the long-term viability of a cooperative.
15. Here I am using the spanish female term for member.
16. As such it represents a profound cultural change: a finding which complements the comparative study of Houtart and Lemerminier (1992) between producers of different forms of social organisation. Here, the authors

conclude that evidence of cultural transformation and the acquisition of social values was most likely amongst individuals incorporated into CAS cooperatives.

17. Wilfredo Rivera, personal interview, German Pomares, January 1990.

18. Luis Rivera, personal interview, November 1989.

19. Adan Bega, personal interview, Tola, December 1989.

20. INRA official, personal interview, July 1990, Granada.

21. MIDINRA was renamed INRA again following the change to the UNO Government.

22. The resulting agreement reiterated the original allocations and an end was put to the historical ambiguity of the respective land areas by establishing and fixing boundaries.

23. Based on interviews with local residents and in discussions during an assembly meeting in a CCS cooperative in Nancimi.

24. Wilfredo Espinoza, personal interview, Sanchez II, July 1992.

25. The extremity of the political polarity was manifest in the immediate aftermath of the elections when local activities, including the marketplace and schooling, became physically divided between Sandinistas and UNO supporters and was accompanied by violent confrontations. As an indication of their severity, such incidents reached national news coverage. Conflict was experienced in every aspect of life: the women who had at one time grouped together to sell cooked food on Tola's central park divided and went to opposite corners of Tola's central square: and UNO teachers and students withdrew from the education institute to establish their own makeshift centre for learning. Sandinista teachers then went on strike to protest to the community at the situation and in a confrontation with UNO supporters one young teacher was attacked. The event was such concern with the government that a top minister came to Tola, in an attempt to reconcile the two fractious groups and the attacker was found guilty.

26. Ernesto Ortega, mayor of San Marcos, personal interview June 1992.

27. Following the change of government the authorities began to demand rent for the house, an issue which was still being contended in June 1992.

28. As an immediate consequence there was an increased incidence of intestinal infections and diarrhoea, from which, within four months, the two year old daughter of a cooperative member died.

29. He was the husband of the current President of Nicaragua, Violeta Chamorro.

30. From personal interviews with MIDINRA personal, San Marcos and various founding members of the cooperative, February 1990 - June 1991.

31. Personal interview Agosto Espinoza, UCA president, San Marcos, March 1990.

32.Juan Galan, president UNAG, IVth region, personal interview, March 1990.

33.Perhaps this constitutes a social dimension to the differentiation between cooperative members and poor peasants, defined by the social relations of production.

34.Based on interviews with UNO supporters from La Chona.

Chapter 6

CORN, COWS AND COFFEE: COLLECTIVE PRODUCTION AND ECONOMY

The productive and economic activities of the cooperatives are the focus of this chapter. Their analysis is basic to our understanding of participation for several reasons. Firstly, they constitute the material basis of the cooperatives and as such must be explored since they represent factors other than participation which influence the viability of the cooperatives. That is, they are the complementarities of participation whose influence on the overall performance of the cooperative must be identified. Secondly, the examination of these aspects enables us to establish the material basis of membership and provides a basis from which to assess the role of subjective values and consciousness as a factor influencing membership. Thirdly, although the generalities of state intervention were noted in Chapter 4, here we need to identify the precise nature and extent of state intervention as it related to each cooperative case. This will serve to enhance our understanding the cooperative's collective strategy towards external agents.

I German Pomares

II Cooperative production and economy

As a CAS cooperative, the land in German Pomares (GP) was worked collectively by the members. Each member also had access to individual plots, the sizes of which were determined according to need and capacity to work them. GP produced for consumption, the domestic market and export. It produced beans, sorghum, plantains and cattle. Twenty *manzanas*¹ were dedicated to sorghum production, approximately sixty *manzanas* for beans and fifty *manzanas* for plantain cultivation. The rest of the land was left as pasture to support four hundred head of cattle throughout the year, although during the summer months between three and four hundred *manzanas* of this land was seasonally "loaned" to the residents of the neighbouring communities for sowing.

As regards the cooperative's agricultural equipment: it had five tractors, two lorries, one trailer, two ploughs and forty spray pumps. The larger items had been purchased during the early 1980s at a time of favourable credit and an irrigation system was bought

during the research period with money sent by a Puerto Rican solidarity brigade which had stayed on the cooperative for a couple of weeks the previous year. Other equipment or machinery which the cooperative required was lent or rented from local producers, such as the combine harvester loaned at discount rates from a large-scale Nancimi-based producer who in turn borrowed equipment from GP. The cooperative even had an exchange arrangement with this producer which provided a mutually beneficial solution to peak labour demands. Here, the members provided a workforce for him during the busy harvest period and likewise used his employees for their peak periods. Machinery and equipment were less often exchanged with the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (UCA), within the municipality.

In 1982, one year after the cooperative was formed, GP had appealed to the state for support to produce cattle. The proposal was rejected by MIDINRA which at the time was promoting basic grain production within the cooperative sector. However, in 1984 after the change in national policy and following a local feasibility study conducted by the ministry and UNAG, the cattle project was approved and financed. This experience of state intervention made the leadership wary of its advice and they saw officers as too remote from the local conditions of the cooperative.

Nonetheless, GP was a cooperative which had been prioritized by the state in the Cooperative Strategy, as described in Chapter 4, in order that it operate as a development pole to encourage the organisation of neighbouring producers into cooperatives and disseminate new production techniques. At the time of the study, the cooperative continued as a major recipient of technical attention from MIDINRA which maintained a regular weekly presence on the cooperative. For instance, when the cooperative reported evidence of disease amongst its plantain crop MIDINRA responded quickly and within days a group had arrived which included local officials and two Dutch agronomists from Managua who came to examine the plants and recommend remedial action. This technical team also brought a generator and projector in order to show an educational film about the benefits of reforestation, biological pest control and crop diversification. Within weeks, the team had initiated a pilot reforestation project on the cooperative with the objectives of improving soils and providing an alternative product for commercialisation. The MIDINRA also managed fifteen *manzanas* of the cooperative's area which it had under an experimental bean project in which two strains were being compared. The

ministry assumed the production costs and regularly monitored the crop while the cooperative provided labour and retained the harvest.

Throughout the 1980s the cooperative had increased its financial independence. By 1991 it had reached complete independence, giving rise to a situation which amused members. They laughed to consider the irony that at a time when other cooperatives were being denied credit, the bank came:

"..knocking on the door to ask if we'd like to borrow money and to suggest things that we might need so as to borrow money because they know that we are excellent customers."²

This financial autonomy was to give the cooperative an enormous advantage in the context of restricted loans and removed credit subsidies which characterised the first economic policies of the incoming UNO Government of Violeta Chamorro.

During the research period, the cooperative's produce was either sold, consumed or sold to the state commercial monopolies. Cattle were sold to the state abattoir in Rivas and, approximately two or three times a year when the cooperative obtained permission from the state, a cow was slaughtered and the meat was divided between members. Similarly, sorghum and beans were sold to ENABAS after members received a share of the harvest. The effect of the liberated markets of post 1988 period made the plantains a lucrative crop. In response, the area of the crop was expanded and the produce was sold to local merchants or directly to Managua's "*Oriental*" or Eastern Market.

Milk - potentially the most lucrative product - was not commercialised. Instead, it was distributed amongst the members who were each guaranteed a litre a day and was sold to the community at half its commercial price. Members explained that this was because "the cooperative wanted to help the community", a statement which implies that the cooperative did not operate within a purely capitalistic logic. Although leaders reported that any significant surplus was sold in Rivas this never occurred during the research period. Instead, when a small quantity was left over it was sold to a local cheese maker. However, this arrangement was halted abruptly once she had made public her voting preference for the UNO.

In the absence of data concerning the relative productivity and economic efficiency of the cooperative compared with other productive units, the observation of the Tola-based BND officer who had an intimate knowledge of all the cooperatives in the municipality is valuable:

"The German Pomares capitalises too much of its profits and doesn't distribute sufficient income to the members. The standard of living of the members is very poor compared with other cooperatives, even though its means of production are good."³

He also noted that GP had the best potential to be a successful capitalist enterprise of all the cooperatives in the municipality but that because of its military, political and social activities "its profitability was reduced." As we saw in relation to milk production, profit maximisation was clearly not its primary objective.

The cooperative also occasionally bartered: in 1988, as part of the worker-peasant alliance forged by the FSLN, the cooperative started to exchange beef and plantains for soap and cooking oil which it obtained at reduced prices from the sea port at San Juan del Sur. In addition, it exchanged plantains for cheap sugar with workers from the Benjamin Zeledon sugar refinery near Rivas. The cooperative also sold cheaply or donated plantains to the local teachers in the ANDEN union, to employees of MIDINRA and hospital workers in Rivas as a concrete expression of its solidarity with local state employees. It sold plantains cheaply or gave them to poor local families who faced particular difficult circumstances.

Collective production in GP was carried out by five work commissions. Members were placed in a commission at the discretion of the production officer and, unless personal conflicts erupted or transference for other reasons was requested, these remained permanent groups. One of the women, Amanda, was incorporated into one of the production teams and fulfilled all the tasks except the most vigorous activity: slashing. One work group, the cattle commission, was different from the others because its sole task was to attend to and milk the animals. All other agricultural tasks were carried out by the other commissions. In addition, there were the following specific posts. One was occupied by a member who worked in a production commission but also served as the mechanic when the machines broke down. Also, the two eldest male members worked a full seven day week as guards patrolling the cooperative's land and perimeter to prevent theft. The second woman, Auzena, was based in the *hacienda* where she cleaned it. This post had been created following a visit from the Ministry of Health (MINSA) which had insisted that the cooperative maintain the *hacienda* clean at all times.

At any one time during the research period between five and eleven men were temporarily absent on active reserve duty. This was not atypical, indeed from the mid-

1980s onwards the cooperative had not operated with its full membership present. Since 1984, during the escalation of incursions into Nicaragua by the Contra from bases in Costa Rica, there was a "militarisation of the cooperative". From then on until 1987 - which marked the end of the national state of emergency - as many as fifty members of the cooperative were mobilised in defence at any one time. This left only thirty (heavily armed) *cooperativistas* working in production together with local members of the Sandinista Youth mass organisation and individual producers who had been mobilised to substitute for the absent members. This zealous military commitment had earned the cooperative a reputation within the region as a "vanguard cooperative".

Not only did the military activities of the members hinder the economic consolidation of the cooperative during this period, there was also an accompanying FSLN takeover of the cooperative. The local party delegate described this as entailing:

".. a direct intervention in the cooperative, with orders coming only from above."

Although this intervention was channelled via those *socios* who had already organised as Sandinistas into a party cell within the cooperative, local observers from different social sectors noted that it led to a "closing of the democratic space". The cooperative's integration into the military and FSLN structures as the war effort intensified thwarted the development of its incipient democratic practices, restricted its autonomy and had a lasting impact on the nature of participation emerging there, as becomes clear in subsequent chapters.

Members working in production teams met at the *hacienda* at 6.00am. They came from all directions by horseback or on foot: some walking up to seven kilometres from their home. They wore loose cotton clothing (mostly army fatigues), carried long machetes and each had a plastic container full of water tied with rope to their makeshift or army provision belts. After role call they would set off in their respective commissions to embark on the tasks assigned them for the day. The cattle commission was different. Its members started their day at 4.30am when they started to round-up the animals for milking into one of the three corrals on the cooperative. Local people, mainly young children and women, arrived at between 5.30 - 6.00am to buy the milk, some having also walked up to seven kilometres distance.

In general, everyone except those guarding the crops, finished work at 11.00am. They sometimes finished earlier but rarely worked until noon except during the harvest of beans, corn and sorghum when members worked intensively, spending up to three continuous days at the cooperative. This was in order to bring in the crops before the weather changed and to reduce production costs, since the combine harvester they used was rented at a daily rate. Many attributed the short working which characterised all but these peak periods of intense labour, to the intolerable heat of the noon-day sun but founder members reported that the length of their working day had progressively decreased over the years. During the afternoons and Sundays, members were free to attend their individual plots.

I2 Individual and family needs

At the time of research, each member was entitled to an individual plot on the cooperative's land which he or she took according to need and capacity to work. Of those interviewed, the average area taken was three quarters of a *manzana* (the equivalent of one hectare) although a couple of members had two *manzanas*. Five interviewees had chosen not to have a plot of their own. Of these two were leaders who did not have the time to dedicate to it. The others who had not taken the opportunity to have a plot stated that it was because they did not have children old enough nor other family members who could help them attend it. Both women, Amanda (37, a single mother with six children) and Auzena (38 with four children and the partner of a current *socio*), had plots on which they worked in the afternoons, assisted by their eldest children and in the case of the latter, her partner.

Members selected plots near or adjacent to their homes for the obvious advantages accrued from proximity for working and keeping guard of the crops: invariably maize and beans. These plots were attended by their family, most typically their spouse, children or in some cases siblings or parents. To this extent, the plots facilitated the integration of family labour into the productive process, thereby overcoming one of the main problems associated with the totally collectivised model of cooperative. These plots accommodated greater flexibility regarding the different needs and circumstances of members' families and even enabled those without immediate close family to arrange for extended family members to assist.

At key points in the agricultural calendar, such as sowing and harvesting, individuals were granted permission to work for a few days on their own plots. This represented an attempt to manage the dual productive organisation within the cooperatives. It also necessitated serious application of the rules which stated that no member should dedicate time to individual production during the days and times allocated to collective production. However, nine months after the elections, GP de-collectivised an area of its land and its cattle, maintaining the plantains under collective production. In an affirmation of the significance of a cohesiveness between some of its members, a nucleus of eighteen members of the cooperative (including many of the founders) continued to work their basic grain productive as a collective.

Favourable weather and intensive labour inputs ensured a good harvest on these individual plots. Production was most remarkable for those who had attended technical courses on agricultural production. This produce was mainly used for family consumption, although eight interviewees claimed they were able to sell some of their produce in the local market. An impressive example was set by Gilberto who had recently been able to buy a television from the proceeds of an abundant harvest of corn produced on the plot. Although Gilberto had been the cooperative's president in previous years, there was no evidence nor rumours - even in the community typically rife with gossip and suspicion - to suggest that his takings were associated with corrupt dealings.

Cooperative members each received a weekly amount of cash, referred to as "economic assistance" which during the research period amounted to the equivalent of US\$2 weekly. Proceeds from the sale of produce, once any outstanding debts to the bank had been cancelled, were also divided. The sale of cattle in 1989 meant that members received between US\$50-150 and from the sale of grains from between US\$20-50, according to their share. The research period coincided with the pregnancy of Auzena who continued to receive her economic assistance during her two months maternity leave: a rare situation according to other documentation which indicates that few cooperatives in Nicaragua were ever sufficiently economically established to provide women with support for pre- and post-natal leave (Paz et al, 1989).

The cooperative met other needs. Members were entitled to wood to construct one house and to collect firewood for family cooking purposes. The cooperative had assisted flood victims to reconstruct their houses and, through assistance from UNAG, had

obtained zinc roofing for them. Members' medical expenses were also covered by the cooperative which on one occasion included a pair of glasses for one of them. Small monetary loans were also available to members who had unexpected problems. Collective transportation was also used to take family members for emergency medical attention and the cooperative paid the funeral expenses of deceased members and their immediate family. As such, the cooperative provided a collective solution to meeting individual and family needs which had previously been sought through traditional social networks such as families, friends and *compadres*.

II Pedro Joaquin Chamorro

III Cooperative production and economy

The total land of PJCh was three hundred and eighty nine *manzanas*⁴, of which two hundred and forty nine were dedicated to coffee production, seventy were forested, fifty *manzanas* were used for pasture and twenty, for producing basic grains. Its equipment included a tractor, a lorry, a trailer and a portable tank, machetes and portable sprays. Its buildings included seven "houses", a barn and a shed. It also collectively owned four horses and four oxen (UNAG San Marcos, 1987). The lorry had been bought in 1987 by the members at the time who had pooled their annual profits. It had continued in use as the means of collective transport for the entire cooperative. In 1990 it was sold and the proceeds were divided between the original shareholders, including ex-members who returned to receive their share. A new lorry was then purchased using the cooperative's capital. The eighty six *manzanas* located at the San Jorge site were under "technified" production, meaning that agrochemical fertilisers and pesticides were applied to boost yields. Another one hundred and sixty three *manzanas* were under "artisan" production at the Santa Maxima which depended on intensive labour and yielded less coffee per *manzana*.

Coffee production was financed by the BND. The bank provided credit, based on the estimated production costs, including the weekly "economic assistance" for the members and the labour costs for between two hundred and two hundred and fifty pickers who were contracted during the harvest. This debt was cancelled when the coffee was delivered to the state agency ENCAFE, for processing.

Although the cooperative reported that 100% of its coffee production was sold to ENCAFE, once the debt to the BND had been cancelled, the surplus was sold for the best price: an unofficial practice since it encouraged speculation. During the research period 145 sacks were sold to a local merchant, the father-in-law of Omar, the cooperative's production officer. He offered double the state price: a price differential which led two of the leaders to complain that:

"As a coffee cooperative the government goes against us and robs us."

This grievance was based on the high proportion of value of the coffee appropriated by the state. It was exacerbated by the fact that the priorities of the San Marcos MIDINRA office were to promote non-traditional production in the zone (in conjunction with a massive EC-promoted project) made worse since cooperative leaders were convinced that their production levels would have increased had technical assistance been available to them. While it was not provided by MIDINRA neither could it be offered by the UCA since this had limited services and anyway was concentrating on accounting services during that stage of its development. However, towards the latter period of research the UCA began to offer processing services and provide producers with more favourable prices. In 1991 it purchased a processing plant and gained access to markets in Europe via the national cooperative council, FENACCOOP⁵.

Other cooperative needs were also fulfilled through the UCA, not the state. Since 1986 the UCA had secured affiliated cooperatives with the supply of basic products provided from ENABAS and in 1989, after a struggle with the UNAG national leadership over access to its products and the right to control the *Tienda Campesina* directly, it gained access to ECODEPA products. Furthermore, in March 1990, the UCA also became a retail outlet for agrochemicals and machinery when the state monopoly on PROAGRO was eventually surrendered. Thus UCA also provided transport but this was an underutilised and inappropriate service since many of the cooperatives - including PJCh - had their own transport or used that provided by ENCAFE.

As with GP, the PJCh also made collective use of other resources. Wood from its forest areas was collected and taken for sale in Masaya weekly. Legally this was supposed to comprise only "dead wood" but the cooperative had a history of over-exploiting its forestry resources. Several years previously it had been fined by IRENA, the state agency for natural resource management, for selling live wood (ironically, to the

state tourist agency for the construction of a coastal resort). This action had temporarily halted the extraction of wood for construction.

Production in PJCh was also carried out on collectivized land, with a small amount allocated for individual plots for the production of basic grains. It was undertaken by four work commissions, three of which contained men while one was comprised of women only. Although work was organised in these separate brigades, women were totally integrated into the productive process, a factor facilitated by the nature of the labour processes involved in coffee production which together with basic grain production, was conducive to the incorporation of female labour (Paz et al, 1989).

Amongst the ten women members interviewed, there were two single and childless women who were both daughters of members; one was single with three children and who was also the daughter of members; seven had partners who were male *socios*, all of whom had children of varying ages, including some who were adult and also cooperative members. Those women with small children either left them with other children in the house or took them to the coffee where they were able to keep an eye on them while they worked.

A typical day can be described as follows. Members congregated at 6.00am at the Santa Maxima *hacienda* on the four mornings they worked there. The women would have risen at 4.00am in order to fulfil domestic duties, such as cook the breakfast, feed the children and prepare the evening meal. Those who lived beyond the *finca* were collected by trailer, although sometimes they would have to walk the one and a half hour journey. Then all the members went off in their corresponding commissions to the area or task assigned to them in accordance with the agreed production plan. A similar work routine was followed on the days when the members worked at the San Jorge site, the rendezvous then being one of the cooperative houses at the entrance to this *finca* to which residents from Santa Maxima arrived by lorry.

Members returned from working amongst the coffee to the *hacienda* between 12.00 and 1.00pm for lunch. As with GP, founders reported that their days had become progressively shorter. Evidently, this was not because efficiency was increased but because members' motivation was reduced and this was either because poor economic returns had hampered incentives or the unfavourable national economic context had made collectivized production seem less logical. After the election, when some of the coffee area

was de-collectivised, members all worked longer hours and said themselves that the division of the land had increased their incentive to work.

During the harvest, the tractor and trailer went to various towns within the municipality in order to collect seasonal workers. Ideally, they required between 200-250 workers but in the context of improved access to land and rental arrangements and permanent employment on state farms the task of finding workers prepared to work became progressively more difficult and required that they go further afield. Some of these seasonal workers stayed in the vacant rooms of the encampment or compound for the duration of the harvest.

II2 Individual and family needs

Until 1986, the cooperative had designated an area for basic grain production which was also worked collectively. This had since been divided into small individual plots for those members based in or near Santa Maxima. Here all members but Aura, the single mother, worked a plot. Meanwhile, those on or near San Jorge were entitled to a plot on that *finca*. Others, such as Benigno who lived at the first house near the main road, had made his own arrangement with his neighbours who had unconditionally permitted him access to a small plot on their own cooperative. On average, members had between a quarter and one *manzana* of land on which to produce maize and beans, depending on their capacity and need. These plots were small and were particularly unsatisfactory given the low productivity and unsuitability of the land for basic grain production. Nonetheless, as with GP, access to these plots enabled individual members to incorporate their family labour into the productive processes. As with GP, members were also given leave on request in order to attend their plots for the particularly important times during the agricultural calendar. In cases where both partners were members, they would alternate their work, attending each plot together. In the case of the three single women, either their fathers or brothers helped them or they paid a male colleague to work on it for them. Unusually, Calero, who had a plot on the San Jorge *finca*, occasionally paid for labourers to work his plot: a fact he vehemently denied (since plot size was defined according to the capacity to work it) but was also overlooked by the cooperative's directive. However, no-one worked as hard on their plots as Omar, the production officer, whose daily input of

approximately three hours rewarded him with the best crop of beans and maize. Two households, including Omar's, kept chickens.

In addition to produce from individual plots, other resources from the cooperative fulfilled family needs. The plantains, grown to provide shade for the coffee, supplied fruit and the forests yielded a source of firewood. In the immediate post-election scenario when there was no credit available members began large-scale felling of live timber as their only source of income at the time⁶.

After the harvest, members received their share of the profits which amounted to between US\$70-150 depending on work attendance. In addition, they received a small weekly income of "economic assistance" which was the equivalent of US\$3 per week at the beginning of the research although this was subsequently reduced and then abandoned in the first months of the UNO Government. Clearly, this provision this small remuneration favoured situations where both partners were integrated. It enabled families to buy cheese and meat once a week. The right for women to receive two months maternity subsidy was established in the regulations although this was constantly being reviewed and was finally revoked in the aftermath of the elections. The family of the successful hunter might occasionally eat the meat and eggs of iguana or lizard from the forest although because of their increasing rarity, these became the products of hours of patience. The diet for those who had family outside the cooperative was varied by trips home: those with families in La Concepcion, Masaya, returned from visits with oranges and lemons and those from Dulce Nombre and Las Molinas, with meat and eggs.

At the beginning of the research period, the cooperative purchased collectively basic products for family consumption using their credit facility, through the UCA, namely soap, rice and oil. This practice was later abandoned since members agreed that it was preferable that each have direct control over their diminishing purchasing power and instead bought things from the local market. Clothes were rarely purchased but when they were it was from the market in Diriamba, not the UCA shop which had an inappropriate and relatively expensive selection.

III The material basis of membership

As previously stated, questions relating to the material basis of membership have to be examined because they reveal the link between economic viability and participation.

III1 Social empowerment

The extent to which these cooperatives met individual and family needs leads us to consider the dimension of empowerment which relates to social power as conceptualised in Chapter 1 and refers to the increased access of households to the bases of production, including material and information resources.

Essentially, the creation of these cooperatives meant that the new social relations of production had eliminated exploitation for the (fifty to sixty) families they supported. Through the cooperatives' access to land, technology, basic grains, credit, loans and social assistance the cooperatives provided collective solutions to many of the needs of members. Also, the primary limitation of the CAS, as collectivised production which incorporated only individual members within a household into the productive process, was partially addressed by having individual plots on which family members could work. Not only did this arrangement secure them with access to land but also enabled them to benefit from other collective resources available to the cooperative, such as chemical inputs, equipment and transport which were readily available for their use on their individual plots. Also an individual was able to apply new techniques and knowledge acquired through cooperative membership to the benefit of production on his own plot, although the extent to which individuals were able to take advantage of these resources varied according to individual circumstance and ability. This could increase productivity and in some instances meant that produce could be marketed. Although individual plots in PJCh were not as productive as those in GP, family households where both partners were members had the benefit of a double income. As such, the cooperatives can be seen to have contributed towards the social empowerment of the household of members, although evidence suggests that under collectivised production members were not working, for whatever reason, to their maximum productivity.

Since the integration of women was not dependent on an individual being the head of household, married women (a term which is used loosely here since few were formally married) as well as the single women could integrate independently from and formally

equal to men. This gave them year round access to the productive process rather than the seasonal labour in which the majority had previously been employed. For those who had not previously been working in social production it provided them with their first opportunity to integrate into paid work. Their incorporation into extra-domestic production on an equal basis to men gave them the possibilities for a better return for their work, access to basic grains and an ability to resolve the social problems of the family. This was particularly valuable for single women with children: Amanda in GP and Aura in PJCh. Women's integration into production fulfilled one dimension of their practical needs, namely that of securing a material basis for subsistence independent from men. As such, it constitutes one element of their social empowerment. Also, in the case of PJCh, other practical needs were provided by the cooperative, such as access to drinking water and its collective transport secured women with access to medical treatment for their families.

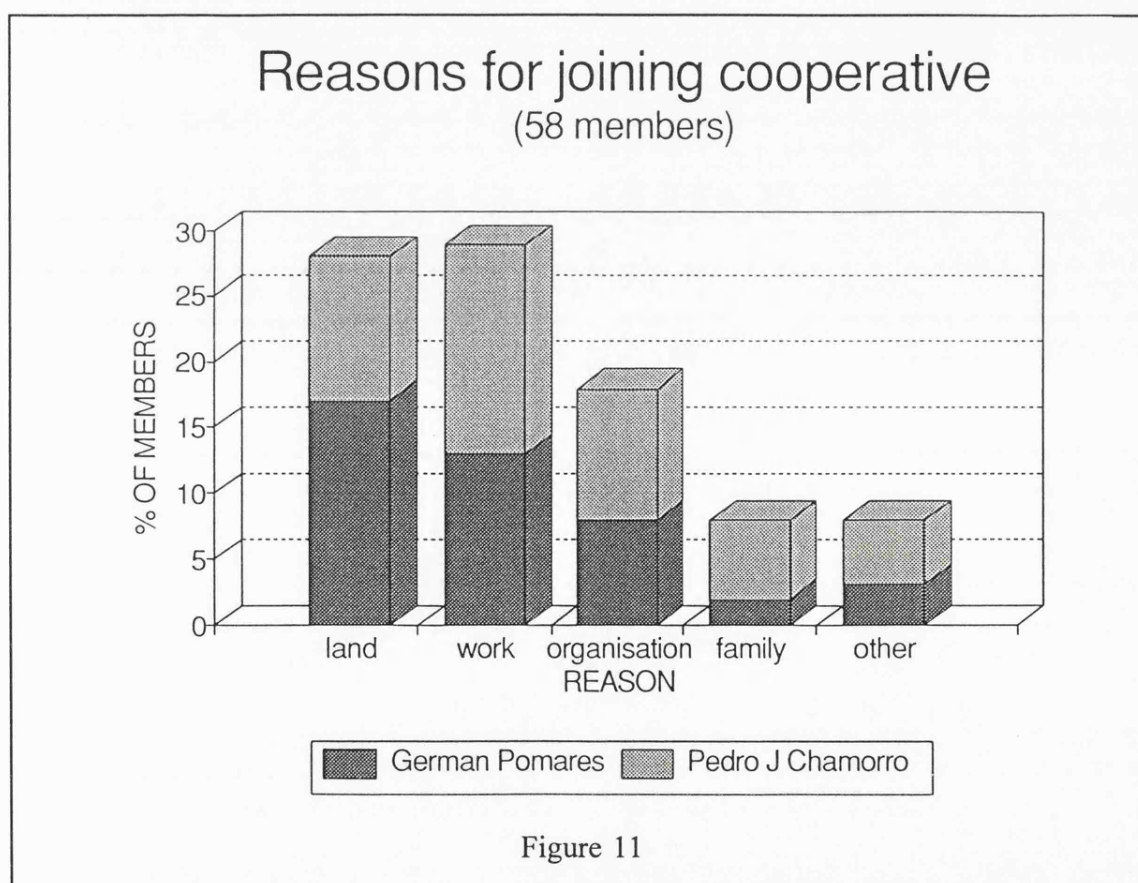
However, given the sexual division of labour women's incorporation into the productive process was not equal. Before and following a full day's work they were faced with having to complete the domestic tasks which men refused to undertake or share. The absence of collective infrastructural support which could reduce the burden of their socially ascribed tasks - that of housework and child care - rendered their working day longer than that of the men. On average they worked for fifteen hours. According to Padilla et al (1987) the absence of such collective solutions to the socially ascribed tasks of women was a serious barrier to more women joining cooperatives. It is interesting to note that after the elections when parts of the coffee area of PJCh were de-collectivised, women whose partners were also members withdrew from productive activities and concentrated on the reproductive tasks of the home. These tasks had become more of a burden in the context of reduced credit availability. The cooperative had to restrict use of the collective transport and could not obtain drinking water so, where possible it was to be boiled, a process which was time consuming. The absence of clean water caused an increase in maternal and child illness and the closure of local medical centres and the exorbitant prices of medicine (following the UNO policies for reducing state expenditure) meant it went untreated. Those who relinquished their productive responsibilities were relieved that it meant their days was a little less exhausting. These points make clear the

importance of addressing the practical gender interests of women in order to facilitate their incorporation into the productive process.

III2 Membership gains

In this section the relationship between economic viability and participation is examined in reference to individual membership motivation as it related to joining the cooperative as well as staying during periods of economic hardship.

The following refers to Figure 11 which shows the main reasons why members joined the cooperatives. There was no significant difference in responses between the two cooperatives.



Here members could give more than one answer and most respondents gave access to "land" and "work" as the main reasons why they joined the cooperative (27% and 29% of the responses respectively), thereby reflecting the dual nature of the historical demands of the Nicaraguan peasantry. An additional 8% of responses (corresponding to the "other" category) claimed that they joined to secure a future for their children or because the

cooperative gained them access to state support. As such, these are also economically motivated.

Although the primary motivation for men and women to join the cooperative was the need to resolve material problems, some joined the cooperatives for other reasons. Another 8% of respondents appearing in the "organisation" category stated that they joined because they liked organisational work. These peasants came to the cooperative with prior experience in social organisation within the CDC, ATC or other cooperatives. As indicated from the "family" category, where individuals had family members already integrated joining was made more attractive.

Although national documentation had indicated that the standard of living for cooperative members during the early and mid-1980s was better than poor individual peasant producers, there was little evidence at the time of research to distinguish cooperative members from their poor and landless contemporaries. Nonetheless, members themselves cited the receipt of the weekly economic assistance throughout the year as the most significant financial difference. They also pointed to that advantages of the "social salary" provided by the cooperatives such as productive technology, transportation, water and electricity. In GP, access to the materials to construct a house was another benefit. In PJCh, members could not build their own houses although they did use the existing buildings. Those families living in the original buildings of the *hacienda* were provided with relatively comfortable accommodation while the others in the encampment had poor housing which was too small to accommodate any more than a few family members. The size of households was significantly smaller in PJCh than in GP as a consequence. Members in GP also pointed to their improved access to a greater variety of food stuffs, in particular their daily quota of milk which improved the nutritional status of their families' diet.

The high level of financial autonomy of GP, as well as its basis grain production, rendered its members relatively protected from the economic adjustment reforms. This was not so in PJCh which was a primary agroexport producer and, given the context of dramatic credit restrictions following adjustment measures, the standard of living for members fell. Nonetheless, the overall opinion that the cooperatives had improved the conditions of life prevailed and was intricately bound up with theological interpretations. Members from both cooperatives considered that God blessed their cooperatives because

the conditions for *campesinos* had improved and because they believed he was ultimately concerned for their welfare⁷. It is also pertinent at this point to note the tendency observed by Houtart and Lemercinier (1992) for organised *campesinos* to transpose the notion of divine hierarchy onto the Sandinista Government because it had bestowed good on them. This interpretation gains some credibility in the light of the apparent loss of faith of two interviewees from GP following the electoral defeat of the FSLN. They had previously professed to being devout Catholics prior to the elections⁸.

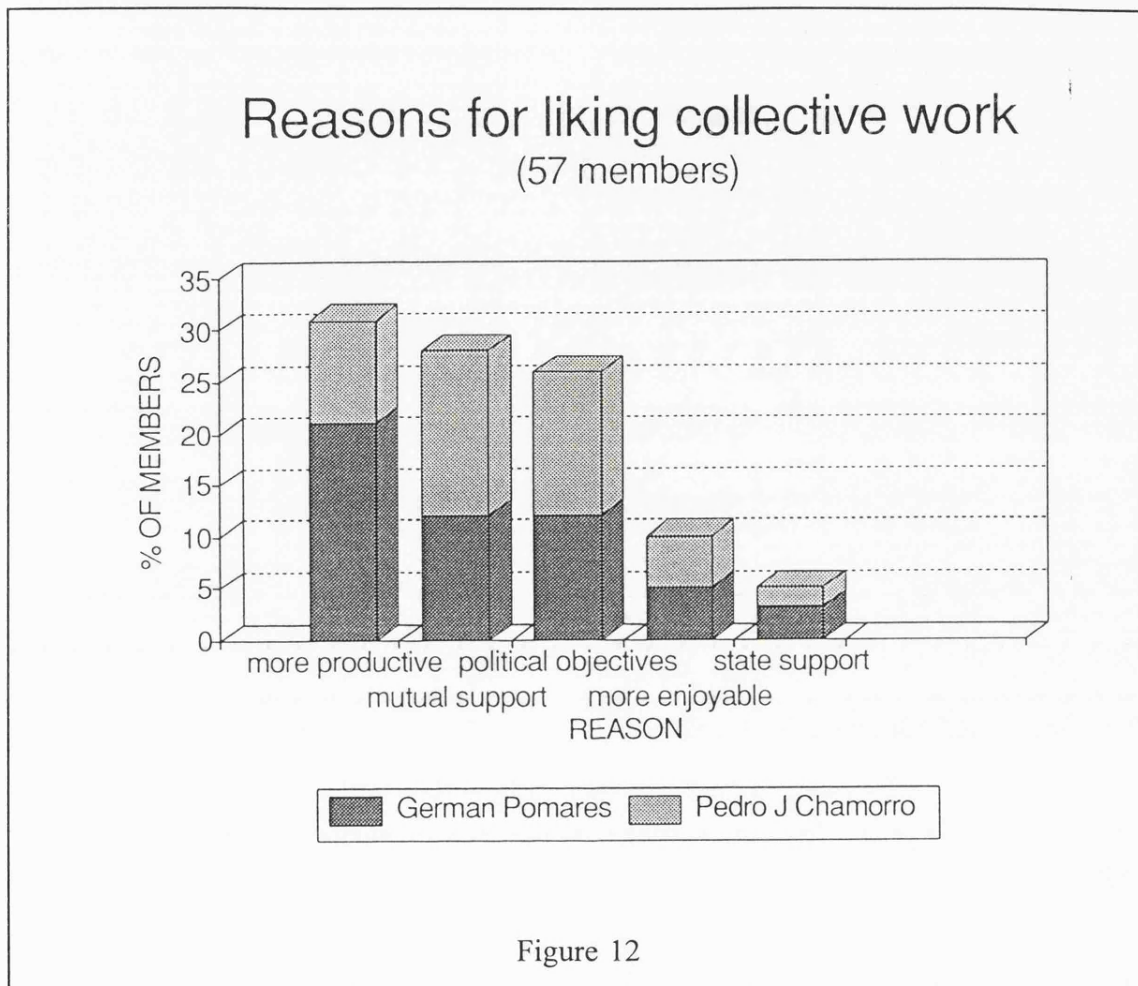
Members also referred to the qualitative improvements associated with cooperative life and compared their situation under Somoza or with peasants who were not organised. Apart from the generalised human rights, political freedoms and access to education and health services, they specified that the year-round and guaranteed access to work and land had made a substantial difference to the quality of their lives. For those in PJCh in particular, joining the cooperative had meant an end to the physical drudgery of the constant search for work and the endless trek to it: many had previously had to walk single journeys of three hours. Founders in both cooperatives considered that not having "someone who bossed you around" was another appeal. This is a particularly interesting comment since it suggests that they did not perceive the state to be their new masters.

Members' views on the material and organisational aspects of collective production became manifest when they were asked what they liked about it. These findings are presented in Figure 12, but must be treated with some caution since only one respondent was explicit in stating that he did not like collective production, despite the obvious preference of the majority for more individual forms of production given the rapid process of de-collectivisation after February 1990. Nonetheless, the findings reiterate those indicated above because they show that members perceived cooperatives as being more productive than individual production given the context of access to technology, training and preferential credit. Unpredictably, this reason was relatively more important for those in GP than in PJCh.

This reason was followed by the "mutual support" members considered the cooperative afforded them. This reason was particularly important (and statistically more significant) for women and is explicable since women face the unforeseen problems that motherhood brings which cooperative membership could assist in resolving. Women also stressed the supportiveness of solidarity from working in a group with other women

although. Some men also valued the social advantages from collective production, such that:

"..when ill you can earn while you recover. Before there was just no pay"



Membership was valued for explicitly ideological and "political objectives" (see Figure 12) by those who had previously been involved in the struggle for the land, had been organised in the ATC or in other cooperatives before. These individuals stressed the importance of cooperatives in relation to the movement of peasant liberation in unambiguous terms: "because they were in the plan of struggle." For these people - and not all were militants of the FSLN - the cooperatives represented an integral and continuous expression of the *campesino's* historic struggle for land, credit and markets. Here, cooperatives were also seen to endow members with an organisational advantage which enhanced their own capacity to resolve problems and enabled them to defend their interests politically, as the following comment from Omar from PJCh indicates:

"While the difference between our material standard of living is not so great we are more advanced in our ability to resolve problems which enables us to go forward and improve."

This reason (which complements the findings in Figure 11 where collective organisation comprised a major motivation for people to join⁹) demonstrates an awareness of the individuals themselves of the positive benefits and increased empowerment derived from organisation.

These findings serve to indicate that while material factors were the motivating force of membership, providing the "take-off" for participation, cooperative membership was not just about meeting economic needs: it was also social and ideological values. Yet, these were not values shared by all *campesinos* in similar circumstances since other peasants did not necessarily want to join. By contrast they calculated the "costs" associated with membership which - as non-members and members alike were able to agree - included the commitment to military action and to a full six-day week and regular hours. It also included the necessity of deferring trust in fellow *campesinos* as is suggested by the following comment of one ex-member who left after allegedly witnessing another steal two sacks of grain during the harvest and:

"...decided that I couldn't work with the constant suspicion that fellow *socios* were cheating me".

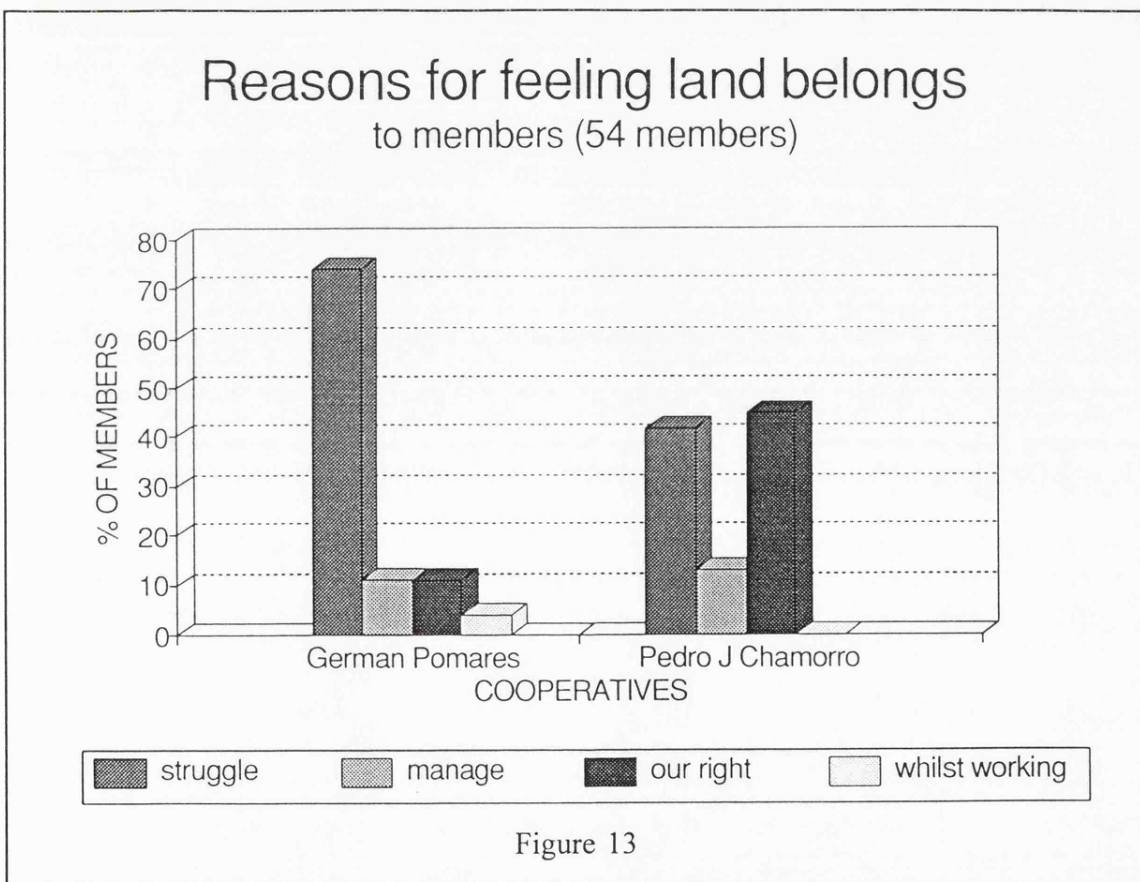
Other perceived costs related to the flip side of the "supportive" feature of collectivized production as perceived by its members. Whereas the cooperative was able to protect individuals during personal and family crises, it also enabled a few individuals to "free-ride" and reap its benefits. This was a negative aspect that members themselves conceded. This phenomenon was termed *chineado* (mollycoddled) in the colloquialism of both cooperatives and presented a repeated problem and potential area for conflict amongst members. For example in GP, members mentioned (in confidence) Miguel as one man in particular who they thought would be unable to eke a living without the cooperative's support, given his compulsive smoking and drinking on which he notoriously squandered his money. Similarly, alcoholism involving prolonged periods of absenteeism comprised a case of free-riding.

The influence of subjective factors in membership is further evident from the voluntary departure of some members throughout the history of the two cooperatives in

response to the periods of particular economic hardship which had occurred throughout the history of the cooperatives. Other members explained that:

".. the economic state of the cooperative meant that some aren't prepared to work for so little."¹⁰

Despite sharing similar economic circumstance other stayed to confront and endure the difficulties in the hope of a better future. In these situations perhaps other subjective meanings as they relate to the individuals identity with the land are influential.



Here, the findings shown in Figure 13 are useful since they reveal the different reasons and experiences which led individuals to feel that the land belonged to them. This is crucial since it is impossible to understand the decisions and behaviour of the Nicaraguan peasantry without recognising that these are rooted in reference to anticipated family needs of the future (CIERA, 1985:21). Although four members stated that they did not consider the land belonged to them (two were long-term members), the others felt

that it and a few qualified this with the *proviso* that this only applied "whilst working" on it. More interestingly, Figure 13 indicates that other factors and experiences generated this sense of belonging. Thus, the personal sacrifice and commitment entailed in the "struggle" for the land and to establish the cooperative was the primary reason why founders considered the land belonged to them. Others (most notably those in PJCh), asserting that the land was theirs because it was "our right" to have it, were either expressing peasant notions of the moral justice of what is rightly theirs (Knight, 1992) or were sufficiently versed with the principles of the agrarian reform and recognised the land theirs because the law established it as such. Finally, a smaller number considered that their contribution to the running and "management" of the cooperative made them feel the land was theirs.

While the data in Figure 13 is presented in this chapter because it provides complementary information concerning the relative significance of economic motivation or subjective values for membership, the extent to which peasants identified with the cooperative - and the reasons for that identification - also contributed to shaping the participatory process as the subsequent chapters indicate. The findings in Figure 13 are also pertinent to our subsequent discussion of empowerment since they indicate that these peasants saw the land as rightfully theirs and understood that these claims were legitimised by state policy.

Conclusions

Whereas the GP was almost self-sufficient, received good state technical assistance and could produce for subsistence, the PJCh increasingly relied on (second level) cooperative services and, as a primary agroexport producer, depended on credit from the bank for its coffee cultivation. Its high level of commodity exchange rendered members' income vulnerable to shifts in macroeconomic and adjustment policies. These objective realities of production and the insertion of the cooperatives into the national economy comprised the material conditions of the members' experiences. They also created the context in which individual and group behaviour developed and strategies were sought and in which opinions and meanings of their own *campesino* predicament, the government, state and the revolution evolved.

Clearly, cooperative membership, while materially motivated, was also influenced by a range of subjective social and ideological values. This is important since it indicates the significance of life experiences other than economic ones which influenced the content and dimensions of the social consciousness of the peasantry. The theoretical implication of this finding is to eliminate the notion that the ideas of the peasantry are necessarily determined by external material circumstances or by external agents or forces. Rather, it indicates that they exist and change in complex relation to them (Gutmann, 1993:78). Thus, our actor-oriented analysis has so far indicated that the ideas, behaviour and consciousness of the subjects of this thesis should not be viewed as the product of an external imposition (by an agent or force) but as evolving and developing in response to external more distant social and political phenomena.

Notes to Chapter 6

1.1 manzana = 0.7 hectares, 50 manzanas = 35 hectares.

.Wilfredo Espinoza, personal interview September 1990.

3.David Ruiz, personal interview, BND Tola, December 1989.

4.Equivalent to 555 hectares.

5.Although an attractive price of US\$125 was offered (instead of the US\$60 previously received from ENCAFE) the harvest of this first year was the poorest for years, down approximately 20% of the production.

6.Confronted with the human tragedy of this reality, local UNAG representatives were personally reluctant to intervene despite their commitment to promote IRENA's policies. However, seven months later the state agency was arriving on a weekly basis to inspect the state of the trees.

7.This interpretation applied to case of Francisco from PJCh who lamented the material situation profoundly. The following remark of Francisco indicates the level of his disillusionment:

"When I look at the situation in the life of the cooperatives I don't and can't believe in a God!"

8.This finding came about when I decided to repeat the questionnaire on two members after the elections to see whether responses differed. This found discrepancies only in this area of religious belief.

9.Here I believe some responded less out of personal commitment than because it was "official" CAS ideology and was the response that best conforms to what they perceived to be my expectations.

10.A point raised by members during an assembly in PJCh, February 1990.

Chapter 7

COOPERATIVE ASSEMBLY: PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

From here onwards the inquiry moves on to examine the participatory processes themselves and it is the function of this chapter to focus on the operational dimensions of the political practices and decision-making processes of the cooperative at an aggregate, unit level. Thus, it looks to the assembly where all members nominally participated even though, as becomes apparent later, it is analytically problematic to disentangle the developments occurring within this entity from the phenomenon of cooperative leadership. Nonetheless, it provides an opportunity to evaluate current participatory practices in relation to previous political experiences, to external intervention and cooperative leadership.

Analysis here requires that we attempt to identify the relative influence of various forces and agents in shaping participatory processes. This task is enhanced with reference to the initial conceptual framework which indicated that the absence of democratic traditions in the context of a post-authoritarian regime imposed particular obstacles to the development of new political practices. Consequently, here we need to consider how and in what way this legacy constrained participation as well as identify the impact of the new political agents in Nicaragua, of the mass organisations, FSLN party and state and the cooperative responses to them.

Finally, our evaluation of participation within the cooperatives will be undertaken in direct reference to the type of participation occurring: to the intensities of the activities underway within them and with attention to the degrees of autonomy and control.

I Authoritarianism and subordination: the antecedent

During the Somoza dictatorship (as already noted in Chapter 2) political domination was exerted through coercion and the violence of the National Guard - which particularly affected the countryside - and by the ideological hegemony of the dictatorship. Under such circumstances there were no civil organisations or associations within society or the countryside and overt forms of political dissent within Nicaragua were inhibited¹. More

than just anti-participatory, this political system was authoritarian and exclusive. Although there is little literature detailing the nature of local or regional power in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua, the weakness of the Nicaraguan state apparatus during the Somozan era - as in other Latin American countries in an earlier period - meant that at the local level the *hacendados* (landlords) exercised their personal power over a region which corresponded to the area of influence of the hacienda². Typically, *hacendados* protected their economic and political interests by upholding the economic, political and social order through the use of violence, imposed by private police or in collusion with the National Guard. The effect of this systematic use of violence was to silence vocal expressions of dissent or opposition as the following and typical comment from a peasant suggests:

"During Somoza we were afraid to speak, talk out, or discuss anything."³

Peasant acquiescence in this authoritarian political system (as elsewhere in Latin America) was also maintained through a matrix of hierarchical social relations emanating from the *hacendado* to include the direct dependents of the *hacienda* as well as other producers in semi-autonomous farms in the vicinity. As to whether these *hacendados* constituted either *caudillos* or *caciques* (the precise meaning of which is disputed in a discussion rife with definitions and counter-definitions), it would appear that they conformed to the *caudillo-hacendados* or "strong man", as identified by Wolf (1967). According to Wolf (1967) these *caudillos*, allegedly obsolete in other parts of Latin America since the advent of commercial and industrial capital and the expansion of the state apparatus, would have persisted in some areas of Nicaragua because of the retardation of these developments. In exchange for attempting to obtain benefits for their social base, in the form of schools, electricity lines or roads, *caudillo-hacendados* mobilised a mass of peasant support during elections or during factional conflicts against opponents. In such a way the *hacendados* served a political function as a type of mediator between the rural inhabitants, the municipal, departmental and national government and as such formed an integral part of state power⁴: a mediating position which gave their power its two-way characteristic of linking the state to the people and the people to the state via verticalist control.

The social relations between the *hacendado* and the peasants, his subordinates, were structured in patron-client relationships and were manifest in various socio-cultural

institutions including *patronazgo* (paternalism), *clientelismo* (clientalism) and *compadrazgo* (godfatherhood). These symbolic social relationships subordinated individuals to the patron and assured them a measure of material security (such as access to land or loans). They also established the basis of cooperation and protection against unforeseen circumstances in a violent environment (Bartra, 1975). Violence was commonly exercised by the *caudillos*, the patron or the National Guard against the peasant father who in turn used violence against the mother and children. This unilateral verticalist application of violence reinforced the social hierarchy and reproduced the notion of the family as one based on patriarchal authority. It socialised *campesino* children through *habitus* into learning the importance of subordination to paternal power and by extension, the necessity of obeying their superiors in other social spheres. In this way, peasants learnt not to take initiative without authorisation (Perez, 1990) and thus potential threats to the status quo were reduced.

In some areas of Nicaragua, perhaps limited to those where agrarian capitalism was most advanced⁵, there were also equivalents of the local popularist leader, the *cacique*, as identified in studies on post-revolutionary Mexico. By contrast to the *caudillo-hacendado*, the *cacique* can be defined as an essentially local male populist leader who is typically (but not essentially) a charismatic leader, has a following and is someone with whom both the state and the *caudillo* have to negotiate (de la Peña, undated, 2-3). Defined in this way, *caciquismo* constitutes an axis in the structure of mediation between social classes since he is linked to the political patrons at a higher level and maintains his power by gaining resources from above for the communities he represents (Barta, 1975). There are as Lomnitz-Adler indicates (1992), different types of *caciques* with different kinds of power relations and who operate in different positions. In western Nicaragua, there is evidence that the leaders of peasant communities, agricultural unions and indigenous communities were such *caciques* who represented the popular classes and fulfilled the function of political mediation. This is documented by Gould (1990) who observes how they variously accepted, challenged or opposed the actions or policies of local landlords, mill owners, regional authorities and the state during the dictatorship. What they had in common with each other is that they mediated between the needs of the nation state (or private corporation) and the actual on-the-ground situation of the peasantry or workers and derived their power from this mediation (Lomnitz-Adler, 1992:296). It is thus significant

that this area corresponds, as previously noted, to the region of Nicaragua where agrarian capitalism was most mature. Here the social contradictions were greatest and a political niche created for individuals who fulfilled this function. As with the *caudillo-hacendado*, the social relationship of the *cacique* and his followers were expressed through the vertical clientist relationships, such as *compadrazgo*.

Similarly, the dominant social order was perpetuated because *campesinos* would typically vote for the party to whom their landlord was loyal, thereby following the voting preference of their parents⁶. The presence of the National Guard at voting stations ensured that disapproval of the dictatorship could not be registered via the electoral process and in some areas meant that no votes were made against the Somoza (Serra, 1991:47).

Thus the traditional Liberal/ Conservative antagonisms which divided the peasantry were reproduced through generations, creating alliances and enemies between communities and villages. But if political loyalties split the peasantry, then other factors also served to maintain political hegemony through their effect of weakening the peasantry as a social sector. The lack of formal education provided to rural inhabitants denied them the basic tools of knowledge and self-improvement further debilitated them. They also lacked their own organisations which represented them.

Although there had been sporadic uprisings and protests in response to the expansionist demands of the landlords and the state the peasantry were restricted from developing into a regional movement by their "localist" consciousness. This refers to the political and social horizons of the peasants which are traditionally confined to the area corresponding to their communities or villages and the geographical scope of their economic activity (Lomnitz-Adler, 1992). Their knowledge of the nation or state in which they lived remained uncertain and patchy and as such they were unable to identify the relationship between their immediate microcosm and the macrocosm of the political system under which they resided. This inhibited them from developing effective political action (Hobsbawn, 1973:7-8).

In sum, there were no political mechanisms or social spaces where politics could be freely discussed and no alternative ideology with which to articulate effective opposition. Nor was there a legitimate organisation or party to represent the socioeconomic and political interests of the peasants. There was no democratic tradition of politics or notion of consensus and legitimacy as a basis of leadership or government, nor was there

experience of exercising voice and vote or of selecting leaders.

Against this historical context, the emergence in Nicaragua of the Delegates of the Word and Christian base communities provided a forum where economic hardship, social problems and politics - framed within the context of religious interpretations - could be discussed. This was significant, as we saw in Chapter 2, in initiating a process amongst the poor of critical reflection on the reasons for their poverty. Also, in some areas where capitalist labour processes were most advanced, the political struggles of the peasantry functioned to sap the dictatorship of its ideological legitimacy (Gould, 1990). This was followed in some areas of Nicaragua by the work of the FSLN and the ATC in the insurrectional movement which provided *campesinos* with their first exposure to an alternative political ideology and an opportunity for co-ordinated and systematic involvement in organised political activity and ultimately military action.

Yet, even for those relatively few *campesinos* who were involved in the insurrection, participation was not accompanied automatically by an upsurge in revolutionary consciousness. The revolutionary discourse of the FSLN guerilla, whose political awareness had been forged through the years in the mountains, clandestine cells or popular organisations, could not - as if by a process of political osmosis - penetrate even the cities' factories, least of all the remote rural areas. This meant that for peasants, participation within the cooperatives represented a new political experience in a double sense. It consisted of an encounter with revolutionary and national discourses and practices as well as unfamiliar organisational and decision-making practices. The extent to which these encounters and experiences served to empower them is our analytical point of departure.

II General assembly as a forum for participation

As collectivised production cooperatives, these CAS cooperatives required a degree of social organisation amongst their constituent membership in order to define how the cooperative should develop. This necessitates a mechanism by which the membership can propose, discuss and approve issues of collective interest. That forum was the general assembly which incorporated all cooperative members. It is therefore an important entity for analysis of the cooperative's participatory processes since the range of participatory opportunities were defined within this operational decision-making structure.

III1 Formal guarantees for participation

As previously described, the regulations of both cooperatives included the commitment to the principles of democratic control by members. The regulations established internal democracy as the rule of one member, one vote. Moreover, they established that the individual had both a right and a duty to participate in decision-making within the assembly and take office when elected and where qualified with appropriate skills. The regulations also established the organisational structures within the cooperatives: the general assembly, the *directivo* or management body (henceforth, the leadership) and the work commissions. Of these, the general assembly was identified as the "maximum authority". Members were required to attend; indeed "participation" was established in the regulations as both a right and a duty of all members. This notion of participation, perhaps suggestive of a coercive approach, constituted a formal provision for participation of members but could only assure the physical presence of members at meetings. The assemblies in both cooperatives followed an agenda previously drawn up by the five management officers in the leadership who would meet a few hours or the day before. Members were free to raise any other issue. Partners of members were not invited to attend.

The offices of the leadership in both cooperatives were the same. Their responsibilities as defined in the regulations were the following. The president was the official representative of the cooperative, supervised all managerial and administrative tasks and ensured that everyone adhered to the rules. The vice-president assisted in general administration and assumed the role of the presidency in the absence of the president. The responsibilities of the production officer entailed planning and organising all the collective production tasks, including the work commissions, fertilisation, disease control and harvesting. The education officer was responsible for organising the training and education of the members. Finally, the task of the defence officer was to organise the defence of the cooperative and coordinate with the local battalion to ensure that the cooperative fulfilled its national military responsibilities.

These regulations provided a legal framework which guaranteed equality and democratic rights between members. However, the two cooperative case studies varied in the extent to which they adhered to these formal rules as a consequence of the lack of familiarity with these democratic notions as much because of the concentration of power

within a few individuals.

II2 Assembly practices and functions

The following general descriptions illustrate the nature of the participatory practices evolving within the cooperatives. We start first with a typical meeting in GP held on 10 December 1990. Here, the assembly opened with Santos Nicoya, the president, informing the cooperative that an FSLN election campaign demonstration was to be held in Rivas later in the month. He and another member, Gilberto Espinoza (a previous president), both stressed that it was important for the cooperative to attend to show support for the FSLN since GP set an example as a "vanguard cooperative in the IV Region". Pedro Aguilar, the mechanic, intervened to reiterate that their political support should be expressed by their presence. No other comments were made concerning this issue.

This was followed by Carlos Tenerio, the production officer, who proposed that the area under plantain production should be increased and the work commissions reorganised. He consulted the assembly for members' opinions. Since members were free to discuss all issues, in this case a generalised discussion ensued, involving eight interventions from other members, including ordinary members, who proposed alternative suggestions to modify Carlos' proposal. A collective decision was reached, marked by the absence of any verbal objection to the final proposal. This topic marked the end of the agenda, after which members were able to raise any further points.

At this point two women, whose husbands were members mobilised in "the reserve" at the time, stood up and appealed to the cooperative to give them more food. They explained that their families were in a state of "permanent hunger". The assembly listened sympathetically but decided to refuse their request. Afterwards, the president then spoke to them in what amounted to a private conversation while the meeting broke down. He explained to the women the established arrangement for families of mobilised members: that they receive 50% of the economic assistance and annual profits. Then, without consulting the assembly, Santos promised them personally that they would be given more plantains. Family members were rarely present at assemblies since they were not, according to the regulations, formally recognised as having the right to the decision-making processes. The meeting was then adjourned by Santos. Luis Rivera, the current education officer, raised the issue of the MIDINRA-supported bean project and a lively

debate followed concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of the existing arrangements. Following contributions from four ordinary members, a consensus was reached to continue the project as it was until the following season.

Finally, Santos notified the assembly that the solidarity brigade from Puerto Rico, which had visited the cooperative the previous year, had sent a sum of US\$1,000 to the cooperative. He invited the assembly to suggest what they should do with the funds. In the absence of any response, he announced that it would be used to buy an irrigation system. The meeting concluded with Wilfredo Espinoza, a fellow officer, reading the letter which had accompanied the cheque from their Puertorican friends.

We now turn to an assembly in PJCh held on 12 February 1990. This started with Lorenzo, the president, who opened the meeting by asking those assembled what should be done with the profits for that year: whether they should be invested or distributed between the *socios*. Other members of the leadership proposed that a large proportion be used to invest in the cooperative, but were strongly opposed and eventually outvoted - by a hand count - by ordinary members who decided that the money should be divided between members. A general discussion about the costs and value of the cooperative lorry followed. After numerous interventions about the merits of maintaining it, the assembly voted to use cooperative funds to buy a new battery. Next, a member requested from the cooperative a financial contribution towards the funeral of his niece and permission for two days leave so that he could make the necessary arrangements. This was unanimously agreed. The leadership then informed the assembly of the travel details which it had arranged for the cooperative's planned visit to Masaya to attend a political rally.

Then Francisco Calero, the defence officer, reminded the men that they should take their night-guard duties very seriously and he warned that their recent laxity was a potential hazard to the cooperative's security. In response, various ordinary members forwarded suggestions about how to improve the rota to overcome the problems caused by the fact that some of the men lived beyond the Santa Maxima finca. A decision was reached through consensus, about how to accommodate the duties of those who lived afar. Finally, a report was presented by the leadership on the progress of the cooperative's legal documents currently being drawn up by MIDINRA. Since no further items were raised by members on invitation, the meeting then finished.

During other assemblies, additional topics included the issue of the cooperatives'

personnel quotas for the national reserve army; contributions to local community project and the application of disciplinary measures. The assemblies also addressed welfare issues, such as whether to contribute towards purchasing spectacles for one member, or dealing with the sensitive task of responding to a *socio*, furious with a fellow member who he suspected had taken his wife as a lover. Members were never reluctant to attend and, as with the commitment to productive tasks, they accepted the rule that each person should attend meetings as they had originally agreed on integrating into the cooperative.

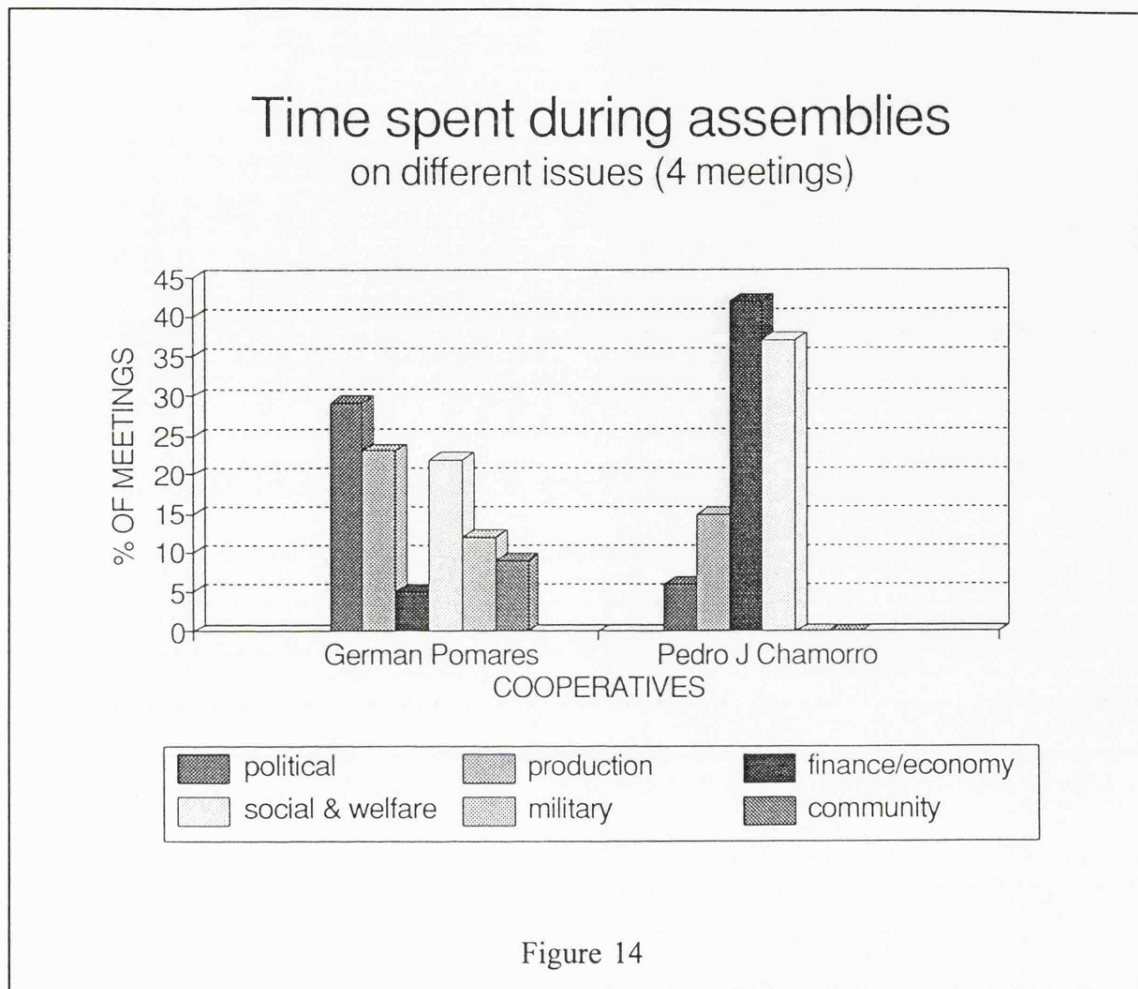
Before analysing more systematically the nature of the participatory processes occurring within these assemblies a brief mention must be made here of the fact that not everyone used the assembly as the forum for discussion, problem solving and decision-making. Some sought informal alternatives. Consequently, leaders were repeatedly warning against the dangers of resorting to what they referred to as "gossiping in the hills" and stressed the importance of restricting the discussion of cooperative-related matters, including personal grievances, to the arena of the assembly. Members were told by the leaders that informal arguments threatened the very social fabric and stability of the cooperative. Here, the assembly was seen as "order" while "gossiping" was represented as anarchy. The regulations were unequivocal:

"Criticisms in the fields or any other place are forbidden, unless they are constructive. They should take place only in the Assemblies."⁷

One interpretation of the problem of persuading individuals to confine discussion to the space of the assembly might be that the assembly represented a new and unfamiliar institution. However, analysis of the reasons why women were reluctant to use the assembly (undertaken in detail in Chapter 9) points to other factors such as feelings of inferiority before a large group. Although it was by no means only the women who discussed collective issues outside the assembly forum, this subjective element relating to negative self-images was a general determinant in influencing the individual participation.

A content analysis of two assemblies of the two cooperatives held between October 1989 and February 1990 is represented in Figure 14 which indicates the relative time assigned to the main categories of issues discussed collectively. At this point in the analysis it serves the general purpose of indicating the areas of collective debate and together with the above observations demonstrates that the assembly was an arena in which the cooperative discussed and resolved problems relating to all the aspects of its

existence and functioning.



However, we also see that there are significant differences between the time spent on community, military and finance/economy- related issues between the two cooperatives for which there are different reasons. Community and military issues were rarely on the agenda in the meetings of PJCh because, unlike GP, it did not articulate closely with either. By contrast, the relatively small amount of time dedicated to financial and economic matters in GP is a product of them being debated and decided upon amongst the leadership, that is outside the Assembly arena.

Moving on from a general description of cooperative meetings, we can now start to analyse the nature of the participation underway within them. Equipped with our conceptual framework of participation we can identify different participatory activities which are distinguished by their intensities. Thus, we can observe that within the

assemblies the whole gamut of participation was occurring from information sharing and consultation, through to more intense participatory activities of decision-making and

Table 4 Primary functions of the Assembly according to members				
Function	Cooperatives			
	German Pomares		Pedro J Chamorro	
	No	%	No	%
Decision-making	29	73	32	78
Inform	7	17	4	10
Consultation	4	10	2	5
Other	-	-	3	7
Total*	40	100	41	100

*Individuals could give more than one response

initiating action. Although these are examined more critically below, it is relevant to note that as far as the majority of members themselves were concerned the primary function of the assemblies was "decision-making", as Table 4 indicates. The existence of these high intensity forms which involve greater levels of control of the participants, suggests that this participation was leading to empowerment. However, in this case we need to be more critical about the degree of control obtained by the assembly and the extent of its influence on various social, organisational and productive aspects of the cooperative. This, as the following demonstrates is influenced by two main factors: first, the cooperatives' relationship to the external agents, including the revolutionary authorities and mass organisations and second, its interaction with cooperative leadership.

II3 Autonomy and control

The purpose of this section is to establish the parameters which defined the extent of the autonomy and control of the assemblies and to identify the extent to which external agents and the leaders effected all four dimensions of participation, namely information sharing, consultation, decision-making and initiative taking.

II3a *Vis-a-vis* the state

As outlined in a generalised description in Chapter 4, cooperative development in Nicaragua occurred in the context of a state which perceived them as objects to be subordinated to its directed planning. Despite the flexibilisation of state policies towards the peasantry and cooperatives after 1985, intervention still occurred in a few key aspects of cooperative organisation. By definition this limited the autonomy of their decision-making capacity.

An organisational criteria had always been imposed by the state concerning the structure of the CAS (a collectivised model which was also upheld by UNAG) thereby violating one of the internationally recognised golden principles of cooperative organisation: namely, the voluntary definition of organisation structure (Matus, 1990:42). This is clear in both cooperatives where discussion about their organisational model was explicitly forbidden in the regulations where it was euphemistically referred to as "speaking out against the cooperative". This rule was informally upheld in meetings: open discussion about the relative merits of collective production or other cooperative models was absent.

Since organisational structure was excluded from the cooperatives' decision-making agenda the assembly had to resolve and ameliorate the numerous "organisational" problems generated from the friction created from collective production. Most of these problems related to "free-riding" behaviour, such as work avoidance tactics which infuriated those who worked regularly and conscientiously. Dealing with the problem of alcoholism (a pervasive problem which had negative social and familial impacts) was a frequent issue for cooperative concern since the consequences of lost days in production were collectively borne by all members⁸.

Few members were familiar with other models of cooperative organisation and this reflected a low level of awareness of cooperativism. Only the leaders (past and present) and the cooperative founders who had received courses on basic cooperative organisation were clear about alternative cooperative models and could comment critically about their relative merits. Nonetheless, the fact that both cooperatives opted to de-collectivise some of the land once the Sandinista Government fell, demonstrates that this level of collectivisation was not a voluntarily upheld model.

As a reflection of its conceptions about cooperatives and according to its national

political and economic objectives, MIDINRA imposed an organisational structure in both cooperatives thereby denying cooperative members' any participation or control over this important aspect of their lives. Considering that many were even unaware of alternative cooperative models, members were excluded from "information-sharing", "consultation", "decision-making" or "taking initiative" concerning this aspect of their cooperative. Thus, on this important aspect of their lives and organisational structure members' participation was reduced to that of "implementing" national directives.

As regards state intervention in production, this was of a different nature in both cooperatives. In GP, state intervention had been greater in previous years when MIDINRA's had repeatedly rejected its proposal to produce cattle. At the time of research, this had reduced dramatically and it had recovered greater degrees of control over its production although the cooperative was complying with MIDINRA's production plans to produce sorghum for which it received credit. However, it was also co-operating with MIDINRA in an experiment with new strains of bean and maize and here, as we saw from the description of assembly activities, the cooperative exerted high levels of control over the project. It was not obliged to continue with the commitment if it so wished. This autonomy was largely a product of the cooperatives' high level of financial independence and in some productive activities the cooperative even acted independently from state directives, sometimes against its recommendations. This was the case with its experimentation with the production of horticultural crops using its newly acquired irrigation system obtained through international solidarity. Translating this to the conceptualised framework of participation we can see that GP enjoyed a high degree of control over its productive activities and included consultation, decision-making and initiative taking.

The situation in the PJCh was different on account of the cooperative's dependence on the availability of bank credit in order to sustain its high production costs throughout the year. Here, the National Development Bank (BND) was influential to the extent that it had to approve the cooperatives production plans before financing was granted. Although economically expedient, this involvement represented a loss of control of the cooperative over its production plans although leaders reported that this approval system consisted most usually of minor amendments to the assembly's original plans⁹. Here the participatory activity of the cooperative involved consultation only.

There was an economic activity over which the state had no control in PJCh and that relates to the cooperative's exploitation of dried firewood which members collected from the cooperative to sell. However, as we saw previously, when the cooperative started felling live timber it came into direct confrontation with the state whose Institute of Natural Resources (IRENA) subsequently fined the cooperative for unlawful exploitation of its trees. IRENA again intervened to prevent further deforestation when, in the context of a tightening of credit facilities, the cooperative had again taken to selling its wood to supplement members' income. This represents the most extreme form of state intervention where local initiative (in this case involving resource exploitation) was not only stopped but was castigated.

II3b The assembly/leadership dynamic

Apart from its relative autonomy from the state, the autonomy of the assembly was also defined in relation to the leadership. This differed dramatically with consequent implications for participation. The extent to which leadership affected cooperative participation is examined below.

Subordinated assembly of German Pomares

The most systematic way to understand how leadership affected participation within the cooperative is to examine its impact on each participatory activity. Firstly, in relation to information sharing. Although leadership officers were formally obliged to give regular reports to the cooperative, they often deprived the assembly of detailed information pertaining to matters of collective interest: a tendency acknowledged by two serving officers. In particular, ordinary members were deprived of the information on which decisions were based for the division of annual profits. They had no access to the records of work attendance, information which would have served as a mechanism of accountability of the leaders' decisions.

However, contrary to my own observations, as many as 27 out of 32 respondents stated that they were satisfied that the assembly was informed about all pertinent activities, although five respondents were uneasy about being kept in the dark over issues of collective interests. Similarly, interviewees said they were satisfied that the leadership did consult the assembly where relevant. While this may have been a function of members'

ignorance about leadership practices, this discrepancy can be accounted for as it relates to the underdeveloped nature of civil society. In a political culture where the concepts and practices of legitimacy and accountability of leaders were novel, members were unaccustomed to demand greater transparency from their leaders. Here, the comments of one are illustrative:

"Sometimes the leadership fails to tell us things, and we hear of them through other sources. The council (the FSLN base committee) also has things which it keeps to itself and in which we have no part... they do have this fault."¹⁰

While aware of this tendency there was an apparent acceptance that that's just the way things were with leaders.

Moving now to consider how leadership affected the decision-making functions of the assembly we see that decision-making was traditionally concentrated in the leadership in GP. Under the current presidency of Santos Nicoya, that tendency was concentrated even further. Despite the regulations specifying that assemblies be convened by the president once a month, longer periods elapsed between meetings (on one occasion this was for eight weeks). Of necessity this meant that the leadership was taking decisions without prior referral to the assembly for collective decision-making or consultation while by contrast, the leadership continued to meet every week.

The decision-making procedures established in the regulations were violated in other ways since major decisions about the cooperative's functioning and development were not taken in the assembly but were reached unofficially in the "council". This was a non-elected body which corresponded to the FSLN base committee and included all eighteen members of the cooperative's FSLN *militantes* (fully fledged party members) and its *aspirantes* (those aspiring to membership). When they met, any elected officers of the leadership who were not party members were also invited. For the duration of the research this meant only Luis Rivera. Details of the production plans, capital investment projects and local community activities were discussed within the council before the issues were put before the assembly. Given the numerical significance of its members who held a united position, the council was able to swing the outcome of most assembly decisions to the policies it favoured.

The council was also where decisions about who should attend adult literacy classes were taken and at the time of research all those studying were council members. This practice so appalled a local teacher that he swore to thwart it by going directly to the

members himself to inform them of their individual rights to have an education independently of the decision of cooperative¹¹. Additionally, the council decided who amongst the members would be sent off to the reserve army. Their main criterion for selection was those who they defined as "going around a little disoriented", meaning those men who were behaving irresponsibly at work, getting too drunk too often or were not convinced Sandinista supporters. The council's logic was that such individuals would benefit from a good dose of "patriotic service", alongside the accompanying discipline and fear, which they perceived would rectify their ways and ultimately strengthen the cooperative's organisation. Nonetheless, members of the council themselves also volunteered to be mobilised and within the council were men who had spent the longest periods in combat: some for as long as five years on the front line.

As seriously, key economic decisions were made within the council. In particular, the amount of weekly economic assistance was established here. During one debate, the council decided to maintain it at a low level because if "they had more they'd spend it on booze"¹², revealing a paternalistic attitude towards other *socios*. Despite the establishment in the regulations of the principle of the proportional share of profits according to work done, the council alone established how much of the share of profits each member would receive. It had devised an informal schema of four categories of membership. This allocated founders a full 100% of their share of the profits; "old" members (of more than five years integration) with 75% and 50% for those who had been members for over a year. Newcomers had none: their share counting as their initial capital downpayment, although this principle was not embodied in the regulations. Yet, even these categories were flexibly interpreted and an additional and ambivalent criterion of "performance" was added to the equation. This arrangement clearly favoured the founding and older-serving members: as far as they were concerned it represented their just reward for their commitment and efforts invested in the development of the cooperative.

This unofficial division of profits was implemented year after year. As a general policy it went unchallenged, even though occasionally an ordinary member might question the basis of the decision as it related to his or her own particular case. While the lack of access to information on which the decision was based might have prevented a concerted challenge from non-council members there was also an acceptance that personal enrichment was an integral part of leadership.

The distribution of internal power as it related to the concentration of decision-making within the leadership was recognised by the members themselves, as Figure 15 shows. This tendency worried local Sandinista friends of the cooperative, who described ordinary members in the assembly as being "at the mercy of the 'others'", meaning the leadership¹³. Yet, the members themselves were not necessarily perturbed by this.

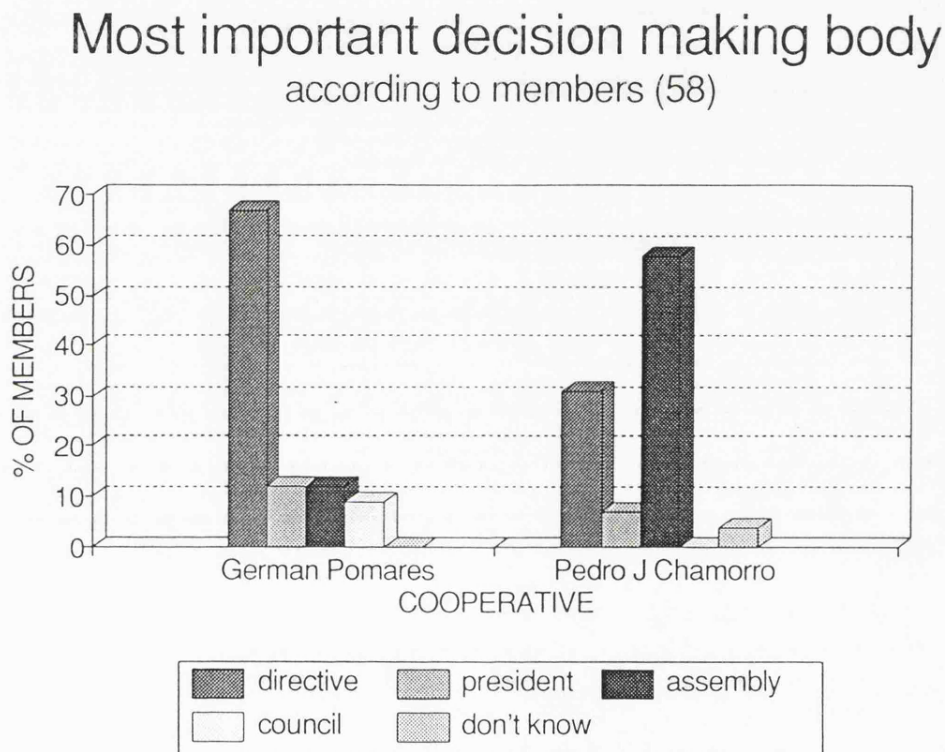


Figure 15

Given the leaders' monopolisation of decision-making functions within this cooperative concerning important aspects of its viability and development, the opportunities for ordinary members to participate were reduced. Thus in these issues, the participation of ordinary members was restricted to lower intensity levels of information-sharing and consultation. In other issues, including some production matters, the organisation of work, welfare concerns and problems relating to the community, ordinary members enjoyed greater influence and control.

The Pedro Joaquin Chamorro assembly overrules

By contrast to GP, the assembly in PJCh enjoyed greater power. The regulations, as rules regulating internal proceedings according to democratic principles, were also physically accessible to ordinary members to use as a basis of information concerning their rights and duties and as a general reference to cooperative rules and decision-making procedures. Unlike GP, the leaders in PJCh were transparent about information, a feature most pertinently illustrated in relation to division of annual profits. When this occurred, the leaders not only adhered religiously to the established rules and calculated it in strict accordance with the number of days worked throughout the agricultural year, but a chart was displayed at the Annual General Assembly, which showed what days had been recorded as days worked by every member. The system was fair and systematic and the information provided constituted a crucial system of accountability, since errors in recording did occasionally occur. Indeed, all members reported that they were satisfied that the leadership informed the assembly of all its activities and were similarly confident that they were sufficiently consulted by them.

As regards the decision-making functions of the cooperative, members were in no doubt that the assembly was the most important entity, as the above Figure 15 shows. This was partially facilitated by the regular and frequent assemblies held in PJCh (unlike in GP) every two weeks which lasted between two and three hours, the same duration as in GP. The authority and independent decision-making capacity of the assembly was also assured by the leaders' respect for the regulations. On one occasion, officers referred to the guidelines for procedures about how to dismiss one member who had been constantly drunk for twenty days and had already received two warnings. Having consulted the regulations and faithfully followed them, the leaders then proposed before the entire assembly, that the man be dismissed. This was subsequently approved albeit reluctantly (because members were seriously concerned for the welfare of his family).

Here, the decision-making authority of the assembly was assured not just from the efforts of the leaders but because it was demanded by the ordinary members themselves. Ordinary members and leaders alike reprimanded anyone who failed to respect the assembly as the maximum authority. One example is illustrative. In the annual general meeting when the division of annual profits was being discussed, the assembly became divided. The leaders proposed investing the funds in improving the cooperative and the

ordinary members proposed that they have immediate access to it for private use. When Jeronimo, the organisation officer, complained that the money would only disappear the next day through "bad use", a colleague retorted that it was the prerogative of each person to decide how to spend his/her money. He also pointed out that on this issue Jeronimo was democratically over-ruled, since the majority of ordinary members disagreed with him.

The most explicit indication that the assembly operated as the main decision-making body was that, unlike the situation in GP where decisions of the assembly mainly coincided with those proposed by the leadership, in PJCh it frequently defeated the leaders' proposals. The disappointment felt by the officers was a reflection that indeed the assembly was the main decision-making forum and that genuine participatory democracy was operating. Contradictorily, the outcomes of the decisions of the assembly sometimes meant the rejection of socially progressive proposals relating to cooperative welfare and the socioeconomic status of women and demonstrates a contradiction of the practice of participation since equal participation in the decision-making process does not necessarily guarantee that socioeconomic equality will be achieved. Nonetheless, the relative lack of monopolisation of decision-making functions within the leadership endowed ordinary members within the assembly with the opportunity to participate in high intensity activities of decision-making and even initiating action.

III Towards cooperative empowerment

Having refined our analysis of the role of external agents and leadership in the scope and autonomy of the assembly as a decision-making forum, we are now in an informed position to evaluate the effects of these participatory processes in terms of the degrees and dimensions of participation that they entailed. Evidence for this is apparent in three inextricably related areas as they relate to the skills acquired, political consciousness and political action. Each will be examined in turn.

Through their incorporation into the cooperative, members gained formal access to the decision-making process and were given the opportunity to participate in and be responsible for managing the technical, financial, administrative and social aspects of their productive unit. Such decision-making opportunities were unprecedented for *campesinos*.

Despite the monopolisation of decision-making within the leadership of GP, ordinary members participated in decision-making in some areas of cooperative life, while ordinary members within the assembly in PJCh had greater access to the decision-making process. To this extent the political power of individuals, as defined by Friedmann (1991), was increased since they gained access to decision-making processes which directly affected their lives and in which they could influence using formal voting and collective action.

The experience of self-management also endowed individuals with the technical skills and knowledge which enabled them to take responsibility for the operational aspects of cooperative management. This experience of self-management developed the strength which enabled them to deal with the appropriate government agencies: it enhanced their capacity to operate. Commenting:

"A nosotros parecía loco poder llegar al banco a pedir prestamos cuando antes ni nos permitirían entrar",

(that it seemed incredible to be able to ask for credit from the bank when before we were not even allowed to enter), it would seem that the experiences served to improve the *campesinos* capacity to deal with the institutions of the state. Consequently, the outcome of this process could therefore be identified as having strengthened the "capacity building" of cooperative members. While significant in itself for its practical utility, these newly acquired skills also endowed individuals with self-confidence, the implications of which are examined in more detail below.

Through participation within the cooperative, members were also being exposed to new organisational structures for the first time. Only two men from GP, as mentioned earlier, were involved as combatants in the guerilla movement and only six in GP and four from PJCh had been incorporated into the mass organisations before integrating into the cooperative. Apart from these exceptions, most of the subjects of this thesis cited the cooperative as their formative organisational and political experience. This itself was significant since it brought members together with the potential for collective action.

Cooperative members were therefore initiated into direct and systematic participation through their integration into the cooperative. Here, as the above description indicates, the assemblies operated as workshops for the practice of free speech, the use of voice and vote, collective reflection and the search for consensus amongst disparate positions. The relevance of this was not lost on members who reflected on these freedoms of speech

created by the revolution and operating within the cooperative. Members from both cooperatives compared them to the oppression they knew under Somoza:

"Now the people are involved in making decisions and have the right to take action and everyone has the right to do what they want: not like before."

Similarly,

"For the first time in Nicaragua everyone can give their opinion and say exactly what they want to."

Members identified these freedoms as representing a qualitative improvement to their lives: if their opposition before, under Somoza could only be expressed in "hidden" forms for fear of retribution or violence, members acknowledged that they now had the opportunity to express overtly their views. However, as we saw, not all were able to maximize these political freedoms available to them: the legacy of Somoza political culture weighed heavily.

In addition, working knowledge of the procedures and practices which were acquired by members from their assemblies equipped them with knowledge of official FSLN discourse. "Decision-making", "voting", "rights" and "duties" became more than abstract terms but were in practice used. In PJCh, the terms were vehemently contended between members and were used to prevent abuses by others: a situation which demonstrates the extent to which these notions had been appropriated by individual and were used effectively to protect their individual interests. As importantly, we see below that these terms also equipped members with a discourse with which to challenge external agents. In some cases members from both cooperatives had developed sophisticated appreciation of the meanings of these terms, for example, "consensus" was understood by several members as:

".. to arrive at an agreement and arrive there clear in your mind of what it means and of the implications."

Similarly, Jeronimo, a leader from PJCh, defined "democracy" in terms which reflected an acute insight into the problems of developing democratic practices in the context of an underdeveloped society such as Nicaragua by stating that he had come to know that it was not a "thing" that could be implemented or developed quickly but rather was a "process".

This grassroots and direct experience of new political practices constituted the basis for individuals' to understand wider political practices. Members from both cooperatives projected an appreciation of wider national developments from their own experience as

the following indicates:

"There's democracy in Nicaragua because we can organise ourselves if we wish."

and Luis Rivera, founder members of the GP:

"I still don't know exactly what democracy is, but in all the meetings that we hold I do have the opportunity to speak and make suggestions during discussions, about any issue that I feel is important and this is definitely participation, so I'd say that there is democracy in Nicaragua."

This experience of participation within the cooperatives also informed members' own appreciation of the meaning of participation. Table 5, indicates that most considered it was based on decision-making activities. Of particular interest here is the high proportion of respondents from GP who considered it synonymous with decision-making: again this can be explained as a function of their uncritical view and low expectations of leadership practices.

Table 5 The definition of participation according to interviewees (58)		
Definitions	GP	PJCh
Decision-making	22	11
Practical tasks	4	7
Mobilisation	5	4
Effect change	2	2
Don't know	6	6
TOTAL*	39	30

*Interviewees could give more than one response.

In this way, the peasants' understanding of their microcosm was extended to that of the macrocosm and formed the basis of their knowledge of national political system. The logic of this link was reinforced by the recognition that the changes in their local political environment were largely attributable to wider political forces. Thus, the assembly process equipped the members with knowledge of the wider political system and in such a way the "localism" of their consciousness was extended to a "nationalism" and and they

developed an awareness of the wider political processes. This was significant since for peasants to operate within a new revolutionary society and contend with the domination of the external forces in the form of the state, they needed the corresponding terminology and information about the new system to enable them successfully to make their demands and protect their interests.

If individual members were developing appropriate political skills and knowledge which could enable them to operate as more effective political actors, this was integrally related to the processes of psychological empowerment which was enhanced through cooperative membership. Through their combined experience of self-management and participatory democracy, newly acquired skills and the recognition of their own capacity to resolve some of the problems they confronted served to enhance their self-esteem and strengthened members' identity as peasants. This was not negated by contact with the state because the objective circumstances (namely, the changes in relations of production) meant that state resources, including credit, education and health care became available to peasants and gave them specific rights. Also, officials did not scorn *campesinos*, indeed it was common practice for local officials to be addressed as equals, with *compañero* and not *señor*, reflecting the absence of hierarchical social stratification. This enhanced self-image and dignity was most movingly expressed by a woman cooperative member:

"Before I used to think that to have healthy children was a privilege only of the rich: when mine died I believed it to be "natural". Now I have learnt to expect my children to live and to realise that it is possible for us poor ones to be healthy too."

In effect, objective conditions and the experiences of self-management and participatory democracy facilitated the substitution of values such as the unquestionable authority of the *patron*, of the merchant, or technical specialist or official. These subjective developments were crucial in facilitating the recognition of their potential for assuming a proactive role.

Although the processes of psychological empowerment amongst the women was contradictory, as is described in detail in Chapter 9, many referred to how their lives had changed since they integrated into the cooperative, reflecting typically that:

"Me relaciono mas con las personas, me llevo mejor con la gente"

(I relate better now with other people), and:

"Ya, estoy mas clara de lo que está pasando"

(Now, I understand more things about that happen). Their entry into the cooperative

provided them with an unprecedented opportunity to gain access to public space, social life beyond the family and the opportunity to interact with others, all of which led to an enhanced self-esteem. Thus, active involvement in decision-making was conducive to a process of empowerment, whereby the old values were delegitimised. Moreover, members came to recognise their own potential to initiate action and seek collective solutions to the situations they faced. They frequently motivated each other when confronted with problems by reminding each other that "*hay que superar*" (we must overcome problems). These subjective aspects constitute important elements of empowerment and represent a step in the construction of *campesinos* as political subjects of the revolution.

Beyond these subjective developments in consciousness, knowledge of the political environment and increased political skills in the art of debate and voting, what evidence was there to suggest tangible political empowerment for the cooperative members? There were several indications. The most explicit expression of political empowerment is manifest in the cooperatives' assertions of autonomy from external agents. In such a way, GP rejected MIDINRA's intervention in its production plans, as one member stated during a meeting:

"They in Rivas may think they know what's good for here, but we're here and we are the ones who decide what works."

This represents an overt form of resistance to the bureaucratic tendencies of the state which attempted to control the cooperative's productive activities and subordinate it to its national development objectives. It is also interesting to note that the above statement was expressed in a language which appealed to the right to autonomy, itself a notion introduced through FSLN discourse.

Another example of GP's belligerence towards external intervention is apparent from a conflict which arose between Mariano, the local UNAG promoter, after a member of the cooperative refused to do his active service. Mariano had intervened in an attempt to resolve the problem. Adan, cattle coordinator, explained:

"We had problems with UNAG because Mariano (sic) didn't understand since he hasn't been mobilised. I had to go to talk with him because he was being too flexible with certain people who were presenting "family problems" as a justification for not going. But these just weren't relevant problems."¹⁴

This confrontation between the cooperative and UNAG is expressed here as a personal

conflict since Mariano is identified as the object of scorn. However, this was because members tended to equate UNAG with the local promoter since the organisation suffered from a low profile in some areas because of its lack of projects aimed to educate members about its work. Nonetheless, the above statement represents a rejection of the UNAG concern for productive issues (established in its drive for autonomy from the FSLN) and must be seen as an assertion of the cooperative's priority to its military function. It is important to note also from the above incident that the cooperative (mediated through its leaders) was also challenging UNAG by asserting its right to participate in national political tasks and to undertake non-productive tasks.

Similarly, in one incident in PJCh the assembly unanimously rejected what it considered to be an attempt by UNAG to intervene in an issue they believed should be resolved by themselves alone. Omar, the production officer, explains:

"Juan Galan (the president of UNAG of Region IV) sent a letter to the UCA telling us how much each cooperative should give him for his election campaign. But this cooperative is composed of members who have votes and the power to decide and other institutions can't impose themselves on us. We thought, as did others in the UCA, that this was an imposition and so we decided that we'd determine ourselves how much to donate."

In the subsequent debate during the assembly members rejected the request because they saw it as blatantly "undemocratic" and consequently intolerable. A decision was taken to send instead, one fifth of the amount requested.

There are other instances to demonstrate the accumulated political power of the cooperatives. The GP was more conscientious of the relative political power it enjoyed vis-a-vis the revolutionary authorities. Here members emphatically rejected the notion of themselves as passive beneficiaries of the FSLN and saw themselves as active political subjects. They saw their relationship with the FSLN as being essentially two-way as Wilfredo Espinoza, vice-president, explains:

"For years we have been the vanguard in this region and when they make their decisions they look to us to see how we are and what we think, and so when it comes to giving, they help us out."

The GP cooperative also had direct representation in a number of local instances of revolutionary power. It had delegates represented in the Municipal Council; in the UNAG Municipal Council; in the Tienda Campesina; in various Community Committee and in local battalions. To this extent GP enjoyed a high political profile. Its power depended

precisely on its integration into revolutionary power. As we shall see in the following chapter, the leaders were key intermediaries in this vertical integration: the consequences for participation then become apparent.

By contrast, the political action of PJCh was quite different. It had on three previous occasions appealed directly to the government for assistance. On the first occasion, in the mid-1980s, the leaders had gone to Managua, the capital, to deliver to the office of the Vice-president a request for funds to reconstruct the roof of the *hacienda*. In this case the outcome had been fruitful: funds had been forthcoming and the repairs were made. A final unsuccessful attempt was made in 1989 to request one of the lorries due to arrive in the last Soviet consignment. This practice of appealing directly to central government was consistent with that seen within the UCA, to which PJCh was affiliated since. During the UCA's struggle for control of *Tienda Campesina*, it had asked Jaime Wheelock as minister of MIDINRA to intervene personally in order to override the unfavourable decisions made by local MIDINRA officials. In the event, that is what he did. Here, national leadership was seen as the last opportunity for appeal and this indicates that they had developed a truly nationalist ideology. In this case, the national political system was seen as being able to reconstitute justices which peasants thought broken by local authorities. While this would not conform to Friedmann's notion of "politically significant" collective action, it reflects an ability of the peasants to operate the national system.

That PJCh made requests to central government and not the municipality raises interesting questions, especially since GP only ever channelled its demands through the latter. However, whether this difference related to the cooperative's perceptions of the legitimacy or effectiveness of different levels of government is not a concern of this thesis. What is relevant is that the cooperative was operating as a proactive political actor, able to operate within and manipulate its institutional milieu. That the cooperative solicited assistance from individuals within central government amounted to recourse to clientelistic methods which individuals saw as being politically effective solutions. The method was not innovative; but it was effective.

Although this represented one way by which the cooperative could resolve its political problems, it was also empowered through its formal affiliation to the UCA which represented its interests in the struggle with the state for access to resources. The

objective outcome of this struggle was on the one hand the cooperative's increased access to state resources and on the other, the establishment of a industrialisation process and marketing outlets which ultimately secured the cooperative's future in the context of the UNO Government.

Conclusions

Against the historical background of political exclusion, subordination and manipulation, cooperative membership gave individuals unprecedented opportunities to participate at different intensities. While they did not have control of decision-making regarding the organisational model of the cooperative and only partial control in some of their production plans, in other issues the cooperatives enjoyed autonomy from external intervention and could exercise high levels of participation, in decision-making and even initiating action. Despite these differences, cooperative assemblies constituted the first political space in which Nicaraguan *campesinos* could exercise their right to voice and vote and develop skills associated with organised debate. The different participatory activities occurring within the cooperative assemblies were conducive to increased capacity building, political and psychological power. Yet notions of democracy were incipient and the practices of consensus and political legitimacy at their infancy. In the case of GP, this facilitated the concentration of power within the leadership.

Nonetheless, the objective conditions of revolutionary Nicaragua together with the members' newfound self-confidence in their *campesino* identity enabled the cooperatives to assert their independence from the bureaucratic tendencies of the state which tried to control them. Similarly, the cooperatives were also able to resist the efforts of UNAG to impose its policies on the cooperatives. While these political actions represent new forms of empowerment for the peasantry, evidence of old forms of clientelism were also evident and were shown to be an effective means by which to resolve political problems as in the case of PJCh. The following chapter demonstrates, in relation to the leadership, exactly how extensive these practices were.

Notes for Chapter 7

1. At this point I wish to acknowledge the argument of Gould (1990), who stresses the extent to which rural inhabitants were co-opted by the Somozan state.

2. Here I wish only to acknowledge awareness of the debate which perceives *caudillo-hacendados* as either the product of the weakness of the state or whose continued existence inhibits the consolidation of the state.

3. Isias Rodriquez, German Pomares, personal interview January 1990.

4. This has been observed by Bartra (1975) and de la Peña (undated).

5. I say perhaps, since there is no systematic data relating to the nature of local leadership prior to the revolutionary movement.

6. According to the informants of this research they and their parents voted for the same party which was also that of their corresponding landlords.

7. Reglamentos Internos. Cooperativa Pedro Joaquin Chamorro.

8. Typically, the men drank on Saturday nights and Sundays and some would remain continuously enebriated for weeks. Quite apart from the hardship on the respective family who would have to go without food and endure physical and sexual abuse, this meant the loss of production.

9. According to the BND officer, San Marcos, personal interview, February, 1990.

10. Marciano Espinoza, personal interview German Pomares, December 1989.

11. Jose Ada a secondary school teacher who also taught cooperative members including those from GP on the adult education schemes, was involved in the UNESCO project which was targeting rural literacy. Personal interview, education Institute, December 1989.

12. Santos Nicoya, president of cooperative, German Pomares, November 1989.

13. Jose Ada, adult education teacher, Tola, November 1989.

14. Ada Bega, personal interview, Jalteva, Tola, November 1992.

Chapter 8

COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP: MEDIATING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

While the empirical point of departure for an examination of the leadership phenomenon is its influence on the nature of internal decision-making and on the processes of participation, other dimensions of leadership also render it worthy of a more systematic examination.

Firstly, cooperative leadership fulfils the dual function of representing the membership and managing cooperative affairs, meaning that leaders not only influence aspects of the internal organisation of the cooperatives but also matters relating to the cooperatives' economic efficiency. Both these dimensions influence participatory processes: the former directly, the latter because it relates to the viability of the cooperative unit itself. Secondly, while leadership can be conceptualised as influencing the practices of participation within the cooperative, it is also a product of participation. That is, cooperative leadership emerges in response to conditions and opportunities created by the revolution including - as we will see - its structures of political power. A third reason why we need to examine the leadership phenomenon, lies in the pivotal role leaders occupy between the cooperative membership and institutional environment in which the cooperative operates. Essentially, this qualifies them as intermediaries who link the cooperative (as well as the communities, given their prominent leadership role *vis-a-vis* the *comarcas*) to political patrons at higher levels (Wolf, 1967; Lomnitz-Adler, 1992). Consequently, leadership must be analysed as much in terms of internal group dynamics as in relation to how it articulates with the wider national or regional structures of revolutionary Nicaragua.

Our concern with the relationship between leadership and participatory processes therefore revolves around its function in relations to organisation, resource delivery and emergent revolutionary power. Consequently, the central questions which the chapter needs to address are: how does leadership influence participation; what are the wider implications of such leadership practices; to what extent can they be viewed as *caciques* and what factors determine leadership practices? Although for the purposes of this chapter we must keep our attention focused on the impact of leadership on the participatory

process, it is necessary to consider the nature of leadership as it relates to historical processes and the reproduction of political culture, the new political structures and the extent of its internal legitimacy from within the cooperative. The chapter starts with an apparently conventional description of the characteristics of leadership relating to its basis, election and internal accountability. This serves contributes to the evaluation of the extent to which it represents a new political practice. The predominant features of the leadership of both cooperatives are then described in more detail and are analysed in reference to their organisational implications, economic efficiency and the contradictions implicit in their distinct styles. Since leadership - most particularly in these cooperatives which were promoted by the state - cannot be understood in reference to internal group dynamics alone analysis is then directed on how the leaders articulated with external organisations and institutions.

II Basis of emergent leadership: continuity and change

This first section examines the characteristics of leadership in both cooperatives, the basis of its power and how it exerted its authority. This it then analysed in relation to previous political practices, the internal nature of legitimacy and external sources of power.

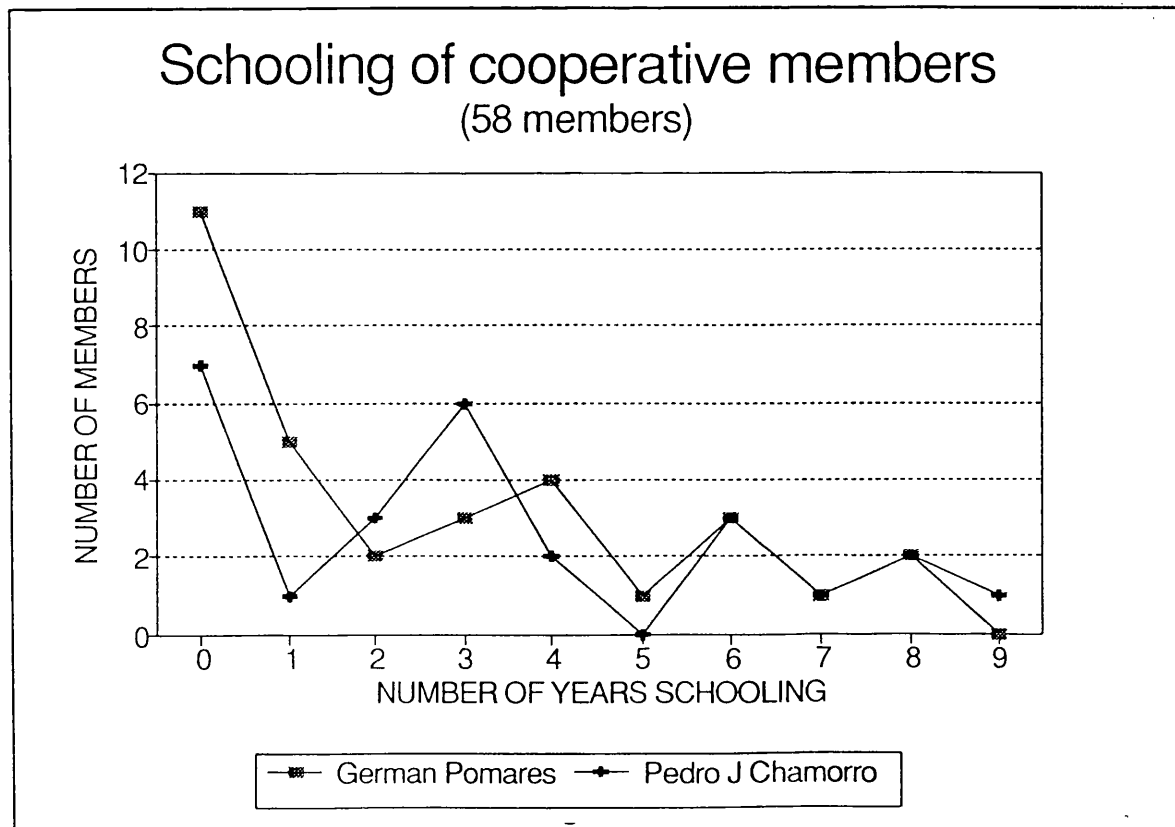
I1 Merit and accountability

Elections for officers of the cooperative leadership were held every year. All the interviewed members knew precisely the specific duties of each officer and, with the exception of those who had recently returned from being mobilised in the army, all knew who filled the offices at the time. Typically, individuals were proposed by a group of members or an out-going officer and then elected formally by majority vote in the assembly. The approval or support of the UNAG promoter or local FSLN leader had previously served to ratify or influence the cooperatives when divided about the selection.

The formal requisites for eligibility to leadership posts were: literacy; adherence to the internal regulations; to have been a member for at least a year; and to have earned the confidence of the members¹. In practice, members were elected on the basis of above average schooling, productive or administrative experience, organisational skills and honesty. The social characteristics of the current leadership of both cooperatives is

Table 6 Differences between leaders and ordinary members		
Variable	Leaders	Ordinary members
Age	31.93	38.05
No years schooling	6.36	1.68
No courses	3.29	.41
Years in cooperative	6.07	4.95
Years in defense	2.64	1.25

displayed in Table 6, where they are shown to be significantly different from ordinary members. On average, leaders were seven years younger and were distinguished markedly from the ordinary members by their greater number of years of schooling (see Figure 16 for the range of schooling levels of all members). In addition, the leaders had attended school 3.7 times longer. In fact, current leaders in both cooperatives had received at least six years of education thanks to the educational opportunities created for the *campesinado* by the revolution.



That is, all had been schooled since the triumph. Carlos Tenerio from GP and Domingo Ampie from PJCh had been to school for the longest periods: both for nine years. Leaders had also attended significantly more courses. Once in leadership positions, leaders became recipients of training courses from the FSLN, MIDINRA and UNAG (as noted in Chapter 4). Limited financial resources excluded all but the leaders from attending. Thus, the technical and organisational skills the leaders acquired from such courses compounded the educational discrepancies between them and ordinary members.

With the exception of Karla Gonzalez, women were absent from leadership positions: both past and present. Karla was the daughter of founder member Rosa and, having received four years of primary education, was the most educated woman member. She had previously been organisation officer for nine months until she resigned because she was intimidated by the men. Women were amongst the lowest educated within the membership and had the least organisational skills because they lacked the experience: a situation which presented a serious obstacle to their opportunities for selection to cooperative leadership and - as becomes clear in the following chapter - a barrier to their greater participation in cooperative affairs.

There was no significant difference in the previous occupations of the leaders compared with ordinary members. All the leaders in GP had been peasant labourers before the revolution although Carlos had since worked as a teacher. The same applied to PJCh although since the revolution Francisco had been a professional soldier in the EPS and both Domingo and Sergio (who served in office for only a few months) had been studying at seminary school and had working for the ATC respectively. Most of the leadership officers in both cooperatives were also Sandinistas. In PJCh, two officers were FSLN militants while the other three defined themselves as sympathisers. In GP, all but one was a militant and he, Luis Rivera, was a sympathiser and founder member. Since the establishment of GP in the early 1980s, nearly all offices of the leadership had been filled by individuals from the council. This overlap of formal cooperative leadership with the council led to a conceptual blur between the two bodies: six months after the change of leadership, a couple of ordinary members mistakenly named as officers other council members. Officers of the leadership had also spent twice as long in the army as ordinary members. Leaders had also been members for longer (on average, 1.2 times) and many were the original founders. Thus in GP, leaders and council members were predominantly

founder members.

Similarly, since the foundation of the PJCh cooperative, the two founding families (the Gonzalez and Ampie) had dominated leadership positions through the parents and offspring. At the beginning of research, three of the leadership offices were occupied by individuals from these two families: Lorenzo Ampie was president; his brother, Domingo Ampie was vice-president and Jeronimo Gonzalez was finance officer. The perpetual presence of the latter in the leadership led local officials to nickname the cooperative "Chombo's Cooperative", (Chombo being an abbreviation for the name Jeronimo). The domination of these families was lamented by officers who were not founding members:

"The problem is that the two families from La Concepcion control the place and only want to rotate the *directivo* (leadership) amongst themselves." (Pablo Ruiz, finance officer.)

However, by 1989 fewer leadership positions were under the control of the two families: Omar Aleman was production officer and Francisco Calero was defence officer. The undisputed basis of their election was technical and organisational competence, respectively. Moreover, when Domingo Ampie left the cooperative he was immediately replaced by Pablo Ruiz: a situation which reflected a shift of power away from the two strong families and coincided with the departure of older members and their replacement by new members.

In only a few exceptional cases did officers not fulfil the formal eligibility criteria. In particular, Carlos Tenerio, who was the production officer of GP had only been nine months in the cooperative before being elected. However, he had joined the cooperative two years previously when he had been sent immediately by MIDINRA to study agronomy in Hungary. This gained him a technical expertise that was undisputed by the cooperative on his return. More seriously, considering the shortcoming it posed to effective leadership, Juan from PJCh had served as president and vice-president despite being illiterate. In his case he had reached this position on account of his experience as a founder and by virtue of the competence of his sons (Lorenzo and Domingo). It is significant that he only held office for short periods.

Theoretically, elected leaders from both cooperatives were made accountable to members by the obligation to report back and inform the assembly of their actions. However, the extent to which the mechanisms of accountability were used varied between the cooperatives. In GP, the leadership was never seriously called to account by ordinary

members. Here, the few efforts made emanated from within the council itself, that is from the more articulate, experienced and confident men. At the time of research, they forced Santos to renegotiate with the municipal council the unauthorised offer he had made to lend it the cooperative's equipment. In addition, they made him repay the money he had donated to the townhall on another occasion: again, something he had done without the assembly's authorisation. It was also from within the council that the current officers were accused of *amiguismo* (friend-favouring). Council members complained that the officers were using their positions to grant favours to their friends within the cooperative or their respective communities. Yet, ultimately leaders in GP could be and were ousted through elections as occurred after the national electoral defeat of the FSLN, when ordinary members replaced Santos by voting Isidrio as president. He was a non-council, illiterate and ordinary but founder member. Interestingly, within six months he was replaced through elections by Santos because members recognised that he was not sufficiently prepared for the post.

By contrast, officers in PJCh were constantly being called by ordinary members to account for their activities and to justify the expenses of their trips. One incident is illustrative. After two officers had spent two days unsuccessfully trying to obtain the legal deed of the cooperative and had returned empty-handed because of the numerous bureaucratic problems they had encountered, they were required by the assembly to explain all that they done and the money that they had spent, only to be accused subsequently of having wasted time and the cooperative's resources. As far as the leaders were concerned this "anarchy in the base" was a consequence of ordinary members "just wanting to run themselves". They considered that ordinary members were ignorant about the importance of leadership, as Lorenzo's complaint about them makes clear:

"They are a thankless lot: they have no appreciation of what leadership involves, the time, the energy, for all that I do, even without having eaten at night!"²

In the light of the effective mechanisms of accountability which rendered its leadership transparent, it would seem that these calls for accountability were not based on an objective concern with leadership dealings. A better explanation is provided by the recognition that the leadership lacked legitimacy: in the eyes of ordinary members officers were failing to deliver resources from external sources and, as far as they were concerned, leaders were wasting unnecessary time on UCA activities. In a context of their lack of

participation in the UCA's development, ordinary members did not believe that the UCA was a satisfactory alternative to state support.

While these calls for accountability, so manifest in PJCh, represented the healthiness of this new form of "institutionalised suspicion" (Worsley, 1971), they created a crisis of legitimacy for the leadership. Officers frequently resigned because of the constant and unsubstantiated allegations made against them and these changes created an unstable leadership. As a result, UNAG had considered it necessary to intervene twice the previous year in order to oversee the re-election of a new officers.

By contrast to PJCh, where all the leaders were elected, in GP they were not. Here, as we saw from Chapter 7, the council - although nominally concerned with activities of the party - assumed a key decision-making role in the cooperative. This was an FSLN base committee and as such was a product of the new structures of revolutionary political power. Although in previous years the council had been more of a direct instrument through which external intervention was channelled, ordinary members still viewed it as being subject to vertically imposed policies. It was in reference to this that several older-serving members who were not FSLN militants defined a council member as a *persona callada* (silenced person), to express their apparent unquestioning compliance with the *lineas desde arriba* (policies from above). In effect, the council represented an imposition on cooperative organisation and violated the autonomy of the assembly.

Although entirely unaccountable to the cooperative members, several factors legitimized the council's involvement in cooperative affairs from within the cooperative. Members considered that the presence of Sandinista militants contributed positively to cooperative management (60% stated that their presence strengthened cooperative organisation and production). Since many members also considered that:

"..the changes the Frente made were a victory for the peasants and have made a difference to our lives"

the council as the party base was legitimized because the FSLN was seen as having benefitted the peasantry. This view was held by the majority of members who considered that the government had peasants at heart and that it had encouraged cooperatives "for the good of the *campesinos*", although ultimately three members of the entire cooperative voted for the UNO. These factors engendered a tolerance towards it and its abuses of power, as is implicit in a remark by Luis, cooperative secretary and non-party member:

"Most of their (council) meetings are in the mornings when we have to work but we don't deny them that and let them get on with it."

The council was also endowed with a degree of moral authority since amongst its members were men who had been mobilised the most times and for the longest periods. All the *socios* were aware, through their own mobilisations, of what sacrifice this entailed. Moreover, within the cooperative there was a collective commitment to support the military since there was a strong association between the members' access to the land and armed struggle to defend that right: an association deriving largely from the cooperative's own history. One ex-combatant explained:

"We've suffered to obtain this land, it cost the blood of our heroes and we are still defending it: we have members at present in the defence forces."

Similarly, the particular commitment of the council to defence duties was the basis of the cooperative's reputation as a unit which gained it political and social prestige in the region.

The admission of fear expressed below is significant for its implicit reference to the sense of duty and responsibility that these volunteers felt about the prospect of going to fight. Wilfredo's comments are interesting not only for what they reveal about himself, but also his attitude to those who tried to avoid mobilisations:

"They were afraid. They constantly presented excuses not to go, that their wife or children were ill. But we were all afraid too, well I certainly was, but it's just something that we had to do."

The prestige accompanying service on reserve duties was the basis for one of the self-identifying categories: that of self-sacrificing *conscientes* (conscious people) which referred to their socially responsible behaviour. Its use was also extended as a dichotomy *conscientes: inconscientes* to mean cooperative: community.

Besides the council there was another unelected post in GP which was approved by all members for a very different logic. This refers to the co-ordinator of the cattle commission which had been occupied by Adan Bega for four consecutive years. This situation had arisen as a consequence of an incident on the cooperative when Santos Nicoya, in this post at the time, inadvertently caused the death of ten head of cattle through his incompetence. Adan Bega replaced him because he had warned Santos against his planned course of action and had been ignored. Under Adan's management the stock had flourished. The decision not to rotate the post of cattle co-ordinator had stimulated

a heated and extensive debate at the time. Members were concerned that the concentration of experience in one member and the concomitant dependence that entailed, could easily lead to an abuse of his authority. However, because he had contributed to the cooperative's economic consolidation through the use of his knowledge (accumulated through practice and training over the years) and because he enjoyed according to members the "respect and trust of all the cooperative", the assembly had decided to retain him as the person in charge. This is significant because it illustrates how the contradiction between the democratic principle of revolving leadership posts and achieving economic efficiency was resolved in this case on the side of profitability.

The above has shown that the educational opportunities provided by the revolution in general and for the cooperative sector in particular, facilitated the emergence of cooperative leadership from the landless or poor *campesino* sector: a socioeconomic group previously excluded from holding any form of leadership position before the triumph. That leaders were either party militants or sympathisers indicates that - having circumvented traditional leadership sources of the previous system - the FSLN was reaching the cooperative bases through a new *cadre* of leader which it had created from its own political structures. Moreover, the selection and election of leadership was based according to merit and competence rather than ascriptive or particularistic criteria and mechanisms of accountability operated (extensively in PJCh and to a limited extent by members of the council in GP). This provides evidence to suggest that new practices of leadership were evolving in which the legitimacy of leaders was derived from within the cooperative and was based on some rationalised democratic principles. While legitimacy may have derived from "below" this is not to say that external factors did not operate to determine leadership practices and styles.

I2 Monopolisation of leadership

Although legitimate in terms of their educational and organisational skills and merits, the leaders of both cooperatives monopolised their positions. In GP, challengers were effectively discouraged by officers and council members who constantly stressed their own long-serving membership, their experience of cooperativism and organisation and their better educational and technical skills.

Similarly, in PJCh, the Gonzalez/Ampie family attempted to exclude contenders by

always referring to and exaggerating their superior educational attainments. They also imposed an additional criterion for the selection of leaders, namely that eligible candidates must live on the Santa Maxima *finca*, and they repeatedly warned of the potential dangers to the security of the *hacienda* of not having a president resident on site. These efforts were designed to exclude the Calero family from leadership. Calero senior had joined the cooperative four years ago, followed soon after by three of his sons who had reached third and fourth grades and who were good workers, well educated and had served their national service. All three were Sandinistas: one a militant, the others members of the Sandinista Youth. They lived in Marvin Corrales, the *comarca* of the San Jorge site. Two years before, Noel Calero, aged 20 and who had the unique and much coveted skill of being able to drive, had persistently requested the job as driver of the lorry. This was used for collective use although it legally belonged to individuals who had been members at the time of purchase some four years previously. The efforts of Noel were constantly frustrated by the founding families and so he had left: a case which seems to imply that this monopolisation was a discentive to cooperative membership. A non-member had subsequently been recruited solely to drive the lorry which was a solution enabling the families to retain control of transport and thereby ensured that they were able to make the fortnightly trip to their home town in the relative comfort of the collective transport.

As regards accompanying corruption here in PJCh, there was no evidence of it. There was a rumour which claimed that two of the Gonzalez men had mis-appropriated petrol funds but this remained unsubstantiated. This low degree of material corruption in cooperative leadership attests to a high degree of "ideological motivation", found only in cooperative movements of a radical nature (Carroll, 1971). The case of GP was slightly different. Here, the leaders and council members implemented an official policy which rewarded themselves (founders and longer-serving members) a greater proportion of the annual profits. This policy certainly constituted material differentiation but can perhaps be distinguished from outright corruption since it was a publically-known policy. Negating this benefit to leaders was the fact that several of the current officers had not obtained a plot of land for individual production because the fulfilment of their duties prevented them from being able to work an individual plot. In GP, the only reports of outright theft involved ordinary members who had stolen cash when delegated to purchase or sell a product on behalf of the cooperative and not covert operations of leadership.

Although there was a monopolisation of leadership in both cooperatives, it is wrong to base an assessment of the cooperatives' practices purely on the formal criteria of rotation and selection of leaders as the ultimate determinants of democracy (Ortega, 1989). In fact, the leaders through formal training in production and management and their assimilated experience and acquired knowledge about how to operate local, regional and national institutions, had also benefited collective interests. In effect, the rotation of leadership amongst those with most training and experience had facilitated the consolidation - in a relatively short time - of a new form of production and one that had supported the constituent members. In other words, when considering the impact of leadership on the nascent participatory processes we need to consider the socioeconomic contexts.

II Leaders as power brokers

Evidence from the cooperatives suggests that there were new forms and practices of leadership common to both. However, there were also great differences between the leadership styles and some of these features indicate that a continuity of political culture.

III Fostering clientelism and flaunting authoritarianism: GP

Although the practice of *amiguismo* was apparent in both cooperatives it was endemic in GP. Here, officers and council members used their influence to favour their personal friends and thereby consolidated their positions by creating a group of loyal followers from amongst the membership. *Amiguismo* was also evident in the arbitrary application of sanctions which were reduced or wavered completely when it involved one of their group. The most extreme example of flagrant favouritism involved Alberto Palma, the brother-in-law of our now infamous Santos. Alberto had been continually drunk for three weeks during which time he did not work a single day yet, instead of being sanctioned as the rules dictated, he was selected as one of three to take two weeks leave from productive work in order to campaign for the FSLN. As ordinary members complained, this effectively rewarded him for such behaviour. Similarly, *amiguismo* appeared when fellow council members were given permission to study if they wanted to or were invited to accompany leaders on their trips away from the cooperative. By contrast, others not

deemed in favour with the leadership were marginalised by the officers. When the three year old daughter of Miguel died, the leadership even failed to send a representative to the funeral. This not only showed an extreme absence of fraternal solidarity but also violated the rules which stated that in such circumstances a representative of the cooperative should attend. Miguel was an ordinary member, and the poorest, and had a visual disability.

Other clientelistic practices extended from the leadership of GP to the surrounding communities, as indicated in Chapter 5, where we saw that the officers exercised favouritism in granting permission for temporary usufruct of land to poor and landless *campesinos* who lived on the cooperative's perimeter. Declared or suspected "enemies" of the cooperative were not allocated a plot. Other residents of Tola knew about this practice and some, including other Sandinista militants, were concerned enough to attempt to draw the assembly's attention to it. The following observation by a local teacher is typical:

"German Pomares is in danger of converting to a patronage system again, with its imposition of authority and its patronage-like relationships".

In fact, the particular issue was contended within the cooperative leadership itself where some, including Adan, had for years suggested that this land be relinquished for permanent use by individuals in the communities. Other manifestations of clientelism occurred when leaders used their influence within the cooperative to direct resources to specific development projects within their respective communities, thereby gaining them prestige within the communities.

As such the influence of the leaders can be understood to have extended beyond the immediate influence of the cooperative itself. Their position, one where they could provide material and other resources which were available to the cooperative sector, also implies that they occupied an intermediate role between the rural communities/cooperatives and the state. Moreover, recourse to such clientelistic practices is associated with personalised forms of power as seen in the *caciques*: evidently this was flourishing in GP under the conditions created by the revolutionary authorities, whereby the resources available to the cooperative (particularly as a prioritised cooperative) in the form of means of production (collective land and transport) as well as access to other resources, including education and training became manipulated by the leadership.

If the structural articulation of the cooperative with the revolutionary authorities encouraged personalised forms of leadership within the leadership and council of GP, the presence of Santos as president exacerbated this tendency because he had personal access to municipal power. At the time of research, Santos was a delegate on the Festival Commission in the municipal council in Tola and was standing as an FSLN candidate for the elections³. His influence in municipal affairs, evident during the research in his ability to secure an agreement to install an electricity line and a television for the cooperative, enabled him to extend his own power base. He maintained his power within the cooperative by gaining resources from above for the members.

This power facilitated Santos with the space in which to exert his authority in ways which would otherwise have been unacceptable. Most benignly, it was used in order to avoid physical work in the fields: a tendency which gained the leadership a local reputation to which a local farmer alluded by noting that:

"They strut around the *hacienda* with their pretty clothes, not prepared to set an example of hard work to the members."⁴

This did not apply to all officers since other were conscientious about their positions including Carlos Tenerio, the production officer, who adopted a deliberate policy to spend as little time as possible away from the fields in order, he said, "to set the ordinary members a good example". By contrast, Santos even skived, making frequent visits to Rivas in the lorry driven by his brother, Ronald, and occasionally accompanied by other officers or council members. He would justify a trip away from the cooperative stating that an administrative task required his "immediate attention in town", when in fact it was not urgent. On one occasion he even made a trip round town in the lorry in search of the day's newspaper! Sometimes Santos went too far in ignoring consensual procedures as when he had offered to loan large amounts of the cooperative's wire to the municipal council and bought it large amounts of nails and screws without prior consultation with his fellow officers or the assembly. As we saw previously, both incidents led the council to demand that he return the goods: clearly, there were limits to the extent it would tolerate his abuses.

He was also extremely authoritarian in his personal manner and conducted assemblies in a way which can only be described as intimidating. He used all the classic techniques to enhance an air of authority: he'd place a desk between himself and the

assembly, establishing himself firmly behind it; would perch upon it to tower over the mainly seated assembly; or stride impatiently up and down while ordinary members spoke. He also interrupted other people's interventions and contributions, causing ordinary members to complain privately that:

"He tells people what to do, does not invite the opinions of others nor attempt to include other members in the decisions of the cooperatives."

Moreover, he had a distinct image of what the cooperative ought to be and saw his mission and mandate for election as being "to keep it in (ideological) line". Nowhere was this attitude more succinctly epitomised than his response to the issue of raising the amount of economic assistance paid to members:

"If we raised the amount, they'd only drink it and besides, the cooperative's not about getting notes (*billetes*), it's about raising consciousness."

It is therefore unsurprising to learn that when I asked Santos about the primary function of the assembly, he replied that it was "to inform" the cooperative of developments.

The effect of his authority and superiority was disempowering on ordinary members and fellow council members alike. It exacerbated the inhibitions felt by the (relatively) new and shy members in the assemblies, who anyway believed that "a new member against an old can't do anything". Even fellow council members confided that they thought Santos too authoritarian. One admitted that:

"He doesn't consult us either and if anyone raises a question or opposes his decisions he says, "Well, tough, the decision's been made!" "

In this respect, his personal style of leadership which monopolised decision-making powers and intimidated members had a direct bearing on the participation of others. However, the centralization of power within GP's leadership and the notoriously authoritarian presidency of Santos may not have been challenged systematically by ordinary members precisely because it had proved effective in delivering resources to the cooperative. Nor did members believe, not being versed in the delicacies of representation, that leaders could be otherwise.

In concrete terms the articulation of the leadership with state institutions, the FSLN and UNAG had hitherto served to consolidate the means of production. It had also served to ensure an accumulation of the means of production and ultimately to obtain financial independence from the bank which would ensure some degree of security in the future economic environment of the UNO government. It is therefore interesting to note that

while the legitimacy of these leaders was rhetorically based on the discourse of democracy - as defined formally in the cooperative rules - in practice it was based more on the strategic ability of leaders to benefit their followers through their external contacts.

This situation echoes the corporatist system as prevalent elsewhere in Latin America and most notably researched in Mexico, whereby material goods and symbolism are exchanged in return for control of leaders and loyalty of the cooperative members which are reproduced through clientalist relations between leaders and organisations who had power to distribute the goods (Cordova, 1972; Warman, 1976). The persistence of such *caciquismo* has been explained by Lomnitz-Adler (1992) who argued that it reflects a dialectic in which *caciques* provide initial avenues for the state to penetrate local peasant cultures and to establish in time a bureaucratised institutional structure for their management. The *caciques* become incorporated into the bureaucratic apparatus and form a personal link between local people and the state. The relevance of the Mexican studies to the Nicaraguan case is that they serve to explain how the post-revolutionary state related to the people in whose name it ruled, through such local and regional power brokers. In this way, *caciques* in Nicaragua became an instrument for the consolidating the post-revolutionary "mass-incorporating" national state in much the same way as in Mexico, as observed by Gledhill (1994:108). Thus the instances of leadership in GP including the officers and council members, emerged as a rural leadership to form part of the wider structures of power within revolutionary Nicaragua and operated as "political intermediaries" (Wolf, 1967) at the "interface" of local sphere and municipal level, able to exploit their abilities and social bases in order to relate to both spheres and convert themselves into representatives of both.

While cooperative leaders in GP were incorporated into a bureaucratic structure an examination of their wider function shows that they also operated as representatives of the peasant movement and advanced the interests of the peasant sector. As we saw earlier, the presidents formed the Municipal Cooperative Council (MCC) which met monthly to seek solutions to the common problems affecting the cooperative sector and met with the UNAG Municipal Leadership Junta for information, orientation and to elaborate economic programmes. Cooperative leaders were also delegates managing the Tienda Campesina and carried out UNAG's rural development tasks in the *comarcas*: distributing seed and stimulating CCs. In this respect, cooperative leadership projected the organised peasant

movement into the rural communities, thereby promoting the peasant movement.

The impact of leadership and the particular personal styles of some of the officers on shaping the participatory process emphasises the importance of an actor-oriented model of analysis because it shows the variability of outcomes according to the idiosyncratic circumstances of local conditions. The dual feature of centralised leadership based on manipulation of resources obtained from the revolutionary authorities together with restricted participatory opportunities for ordinary members that this entailed also raises the question of the relative empowerment of individuals within GP.

II2 Primitive communism and leadership crisis: PJCh

By contrast to GP, the leadership of PJCh was not structurally articulated with the FSLN. It was characterised by a conscientious adherence to formal cooperative regulations and was subordinated to the authority of the assembly. Moreover, personalised forms of power such as *amiguismo* although present were confined to the manipulation of control over collective transport. Members not close "pals" with the leaders complained that, unlike those in favour, the lorry was not used to take their sick children to hospital.

Those who supported the two dominant families were other co-founders: a situation which had given rise to a division between old and new members. Pablo Ruiz who became the secretary, considered that this situation was changing in relation to the numerical significance of the two groups:

"Before the new ones had no rights to make demands, because we were not founders and the old members always looked how to exploit new ones. They would threaten to run us out. So we all shut up because we were in the minority and so had no vote. When in 1988 some of the older ones began to leave then us new ones, we became a majority."

This shift was reflected in the composition of the leadership, as previously indicated in Chapter 7, which then became open to new contenders: a situation which led to a stabilisation of the leadership, rendering it more effective, in Pablo's words:

"it works much better now, there's no conflicts".

The generally more transparent form of leadership assured that members could employ all available mechanisms of accountability to keep leaders in check. This was matched as we see below by the open personal style of some of its leaders. Despite this, officers lacked credibility: a situation which is perhaps explained by the examining the

case of Lorenzo who was the person most subject to scrutiny. Not only was Lorenzo president of the cooperative but he was also organisation secretary for the UCA, the second level cooperative association to which PJCh was affiliated. This dual role raised expectations that he would be able to secure greater access to external resources for the cooperative or improve the material basis of the cooperative. In the current economic context, which was particularly prejudicial to this cooperative as a coffee producer, neither he nor the UCA (with which he was so intimately associated) were able to deliver. Ordinary members claimed that Lorenzo spent too much time unnecessarily outside the cooperative fulfilling his secretarial duties of the UCA. They increasingly complained that the cooperative had to reimburse his travel expenses and the corresponding economic assistance owed to him. Aware that his personal credibility was intimately bound-up with the ordinary members' perception of the UCA, Lorenzo repeatedly appealed to me to tell the assembly of its virtues and to reassure members of the benefits that the UCA would endow on the cooperative in future.

Although it was clear to Lorenzo and the other officers (who attended the meetings and workshops relating to the development of the UCA) that affiliation to the UCA was the only way to advance the cooperative and secure its future economic security, such faith was not shared by ordinary members within PJCh. Unlike the cooperative leaders, they knew little about it. Indeed, only 27% of the interviewees reported that they belonged to it when asked to identify the organisations to which they were affiliated. This in turn reflects the poor projection of the UCA in the cooperative bases: itself a situation which arose because the UCA had been imposed on the cooperatives without the direct participation of ordinary members. This presented a real dilemma to Lorenzo and his statement below reveals his acute awareness of his dual role as a leader in the cooperative as a representative of the members as well as a resource manager. He was clearly reluctant to shift in favour of the latter:

"If you 'lose' a day's productive work doing administrative work, according to "the people" you're working badly yet, if you do what the people want the cooperative would collapse. If you're managing the cooperative then of course you have to spend days on administrative matters. I started out trying to balance what the people wanted and what needed to be done but it just didn't work out and I had to try to ignore their criticisms."

As we see, he resolved the problem by prioritising the efficiency of the cooperative as a productive unit, above his role in determining a more democratically accountable model.

The UCA represented the main vehicle for furthering the *campesino* struggle and provided an organisational basis from which advances had been made. Lorenzo's participation in its leadership was impressive and he had been elected as secretary from an assembly comprised of all the officers of the thirty three constituent cooperatives: an accolade to his administrative skills. As such, his own work as a leader in the UCA project including the Tienda Campesina should be seen as contributing to the wider peasant movement. In this respect, the leadership of PJCh is understood less as a political mediator between the cooperative and municipality (as in the case of GP) since it was involved in an organisation which was challenging state power. It can best be described as an intermediary between the national cooperative movement and the cooperative base to the extent that it was able to relate to these spheres while representing both of them. Nonetheless and contradictorily, the imposition the UCA on the affiliated cooperative represented the state's bureaucratisation of the movement.

That the assembly was in danger of jeopardizing the cooperative's participation in the UCA is clear. In a similar way, its over-ruling authority had negative implications for the social development of the cooperative. The assembly rejected a number of the officers' proposals which were informed by higher educational levels and a more progressive gender insight concerning the importance of maintaining maternity payments and organised childcare arrangements. The assembly also outvoted the leaders' proposal that the cooperative find another teacher, thereby denying the children a formal education. As seriously, ignorant about the health dangers posed by the insanitary conditions of the encampment, the assembly outvoted the president's proposal to improve hygiene, although months later he was able to convince them. The problems generated by maximum authority of the assembly raise two important issues. First, it indicates that the ultimate practice of participation under a situation of majority rule was no guarantee to democracy or social equality - democratic processes can have undesirable outcomes. Second, it emphasises the importance of leadership in such circumstances of underdevelopment in order to enable the peasant movement to consolidate its economic base and compete with other sectors in society.

A comparison of individual styles amongst the leadership of PJCh reveals another important influence on the nature of participation. In dramatic contrast to his GP counterpart, Lorenzo had a distinct style which was conducive to the participation of all

members (a dramatic contrast to his GP counterpart). He always solicited the opinions of members who would otherwise have remained silent and would actively seek consensus between members. At the cooperative's annual general assembly (AGM), when new affiliates were present for the first time, he stressed that all members had:

"..the right to express their opinions and participate without fear. Here we try to create an atmosphere where we can discuss what we agree and disagree. The *directivo* does not make the decisions: it makes proposals for the approval of the assembly. And all members should take part in the assembly and assist in controlling the faults even of the old members."

Although Lorenzo's attempts to harness the participation of women proved hopelessly inappropriate (as Chapter 9 describes), his efforts at being a facilitator of discussion and participation within the assembly were generally successful. This was a role that both Omar and Pablo also fulfilled since they too sought opinions and appealed to ordinary members for support in their proposals.

By contrast, Jeronimo and Francisco, who were both Sandinista militants, typically lectured the cooperative about the way it should resolve its problems; paid scant attention to democratic procedures; and consistently failed to understand why others saw things differently to themselves while expecting others to support their views. For example, during one of the leaders' meetings prior to the AGM, Jeronimo began referring to the "new" officers as if the posts had already been elected. He had to be reminded by Omar that the role of the present leadership was only to nominate members and that ultimately it was the assembly which decided. Similarly, Francisco would stand up to give his opinion in an authoritative manner. He had assimilated the dominant state conception of the *campesinado* as backward and held them in a degree of contempt:

"You can be talking and explaining something, while the members start to talk or play about. They don't recognize or understand the importance of things."

Here in PJCh, the absence of control of power within the leadership facilitated the assembly with greater opportunities for high intensities of participation in all key areas of cooperative life and development. As with GP, the analysis of leadership in PJCh reveals the importance of local dynamics in shaping the nature of participatory processes.

This finding, as it relates to the different leadership styles of Sandinista and non-Sandinista officers in PJCh, suggests that our enquiry should now pursue a systematic examination of what external factors shaped their particular styles. The following attempts to do just that and the task becomes more important since the issue of internal legitimacy

and accountability of the leadership has also indicated that external factors have to be placed on the analytical agenda in order to understand the leadership phenomenon.

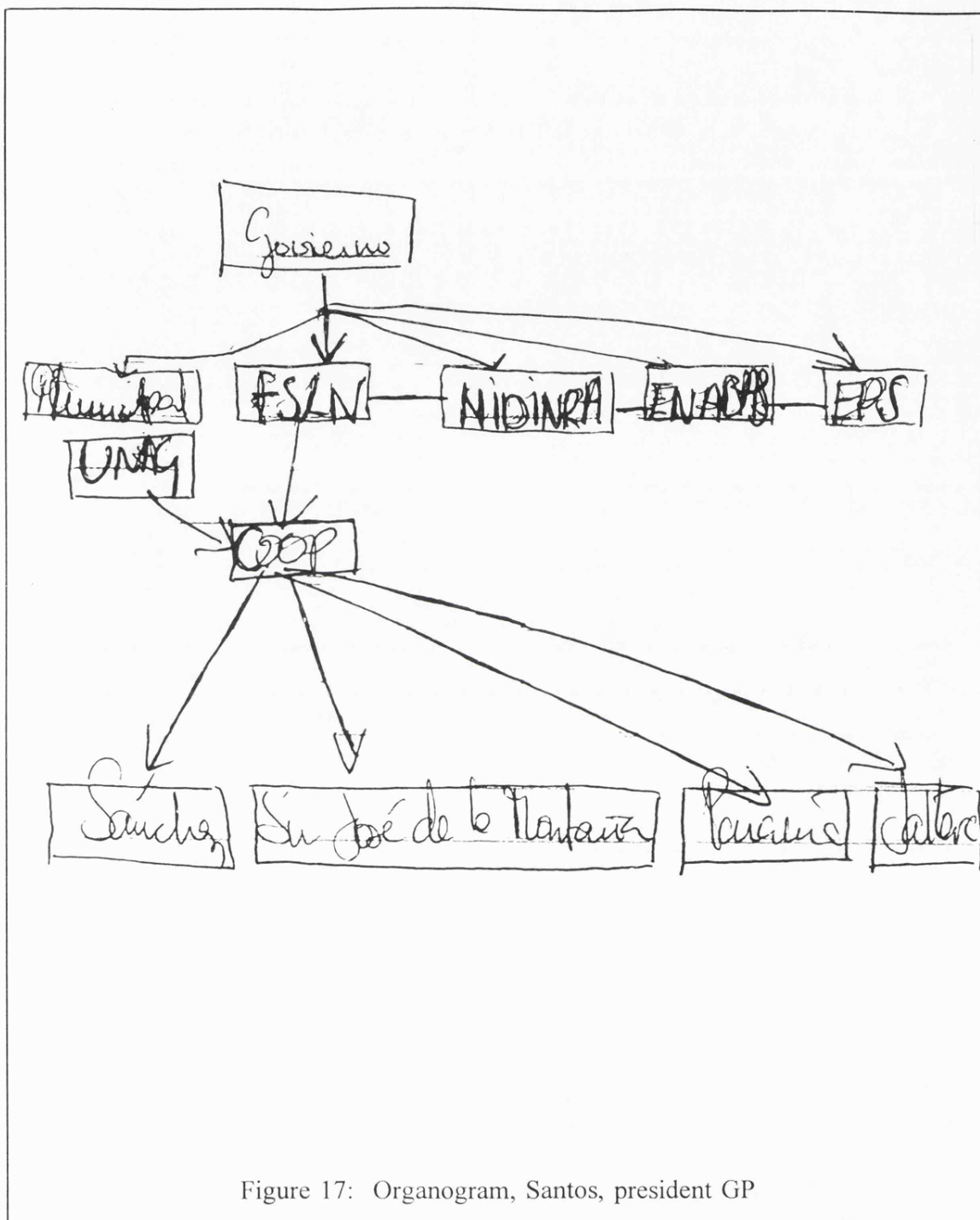
III Priorities, political visions and verticalism

One way of identifying what other external factors might influence leadership practices and styles, is by referring to and comparing individuals' perceptual worldviews of the institutional milieu in which the cooperative was located. Consequently, I asked leaders from both cooperatives to depict by drawing, how they thought their cooperative articulated with other organisations and institutions of society⁵. This exercise was based on the assumption that the diagrams would ultimately represent a combination of the objective reality of their own cooperative's institutional links and their own interpretation about which were most significant: a subjectivity itself a product of the individuals' interests and priorities. Used in conjunction with supportive evidence of their known extra-cooperative activities this methodological approach is instrumental in indicating the potential sources of an individual's social, political or economic resources.

Here, the diagrams are interpreted purely in relation to their overall structure, geographical scope and the nature of the relationships (whether economic, political or social, hierarchical or mutual). What must be clear from the outset is that while individual personalities ultimately influence how individuals act, these diagrams suggest that there is a social and political explanation for leadership styles and practices. Each is briefly described before concluding generalisations are drawn.

The first diagram presented is that drawn by the demagogic Santos, the current president of GP (see Figure 17). In it, Santos placed the cooperative in the centre of the lower-middle of his hierarchical diagram, above the surrounding communities and beneath the structures of the FSLN and government. Arrows indicate a "top-down" direction of political input from the FSLN to the cooperative and from the cooperative to the communities, suggesting that Santos perceived the cooperative as an intermediary between the party and the community and as an object at which policies were directed.

His diagram is confined to the depiction of the political functions of the cooperative to the exclusion of other aspects of cooperative existence, reflecting Santos' view that the cooperative was a predominantly political entity. It is also consistent with his own



political interest, since he was a Sandinista militant (he had joined in 1983), was an FSLN substitute candidate in the municipal elections and a current delegate of the Municipal Council on the Festival Committee. Through this political incorporation, Santos is able to conceive of the national government (the diagram is national in scope) a feature which reveals that his post-revolutionary experiences had gained him a truly nationalist ideology.

Nonetheless, some institutions of the state (MIDINRA, ENABAS and EPS) are present in Santos' conceptual worldview and these deal with the productive, supply and marketing aspects and military commitments of cooperative political economy. The location of these state institutions on the same hierarchical level as the FSLN implies a conceptual unity between these entities and reflects the extent to which the FSLN, had through its bureaucratic tendency, had become synonymous with the state. Essentially, Santos' diagram serves to indicate in an explicit way the resource base and the political influences which informed his leadership style. They confirm our view that his recourse to external resources consolidated his leadership and that his authoritarian style of leadership derived from a verticalist concept reproduced from previous authoritarian practices and based on the FSLN political model.

Wilfredo constructed a rather different diagram (see Figure 18). He was the production officer in GP and had previously held posts in the cooperative as finance officer, production officer, mechanic and was president between 1988-89. Instead of illustrating the interrelationship of the various organisations and institutions, Wilfredo elected to represent the relative significance of the various organisations by placing them at corresponding distances from the cooperative. His own community, Sanchez, is represented as the entity closest to the cooperative, supporting his own explicit references to the community as his main interest. The proximity and relative significance of the community is also consistent with his source of social prestige or resources: he was not immune to the practice of *amiguismo*, of trying to advance the interests of his own community through use of cooperative resources, such as transport, etc. Again, it seems that it is the cooperative which links the community to the rest of the diagrammatic structure suggesting that he also perceived the cooperative as a political or cultural intermediary between new revolutionary power and the rural communities.

Unlike Santos, the components Wilfredo included in his diagram incorporate the economic, political and social functions of the cooperative and geographical scope of Wilfredo's diagram is local, yet his acknowledgement of other social sectors, including those linked to the cooperative through the peasant-worker alliance, indicate his awareness of their alliance with the peasantry. The presence of these functions reflects the diversity of Wilfredo's own extra-cooperative activities. These included being a Sandinista militant (since 1984); a CC activist (as the coordinator of Sanchez II); representative for MCC and

representative on the commission of the Tienda Campesina. He had also been mobilised for two years but the EPS appears not to feature in his worldview. Unlike Santos, Wilfredo placed the FSLN alongside UNAG: a symbol of his view that the producers' association was equally significant to cooperative affairs although the FSLN occupies the largest box in the diagram.

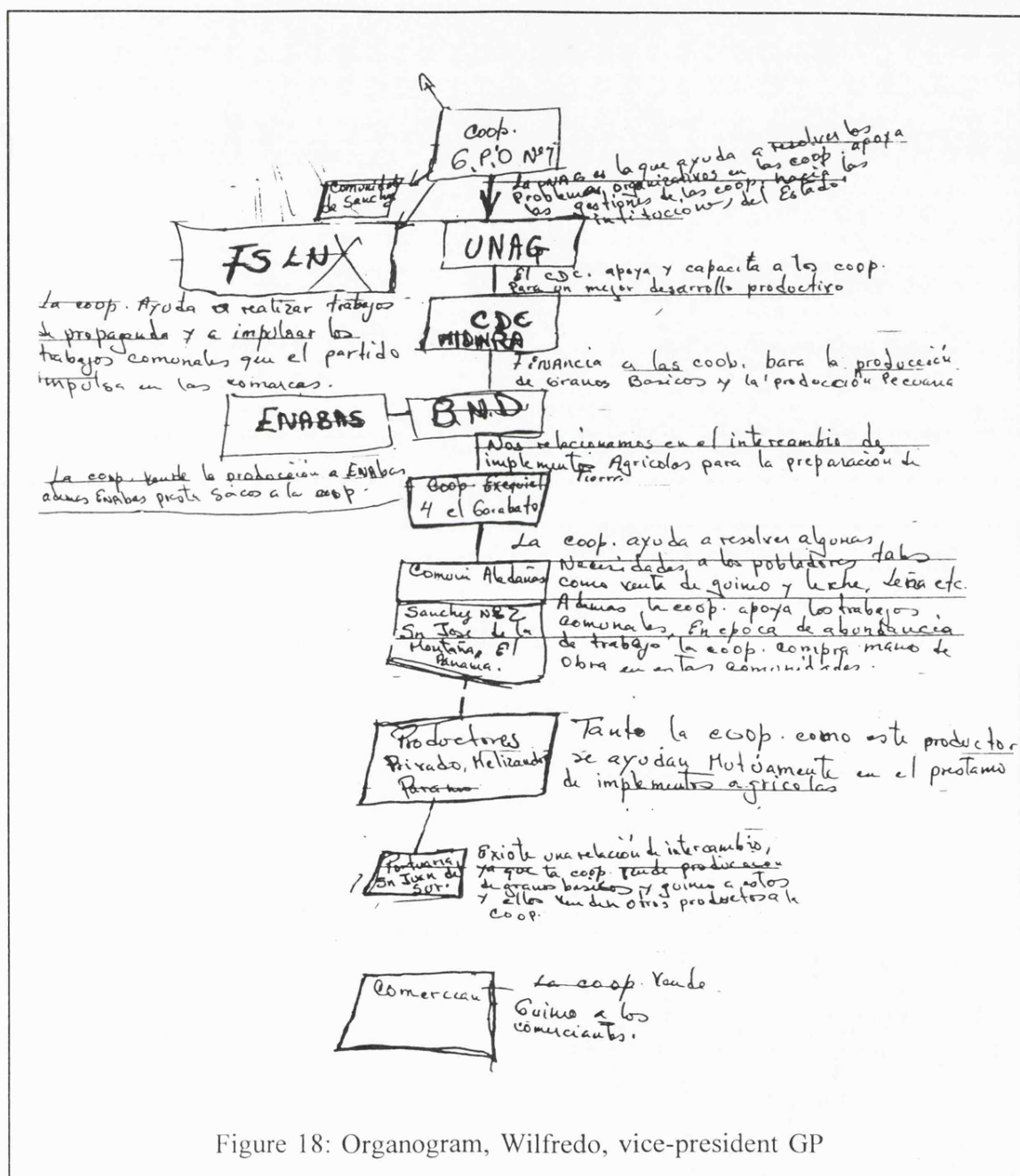


Figure 18: Organogram, Wilfredo, vice-president GP

Then come the institutions of the state (MIDINRA, BND and ENABAS) and they are situated below the cooperative, suggesting that Wilfredo did not see the cooperative

[illegible]

Luis Rivera, the author of the third diagram (see Figure 19), is the education officer of GP and was its very first president. He was neither a party member nor an UNAG

representative and did not participate in any other mass organisation although he occasionally volunteered on CC projects because he "doesn't have the time", nor had he been mobilised. Reflecting this, Luis' diagram has neither FSLN, UNAG nor other cooperatives or social sectors⁶.

Significantly, his diagram has a circular format which distinguishes it from the previous two. The cooperative is located in the centre around which revolve the state, government and communities worthy of his note. The only state institutions noted are the BND and MIDINRA and the municipality and town hall in Rivas are represented as instances of government. The geographical boundary of his perceptual universe extends only as far as Rivas, the Department's capital, and imply that his worldview was an essentially localist one. Essentially, he remained within his peasant microcosm. As with Wilfredo, Luis described the relationships between the cooperatives and the other institutions. He clearly portrays these relationships as two-way and they are represented by double-ended arrows. His accompanying remarks emphasise the cooperative's relationship with the community as being one of "exchange" and mutual benefit. Its relationship with MIDINRA, is described by Luis supporting the cooperative with advisory and technical assistance while the cooperative supplied plantains to its employees and information about crop projects. The relationship with the Municipal Council is also portrayed as being mutual whereby the cooperative paid its 10% tax on sales and provided transport for municipal activities while the Municipal Council responded with "flexibility" regarding the demands of the cooperative. The mutuality of these relationships is strongly suggestive of Luis' perception of the cooperative as a proactive political agent in relations of exchange with the institutions around it.

All three diagrams from GP include the local government and strongly imply that it existed as a political reality for the cooperative for both the non-Sandinista and Sandinista authors alike. The diagrams are also common in having designated a place for MIDINRA since it directed considerable technical attention to the cooperative's development.

We now turn to the drawings of leaders of PJCh. We start with that of Lorenzo the president, who had previously held this office and that of finance officer (see Figure 20). He came originally from La Concepción, had joined UNAG in 1983 when he entered the cooperative and had joined the UCA in 1986 when it first formed, and became its

secretary. He had also been in the military for two years and although not a militant, he was one of those who identified himself as "*soy Sandinista*" (I'm a Sandinista)⁷. Apart from having participated in the occasional construction projects in the local communities, Lorenzo had no formal or social connections with the surrounding communities. In fact, he never visited them.

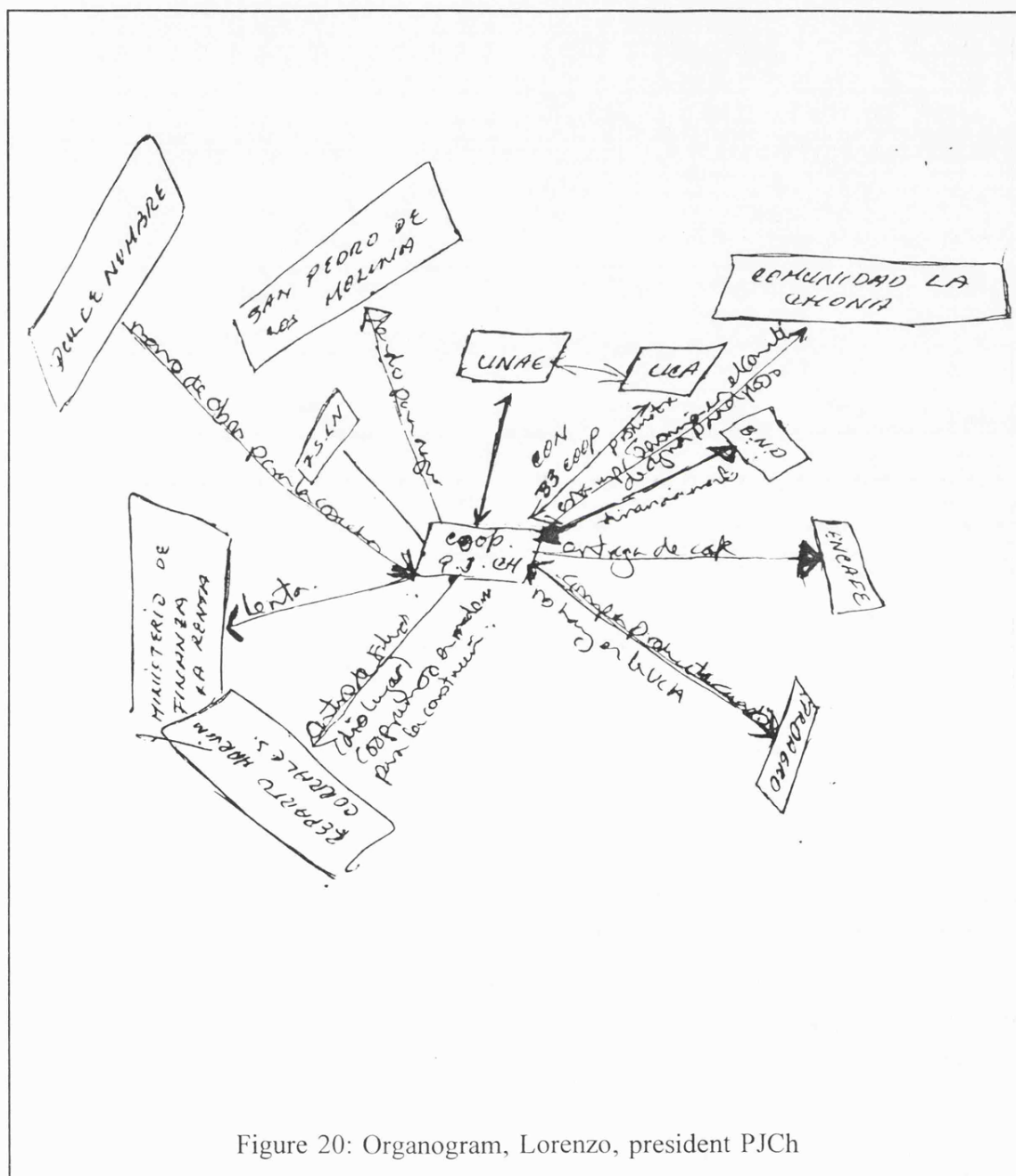


Figure 20: Organogram, Lorenzo, president PJCh

Lorenzo positioned the cooperative in the middle of the diagram amidst other institutions, organisations and the communities. The boxes are positioned at different distances from

the cooperative, with the FSLN, UNAG and the UCA the closest to it, suggesting their equal importance to the cooperative's existence (when asked which organisations were the most important to him, he gave the FSLN and UNAG as equals). Here, double-ended arrows indicate two-way relationships between a triad encompassing the cooperative, UNAG and UCA. The components which are the furthest away are the *comarcas*: La Chona, the name of the *comarca* in which the cooperative itself is located; San Pedro de los Molinas, to the west; Marvin Corales, adjacent to the San Jorge site; and Dulce Nombre, which was the furthest placed on the diagram and was a town five kilometres to the south and was relevant only insofar as it was the origin of a few *socios* and was an UNO stronghold.

The components included in Lorenzo's diagram encompass functions which relate to the productive viability of the cooperative. The BND and PROAGRO, as state institutions, are presented with lines emanating from the centre. Double-ended arrows indicate a mutual relationship of assistance, money or products going from and coming to the cooperative. Significantly, the relationship with ENCAFE, the state coffee processing plant, is portrayed as being one way whereby the cooperative surrendered its coffee. Political relations are merely implied through the presence of the FSLN but this is connected to the cooperative with an arrowless line, perhaps reflective of the ambiguous influence and intervention of the different levels of the revolutionary authorities. There is no municipal government in his schema.

The author of the second organogram from PJCh was produced by Jeronimo (see Figure 21) who was a Sandinista militant and activist in the electoral campaign in San Pedro and occasionally in the CC of La Chona. His diagram is significantly different from those of his co-leader, sharing the more structured diagram that typifies the Sandinista authors from GP. Here, the cooperative is depicted as having two distinct associative relationships; one in a triad with the FSLN and community, comprising a political relationship, the other with the UCA and UNAG which defines its union association. Interestingly, Jeronimo indicated UNAG to be the single most important organisation. Given his militancy this was an unexpected response but this is perhaps a product of the decisive role of UNAG on behalf of the cooperative in the UCA struggle with the state over control of resources. All instances of the state and government are absent from his schema since they are not seen as political sources for assistance, support

or the solution of political problems.

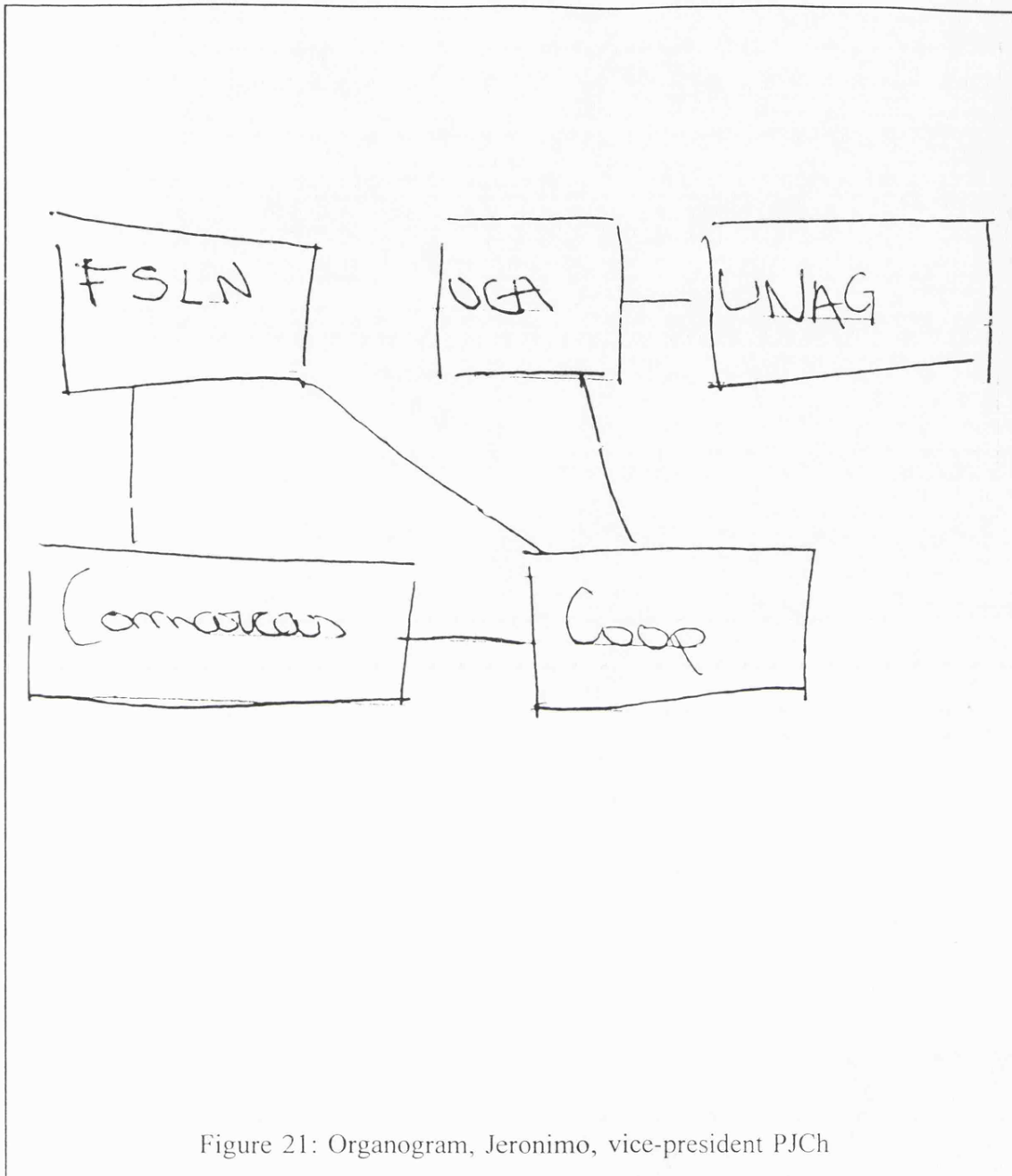


Figure 21: Organogram, Jeronimo, vice-president PJCh

The final organogram was drawn by Omar, the production officer, who had been president in 1988, vice-president in 1987 and production officer in 1985 and 1986 (see Figure 22). In his capacity as a leader, he frequently attended local UNAG and UCA meetings. Omar, was not a Sandinista although he also identified with the party. His original home was in the neighbouring community, San Pedro de los Molinas. As with Lorenzo's, Omar's schema has the cooperative in the centre of the diagram but he placed

his cooperative above UNAG (which he identified as the single most important organisation), the FSLN and the UCA. A circle encloses these components, in a symbolic unification to represent their common role as either providing an organisational input to the cooperative or as revolutionary organisations. Other components in the diagram include: individual local producers; ENCAFE, the only state agency mentioned; and the community from where he originates. Like his fellow officers, Omar represented neither local or central government.

The fact that none of the diagrams from PJCh include government in either local, regional or central instance is a manifestation of either the inefficiency of local government in resolving the problems of the cooperative or the unpopular economic policies. Whatever the reason, it reiterates our appreciation that government and state institutions were not a source of power for these leaders, indeed, our knowledge of the basis of their leadership indicates that their leadership was largely based on internal legitimacy. The common components of all three PJCh diagrams are the UNAG, UCA and FSLN party and the authors' accompanying descriptions of the diagrams identify these as the most significant for the organisation, economic viability and political representation of the cooperative. This reinforces the earlier characterisation of the cooperative as "horizontally integrated" since it was allied with the organisations which represented the organised peasant sector, namely the UNAG and UCA. It did not integrate vertically with the government or state institutions.

Beyond the mention of the cooperatives, the only other component common to all six of the diagrams was the "community", described variously as serving the cooperative as home, as an object for receiving FSLN policies, a supplier of workforce or market for produce. Whereas the diagrams of the non-Sandinistas were generally concentrically organised and were characterised by the centred location of the cooperative within the authors' conceptual universe, those of the Sandinistas were more structured and had evident hierarchical levels. These typically emphasised (to varying degrees) the political function of the cooperative in its relationship with the FSLN and the local communities. This commonal feature of the Sandinistas' diagrams suggests that organisational models were internalised by militants. This highlights the impact at the local level of the FSLN political model: the dialogical methods of teaching, promoted initially by the literacy campaign and by UNAG were clearly not effective in negating these verticalist

conceptions.

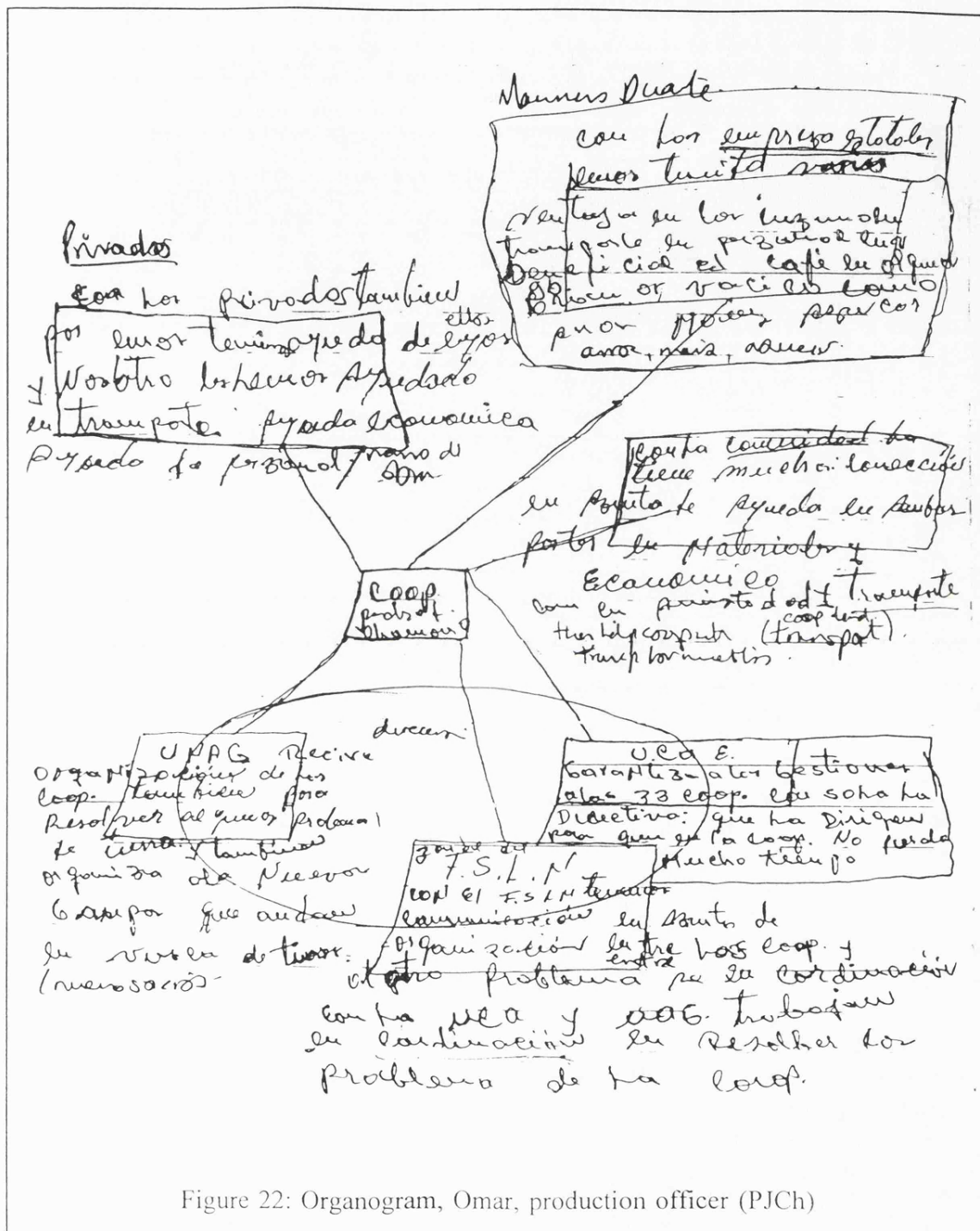


Figure 22: Organogram, Omar, production officer (PJCh)

Conclusions

Here, the actor perspective has revealed that leaders are key agents which give local

circumstances their particular participatory character. This is because the extent of their power over the assembly determined the range of issues and participatory intensities in which ordinary members could participate in the decision-making process. Leaders also influenced participation indirectly through their role as resource managers, the success of which had implications for the viability of the cooperatives.

They were also an important element to consider in the inquiry into participation because they were the products of the participatory and political processes. This became evident from our inquiry since leadership could not be understood solely in terms of internal group dynamics but in reference to the nature of their articulation with external agents. The leaders in GP emerged with the hallmarks of *caciques* and assumed a leadership role within the countryside by providing a link between cooperative members and the rural communities. It would seem they fulfilled an important political function which arose in response to the circumstances at the time of the triumph when the administrative structure of the Sandinista state was weak. In such a way the leaders can be conceptually identified as constituting another medium by which macro-level phenomena influenced the nature of local level participatory practices.

Although the leaders effectively extended the state bureaucracy into the rural areas, they served another important role: those from GP and PJCh were significant in contributing towards the development a national peasant movement. With their education, training, organisational skills and experience they consolidated the economic base of the cooperatives and through their activities in local UNAG, CC and UCA contributed towards strengthening the organisational base of the movement.

The examination of the internal nature of the legitimacy of the leaders reveals evidence of new - albeit uneven - political practices. These were most significant in PJCh as a consequence of two factors. First, members were effective in challenging the leaders and thereby securing a more representative form of leadership and second, deprived of the ability to gain resources from above. the power of the leaders became based purely on their internal legitimacy. By contrast, in GP, members did not demand a more representative and accountable leadership and the power of these officers was more heavily weighted on their ability to secure material resources. Yet, even here there were limits to the leaders' domination, beyond which they could not go without being usurped by members who used new democratic processes to replace them.

This examination of the external linkage of leaders with the state shows that they were another type of *caciques*. Moreover, their recourse to forms of clientelism demonstrates the prevalence of personalised forms of power and reveals the continuity and reproduction of a political culture which preceded the revolution.

Notes to Chapter 8

1. Estatutos de la Cooperativa German Pomares, Tola.

2. Lorenzo Ampie, personal interview, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, March 1990.

3. He was removed from the list following the decision to reduce the number of FSLN candidates, after the UNO contended their estimations of the country's population, on which numbers of candidates was based.

4. Ever Herrera, personal interview Tola, December 1990.

5. This had an added methodological advantage of reducing the ideological bias associated with straight forward verbal communication. All the informants attempted to modify their initial drawing but were prevented by the researcher to ensure methodological consistency.

6. It is interesting to compare Luis' accompanying verbal expression about how the cooperative articulates with external agencies:

"The cooperative within the revolutionary process plays an important role because it participates in all the tasks of the country: in defense and in politico-ideological work. It also participates in debates to analyse work and planning programmes and helps one way or another MIDINRA, UNAG, the police and some of the *barrios*. In this respect the cooperative helps the state and participates in the government."

Although this verbal description includes the cooperative's political functions through the FSLN and UNAG, my feeling is that it appears to be more of a self-conscious "ideologically" correct line. Luis was familiar with UNAG or FSLN's perspective on such a politicised topic as the role of the cooperative. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that this statement also reflects the concept of the cooperative as an autonomous unit and one which through its other functions ultimately contributes to the state and government as was implied in the diagram.

7. In fact he considered that he did a better job at political work within the cooperative than Jeronimo of whom he was critical. Lorenzo was concerned that Jeronimo did not pay sufficient attention to "educating" the cooperative members about the FSLN.

MACHISMO AND THE LEGACY OF EXCLUSION

This chapter continues with the efforts to disaggregate the cooperative experience of participation and is the last one which attempts to identify other facilitating and constraining factors. It focuses on the individual level - on men and women - and examines different participatory activities within the cooperatives, explaining the variation in participatory behaviour between the members who have essentially shared the same structural circumstances. It also assesses the nature of individuals' participation in reference to the processes of individual and group empowerment.

Since analysis is aimed specifically at the actor level, the chapter provides the opportunity to examine the individuals' interaction with and response to macro-level forces and agents such as mass organisations, state policies and international forces (which they experience directly and indirectly). Specific consideration of the situation of women within the cooperative requires further analysis of the impact of the cultural, ideological and material expressions of patriarchy and the extent to which subordinate female gender constructs are challenged by them. Thus, the chapter emphasises the strategies men and women developed in response to the situations they encountered as well as the subjective meanings they attached to their life worlds and experiences. The extent to which these peasants operated as passive objects to externally directed change or as constructive actors who shaped participatory outcomes are the theoretical concerns at stake here.

I Differential participation

It has been demonstrated in previous chapters both that the members of the cooperatives experienced similar historical conditions, structural circumstances and historical processes and intervening parties and that not everyone participated in the decision-making process in the same qualitative way. Quite simply, some were more involved and played a greater role than others. In fact, closer inspection indicates that there are three general groups into which individuals can be seen to conform. These categories are distinguished by the nature and intensity of their participation or rather, their participatory inputs in the decision-making process.

At the one extreme were those who didn't speak or very rarely spoke during the assemblies. The participation of these relatively passive individuals, the "quiet ones", was the minimum possible within the cooperative since it amounted to their physical presence at meetings (required according to cooperative rules) and the simple expression of policy preference by use of their vote. Within both cooperatives there was a core of about ten such members. A more involved participation in the decision-making process is represented by those who were able to comment critically about a particular project or issue, proffer counter-arguments or suggest alternative solutions to problems. This was the largest group which is categorised here as the "active ones".

The last group were those who, in addition to those participatory inputs of the previous group, initiated topics for discussion or suggested projects to undertake. Also, when challenged on issues, individuals from this group would typically solicit support from others. They are categorised as the "initiators" in reference to their high intensity participation. Included in this group are those who were currently occupying officer positions and who by virtue of their posts were systematically fulfilling the role of initiating projects and topics for discussion concerning the cooperatives' affairs. It also included individuals who had previously been leaders and a handful of others who as yet, had not held office.

In general, individuals were reasonably consistent in the nature of their participation although normally passive individuals would intervene in proceedings under particular circumstance, as the following indicates:

"I participate when I want something, to borrow money or ask for wood or medicine."

This statement, reiterated by the following one, suggests that their "silence" was not insurmountable and that they felt at liberty to intervene in proceedings when sufficiently moved:

"I only speak in the assembly when I think something is very wrong and unfair."

Again, Paul's schema of distinct participatory "intensities", which was of analytical value for our earlier examination of the aggregate participatory activities of the cooperative, can be usefully applied to individuals. Thus, the participatory behaviour or activity of this group of quiet ones can be identified as low intensity since it involved only information

sharing and consultation where individuals gave their opinions or were consulted by the leaders. The active ones had a more involved role in decision-making, for example by contributing to the development of ideas and by providing counter-opinions. The final group, the initiators, had a more intense involvement yet. Applied as such to the activities of individuals, these intensities suggest a hierarchy of political behaviour which increases from minimal involvement or "intensity" in the case of the silent ones, to the more complex participatory behaviour represented by the active ones and ultimately is expressed by the qualitatively distinct ability of being able to generate new projects or schemes, as represented by the initiators.

How can we account for the differences between individuals who have such similar backgrounds? What other factors were operating to shape individual participation? Here, a first step is to reject the interpretation of those political scientists such as Milbrath (1965) and Almond and Verba (1965) who have sought to explain the different categories of participatory inputs amongst social groups as a function of some "social" and organisational law¹. This interpretation is clearly flawed because it ignores how power is distributed, asserted or resisted within groups and fails to account for the influence of socio-cultural or psychological factors which inhibit greater participation.

II Overcoming the ideological legacy of suppression

This section examines the extent to which the ideological legacy of Somoza continued to operate as a constraint on the participatory processes. This is then examined in relation to the factors and experiences which facilitated greater participation.

III1 Consent to be dominated as a barrier to participation

In Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 the way socio-cultural factors can operate to inhibit participation through the peasants' internalisation of the negative images of themselves that are perpetuated by the *patrones* and society was described with particular reference to Nicaragua. Ideas that peasants were inherently stupid and that the existing social order was natural in origin were reproduced in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua in the dominant culture and contributed to the maintenance of the dominant social order. However, this is not to state that oppositional actions of resistance did not evolve amongst the peasantry,

since they certainly did, nor that they were not conscious of their subordination. What it does mean is that these notions created a psychological barrier amongst this subaltern group, that they were incompetent and incapable of effecting significant change.

There was strong evidence amongst the cooperative members in the aftermath of Somoza that indeed this ideological system which legitimised the previous order had been internalised by *campesinos*. The following statement by a woman cooperative member is movingly illustrative of the extent to which these notions had influenced the peasants' perceptions of themselves and of the system which exploited them:

"Before we used to think that to have healthy children was a privilege only of the rich: when mine died I believed it to be "natural"².

After the revolution, these feelings of inferiority lingered amongst the silent members of the cooperative who felt inferior and remained convinced of their own worthlessness. Their behaviour, namely their peripheral role in the cooperative's decision-making processes, conformed to precisely the passiveness which the early development literature pointed to as evidence of the poor's inherent docility. However, the explanation for this was implicit in the explanations given by these "quiet ones" themselves. They typically attributed their low participation to the "fear of saying something stupid" or of "not having anything useful to add". Similarly, in more articulate terms their colleagues attributed it to their being "conditioned not to value their worth". A couple of members expressed remarkable insight into the historical and socio-psychological origins of the problem, interestingly in terminology which mirrored precisely that of Freire (1972). In particular, Auscencion Alvares, the veteran guerilla and one of the original founders of GP stated that:

"Since Nicaragua is a marginalised country there are people who themselves haven't emerged from their own condition of marginalisation and underdevelopment. The problem of us feeling oppressed is historic as is the feeling and belief that your voice isn't worth a thing".

If the feelings of inferiority are the legacy of an ideological system which perpetuated the myth of an inherently incapable *campesinos*, then so too was the tendency for some of the members to defer the responsibility of resolving problems to others - including other members of the cooperative or its leaders, the government or the state. As we have seen in GP, this syndrome of dependency was convenient to the leaders and council members whose power remained unchallenged as a consequence. These

individuals explained the relative inactivity of others unproblematically, in terms of their timid personalities or as a product of "not everyone (being) the same". This point is crucial since it indicates that their silence was not necessarily a consequence of being disempowered by others.

By contrast, in PJCh this passivity was a constant frustration to the leaders who constantly complained that some of the members lacked any resolve to confront the problems they collectively faced. Lorenzo from PJCh frequently gave vent to the frustration that:

"The problem is that they want everything done for them.. they want the state to do everything.

Hence, after cooperative discussions about education and improving the sanitary conditions of the encampment, members rejected proposals that they find their own solutions and instead stated that they thought the state ought to assist. As the leaders themselves stressed this - considering the limitations on the state - amounted to ensuring that nothing changed.

Augusto Espinola, the president of the UCA in Carazo, also lamented this problem of dependency:

".. the *campesino* is accustomed to a *patron* and not to think and the Revolution has not managed to change that."³

Beyond recognising this problem, the fact was that neither Augusto, other leaders within the UCA nor indeed the majority of leaders within the cooperative movement, had self-critically analysed precisely what elements of cooperative organisation might have perpetuated this mentality of dependency. Evidently, the dominant ideological notion of the peasantry as backward, still dominant within MIDINRA and reproduced within other political institutions, had pervaded analysis. Thus, there was sparse reflection on the role of subjective notions of ownership of the land and externally imposed models of organisation in influencing individuals' motivation to participate in cooperative decision-making, that is of factors which this thesis has suggested influence the process.

Despite having experienced similar conditions during Somoza and being exposed to the opportunities created within the cooperative the question remains as to what makes an individual more participatory than another. So, now we need to examine the specific factors and experiences which contributed to some individuals overcoming these debilitating notions that had previously created a barrier to their participation.

II2 Facilitating factors

The following examines how individuals responded to the developments and changes evolving since the triumph of the revolution and how this interaction shaped their different responses and the strategies they adopted. Consistent with the complexity of reality itself, there is no one single factor which can be isolated as being the facilitator to greater participation. However, an examination of the characteristics of participants in the initiator, active and silent categories reveals that the most significant variables are gender, education, organisational and military experience. Each of these interacting variables are examined in detail below and a detailed consideration of gender is presented in the next section of the chapter.

II2a Education

In general higher educational levels were associated with more intense participatory activities. This positive correlation has already been illustrated in Table 6 of Chapter 8, which shows the characteristics distinguishing leaders from ordinary members. This serves our analysis here if we consider that the leaders represented a group which can be unambiguously distinguished for comparative purposes from other members, since this is the group which had the consistently highest intensity of participation and "initiating" activities. Moreover, the positive relationship between education and participation is further illustrated by the case of the women since Karla was the only woman from either cooperative to have obtained a leadership position and was the woman who had attended school for the longest.

The relationship between education and participation is also evident from the characteristics of the silent members who were with few exceptions, the least educated. Indeed, illiteracy inhibited the participation even of the founders since amongst the illiterate founders interviewed, two from each cooperative were categorically silent. That higher levels of education were facilitating factors is also evident from the advantages it gave newcomers. While new members with low educational levels claimed that "the older ones" were a primary source of ridicule or intimidation which prevented their immediate incorporation, the barrier was easily surmounted in the case of newcomers with more years of schooling. Carlos from GP, with six years schooling and Sergio from PJCh, with four years, had been members for less than a year but nonetheless maintained active and vocal

profiles during the assemblies and what's more, both went on to be elected to leadership positions. Of course, this was not their only facilitating advantage since both these men had prior organisational experience. As we shall see these two factors also tended to coincide anyway.

These findings reinforce the already well established recognition of the role of education in contributing to enable the poor to overcome the constraints to participation as identified by Freire (1972) and recognised in Nicaragua by the revolutionary authorities (Arnove, 1986). Education contributes to the development of self-awareness and consciousness among the poor. It also generates a critical self-awareness of their life situation and engenders positive images about themselves and their potential as political subjects. Related to these subjective developments, education serves to improve the individuals' skills in logic and general debate and endows them with more confidence to use their voice within a social group. It was recognised by members themselves as one long-term guarantee of improving the participation of the passive members: out of a total of thirty five responses, twelve gave education as the solution to improve the participation of members. An alternative was suggested by a further twenty respondents who stated that passive individuals ought, in the immediate context of a meeting, be asked questions directly.

Most members had gained access to the educational opportunities created after the revolution by the state. These included the Literacy Crusade (1981) and the Adult Education Programme which started in 1981 and was provided in Popular Education Collectives which met after working hours (Arnove, 1986). More recently, re-formulated adult education programmes had been specifically directed at cooperative members (CIERA, 1989c:207). The younger members who joined in the years after the cooperative was created had attended school.

However, the benefits were unequal and illiteracy levels were high in both cooperatives: of the two cooperatives, 31% identified themselves as completely illiterate and a further 17% were only partially literate. Women were significantly less educated than the men: they averaged one year seven months of schooling compared with four years for the men. Of the twelve women interviewed, five described themselves as illiterate. The absence of technical training especially for them meant that their low educational levels were never addressed and this further marginalised them the

participatory process and leadership opportunities. Coupled with the effects of patriarchy (which are examined later), women were less able to participate and were not eligible for leadership positions. The importance of directing education and technical training to women to enable them to gain access to leadership positions was a key to women's greater participation since attention to gender specific issues could only have been guaranteed where women participated in the cooperative executive council.

While different educational levels can be accounted for by the extent to which individuals were able to assimilate the importance of education for their own improvement, objective circumstances also played a part. In particular, unlike their younger colleagues, the older members encountered specific difficulties because of their age and problems with their sight. At the time of research six of the interviewees from GP, all men, were currently studying. Four of these were undertaking basic literacy and two were studying at secondary level and all of them were members of the Council. By contrast, no adult within the whole PJCh cooperative was studying at the time of research. This is a combined product of the physical distance of the cooperative from adult education programmes and its collective decision not to arrange for another resident teacher to work with them. Access to education was not the only limitation. The Freirean methods of reflexive pedagogy on which the Literacy Campaign was devised in order to instil a critical consciousness in the learner, were in practice abandoned. Instead, and in the context of a Crusade which was limited to a five month period, methods of rote learning were adopted by teachers. Its full potential as a liberating ingredient was restricted as a result and so was the state's positive intervention in participatory process (Arnove, 1986).

Nonetheless, while education appears to be a facilitating factor it was not the only pre-requisite to more intense participation. This is most aptly illustrated in the case of Ascension of GP who, although never an officer of the cooperative, was a member of the council and was a prominent initiator in the cooperative despite being barely literate. Ascension, a "militant" Catholic, had become a Delegate of the Word thirty years previously and was also a veteran Sandinista guerilla.

II2b Organisational experience

If education contributed to the individuals' liberation from an ideology which constrained them and enhanced their opportunities to operate as more effective participants within a social group, then so too did the organisational experience individuals gained before their incorporation into the cooperatives. As already described in Chapter 5, all the cooperative founders had prior involvement in either religious, trade union or other mass organisations organised around taking land and, in the case of GP, were directly involved in the struggle for the land. Social and political theory provides the basis from which to suggest that the involvement of peasants in organised movements contributes positively to the process of critical reflection on their social condition and increased political consciousness. The transformatory potential of *praxis* was consolidated by the discussions and debates within the organisations and institutions associated with cooperative development, thereby complementing their lived experiences by providing a formal education and reflexive perspective on their social history. In the case of these *campesinos*, where organised action led to the triumph itself and specifically to their gaining access to land and work through the cooperative, it served to generate a positive impression of collective action and what it could achieve.

These experiences enhanced the organisational and political skills of four of the founder members in particular and enabled them to overcome the disadvantage of their illiteracy, namely Ausencion and Joaquin from GP and Juan and Manuel from PJCh. These men were active and vocal contributors to the cooperative decision-making. This also contributed to the development of a strong politico-ideological identification with the revolution and the FSLN and was expressed either through formal membership of the party or their explicit self-identification as "*soy Sandinista*". This contrasts to other illiterate founders, who had also previously been incorporated into organisations but remained non-vocal in the assemblies despite their years of membership. They did not express any strong identification with the FSLN, on the contrary, one of them, Victoriano from GP, even stated:

"The cooperative has cooperated with the Sandinista Government, but were haven't received any benefit for this."

For the newer members who joined after its creation, prior organisational experience enabled them to incorporate themselves as active participants into the assemblies. The

social and political skills they had acquired through active participation in other organisations enabled the two new members referred to previously, namely, Carlos from GP and Sergio from PJCh, to become cooperative leaders within a less than a year after joining the cooperative.

The relationship between organisational experience in participatory channels beyond the cooperative, leads us to consider the relationship between internal participation and the members' current activities in other instances of participation. The cooperatives were not isolated organisations, but were linked either as a unit, or through the particular activities of individual members, with other channels of participation created by the revolution, including political parties, mass organisations and the military.

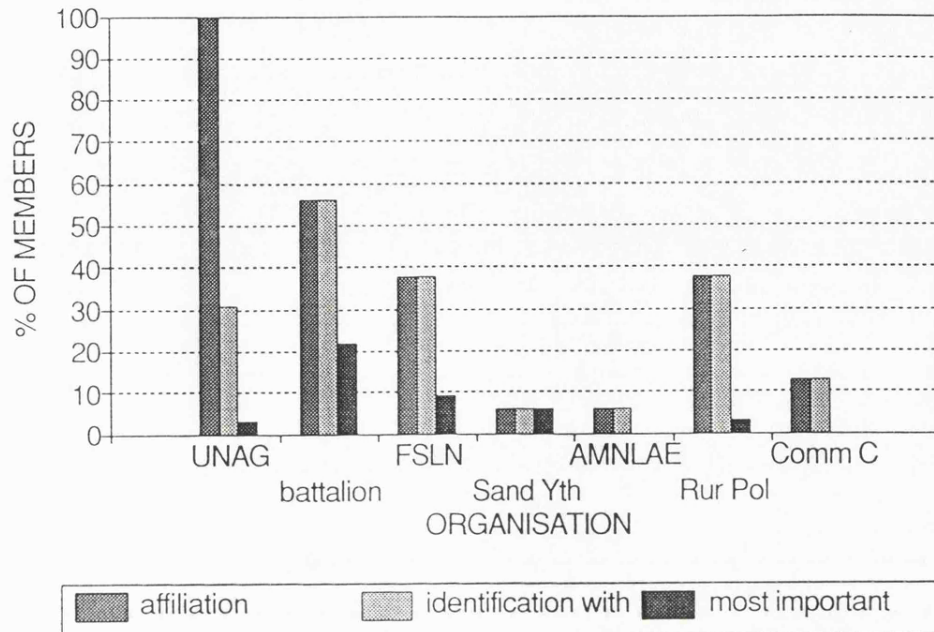
The incorporation of individuals to other organisations is represented in Figures 23 and 24. Here, formal affiliation of individuals to organisations was noted (represented in the "affiliation" category), as well as the subjective interpretations of individuals about their membership to the organisations mentioned, specifically whether they stated it as organisation to which they belonged (represented in the "identification with" category) and they perceived it was the most important organisation to them (in the "most important" category).

Analysis of an individual's profile of participatory activities reveals that participation within the cooperative is related to participation outside the cooperative. Thus, passive cooperative members either didn't participate in any other external organisation, as in the case of members within PJCh, or participated at low intensity activities in other organisations. Hence, the quiet members of GP participated during public events as members of the voluntary rural police force or as labourers in the material construction of local projects. Similarly, the high intensity participation of individuals within the cooperative correlates with participation in high intensity activities beyond the cooperative.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this external dimension of participation in any detail since this would entail a wider analysis of the socio-political implications of other participatory channels. Nonetheless, it seems that the politico-ideological identification was a factor facilitating their external participation, which implies that wider citizen participation in Nicaragua constituted a direct confirmation of politico-ideological identification of individuals with the revolution and the FSLN. By implication it suggests that identification of individuals with the revolution was a catalyst

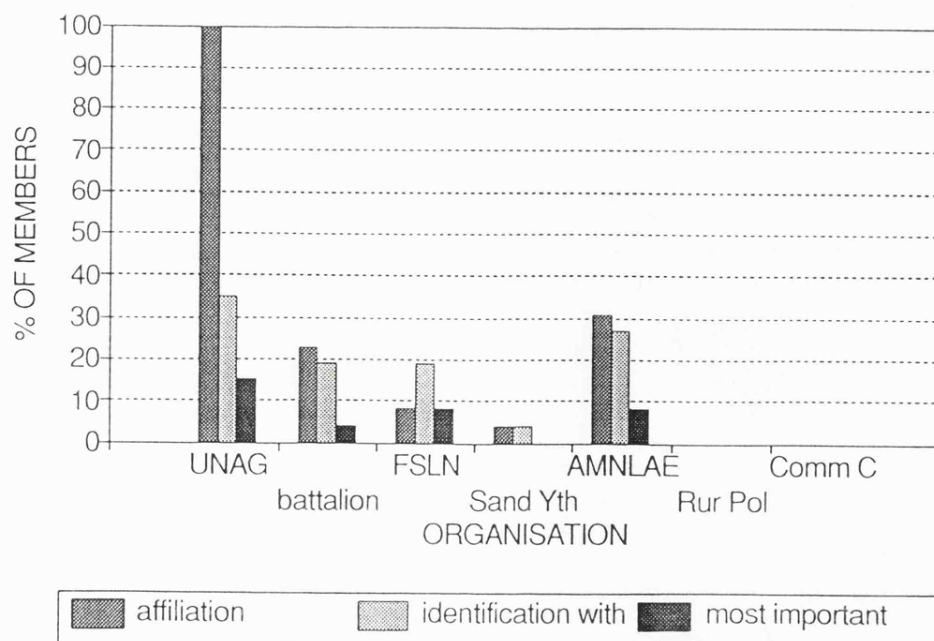
Membership of organisations

German Pomares (32 members)



Membership of organisations

Pedro J Chamorro (26 members)



to internal and external participation.

II2c The military *te da coraje*

Another variable which correlates positively with cooperative participation is that of military experience which itself can be seen as another participatory opportunity created by the revolution. As Chapter 6 indicated, the number of reservist duties carried out varied greatly between individuals and between the two cooperatives. Those in GP were mobilised more frequently and for longer periods than those in PJCh. Leaders went on reserve duties more times than ordinary members.

As with organisational experience and external participation a methodological problem arises from attempting to identify any causal relationship. However, this relationship can perhaps best be understood from the informants' own interpretations of their military experiences. Although some of them were dismissive of their military duties, others reported that their experience had profoundly influenced them in ways which can be seen to have shaped the nature of their participation. Ex-combatants, particularly those from GP, alleged that it gave them "the courage of our own convictions" and the confidence to make a stand on the issues they thought important as the following remark illustrates:

"I was close to death several times when I was mobilised, but God is great and it never happened. Now I'm not frightened to defend myself and what I believe in."

This quote - apart from raising doubts about the prospects of a non-violent political cultural - suggests that the military experience of individuals may have contributed to the process of de-legitimising old ideological portrayals of the docile *campesino*.

National service, which constituted the first military experience for the men was also an effective stimulator of their national and revolutionary political awareness, even for those who had previous organisational or political experience in the ATC, CC or even FSLN. In fact, the ideological preparation of the rank and file was systematically addressed by the military forces (Marchetti, 1986:317). In an explicit reference to his own political transformation during his military service, Wilfredo from GP reported that:

"The military was my real political formation, that's what really gets you understanding the national problem, which before I didn't."⁴

In other words, fulfilling his military service added a nationalist perspective to his political awareness since it served to place the revolution in the context of its international relations. The collective importance assigned to the military by those in GP, particularly those within the council, meant that participating in the reserve forces was the ultimate expression of their political commitment. Participation in the militia and reservist army was an explicit reaffirmation of identification with the revolution and the FSLN. In such a way the war against the US surrogate forces constituted a significant tutor in the political and ideological formation of young *cooperativistas* during the Sandinista Government. Given the more extensive and numerous mobilisations amongst the membership of GP, it is worth reflecting that perhaps the conventional military discipline of vertical style of commands may also have contributed to the development of its authoritarian leadership of GP as well as the generalised tolerance to it.

II3 Discrepancies in participatory outcomes

The variation in intensities of participation between individuals within the cooperatives indicates that amongst the members there were different outcomes in the participatory processes. These can be evaluated in relation to their incremental process towards empowerment.

That the quiet members remained constrained by a sense of worthlessness and feelings of inadequacy which were exacerbated by more experienced, articulate and confident members would suggest that internal constraints had not been overcome and that psychologically they were not empowered. Nonetheless, their formal incorporation within the cooperative guaranteed them access to decision-making a process into which they contributed albeit at low intensities of participation. Given, the cooperatives' articulation within wider political associations of the UNAG and cooperative movement this represented a degree of political empowerment in the sense that their minimal participatory inputs were channelled through these organisations which represented their strategic interests politically.

The active members had gained marginally more empowerment. Through either their own active experience in struggle or other channels of participation including the military and within the cooperative, they had overcome the internal psychological and social constraints and were able to engage more fully in the decision-making process.

Their political empowerment was therefore heightened because they exercised greater levels of intervention in the decision-making process. They had acquired a louder voice.

The initiators were those who from the beginning had been able assimilate the importance of taking advantage of the opportunities created by the revolution and had not only overcome the internal constraints but had also managed to increase their social empowerment through their access to knowledge and training. Their participation and involvement with organisations beyond the cooperative increased their political power by providing them with more channels through which to channel their own voice, particularly since they also occupied prominent roles in those organisations. As we saw in Chapter 8, these external participatory activities also consolidated their social power within the cooperative through the access to information, skills and resources it implied.

III Objective and subjective constraints of patriarchy

The participation of the women in cooperative decision-making in both GP and PJCh was limited. Typically, their involvement in the meetings was passive and rarely ever did women initiate a topic for discussion. In GP, neither Amanda or Auzcena spoke and in PJCh, the women usually remained silent during meetings, often grouped together. With the exception of Karla from PJCh (who had been an officer in the cooperative for a five month period) no woman had occupied a leadership position. There are several interrelated causal factors which account for women's marginalisation from the participatory process.

III1 Debilitating *machismo*: false notions and overwork

The incorporation of these women into the extra-domestic productive processes presented them with the opportunity to achieve a new dignity based on independence and equality as well as access to a public life. However, when women joined the cooperative they took with them the social devaluation of their productive and reproductive labour, the burden of their work in the domestic sphere plus the paralysing effects of an ideology that maintained that women were incapable of exercising leadership. These ideas (which were also internalised by women themselves) were embodied within the ideology of *machismo*

and were reinforced through the many expressions of patriarchy⁵. They constituted a serious barrier to women's participation in the cooperative.

Expressions of *machismo* were endemic throughout the two cooperatives and appeared in both overt and subtle forms. Domestic violence was common in PJCh although not evident in GP. Here one of the women was single: a status which enabled her to escape this overt dimension of patriarchy as expressed in this cultural context. It was particularly evident in PJCh given the existence of many couples and the proximity of families in the compound in Santa Maxima. Here, a man could beat his wife undisturbed because in the words of Pablo Ruiz, who himself lived there: :

"If I or anyone interferes he (the abuser) will say to me, 'Hey, is she your wife?'"

This statement reflects the predominant idea that women were subordinate to men and were their possessions. Moreover, the fact that domestic violence was categorically excluded as an issue for collective debate in the assembly indicates that this was seen as a strictly private problem and not a social concern. In this way, members were rejecting the view of *machismo* as a social problem.

Some men also publicly ridiculed and intimidated women, a practice which further inhibited women from taking a more prominent role in cooperative affairs. Such harassment had led Karla to resign from her post after a brief spell as organisation officer. Similarly,

despite having been elected by the women of PJCh to represent them on a training workshop of the Women's Section of UNAG, another woman, Margarita (a 33-year old mother of three and who lived with her partner) was forced to resign by the men after an angry debate in an assembly. The prediction of another, Fidelia (a long-serving member of the cooperative) that the men would not allow Margarita to be replaced by another representative proved correct.

Consistent with the dominant ideological conceptions about women there was a frequently expressed criticism from the men that women "*no rinden*" (don't produce equally). This is in keeping with observations made elsewhere in Latin America, which indicate that despite the indispensable economic contribution of peasant women to the household economy, their labour is undervalued (Phillip, 1987:114; Stephen, 1993:35). Although there was no evidence that men in GP explicitly devalued their colleague

Amanda (who worked amongst them in their production commissions) this view had previously been institutionalised in the cooperative to the extent that the women were allocated fewer basic grains than the men for equal work. In 1987, after Amanda had complained to AMNLAE about this inequality, she had been sanctioned with the removal of her full share of the year's profits.

The notion that women weren't as productive as men was often repeated voiced some men in PJCh, but it was never substantiated with reduced pay: indeed, as we saw from Chapter 7, profits were divided in strict accordance to days worked. Moreover, the notion was refuted most vehemently by some of the more enlightened men, responding to a proposal forwarded by a couple of men that the cooperative accept fewer new women as members, Juan, in an impassioned speech stressed the advantages of having women members. Women he stated, should join not only because it was their "social right to work as men" but also because they were conscientious workers and they benefitted the cooperative because production could be organised so as to make best use of the respective strengths of the men and women.

Nonetheless, the pervading portrayal that their productive work was not of equal value undermined women's self-confidence and made them keen to avoid public confrontations, particularly on gender related issues. Consequently, women in PJCh were even reluctant to support proposals put before the assembly by the leadership which would have furthered their own gender interests. For instance, in the context of the predominant conception that the care of children was a "women's" problem (not a social or joint-parental one) women rejected the suggestion that collective childcare provision be arranged. This would have entailed the release of a woman member from productive activities on a daily basis, an arrangement which required the support of all members including the men who the women did not want to alienate.

On another occasion in PJCh, and contrary to the recommendations of the leadership, the assembly voted to amend the regulations and withdraw economic assistance from expectant mothers. Ordinary male members stated that it was an unnecessary use of resources and as a policy had to be sacrificed, given the difficult economic circumstances. This issue of sexual politics had united the women to the extent that they had previously agreed that the matter was important and had to be addressed through a collective cooperative response. However, in the event only two women opposed it: the

others withdrawing their public support. They subsequently admitted that they were fearful of giving the men further grounds to criticise them and were reluctant to do anything which made their position as members (all the more) vulnerable.

Yet, one remarkable incident indicates that confrontations could take place. It involved an issue which went beyond challenging gender constructs of themselves and comprised a profound challenge to the men. It concerned the weekly visits of Dona Santos, a seller from nearby Pedro de los Molinas, who came to the cooperative to sell them liquor. By taking alcohol directly to the cooperative this woman's enterprising initiative had effectively removed a major deterrent from the men's drinking: namely, their access to it. Alcohol abuse was common and often resulted in violence. It was an issue that moved one woman - urged by her female colleagues - to speak about the matter at the next assembly where she complained that the cooperative:

".. is not a bar, it's a place of work and it's our home!"

By contrast, gender-related issues were never discussed in the assembly in GP. Apart from this above occasion, the women in PJCh as well as Amanda and Auzcena in GP, were very reluctant to place gender-related issues on the agenda of the assembly even though they considered that it failed to address the problems that they faced as women⁶. Gender related issues were also absent from the agendas of the GP leaders and low on that of the PJCh leaders although, as we saw previously, Lorenzo and Omar had tried in vain to promote childcare provision for the cooperative. Instead, the leaders gave priority to public-political matters above those of the private-political sphere: of which the exclusion of wife-beating from the agenda is illustrative. Without women in leadership positions these issues were fated to remain absent.

In addition to the subjective constraints on women's greater participation within the cooperative, it was also limited by their domestic commitments since their reality was that:

"We live always busy with the tasks of the house, cooking and looking after the children."⁷

This meant that they were unable to assume more responsibility within cooperative management or organisational activities. Women worked a double day of domestic and productive work, lasting between fourteen and sixteen hours. Typically, the women rose at 4.30am in order to cook breakfast, feed their children and their partners and start to prepare lunch. On return from work they would have to prepare a third meal, see to the

children, collect water and wash clothes. Indeed, the women themselves noted that their own days started while their men still slept and intensified on return from productive agricultural work while "he lies down to rest off his feet".

While women's incorporation into production represented one dimension of the satisfaction of their practical needs by securing an independent material basis for subsistence from men, their participation in the decision-making forum of the assembly was seriously constrained. Yet, although the above suggests that women's political power was weakly expressed in the formal decision-making where they were denied the power of voice, it is wrong to base an assessment of their participation purely on their activities in this male-dominated fora, as the following indicates.

III2 The *El Monte* strategy

Since women preferred to avoid public debate, those in PJCh sought an alternative strategy for resolving their problems. This was found in *el monte*, that is, in the hills. Here, working together amongst the coffee in one commission and uninhibited in the absence of men, women found an environment which was conducive to discuss their common problems, resolve disputes and reach collective decisions. It was here, following a discussion about their fear of abuse and attack, that the women decided to abandon the outside cooking area in the encampment. It was also where they shared their grievances about the booze-seller, Dona Santos, agreed a strategy and delegated a representative to speak about it before the cooperative assembly.

Essentially *el monte* was an oppositional strategy, an act of resistance to male domination and but was significant because it was an informal committee which had been created by the women themselves and constituted a response to their particular needs and the conditions they faced. It did not aim to achieve their "emancipation" or gender equality: a distinction which perhaps qualifies it as a fulfilling a practical gender interest as conceptualised by Molyneux (1986) and outlined in Chapter 1.

As we saw in Chapter 7, male members also used *el monte* as an informal arena for discussion and as a result the leaders repeatedly warned against it. This prohibition was applied without distinction to that of the women's group. Men habitually portrayed women's discussions there as subversive, reinforcing the definition of the assembly as the only legitimate arena for participation and thereby effectively delegitimizing the women's

forum. During one assembly the women were reprimanded for "creating rumours in the fields" and in another when two women had attempted to resolve a dispute amongst themselves in the hills, they were told that:

"..if you believe your partner is going with another women you must discuss it with him. If there are fights between women, both will be expelled."

Hardly justice! According to the all-male leadership officers the solution was simple: they reiterated that the women had been assigned a "coordinator", Francisco (a man), who was available to them for advice should they need it:

"..we don't want to hear you all presenting different points of view when you have a representative who will speak on you behalf."⁸

Immediately after making the above comment and without consulting the women, Lorenzo, the president, then suggested that the women should meet Francisco every one or two weeks because:

"you women are more delicate than men and we must try to overcome these little problems (of sexual jealousies)."

Other studies on cooperatives in Nicaragua have indicated that women have greater opportunities to participate meaningfully when decisions are made in decentralised committees and then ratified in assembly meetings (CIERA, 1989d). Essentially, the absence of decentralised committees in the two cooperatives denied women an effective and legitimated fora in which to participate and channel collective action. However, these informal meetings provided women with an opportunity to act collectively. Commenting that, "*ya juntas vemos los problemas que enfrentamos todas*" (together we can resolve the problems that we confront), the meetings constituted a space for social interaction which sensitised them to their common problems and, as we shall see below, an arena in which new ideas were discussed. The value of such "small group models" has been shown elsewhere in Latin America to be an effective means of facilitating discussion amongst women, to enable them to challenge subordinate female gender roles and to begin to explore their gender identity in a different light (Stephen, 1993).

Despite its potential, the fact that *el monte* was prohibited and not formally structured into the cooperative's mainstream decision-making structure prevented the women from effectively channeling their voice to wider political associations: including the cooperative itself, the UCA or UNAG.

In GP, objective circumstances dictated that the two women would not be able to develop any degree of solidarity between them since they had little social contact. They did not work together in production and lived a significant distance apart from each other. By contrast, the situation in PJCh was more conducive to the development of solidarity since their opportunities for social interaction were numerous. They formed a substantial proportion of the membership (approximately 35%), they worked together and many of them were neighbours who also shared cooking and washing facilities and a common water source. In addition to the use of *el monte* and the agreement to keep secret their discussions there, gender solidarity was evident from their mutual assistance in domestic tasks and other occasions. Once, when a woman became seriously ill after attempting to abort an unwanted child, her companions were united in persuading the men in the cooperative to support her morally and financially during her recovery.

Yet, the women in PJCh were not always united as a group and in other instances expressions of sisterhood were clearly absent. Once, during an assembly when members were discussing the proposal for children, the women with older children instead of remaining neutral disclaimed their gender interests by announcing of their own children that "*Ya, no se necesita cuidarlos*" (that they no longer needed care). Women also became divided by sexual jealousies. This was either directed suspiciously at young female newcomers or to the long-term member, Aura, a single woman (aged 29) who had four young children who were allegedly fathered by different men on the cooperative. This rumour led to her ostracisation by the other women, who described her unflatteringly in variations of the following theme:

"Aura es como una chancha que se acuesta en el monte para culear" (Aura is like a sow who lies down in the fields to fuck).

These contradictory indications of gender solidarity necessarily had negative implications for their potential for collective action.

III3 Challenging female constructs

Nonetheless, women within both cooperatives had begun a process of conquering the fear of culturally sanctioned social norms concerning their gender. As regards gender roles in politics, all the women interviewed believed that women should participate in (public) political life and asserted this belief in a terminology which reflects their awareness of the

social and legal basis of women's equality. Typically, they stated that it was their "right" and that women "make important contributions to finding solutions". Moreover, women considered that their political roles within the cooperative were inhibited not because of some natural law which confined them to the domestic space but because of their objective circumstances, namely their low "cultural" levels, specifically their poor educational and training levels, their lack of organisational experience and finally their domestic commitments. There were exceptions: two young women from PJCh just thought that "politics wasn't of interest to women". Beyond seeking explanations to account for why women participated less than men, Amanda from GP (aged 37, a single mother with six children), was clear that whatever the limitations it was imperative for women to participate in politics because:

"(i)f we don't know about politics, the men take advantage of us",

While Amanda's recognition that men attempted to manipulated women was not a view shared by other women, all the others were aware of the value of their productive work and contested the male dominated notion of theirs being a "help" to production. They expressed strong opinions about the value of their labour in the productive process asserting that "we work as well, if not better than the men". In most cases women reported that they participated in all the productive tasks, even though there was a minor division of labour since women not do the more strenuous slashing but this was a reflection of their confidence in the equality of their production work.

They were also conscious of the inequality of the amount of work they had to do daily compared to their partners. While there was no absence of expressions of their suffering this did not necessarily constitute a dimension of gender consciousness; indeed most women perceived the existing division of labour as uncontestably "natural". If the issue of renegotiating domestic duties was not on the women's agenda then neither were their practical interests yet politicised. Indeed, there was scant evidence of challenges to gender roles in reproduction. As regards control over their reproductive capacity, most women thought it right that they bear all "*los ninos que Dios quera*" (the children that God wishes). Only Maritza, the ex-teacher in PJCh, practiced any form of birth control.

However, the above indicates that the women had begun to develop a critical appreciation of their life conditions as women and as such an emergent gender

consciousness is some aspects of their roles were being challenged and these represent advances for their process of psychological empowerment as peasant women.

At this point my analysis is enriched by the findings in the comparative study of Perez (1990). This demonstrated that women organised in communal and educational mass organisations in Nicaragua were more ready than those in the CAS to oppose the dominant patriarchal ideology. The author accounted for this in reference to the greater possibilities for women to assume leadership positions in organisations oriented to consumer and family needs, such as education, health and housing, that is in areas which correspond to the traditional domestic and private spheres of women. Perez also observed that most women involved in communal and educative activities were single and were therefore freed from the imposition of patriarchal notions within the confines of the household. The high instance of women cooperative members with male partners could therefore account for why women with CAS do not exhibit greater beligerance towards the notions embodied within the socially ascribed gender norms. Nonetheless, the author also identified that the consciousness of women within CAS was more developed than amongst women who were not organised at all or were incorporated into religious groups.

If there was a discourse amongst cooperative women about their gender roles this was not only a product of the daily experiences and the conflicts they encountered within the cooperative, but also the influence of "external" agents. It is worth examining this in order to identify the precise role of these forces in facilitating increased participation of women in the political process. Here, the Women's Section of UNAG and AMNLAE before it had been influential in generating women's awareness of their gender condition. Over the years, both organisations had attended rural women in Tola and San Marcos and had provided training workshops for cooperative women on practical and strategic gender interests. The former addressed practical and legal issues of cooperative production. Half the women had attended these at some time. The AMNLAE workshops addressed physical and mental health, family violence and women's rights. The two women from GP and three of those interviewed from PJCh had attended these courses. AMNLAE had also provided the women from PJCh with transportation to attend national celebrations of International Women's Day, held in Managua on 8th March. Since the work of AMNLAE preceeded that of the Women's Section of UNAG, the women erroneously

attributed the gender related workshops organised by UNAG, as being organised by the former⁹.

It is interesting here to note that the participation of the women in these workshops amounted to information sharing which qualifies it as a low intensity form of participation. Nonetheless, this was sufficient to equip them with information concerning their formal rights. The women appreciated these mass organisations because "they address women's problems" and they acknowledged that they had been instrumental in raising their awareness of their problems and that they "enable us to know our rights in the revolution". To the extent that this knowledge of the politico-legal rights had been utilised successfully by the women to reduce their exploitation, these organisations can be seen to have been instrumental in contributing to their political empowerment.

The following illustrates how these workshops also provoked a questioning of traditional gender constructs and a process of collective reflection on the nature of their gender-specific condition of subordination. When Margarita (34-year old mother of two and heavily pregnant at the time) returned from a UNAG women's workshop in San Marcos to share the information she had gained with her female colleagues, an angry debate with the men ensued. Margarita described in the privacy of her room what happened:

"In the assembly meeting after (attending) the course we addressed the problem and they agreed to pay the women maternity pay. But then the men said, "here in the cooperative we command, not those women from there (San Marcos)". The fact is that they don't want me to go to the meetings since they say that all we talk about there is the theme of the economic assistance and the rights of pregnant women."¹⁰

Apart from demonstrating the interesting strategy of the men to attempt to legitimise the pursuit of their own interests and reject the women's perspective by recourse to a discourse about cooperative autonomy, the incident shows how external organisations fuelled debates around which a discourse on gender revolved. This also demonstrates the potential role for women's organisations to stimulate women to challenge patriarchal authority through the development of gender consciousness. This role is particularly significant since, as Deere and Leon (1987:11) observe from international comparative studies, women's participation in social production does not automatically produce gender consciousness.

These organisations also provided institutional support of another kind for the women. In GP, AMNLAE had last intervened concerning the aforementioned case of unequal payment to women members. The organisation had also been called to help resolve a problem which arose in PJCh when the men were insisting that women do nightwatch. Here, AMNLAE had presented its perspective to the cooperative, explaining that women should be exempt since it meant the children were left alone and the jealousy it caused often provoked fights. Its proposal was subsequently accepted and the men then assumed sole responsibility for night-watch¹¹. While this matter had been resolved in the women's favour, there were costs to them of having appealed to an external organisation for support. Afterwards, the women had to endure intense harassment from the men and were afraid of the repercussions of disclosing other cooperative issues to outside organisations as the following statement implies. After the aforementioned event involving Margarita (the women's representative to the UNAG workshops), Fidelia remarked that:

"Women tell them yes, that the cooperative is giving economic assistance (during maternity leave) when in fact it is not. They don't want to involve the cooperative in any problems because of the hassles the men then give us."

Ultimately, the fear of the men's response deterred the women from seeking further intervention from agencies beyond the cooperative. Nonetheless, they were clearly involved in a process of negotiating strategies *vis-a-vis* the institutions around them and in this case opted for the one which carried the least "costs" to themselves. Although the strategy they adopted did not challenge male authority it was one consciously selected in response to the anticipated consequences of their actions.

While ideological conceptions which perpetuated sexual discrimination endured in the cooperatives, the process of organisation and participation of the women and their everyday life experiences within the cooperatives facilitated an advance in the aspects of their gender consciousness. In the light of the observations by Deere and Leon (1987:262) based on comparative studies of other Latin American cases, it is clear that gender consciousness among women is a necessary pre-condition which enables them to become a political force and to challenge not just state policy but also gender relation in daily life. Thus, it would seem that although the development of women's consciousness concerning their roles in production, reproduction, sexuality and politics was not uniform, there were significant advances to suggest psychological empowerment and small steps towards their

political empowerment. However, women in neither cooperative had elaborated an antagonistic response to *machismo* or to the problem of having to be responsible for all domestic commitments. Unless they were prepared educationally, emotionally and organisationally to do so, it is unlikely that they would have been able to develop themselves within the public arena.

The prevalence of patriarchy in the cooperatives as other studies have indicated existed elsewhere in Nicaragua (Padilla et al, 1987) demonstrates that despite structural changes it remained an ideologically dominant conception which had objective and subjective implications on the organisation and participation of women. After all, as the Nicaraguan sociologist Nuñez (1988) emphasises *machismo* is the most resilient of all ideologies. Indeed, we are reminded from the studies of Cuba (as a socialist state which similarly sought to eliminate gender inequality), that the provision of new legislation and strategies, such as those embodied with the Nicaraguan RAS; other legal measures implemented by the Sandinistas; and the efforts of mass organisations cannot alone "will away" the cultural, ideological and material factors which have perpetuated women's subordination (Deere and Leon, 1987:262). It is however, important that transformations in gender relations take place in daily life, in the household, family and - in the case of these rural women - in the cooperative. This is because it is at this loci that women can re-negotiate the reproductive tasks of the household and challenge the gender constructions which associate women with reproduction and men with privileges of authority.

When the cooperative de-collectivised some of its land following the UNO victory, many of the women with partners negotiated with them over the distribution of labour and withdrew into the private arena, opting to concentrate on domestic chores. While the price to be paid for this was exclusion from access to the public political arena, it cannot be judged to represent a lack of gender consciousness since the decision was motivated by short-term practical interests: namely to reduce their workload.

Conclusions

This chapter has indicated that involvement in struggle and mass organisations and access to education and training are necessary elements to ensure high intensity participation because these activities enable individuals to overcome the constraints, the negative

constructs of themselves as peasants and women. The organisation of women within the cooperative incorporated them into a public space and removed a principle barrier to their developing consciousness of their gender condition. There was also evidence that they were developing a critical appreciation of their life condition as women. Both advances have implications for the process of psychological empowerment.

The positive contribution of education and training the programmes introduced by the mass organisations highlight the positive role of external agents in promoting participation amongst the peasantry and the women in particular. However, as this chapter has shown, the ideas from external sources cannot be seen to be simply imposed on these subjects, since they intervened into their lives through their interaction with the peasants' own knowledge systems and experiences.

With its focus on the actor, this chapter has also indicated the features of the transformations underway in the cooperatives and has emphasised that they may be indeed be small and largely subjective in nature but that this should not be written off as insignificant. While it is wrong to judge a period of transformation by its consciousness, the type of oppositional constructions and strategies they develop imply that new worldviews and self-identities were emerging as important pre-requisites to political action.

Notes to Chapter 9

1. Milbrath (1965) and Almond and Verba (1965) sought to establish the relative proportions of modes of participation within different societies in order to account for the organisational principles of society. Milbrath identified three categories apathetic, spectators and gladiators and observed that these categories occur uniformly in all societies in the relative proportions, respectively of 33%: 60%: 7%.
2. Maria Jesus, Sanchez II, Tola, personal interview, 4th December 1989.
3. Personal interview, 17 November 1989.
4. Personal interview, German Pomares, December 1989.
5. Here patriarchy is understood as a general definition which refers to power relations between the sexes and exercised by men over women and within institutions with various social relations and practices, such as the law, family and education and which varies between and within nations, cultures and communities.
6. Out of the twelve women interviewed, only four believed the assembly considered all of women's problems.
7. Amanda Salinas, Personal interview, German Pomares, December 1990.
8. Lorenzo Ampie, during General Assembly February 1990.
9. This history of this organisation's involvement in the cooperative was the origin of the women's confusion between it and Women's Section of UNAG. In their minds AMNLAE was synonymous with "the women's movement", to which they credited any training courses or women's related developments.
10. Personal interview in Pedro Joaquin February 1990.
11. Yolanda Ramirez, personal interview, Casa de la Mujer, San Marcos, February 1990.

Capter 10

CONCLUSION

By 1979 Nicaragua had been ruled for forty five years by a dictatorship headed by the Somoza dynasty. This era was characterised by social inequality and authoritarianism where control over the country's resources was maintained exclusively by a small elite of the Somoza family and its cohorts. The National Guard, a constabulary force which had been created and trained by the US government, was used as its primary instrument of oppression. Political opponents to the regime were not tolerated and were either co-opted or repressed: conditions which inhibited the development of effective opposition and popular organisations.

Historically, the peasantry had resisted their progressive marginalisation during the development of Nicaragua's agroexport economy which had displaced them from their ancestral lands. Some supported General Sandino who recognised that the US presence in the country was an impediment to the possibilities of change given the extent of dependency of the national government on its support. Peasants filled the ranks of his Army for the Defence of National Sovereignty and fought against the US marines from 1927 until they were forced to withdraw from the country in 1933. After Sandino's assassination by the National Guard in 1934, the peasantry were systematically oppressed. In the absence of an alternative ideology in which to express themselves, the traditional Liberal/Conservative antagonisms served to divide the peasantry.

They lacked an organisational network to cohesed them and remained illiterate. The dictatorship was overthrown in 1979 by the Sandinista Popular Revolution which comprised an alliance of social forces and was led by the FSLN. Some peasant sectors incorporated into the liberation movement not only because the Sandinistas aimed to overthrow a regime which oppressed them but also because the FSLN promised to fulfil the peasants' historic demand for access to land.

On coming to power, the Sandinista Government declared a commitment to incorporating the masses into national political and economic development, maintaining that popular participation was the best guarantee to create a popular democracy based on socioeconomic and political equality. Representative forms of democracy were also adopted in order to accommodate the plurality of sectorial interests within the broad

alliance of the revolution. In addition, it identified its political mission as that of the vanguard of the popular sectors which would lead the hitherto unstructured "masses" through the transition to socialism according to its own political and theoretical interpretation. Structural changes and radical reforms, including national literacy campaigns, were subsequently implemented to provide conditions conducive to the development of popular participation. The new national political environment guaranteed political freedoms and various mechanisms were created to encourage and harness popular participation. In response, mass organisations flourished and multiplied after the defeat of the Somoza dictatorship as people organised around the need to resolve collective social and economic problems. These were formally incorporated into the national decision-making structures, including the legislative processes.

In the countryside, agrarian reform radically transformed the structure of land tenure. From a situation under Somoza where the concentration of land-ownership was one of the most concentrated in Latin America, the Sandinista Government turned Nicaragua into one of the most equitable which also ensured women access to land. This redistribution not only gave landless and poor peasants increased access to land but simultaneously did away with the pre-existing relations of rural domination: the *hacienda*. Accompanying rural policies provided access to credit, technology and training, in addition to other basic education and health services. This increased the peasantry's access to resources (material and otherwise) and increased the social power of rural households to the extent that their means of production and reproduction were improved.

The Sandinista Government encouraged cooperative formation because collective production fulfilled various political, economic and social objectives. Within the context of a mixed economy which included private ownership and a state sector, its policies towards the cooperative sector were therefore affected as much by the class alliance as the decision to prioritise socialist state production: a situation which gave the incipient peasant movement its dual character as defending its interests against the bourgeoisie and state. Cooperatives were seen as a superior form of organisation which could transform what the TP-dominated MIDINRA perceived to be a backward and individualist peasantry into a politically more advanced sector; and as a way of socialising the means of production. This was a clear indication that the concept of political pluralism did extend as far as accepting alternative ideological or developmental perspectives within the peasant sector.

Cooperatives were also seen to facilitate administrative control of the countryside as well as the introduction of modern technology and production methods.

In addition to these instrumental purposes, cooperative organisation was perceived by the Sandinistas as a means by which to enable the hitherto excluded rural population to participate in economic management and political processes and thereby increase their power. With the recognition by peasant producers themselves and the FSLN, that there was no mass organisation following the triumph to represent their specific interests within the new political system, UNAG emerged as a heterogeneous association incorporating producers from the different social sectors. Declaring its support for the revolutionary process, UNAG's influence expanded through its membership, economic significance and political weight. Its leadership was dominated by middle and large producer sectors.

The existing literature - to date - has placed analytical emphasis on such popular organisations which emerged as the most important channel of participation and has indicated that the outcomes of the participatory experience during the period of the Sandinista Government were disappointing. This, it is argued, is because the opportunities for autonomous action of the popular sectors became restricted through an unchecked tendency towards bureaucratisation of the mass organisations. In addition, observers account for this in terms of the impact of an externally imposed and prolonged war of attrition fought by the Contra mercenaries and an economic embargo imposed by the US in 1985 which exacerbated an economic crisis. Funds for social programmes were re-directed towards the military effort and the demands and interests of popular organisations became subordinated to the national priority of defence of sovereignty, the right to self-determination and the need to maintain the multi-class policy of national unity. Criticism within the ranks of the FSLN and from within mass organisations became progressively closed.

Whilst accepting the above analysis, this thesis has aimed to analyse the processes of participation. Rather than evaluate the period in terms of the extent to which access to the decision-making processes in structural terms was secured and resources were redistributed, it focuses instead on the qualitative nature of the processes evolving at the grassroots level. It undertakes this task equipped with an operationalised framework for analysis which categorises different intensities of participation which correspond to the extent to which the control or voice of an individual is incorporated into an activity.

These intensities are then related to the extent to which participation contributes to the interrelated processes of empowerment of individuals in the social, political and psychological dimensions as they apply in particular to the peasantry.

An integral part of the examination of these processes has involved the identification of various factors and agents operating at different levels of analysis which influenced and shaped participatory experiences at the micro-level. Consequently, the study has shown that while participation should be understood in terms of the historical, structural and macro-level phenomena which establish the contextual parameters - the opportunities and constraints for participation - these were only part of the story. It is also imperative to consider how these forces became translated into daily behaviour through a complex interaction with micro-level phenomena and processes. This is achieved in the thesis by adopting an actor model which emphasises how local processes shape the nature of participation. In such a way, the distinct and unique participatory character of each cooperative can be explained in reference to how historical, political, institutional and daily events converged at the local level with group dynamics and the interpretations and life experiences of individuals.

As elsewhere in the country, the founders of the two cooperatives studied here were granted access to redistributed land which was conditional on their organisation into collectivised production. After a brief period when they received minimal attention, they subsequently developed within the context of a state which considered them as objects to be subordinated to national development objectives. During this stage they endured high levels of state intervention in membership, productive and organisational aspects. After 1985, state policy towards the cooperative sector became less interventionist following a shift in agrarian reform towards a more pro-peasant state policy in response to peasant demands for land and the need to consolidate support for the revolution as the war escalated. Also, after a national process of "self-criticism" in 1987, when the negative effects of its intervention in production, organisation and internal democratic processes within cooperatives were acknowledged, the state reduced its direct intervention in cooperative affairs although it still retained a paternalistic notion of cooperative development.

By 1989, the two cooperatives studied enjoyed a relatively high degree of control and autonomy from external agents with the important exception of the imposition of the

CAS organisational criterion which UNAG also enforced. This denied cooperative members control over this crucial dimension of their cooperative unit although macro-economic policies also ultimately determined production decisions, the cooperatives themselves controlled their own production plans. The reduced control of cooperative members over their own organisational structure and some aspects of their production, meant that their participation was of low intensity in these aspects: amounting to implementation of policies and information sharing and consultation with external agents and institutions. However, cooperative assemblies were also the arena for high intensity participation: for decision-making and initiating action concerning other aspects of collective life, including some aspects of economic management, finance, production tasks, welfare issues and political and social life.

In the GP cooperative the scope for ordinary members to participate in high intensity participation was particularly limited because its assembly was not the sole forum for decision-making. Here, power was concentrated in the council and leadership, both of which were dominated by FSLN members, who monopolised control of the key areas of cooperative management and development. Consequently, ordinary members were restricted in the issues and intensity with which they could participate. However, the role of the leadership was legitimized by ordinary members because the cooperative's history, involvement through the reserve militia in national defence and the extent of support it had received from the state, meant that most of its members identified strongly with the FSLN. Their familiarity through *habitus* of non-consensual forms of leadership meant that the behaviour of officers went unchallenged and personalised forms of leadership prevailed. The incorporation of these leaders into other structures of revolutionary power rendered them effective resource deliverers and this enhanced their authority.

By contrast, the more egalitarian distribution of power amongst the members in PJCh meant that ordinary members had greater opportunities to participate at higher intensities in the decision-making processes and they enjoyed effective influence over issues of collective concern. Here, the participatory processes were more democratic than in GP. In the context of unfavourable economic conditions in general and in particular following the adjustment policies of 1988, the leaders were sapped of authority mainly because their involvement in the UCA was not seen as delivering the anticipated resources. Members were further alienated from the UCA because it was created without their direct

involvement. In such circumstances they demanded that their leaders comply with their role as being representative of and accountable to the membership. In turn, this situation deprived leaders of the opportunity to implement progressive social policies which would have benefited women members.

At first sight, the participatory practices emerging within the two cooperatives may appear limited, constrained and indeed disappointing. However, our expectation of the possibilities of empowerment must be based firmly in an appreciation of both the historical context of Nicaragua and should be sensitised to the particular conditions confronting subaltern groups such as the peasantry where overt forms of "politically significant action" would be spectacular indeed. Instead, we must consider a more nuanced appreciation of the type of transformations underway within these two cooperatives.

Thus, the study reveals that - independently of the relative power of the assembly - compared with the historical conditions facing these peasants, both cooperatives served to empower members in several dimensions, albeit in contradictory ways. Previously, peasants were marginalised from the political process and denied the opportunity to free speech and to debate matters which affected them. By contrast, these cooperatives provided members with a framework for continued and sustained participation during which individuals could channel their voice and assert control in the decision-making processes over some - if not all - of the areas which affected their lives. State intervention, the imposition of policies from UNAG and the national economic context limited the prospects of members for complete control over all aspects. Nonetheless, the cooperatives effectively served as schools where individuals gained unprecedented political experience and had the opportunity to learn new political skills and practices, including group discussion, debate, reaching consensus, the use of voice and vote and analytical thought.

The processes underway in the assemblies contributed to individuals' awareness and knowledge of their own circumstances and rights and of the national political situation and institutional milieu. Previously constrained by localist worldviews or ideologies which corresponded to the immediate locality or geographical area defined by the sphere of production, these *campesinos* obtained a nationalist dimension to their consciousness which exposed them to national political discourses. This was significant for several

reasons. It provided a basis for potential unity of a national peasant movement which had hitherto been divided by the traditional ideologies of Liberalism and Conservatism. Furthermore, assimilating the notions and principles of, amongst others: "democracy", "justice" and "rights" these peasants were provided with a new vocabulary with which to defend their interests. The assimilation of this national political discourse combined with new political practices also equipped the cooperatives and their members with sufficient political agility to enable them to challenge the encroaching bureaucratic tendencies of both the state and rural mass organisations which constantly attempted control them and limit their autonomy.

These elements equipped individuals with the pre-requisites which enabled them to become politically proactive and were accompanied by the empowerment of a subjective nature. Thus, through *praxis* within the cooperative, individuals were able to overcome the constraining ideological notions of themselves as passive peasants which were perpetuated under Somoza, making collective and organised action seem possible. The assemblies facilitated the members' realisation that change could be achieved through concerted action.

Even if individuals only used their passive vote and not their active voice in decision-making, their incorporation into the wider cooperative movement effectively enhanced the political power of individuals in this sector. Before peasants may have been conscious of the subordination which they endured but then they had lacked the sophistication or the social cohesion to enable them to construct their own organisations. Here, by contrast, both cooperatives through their formal affiliation became incorporated into a wider peasant movement.

At the local level the political power of the two cooperative was enhanced by their incorporation into the peasant movement in quite distinct ways. Essentially, the GP was vertically integrated through its leadership, into instances of revolutionary power at the community and municipal level which incorporated it into bureaucratic structure of the government. Nonetheless, its formal affiliation within the MCC alongside other cooperatives rendered the sector a powerful and influential economic and political actor in municipal politics. By contrast, the political power of PJCh was based on its affiliation within a second level cooperative, the UCA, thereby extending the cooperative's power base horizontally. This provided it with a broader front in which it could struggle to

protect the economic and political interests of its sector against the state.

Moreover, not only were the cooperatives empowered at the municipal level within the MCC but they were also affiliated to the national cooperative movement which had political representation within UNAG. Thus, the power of individuals was increased through their representation within a larger organisation which represented them in the context of national politics. The economic significance of this movement, matched by its increasing political power, gained it important concessions in the competition with other economic sectors, including that of bourgeoisie and the state. At the same time, the military experience of the *socios* represented one dimension of "political capital" during which it enhanced its leadership and organisational capacity and collective discipline. Their acquisition of arms could also prove decisive in defending their interests in the face of unexpected attempts to re-establish a system of historical domination (Serra, 1993:26).

There is tangible evidence for this political empowerment. One such source does not relate specifically to the cooperative movement but more generally to the country, namely the newly established right to vote against the FSLN, which is precisely what several individuals within the two cooperatives did. Other indications of political empowerment are provided in the two case studies from the encounters and negotiations between the cooperatives with the various institutions around them, including those of the revolutionary authorities and the mass organisations. This demonstrates clearly that the cooperatives had gained the appropriate political skills to enable them to operate their institutional milieu and to assume a proactive political role. The conflictual nature of their assertions for autonomy from imposing external agents (UNAG and the state) and their demands for increasing control over cooperative matters constitute politically relevant actions.

Participation did not develop uniformly amongst members and despite shared social backgrounds, the input of members to the decision-making processes varied. Those who had been involved in the organised struggle for land or had higher educational and training levels and took part in other activities participated more intensely. These factors were significant in the process of empowering because they contributed to the process by which individuals could overcome the ideological barriers perpetuated by the old system, enhance their political and class consciousness and develop an awareness of themselves as potential political actors. The positive influence of education and training in facilitating

participation suggests the positive role of external agents.

Women were consistently poor, relatively passive participators. Despite legal guarantees to ensure their equal incorporation into the productive process, their participation was inhibited by the persistence of a patriarchal ideology which perpetuated negative views of women and their capacity to fulfil political roles in the public domain. Women's burden of the subordinate female gender social constructions and their low education and training levels meant that they were further marginalised from the participatory process. Despite these limitations, the organisation of women into the cooperatives represented a small advance since it gave them access to a public space for the first time and removed a major obstacle to their political and gender awareness. The women in the PJCh cooperative had the advantage over the two in GP primarily because there were more of them. Amongst them they had not only developed a discourse about the roles of the sexes but they had responded to their marginalisation by establishing their own forum for collective action. Although the *el monte* solution was essentially a strategy of resistance and not one which gained them access to the formal public and male dominated arena, it was significant because it represented an organisational and collective response. The women in GP had also developed a critical awareness of their gender condition but had not been able to devise an organised counter-strategy because they were socially isolated from each other.

The findings indicate that the women were challenging their socially ascribed domestic roles and did so as a product of their own daily experiences made coherent by the input of external agents. Here, AMNLAE and the Women's Section of UNAG played an important role through both their provision of basic information to women about the issues relating to practical gender interests (concerning their incorporation into production and basic healthcare) as well as strategic gender interests (relating to the social and political discourse of women's rights, gender equality and legal protection). They would also intervene directly in the cooperative to assist women in their demands.

Cooperative leaders were the most active participants who were capable of assuming high intensity initiating roles in the administration, management and development of cooperatives. They had been able to respond to the organisational, educational and training opportunities created around cooperative organisation and more generally by the Sandinista Revolution. As the main beneficiaries of the efforts of the

state to consolidate a layer of competent rural administrators, then later of UNAG to consolidate the movement as a competitive economic sector, the leaders were essentially a product of the participatory and political process. In GP they emerged as rural *caciques* deriving their power from their access to resources from above while delivering members as loyal political subjects to the FSLN yet they also contributed to the extension of the rural mass organisations into the countryside. In PJCh, the power of the leaders was essentially based on their internal legitimacy. Here, unlike in GP, transparency was demanded by ordinary members from their representatives. This is significant because it indicates the importance of developments within the cooperative bases and civil society, where the notions of representation, consensus and legitimacy must not only be understood as basic democratic principles but also demanded from the bottom up.

The development of participatory processes within the cooperatives cannot be considered separately from other factors which influenced their viability. Here the positive effects of participation were largely masked by the negative impact of the other variables, in these cases the unfavourable economic situation and context of a war, which reduced productivity through lost material incentive and because members contributed to the military defence.

The empirical findings of this study have demonstrated here that in response to the macro-socioeconomic and political transformations in the Sandinista period, new practices of participation, sources of leadership and different values and modes of behaviour were emerging within these CAS cooperatives which conflicted with the previously held norms and dominant values. However, the processes of empowerment underway through individual participation within cooperatives were not linear nor uniform but developed in contradictory ways and were inconsistent in the various dimensions. The lack of democratic traditions, of experiences with the principles of representation and consent and the low educational levels of many members - all products inherited from the country's "reactionary despotism" meant that authoritarian forms of leadership and those based on personalised forms of power were reproduced and could prevail unchallenged. At the same time, the low educational levels of members required strong leadership.

Nonetheless, our actor-oriented perspective has revealed that the cooperatives secured the inclusion of peasants who were hitherto excluded from the political process, co-opted or repressed into an organisational configuration which enhanced their social,

psychological and political power. By indicating how these peasants interacted with external forces, it has also shown that the peasantry cannot be viewed simply as being subjects on which policies or ideas can be imposed. Rather, their own life experiences, strategies, values and consciousness interacted and responded in a complex way to these phenomena, modifying them in the process.

Policy implications

The research findings illuminate three main areas which are relevant for their implications on policy as it relates to participation. These refer to the role of the state in promoting participation, the problems of rural cooperatives and policy approaches. Each of these issues is addressed below.

Firstly, is the state an appropriate sponsor of participation? The documentation of the shortcomings of Nicaraguan experience of participation might provide further evidence to the case of the community participation theorists. They consider that the state is unable to effect "meaningful participation" (defined as where individuals have effective influence and power) because of its inherent feature of perpetuating the top-down approach (Midgley, 1986:145-160). Commentators are generally agreed that the realisation of participatory ideals is blocked by administrative inefficiencies of government administration, bureaucratic indifference, procedural delays and other administrative problems (Lowy, 1986:286; Midgley, 1986:149). Advocates of community participation favour NGOs above officialdom as external sponsoring agents and argue that NGOs are less encumbered by bureaucratic rules and procedures. Thus they can enjoy relative independence from the state, can stimulate radical community action and can be more dynamic, innovative and flexible (Oakley and Marsden: 1984:88-9).

Nonetheless, I maintain that there are several reasons why the state is a potentially important sponsor of participation. The state has a central role in the development process (albeit currently rapidly diminishing in Latin America as elsewhere) and the gravity and extent of chronic poverty and deprivation in the developing world necessitate a systematic and global intervention by the state if these problems are to be tackled. Also, government agencies have access to central decision-making, greater resources and organisational capacity to enable them to carry out development programmes at national level (Midgley, 1986).

As in the country case of this study, the state can create conditions conducive for participation by implementing radical reforms to eliminate those structural constraints to participation in the form of sociopolitical and socioeconomic inequalities which are a main obstacle to participation. But, this alone is not enough. It can also provide education and training in programmes for rural populations aimed at generating critical consciousness about the conditions of their lives, since, as the thesis findings indicate, this plays a key role in influencing the quality of individuals' participation. As importantly, the state has an important role in establishing the national political parameter in which participation may develop as a consequence of the initiatives of other agents, including popular organisations.

As regards women in particular, the state can provide legal guarantees to facilitate women's equal access to the means of production which increases their social power and improves their access to resources for their families. It can direct training programmes at women to facilitate their greater incorporation into the participatory process. These would need to relate to issues concerning cooperative production and management in order that women's opportunities for greater participation and ultimately for leadership improve. This would then enable them to address their gender practical needs.

In many respects, it is in the interests of governments to promote the participation of local people in order to mobilise local resources, save on costs and make the project efficient. Participation which incorporates local people such as peasants in determining objectives provides better information about the local area, its people, their needs and priorities and provides feedback on official initiatives. The use of local technical knowledge can be used to adapt programmes to local conditions also makes projects more effective and therefore more successful. By ensuring that the local people maintain the momentum of the project, also ensures the longer-term sustainability of the project and by incorporating more people in development activities, participation also ensures a wider coverage than those government or agency supported development projects which reach only a limited number of rural people (Oakley, 1991). But this perspective must be tempered with the recognition of "human agency" whereby the individual: the farmer or peasant is acknowledged as being conscious of and knowledgeable about the world around him or her, can come to grips with it and devises ways with which to resolve the problems encountered. It is this which accounts for different local response to specific policies and

it is this which requires that we abandon the notion that the state alone can, should or is alone responsible for policy outcomes.

This view is validated, as is the role of the state as a potential sponsor, by the recognition which arises from the research that - contrary to the view of Oakley and Marsden (1984) - participation as a "means" has the potential to develop into participation as an "end". Under certain circumstances, given the correct political environment and sufficient democratic space, participation can develop by the interaction of individuals and groups with more remote social and political phenomena, into a force from below: such is the dynamic of participation and the influence of human agency.

A second question - namely, whether rural cooperatives are viable participatory mechanisms by which to incorporate the peasantry into development processes - arises from the research with policy-related implications. However, in the assessment of the cooperative experience of participation we must consider the debates about the role of cooperatives in development as well as the broader goals of the Sandinista regime as they relate to social, political objectives and the preservation of national sovereignty. Here, while the creation of cooperatives contributed to the democratisation of the rural structure of land ownership and the socialisation of production, the economic and political contradictions arising from the CAS cooperative model, in particular, were inherently problematic. The CAS model frustrated peasant aspirations of integrating family labour into the productive process and, as this thesis suggests, may have served as a disincentive to greater efficiency. As such the imposition of organisational criterion on cooperatives was counter-productive to the extent that it denied members the opportunity to initiate and decide their own organisational structures and may have contributed as a factor reducing their motivation to work longer hours. Moreover, in the context of continuing land hunger and economic crisis, the official prioritisation of CAS alienated many poor and landless peasants as well as individual producers from state rural policies.

Thirdly, what do the research findings suggest about our approaches to participation? This study has clearly indicated that macro-processes find expression at the local level only as they are translated and modified through individual and group interpretations, action and behaviour. It also demonstrates the unpredictable nature of the participatory process which cannot be established *a priori* but which develops with its own dynamic to give its idiosyncratic outcomes in response to the local level circumstances.

Participation is not a constant: it varies over time and has greater or lesser importance at different periods or stages of project or activity. These characteristics suggest that participation cannot be injected formally into a situation but instead must be accommodated by creating favourable conditions for its development which can be subsequently negotiated by the actors involved. The wider implications of this gives weight to the proposal of Hall (1986), that a "process" approach to development planning which emphasises continuous dialogue between state planners and beneficiaries should replace the "blueprint" style of development which sees projects as vehicles through which pre-determined government goals can be applied.

Participation: a modest reappraisal of the 1979-90 period

The findings of this study also contribute to an assessment of the importance of the Sandinista period of rule. It does this by highlighting the nature of some of the political transformations that were occurring; the quality and dimensions of the participatory process; and specifically, the role of the Sandinista Government in these developments.

Given that this study was based on two CAS case studies within one region, it would be inappropriate to generalise from these conclusions to the overall cooperative experience in the countryside let alone the experience of participation in other sectors. However, here, other studies are informative and suggest that some of these tendencies were more widespread. A study by Houtart and Lemerminier (1992) in Masaya (also in Region IV) of belief systems, values and worldviews, showed that socio-cultural and political changes were most consistently evident amongst rural inhabitants integrated into CAS cooperatives, compared with any other form of social organisation, including the CCS and individual producers. This supports my findings by demonstrating further the transformatory potential on subjective notions and political practices of organisational and participatory mechanisms facilitated by collective production. Another comparative study by Perez (1990), focused on Nicaraguan peasant women and demonstrated the extent of social and political transformations observed amongst rural women. The author concluded that women involved in the processes of organisation and participation exhibited a greater capacity to question and resist hierarchical relations compared with non-organised women. It was demonstrated that women organised around production were more critical of their socially ascribed roles than non-organised women. However, Perez also indicated that

those in organisations oriented towards health and education services manifested more radical transformations in gender consciousness and belligerency than the women in CAS.

Beyond the organised countryside experience other studies have suggested that other participatory processes and channels created during the revolution profoundly affected the lives of the individuals involved in various ways. For example, based on observations of low-income women in urban communities of Managua, Vance (1987) noted that the processes of women's participation in the formulation and execution of housing construction projects contributed to their development of a gender consciousness. Also, Arnove (1986) has indicated that the participation of young people in the Literacy Crusade, which exposed mainly urban bred individuals to the realities of conditions in the rural areas, influenced their values and heightened their own political commitment. Suggestive of the psychologically and politically empowering effects of these experiences, Arnove also claimed that they served to increase their confidence in themselves and in their own capacity to effect change. In addition, Arnove (1986) and Olivera et al (1990) considered the significance of participation in the national literacy and health crusades for women. They were the major contributors to these campaigns - both as students and teachers - which presented them with opportunities to play a more prominent public role. Their participation at different levels and intensities also enabled them to develop political awareness and gender consciousness and awoke new ideas of their capacity to act collectively.

Taken with these studies, this thesis contributes to an understanding of the nature of the political transformation occurring under the auspices of FSLN rule and serves to explain the phenomenon observed in Nicaragua in the aftermath of the February 1990 UNO electoral victory. Then, there was an explosion of popular protest and demonstrations which were carried out independently of FSLN leadership and sometimes contrary to its directives, against the attempts of the new governments to reverse Sandinista property and labour laws. In the countryside, cooperative members united in collective political and military action in order to defend their cooperatives. Their various experiences, such as those documented in this thesis, accumulated through ten years of Sandinista rule facilitated them with the organisational, political and military capabilities to do so.

The interpretation originally put forward in the literature that participation failed

or became over-bureaucratized cannot explain how this scale of mobilisation could occur. By contrast, this study of the grassroots participatory processes highlights the nature and extent of transformations at the local level and suggests how popular participation contributed to those changes. As we saw, the channels of participation created by the revolution, enabled these peasants to overcome the psychological obstacles to collective political action, assimilate national ideologies and political discourses which united them, enhanced their consciousness and provided them with critical analysis. It also enabled them to consolidate their organisational structures and gain the political skills. Moreover, these above mentioned studies reinforce my own in identifying the primary importance of the FSLN's prior political commitment to the development of participation as the enabling factor which facilitated it despite, as this study has shown, the numerous contradictions and unintended consequences.

The objective conditions inherited by the Sandinistas, of underdevelopment, a barely existent civil society, high illiteracy rates and the intense economic and military pressures the government encountered made it more difficult to resist the patterns which have emerged elsewhere in the South, where other governments have also embraced the notion of participation as an integral part of development policies. In Nicaragua, the mass organisations had a similar fate to those in Castroite Cuba (since 1959) which also developed as key channels of participation but where a tendency towards "bureaucratism" contributed to their under-use (Hernandez and Dilla, 1991). In Nicaragua, the restructuring of decision-making structures failed to guarantee the participatory function of grassroots organisations as it had done in Tanzania, under the Nyerere Government (following the Arusha Declaration of 1967), where local initiatives became blocked when ministries and their officials opposed challenges to their authority. Similarly, in Nicaragua as in Tanzania, the official interpretation increasingly equated participation and political awareness with conformity to official policies (Hall, 1986:95).

Under the prevailing conditions in Nicaragua, the state was assigned a central role in the transition which required its expansion in order to fulfil its new and varied tasks. In addition to fulfilling a number of social and political objectives, cooperatives provided a convenient administrative structure to enable the state to penetrate the countryside. Given the newfound role of the state in economic planning, its emphasis on modernised production and the dominant view of the peasantry as in need of radical reform, it

intervened in cooperative development.

Directing limited resources to the emergent cooperative leaders was key to the consolidation of a new form of production and to the control of the cooperatives and the countryside. During the initial years - in the context of a weak state - the concentration of skills amongst leaders and their incorporation into the instances of revolutionary power provided the initial avenues for the state to penetrate local peasant cultures and become incorporated into the bureaucratic apparatus. Yet, this leadership did not respond uniformly to the new conditions created by the revolution but interacted with it according to the specific life experiences, economic circumstances and ideological perspectives of the individuals themselves and their social groups.

Those leaders who became party members represented the most blatant form of bureaucraticism of the rural areas. They emerged with all the features of caciques, deriving power from both the political patrons of the higher levels and the bases they represented. Others became incorporated into the bureaucratic structures of the rural mass organisations which gave them a beligerant role *vis-a-vis* the state as regards their own peasant sector. Whatever, the political function in relation to the state and mass organisations, personal forms of political power and authoritarian tendencies amongst the leadership were reproduced. As social agents shaped by the action of historical social forces during the "despotic oligarchy" of Nicaragua's recent past these individuals were imbued with a disposition to behave and think in ways which reproduced hierarchical and non-consensual power relations. These tendencies were not negated - rather they were exacerbated - by the political model of the FSLN which was extended to the rural mass organisations, which identified a leadership role for a revolutionary elite to lead the unstructured popular sectors.

These problems highlight the serious obstacles to the creation of a mass-incorporating political system such as that which the Sandinistas intended to establish particularly in the countryside where contradictorily, the context of severe underdevelopment suggests that strong leadership forms are necessary to consolidate the economic base and organisational and political structure of the peasant sector in order that it be able to compete with other social sectors. In fact, under such circumstances *caciquismo* proves an efficient political "method". Yet, this phenomenon also constitutes the "labyrinth" with which innovative political systems are confronted. It is a feature of

political culture which raises questions about the applicability of political principles such as those from the Liberal enlightenment which are based on the principles government by consent and equality before the law.

However, the Sandinista Government perhaps went further than most efforts in promoting participation. The revolution created favourable conditions for the participation of men and women in all aspects of social, economic and political life. It condemned exploitation, implemented measures to eradicate structural inequalities, redistributed wealth through credit, health and welfare programmes and educated its population to liberate them from their ignorance, exclusion and subordination. Importantly, the Sandinista Government's adoption of political pluralism and participatory democracy also facilitated the opening of political spaces which could then be contested by social and political forces from below. Thus, agrarian policies were successfully challenged by UNAG and the national cooperative movement in their demands for a change in direction of agrarian reform and greater autonomy from state in cooperative development. At lower levels, from within the heart of civil society, this study has shown that essentially this space evolved as an *loci* for the contention not only for hegemony but also for the position of the line of demarcation between the state and civil society. The increasingly oppositional efforts of the two cooperatives to challenge external intervention and assert their autonomy can be conceptualised in precisely these terms, since they represent efforts to exclude state from the civil domain.

This period constituted a watershed in Nicaraguan history and the challenges of the processes set in motion were only put to the test in the context of the UNO victory. Then, the belligerent action of the popular sectors indicated their refusal to accept potential exclusions and a willingness to defend the democratic spaces obtained during the revolution. Evidence of the political strength of the popular sectors had important implications for the immediate post-electoral position of the FSLN, whose symbolic leadership of them enabled the party to negotiate with sections of the UNO Government using a political card which variously promised or threatened to "govern from below". Once it was clear that the workers within the state sector and the peasants within the reformed agricultural sector were prepared to defend their property and land, this was in turn one of the factors contributing to the separation of the UNO executive from its ultra-right wing factions dominating its legislative branch, which aimed to reestablish the pre-

revolutionary socioeconomic and political order.

ANNEX I: METHODOLOGICAL COMMENTS

This annex presents additional information concerning the research methodology and includes a discussion of its strengths and limitations.

Participant observation: strengths and weaknesses

This thesis, from conception through to completion, was steered by a theoretical interest in the factors which operated to influence participation. Consequently, the research questions, methodology and the selection of cases were guided by my pre-suppositions about the relative influence of certain phenomenon, which in turn informed the logic of my analysis. Described as such, the study appears to have been completely framed by my theoretically and analytically preconceived, culturally specific and ideologically informed position. However, despite such "outsider constructs" to my inquiries, the research was also interpretative and was guided by my attempt to understand the actors' viewpoints and life-worlds. This was achieved through participant observation, in what I came to identify as two distinct research "modes" which I consciously adopted, namely the "all ears and eyes" and "initiator" mode which correspond to different degrees of intervention in the research context.

In the "all ears and eyes" mode, the researcher aims to merge as discretely as possible into the background and with minimal disruption to the processes and activities of social life, bear witness to normal interactions and behaviour. This constitutes the more "observational" dimension of participant observation and is typically accompanied by studious note taking in order to document events. Its strength lies in its potential to access culturally-specific values and subjective opinions that are not externally structured by the outsiders preconceived world view. Here, the themes discussed are informant-led and may include "situational analysis" or observing key or mundane events which enables the researcher to identify the networks and dynamics of relationships.

It is, of course, naive to suppose that the researcher can ever become the proverbial fly on the insiders' wall, since the presence of an "outsider" will necessarily influence group dynamics. Moreover, in their interactions with outsiders (including researchers), individuals assert themselves through their actions and questions, as actors and constructors of their own circumstances. The researcher can be a resource and provide

information which, as active subjects, the subjects of study are aware may serve them. Thus, the researcher's presence affects them and can be of value. Nonetheless, the researcher's aspiration to become "part of the furniture", can to some degree be achieved with the passing of time and the familiarity it breeds. Then, a degree of normality slowly settles down to "happen" conveniently in front of the researcher with her notebook. To deny that one's presence can influence and may even serve the communities of study is not only a conceptual and moral decision: it also has methodological implications.

Aspiring to reach a situation where the researcher does not intrude in the rhythm of everyday life is in fact undesirable, since it presupposes a total adaptation, a becoming of "sameness". This is a situation against which anthropologists have always forewarned since it necessitates surrendering one's "otherness" which endows the researcher with observational insight and analytical objectivity. Returning now to consider that the "initiator" mode of research, this can be distinguished from the former relatively passive mode of data collection by its greater research intervention. Here, the research opens topics for discussion and inquiries about the links between phenomena and can succeed in gaining access to areas that informants are either unwilling to discuss because they are controversial or have not made consciously themselves. In such a way, asking a group of villagers, congregated and awaiting transport, why the school roof had not yet been completed, elicited responses which made the schisms between cooperative and community followers explicit.

The initiator mode represents that feedback potential of participant research to the extent that it can start an educative and reflexive process amongst the individuals themselves. In such a way, when in an initiator mode, I asked the entire cooperatives for their collective histories and obvious discrepancies in interpretation emerged, this then became the theme of wider debate about whose version was correct and why others saw it differently. This served to reveal for the group how subjective interpretations inform historical constructs. Similarly, asking the assembled cooperative memberships about their thoughts on the effects of state intervention in the cooperative generated a heated debate about precisely what constituted "external" intervention and cooperative development.

My formal introduction to the cooperatives came through the local promoters of the UNAG and by definition of my very research focus on the cooperatives this meant that I became associated with the revolutionary authorities. This perspective which was

reinforced by my use of a Soviet made Lada jeep, symbolic of the Sandinista regime and my participant research in the political activities of the cooperative, which took me on demonstrations and election campaigning accompanying cooperative members. Individuals learnt about my Sandinista partner and in their eyes my *panza* (belly) progressively enlarging because I pregnant, made my association with this political perspective more concrete.

Initially, I was concerned that my apparent political allegiance would bias the information I obtained. In fact, my concern was only partially founded. In the cooperatives, responses to even overtly political questions concerning the record of the Sandinistas or voting preferences did not necessarily conform to the official view. The two members interviewed who ultimately voted for the UNO had responded evasively to these questions, stating that they would not divulge their opinions. Other questions which provoked evasive responses were those relating to problems and advantages of the particular CAS cooperative model. Yet, even here, barriers were overcome with time amongst key informants who knew more about other models and articulated their views freely about their relative merits.

Non-cooperativist villagers in the surrounding *comarcas* also saw me as partisan. On one occasion my jeep was sabotaged and on another, I narrowly missed being hit by a large stone. However, villagers including UNO supporters were keen that I speak with them also and made themselves available to me when I visited. Their views on the cooperative were not inhibited and they unreservedly expressed their frustrations and grievances about the cooperatives, the members and the government. This itself is crucial research material, since it indicates that opposition and plurality of political opinions during the Sandinista period (outside the FSLN) were not stifled and that individuals felt at liberty to express explicitly anti-Sandinista sentiments generally, including to someone they identified as being a sympathiser.

Since my initial contact in the cooperatives was with the leaders, this exacerbated my apparent association with political elites, which I was concerned could have jeopardised the confidence of the ordinary members, women, partners and villagers. Indeed ordinary members were initially guarded until it was clear that I was systematically visiting those ordinary members who lived in the remotest locations. I became surprised at their compromising remarks and opinions about internal cooperative affairs. This

perhaps has as much to do with increased confidence in me and the apparent neutrality of the questions as the different moral evaluation of specific behaviour. Hence, a typically unguarded remark, such as, "Oh, Santos is the one who decides everything round here", was presented unproblematically as a mere observation of the way things were and not as a deeper criticism of authoritarianism engendered by the new political system.

This type of study relies heavily on key informants, that is with individuals who are valuable communicators. Relationships with these individuals, which may develop into friendships, are consciously nurtured and must also be seen as the consequence of the individual's own response or interest in the researcher. The social networks thus created from the dynamic of the research context provide an invaluable source of material, but it must also be recognised that they present an inevitable bias to the research, constructed as they are around such subjectivity. Informants as effective communicators are often, though not always, represented by those individuals who have the highest "cultural level", who can articulate their thoughts and opinions and reflect on different situations. Hence the tendency towards an elite bias which is particularly notable in research such as this which involves largely illiterate peasant populations. This tendency was tamed by my use of a survey, described later.

During my participant observation, I employed the use of supplementary methods. One such, was to document the details of the proceedings in the assemblies for content analysis, identifying the nature of contributions and responses of different individuals. Discussions with members were subsequently initiated by me in order to elaborate responses and elicit further opinions. Other meetings, including those of the cooperatives' leadership, with the adjacent communities, UNAG, other mass organisations and the military were also observed.

Formal and informal interviews

An integral part of the research process was interviews with a variety of people, local, regional and national, within the cooperative sector and beyond. These were conducted using semi- or "flexibly-" structured questionnaires, which covered the main areas of relevant information and enabled the interviewees to expand on issues they considered pertinent to my research.

Here, my access to transportation was crucial in enabling me to carry out the interviews. It was also a great advantage as regards further access to the cooperative leaders, since sometimes I took them to meetings beyond the locality in my jeep. This gave me the opportunity to document their activities and discuss general issues with them. On other occasions I travelled with the leaders in the cooperative's transport.

Leaders organograms

Since cooperative leaders were one of the key focuses of the research, I not only accompanied them on errands and trips to meetings but attempted to assess how the cooperative leaders saw themselves within their institutional milieu. Consequently, I asked them to draw on paper how they perceived the relationship between the cooperatives and external organisations and institutions. They were then asked to describe these relationships orally. I adopted the use of this particular method as a way of accessing the worldviews, (or the cognitive map of their political world) because I believed that representation by drawing would complement verbal communication for several reasons. It is a more direct way of describing a complicated phenomenon and, since informants were relatively unfamiliar with expressing their ideas through this medium, they were less able to identify the implications of what they were representing, and were therefore less likely to conform to what they might perceive to be my expectations.

The leaders were only given one opportunity to draw the diagrams and did so in my presence so I could prevent their temptations to make modifications. I enforced this because I thought if they made modifications, they would inject their intellectualised and formalised schemas. Thus, while there was a methodological consistency in the production of the organograms, it should be borne in mind that they were the leaders' relatively spontaneous first efforts.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was initially devised, then piloted on two members in order to evaluate the substantive and linguistic suitability of questions and establish the categories of the responses. It was subsequently modified. Half the members in both cooperatives were selected randomly from complete membership lists and were visited for interview in the privacy of their own homes during the hours of rest. However, in the case of GP, both

women were included as were half the women in PJCh. Each questionnaire took, on average, between two and three hours to conduct and was the basis for subsequent informal interviews.

The replies to questions in the survey on objective "facts" were relatively unproblematic to the extent that they appeared to conform to information obtained after crosschecking from other sources. Yet, interestingly (as the above has indicated) questions relating to opinions and perceptions - that is subjective data of apparently controversial issues, such as how power was distributed within the cooperative - were also freely given.

The benefits of using a questionnaire were many. The data obtained from the questionnaire provided a basis from which statistically significant observations about the cooperatives' membership could be made. It also provided an initial point of social contact between myself and some of the less articulate and confident members whom I would not have had an opportunity to meet had I relied exclusively on informants. Moreover, the home context gave me the opportunity to meet and talk with respective spouses and family members, which was particularly valuable in providing their perspectives on the cooperative.

This data was analysed on return from the "field" with the computer package SPSS. Frequencies and variables were tested for significance using T-tests at 2-tailed probability and Crosstabulations where two variables are tested for significance using Chi-Square calculations. Those which indicate a significant correlation are referred to in the text as significant.

Honest appraisal

This research also suffered from many of the practical problems which commonly plague researchers working under difficult conditions and circumstances. Although I had a four wheel drive jeep which could access many areas, some of the communities were inaccessible by any form of transport. This presented a problem of distances involved in conducting the fieldwork. It meant that I could walk for several kilometres only to find that the person I had intended to interview was not there. This limited my time and ultimately restricted the number of interviews I could conduct, since my original plan was to interview all cooperative members. It also meant that I did not gain the same social access to those who lived in the more remote areas. I was also ill several times, which

interrupted my periods of stay in the communities and ultimately reduced the fieldwork period.

Questionnaire for members of CAS

1	Nombre y apellidos	2	Edad	3	Sexo
4	Lugar de origen				
5	Nivel escolar alcanzado	6	Estudios actuales		
7	Cursos de capacitación recibidos (UNAG, FSLN, MIDINRA, AMNLAE)				
8	Cargo en la cooperativa:	ahora			
		antes			

9 Antes de integrarse a la cooperativa a qué se dedicaba?

a Finquero tierra propia/familiar	b obrero agricola/peon tierra alquilada y donde
c obrero industrial	d artesanía
e estudiante	c otro

a agricultura peon
tierra propia
alquilada

11 Que religion practicaban sus padres?

12 Pertencían a algun partido politico?

13 Quienes de su familia viven con usted y qué es su edad?

a agricultura
b industria
c escuela

15 Cuando se integró usted a la cooperativa?

16 Porqué se integró a la cooperativa?

17 Quien es al autoridad de la cooperativa?

18 Conoce usted quienes son los miembros de la Junta Directiva?

- a Sí
- b No

19 La Junta Directiva consulta a los socios antes de tomar decisiones?

- a Sí
- b No
- c A veces

20 Informa la Junta Directiva de sus actividades?

- a Sí
- b No, porque

21 Se aplica el reglamento?

- a Sí, entonces, como
- b No, porque

22 Para qué sirve la Asamblea de socios de la cooperativa?

PARTICIPACION

23 Hay socios que no participan en las discusiones?

- a Sí
- b No, porque

24 Participa usted en las discusiones?

- a Sí, en qué forma
- b No, porque
 - le gustaria poder participar
 - que le falta para que participe usted

25 En qué organizaciones pertenece?

cargo
duracion

26 Mobilizaciones en la defensa

cuántos veces
dónde

27 Tiene usted cargo en el proceso electoral?

28 Participa usted en actividades de la comarca (desarrollo comunal, cultural, deportiva, defensa, salud, educacion, religion)?

- a Sí, en cuáles
- b No, porque

29 Cuáles de las organizaciones en las que participa, es para usted la mas importante y porqué?

30 Ha participado en manifestaciones políticas (actos)?

a Sí, desde cuando

b No

31 Va a votar en las elecciones?

a Sí, por quién

b No, porqué

32 Qué significa "participacion" para usted?

33 Qué significan las elecciones para usted?

34 Tenemos una democracia aquí en Nicaragua?

SITUACION ECONOMICA

35 Le gusta trabajar en forma colectiva?

a Sí, porqué

b No, porqué

36 Trabaja una parcelita de tierra también?

a Sí, de la cooperativa

a Sí, de otro

b No

37 Cuántos manzanas es?

38 Quién decide la asignacion de las parcelas?

39 Con quién la trabaja?

40 Cuánto tiempo de trabajo le dedica usted a la parcela?

41 Qué produce ahí?

42 Para qué es la produccion?

a consumo familiar

b venta

c otro

43 Hace trabajo por fuera de la cooperativa?

a Sí, dónde

b No

OPINIONES

- 44 Qué tiene que ver la cooperativa con otras organizaciones comunales?
- 45 Cómo vean la gente de la comunidad a la cooperativa?
- 46 Cómo es la atención de la UNAG?
- 47 Cómo ha sido la relación con el MIDINRA?
- 48 Cómo ha sido la relación con el Banco?
- 49 Cómo ha sido la relación con el FSLN?
- 50 Qué papel ha jugado los miembros del FSLN en la cooperativa?
- 51 Siente usted que la cooperativa puede influir las decisiones del gobierno?
 - a Sí, cómo
 - b No, porque
- 52 Porque, cree usted, ha impulsado el gobierno sandinista las cooperativas en el campo?
- 53 Considera que usted mismo es creyente? Qué religion?
- 54 El Dios ayuda en resolver los problemas de la cooperativa?
- 55 Siente usted dueño de la tierra de la cooperativa?
 - a Sí, porque
 - b No, porque
- 56 Qué le falta para que se sienta dueño?
- 57 Porque no hay mas socios mujeres?
- 58 Han sido mujeres dirigentes antes?
- 59 Participan las mujeres en todas las tareas en la cooperativa?

Added questions for women members

- 60 Además del trabajo de la cooperativa, qué otro trabajo tiene usted que hacer?
- 61 Cuánto tiempo dedica a este trabajo?
- 62 Quién la ayuda en el cuidado de los niños?
- 63 Participa en todo el trabajo productivo?

64 Hace la vigilancia?

a Sí

b No, quién lo hace para usted

65 Piensa usted que las mujeres deben participar en la política?

66 Cuáles son los problemas por los que las mujeres no participan más?

67 Las asambleas abordan los problemas que afectan a las mujeres?

a Sí

b No

Added questions for cooperative leaders

68 Porqué fue elegido para este cargo?

69 Trabaja usted en la producción?

70 Cuáles son los principales problemas de la cooperativa?

71 Cuáles son los logros?

72 Cuál es el role de la mujer en la cooperativa?

73 Cómo evalúa la participación en la cooperativa de todos los socios?

a en producción

b en la toma de decisiones

74 Cómo evalúa la participación de la mujer?

a en producción

b en la toma de decisiones

75 Cada cuándo hay cambio en la Junta Directiva?

76 Porqué se cambian?

77 Qué aportes ha dado la cooperativa al desarrollo de la comunidad?

78 Tiene la cooperativa relación con otras cooperativas cercanas?

79 Qué relación tiene la cooperativa con productores individuales?

80 Qué relación tiene la cooperativa con otras instituciones del estado, y como ha sido?

81 Para qué sirve el Consejo Municipal de Cooperativas/ UCA?

82 Cómo anda la Tienda Campesina?

ANNEX III: DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are several directions in which future research could logically be pursued in the light of the findings of this thesis. Given the change of government since the study, research would necessarily be conducted under different macro-contextual conditions which other questions pertaining to the participatory processes. Amongst other features, the period since the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas has been characterised by the removal of state patronage from the cooperative sector; radical structural adjustment and reduced state expenditure, such as preferential credits; an end to the war; and the emergence of FENACOOP as an independent third level cooperative.

Firstly, a longitudinal study of the two case studies would aim to identify how the new economic and political conditions have affected the cooperatives generally. Specifically, it would consider whether they have been able to shift towards economic efficiency in order to survive as a sector. Also, an examination of the organisational response to the new situation would indicate the relative strength of those forms established during the Sandinista Government and an assessment of the effect of these changes on leadership would highlight the relative primacy of the members-leadership-party/state as an internal organisational determinant.

A second area for future research would also be based on a longitudinal follow-up of the two case studies, focusing on the fact of the emergent local political power structures as described in this thesis. Here we saw, that in the context of an eradicated landlord class, cooperative leadership - with its access to resources of the revolutionary authorities - effectively served as mediators between the rural communities and the national political and economic system. Thus, further research would examine what has happened to this new rural leadership in the absence of external resources and would identify whether it remains significant or has been rendered impotent. Since the issue of the role of the leaders as mediators between macro- and micro-level forces is pertinent to the formation and extension of state structures in the countryside, research would also seek to establish how this relates to the development of the municipalities which following the implementation of municipality laws in 1990, gained greater autonomy.

Thirdly, a related research project of a more generalised nature would consider the viability of the cooperative sector without the direct patronage and examine the

organisational, production, training and marketing strategies it has adopted. It would also examine the organisational responses adopted by FENACOOOP and UNAG to establish how they have mobilised as social and political forces and what internal democratic procedures have been implemented to consolidate their representativeness.

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