

AUFS

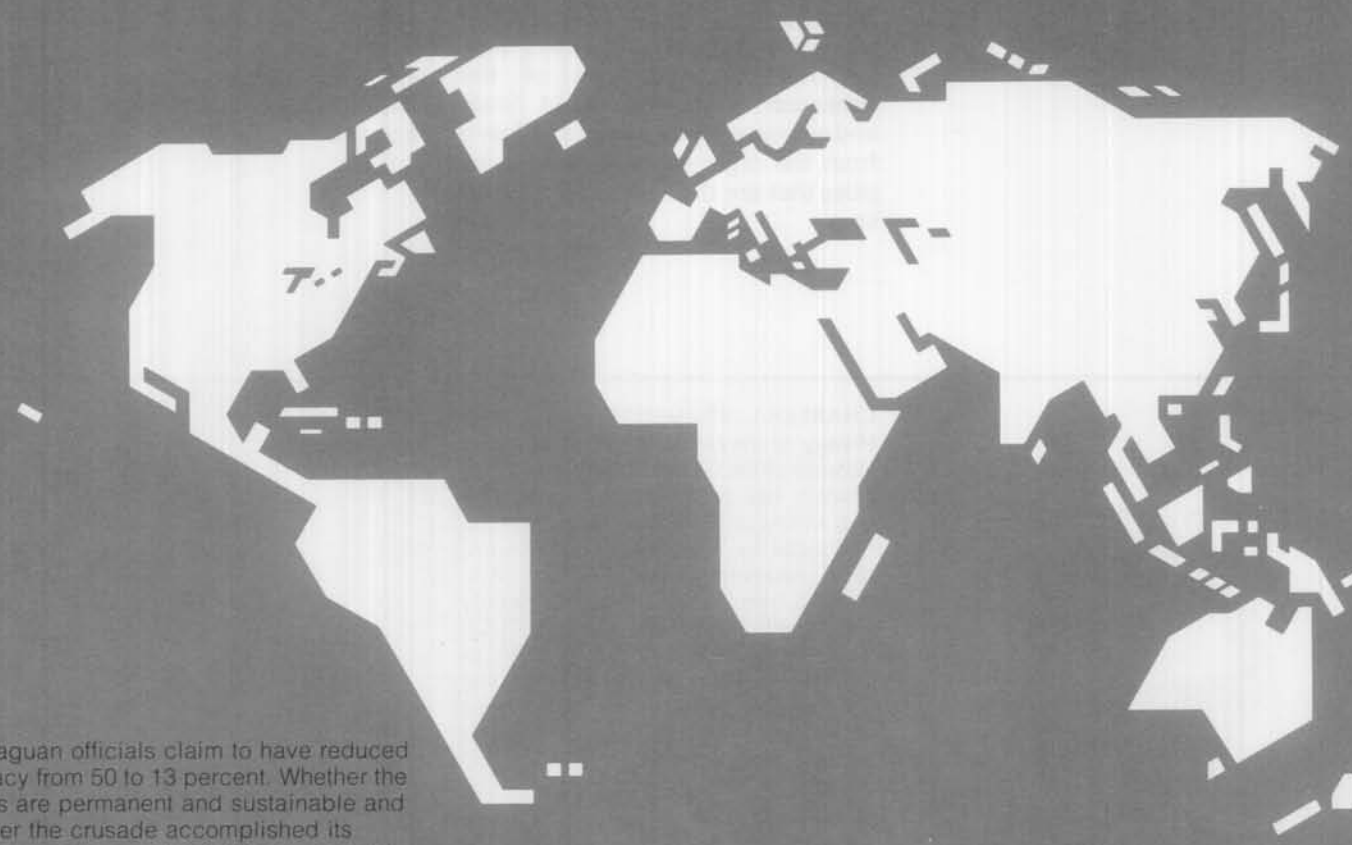
American  
Universities  
Field Staff

1981/No. 6  
South America

Reports

THE NICARAGUAN NATIONAL  
LITERACY CRUSADE

by Charles L. Stansifer



Nicaraguan officials claim to have reduced illiteracy from 50 to 13 percent. Whether the results are permanent and sustainable and whether the crusade accomplished its secondary goal — politicization — remain to be seen.

[JLS-1-'81]

ISSN 0161-0724

# American Universities Field Staff

The American Universities Field Staff, Inc., founded in 1951, is a non-profit, membership corporation of American educational institutions. It employs a full-time staff of foreign area specialists who write from abroad and make periodic visits to member institutions. AUFS serves the public through its seminar programs, films, and wide-ranging publications on significant developments in foreign societies.

## INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS

University of Alabama  
Brown University  
California State University/Fullerton  
California State University/Northridge  
Dartmouth College  
Indiana University  
Institute for Shipboard Education  
University of Kansas  
Michigan State University  
University of Pittsburgh  
Ramapo College of New Jersey  
Utah State University  
University of Wisconsin System

## Reports

AUFS Reports are a continuing series on international affairs and major global issues of our time. Reports have for almost three decades reached a group of readers—both academic and non-academic—who find them a useful source of firsthand observation of political, economic, and social trends in foreign countries. Reports in the series are prepared by writers who are full-time Associates of the American Universities Field Staff and occasionally by persons on leave from the organizations and universities that are the Field Staff's sponsors.

Associates of the Field Staff are chosen for their ability to cut across the boundaries of the academic disciplines in order to study societies in their totality, and for their skill in collecting, reporting, and evaluating data. They combine long residence abroad with scholarly studies relating to their geographic areas of interest. Each Field Staff Associate returns to the United States periodically to lecture on the campuses of the consortium's member institutions.

## THE AUTHOR



CHARLES L. STANSIFER, Professor of History at the University of Kansas and Director of the Center of Latin American Studies, has concentrated his research and writing on Central America and the Caribbean for more than two decades. After receiving his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Wichita State University and his Ph.D. from Tulane (1959), Dr. Stansifer taught at the University of Southwestern Louisiana before joining the Kansas faculty in 1963. His most recent research in Latin America focuses on Costa Rica, El Salvador, and especially on Nicaragua.

The Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade, completed in August 1980, was one of the most successful movements on behalf of education in the history of Latin America or the Third World. Like other successful literacy campaigns in Latin America—in Mexico in the 1920s and in Cuba in 1961—the Nicaraguan campaign followed a revolution liberating the country of a hated dictator. (Revolutions, it appears, are necessary to prepare people for sacrifice and extraordinary effort for the common good.) Not even the campaigns in Mexico and Cuba, however, involved such a high percentage of a nation's people as was committed to the Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua.

Considering the country's underdevelopment and the recent war against the Somoza dictatorship, the Nicaraguan crusade was carefully prepared and skillfully promoted. Nicaraguan leaders deliberately chose the term crusade to describe their effort and they chose military organization to accomplish it. Tens of thousands of youths, marching in uniform to long-neglected corners of the country, cheerfully accepted the terms and bowed to the discipline and attendant privations. They were the Popular Army of Literacy Instructors (*Ejército Popular de Alfabetizadores*), and they received the support of virtually the entire population—government officials, teachers, parents of schoolchildren, and after hesitation, the illiterate workers and peasants who were the object of the crusade. To be sure, critics and grumblers appeared, but the overwhelming popularity of the crusade swept them aside.

Officials claim that in the 5-month crusade Nicaraguan illiteracy was reduced from 50 to 13 percent. UNESCO officials, upon announcing the Nadezhda K. Krupskaya International Literacy Award to Nicaragua September 8, 1980, did not question this astounding numerical conquest. Even if the figures are exaggerated, as they must be, the crusade certainly did achieve its major goal of drastically reducing the Nicaraguan illiteracy rate. Whether the results are permanent and whether the crusade accomplished its secondary goal of politicizing the masses remain to be seen. From a political perspective, the new government in this crusade did successfully channel revolutionary passion into a beneficial cause and won internal political support and international recognition.

Anastasio Somoza Debayle, dictator of Nicaragua from 1967 to 1979, contributed unwittingly to the kind of unity that allowed such a campaign to succeed. Brutal governmental repression of rebel action in the mid-1970s led to a full-scale war against Somoza and his National Guard during 1978 and 1979. By July 17, 1979, when the dictator finally fell, perhaps as many as 50,000 persons had lost their lives in the war, and practically every Nicaraguan citizen had been affected by the revolution and the ruthless attempts to crush it. The cost in blood was high but the widespread repression forged an unparalleled unity of Nicaraguan classes against the Somoza regime and in favor of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), Marxist vanguard of the revolution. Shared suffering dating to the mid-1930s, when

Somoza's father established the regime, accentuated a rebirth of Nicaraguan national pride when the dynasty collapsed. With the war over, energies previously tapped for purposes of destruction or survival were released. How would the Government Junta of National Reconstruction capitalize on this unique moment in Nicaraguan history?

The answer came even before the junta took power. In the proclamation "Somewhere in Nicaragua" dated June 18, 1979, the junta promised to initiate a "national crusade which would mobilize all the resources of the country to bring about a total eradication of illiteracy."<sup>1</sup> Two leading Nicaraguan educators living in exile, Carlos Tünnerman Bernheim and Miguel de Castilla Urbina, had prepared a brief on the need for a massive literacy effort in early 1980. Fifteen days after taking office, the junta converted the Tünnerman-de Castilla proposal into a firm commitment by giving the promised crusade the highest priority and began to assemble a special staff and to consider methodology. The National Directorate of the FSLN, consisting of nine commanders of the revolution, gave its assent, insuring total government support for the effort to wipe out illiteracy.

#### **Objectives and By-products of the Crusade**

After intensive discussion of goals and priorities, the crusade leaders agreed on the following principal objectives of the crusade:

1. To eradicate illiteracy in Nicaragua;
2. To conscientize and politicize the illiterate population;

3. To conscientize Nicaragua's youth on the life and problems of the rural population;

4. To prepare the foundation of the Vice-Ministry of Education for Adults to follow up the crusade;

5. To strengthen the organization of the masses;

6. To deepen national integration.<sup>2</sup>

These objectives did not differ in detail from the concepts discussed by Tünnerman and de Castilla Urbina before the Sandinista triumph. To avoid conflict with the revolutionary government's goal of reactivating the economy, crusade leaders had to agree to conduct literacy lessons only two hours a day and on weekends. They also agreed to emphasize agricultural production in the literacy workbook and to urge literacy instructors to help *campesinos* (peasants) in the fields in order to create time for classes. The campaign slogan, which appeared in the government newspaper *Barricada*, exemplified this dual approach: *La meta del brigadista: levantar la producción durante la alfabetización* (The goal of the literacy instructor: raise production during the literacy campaign).

To ward off the inevitable desires of other ministries and interest groups to share the glamour of the crusade and dilute its impact, the crusade leadership decided on a list of acceptable by-products that could be gathered without interfering with the principal objectives. These were as follows:

1. Eradication of malaria;
2. Collection of examples of flora and fauna from the different regions of the country;
3. A census of work, unemployment, agrarian systems, and land distribution;
4. Collection of folk legends and regional popular songs;
5. Inspection of possible archaeological and mineral sites;
6. Collection of oral histories of the recent war;
7. Improvement of sanitation.<sup>3</sup>

Some brigades, usually made up of university students, were specifically trained to accomplish the secondary purposes of the crusade, but



all groups received some instruction on methods to achieve the by-products.

#### Crusade Leadership

Overall supervision of the crusade was handed to Tünnerman, who became the new Minister of Education. As a respected rector of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua (UNAN), author of scholarly books and articles on higher education, and former president of the Union of Latin American Universities, Tünnerman brought to the ministry administrative skills, intellectual brilliance, and a wealth of international educational contacts. He also had been a member of the Group of Twelve, who from its Costa Rican base maintained close touch with the FSLN during the last year of the war. De Castilla Urbina, a former professor at UNAN and Nicaragua's leading student of the country's primary and secondary education problems, became Vice-Minister of Education. Juan Bautista Arrien, a former Jesuit priest and former rector of Nicaragua's Catholic university, the Universidad Centroamericana, became Vice-Minister of Education in charge of planning. The Crusade's coordinator—a special, temporary post which ended with the crusade—was Father Fernando Cardenal. Better known for his moral stature and his vocal opposition to the Somoza regime than for any administrative or educational experience, Father Cardenal was expected to use his oratorical abilities and sympathy for the

Giant literacy scorecard showing increases in literacy rates in Nicaragua departments, Plaza 19 de Julio, Managua.

humble to stir enthusiasm and to win support from religious organizations, workers, and youth groups. Sonia G. de Chamorro of the influential Chamorro family took a key position as head of the section on financial promotion. In general the staff consisted of FSLN militants, priests, social democrats, and technocrats, united in their hatred of *somocismo* and in their dedication to free Nicaragua of illiteracy.

These individuals had close connections with the junta, other government ministries and agencies, the press, and Nicaraguan private organizations. With the country in such disarray following years of corruption and bad government, in addition to the disruption of war, individual and family ties were used to cut through the emerging revolutionary bureaucracy. Fernando Cardenal's brother Ernesto, also a priest and Nicaragua's most famous living poet, became the Minister of Culture. Sonia Chamorro's husband, Xavier, had become the editor of *La Prensa*, Nicaragua's leading newspaper, upon the assassination of his brother Pedro Joaquín in January 1978.<sup>4</sup>

#### Comparisons with Cuba

From the beginning, the crusade leadership had the benefit of Cuban experience. As early as August 1979, Raúl Ferrer, head of the Cuban literacy campaign in 1961, was in

Figure 1

**NICARAGUA: ILLITERATES OVER TEN YEARS OF AGE, PERCENTAGE OF ILLITERACY,  
AND PROBABLE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS BY ZONES AND DEPARTMENTS**

Zones/ Departments	Population over 10 years of age	Illiterates over 10 years of age	Illiteracy Rates			Persons over 15 who agreed to teach	Ratio of instructor t illiterate
			Total	Urban	Rural		
NICARAGUA	1,439,474	722,616	50.20(%)	30.04 (%)	74.92 (%)	266,501	1/3
Pacific Zone	857,406	354,822	28.06	26.35	65.80	199,599	1/2
Chinandega	116,795	57,707	49.41	82.88	66.43	21,827	1/3
León	152,034	71,698	54.34	32.17	76.77	20,047	1/4
Managua	398,016	109,888	27.61	21.65	55.80	104,788	1/2
Masaya	93,312	43,770	45.91	36.42	60.78	15,445	1/3
Granada	62,847	26,702	42.89	30.21	63.19	11,349	1/3
Carazo	49,745	19,765	39.73	24.53	61.60	11,025	1/2
Rivas	54,178	25,292	47.56	36.34	60.63	10,198	1/3
North Central Zone	399,735	266,812	66.74	43.95	80.26	51,103	1/6
Chontales	51,747	31,769	61.39	34.25	79.48	3,380	1/4
Boaco	49,116	34,843	70.94	40.11	82.59	5,239	1/7
Matagalpa	95,432	68,011	71.24	58.07	85.06	8,831	1/8
Jinotega	36,607	39,702	70.14	33.84	81.19	6,527	1/7
Estelí	52,860	27,671	52.34	32.78	68.86	10,169	1/3
Nueva Segovia	53,346	36,818	69.02	42.40	81.00	6,740	1/6
Madriz	40,627	27,998	68.91	43.32	79.48	5,217	1/6
Atlantic Zone	140,934	100,482	78.07	33.41	82.64	15,888	1/9
Río San Juan	16,682	12,593	75.49	33.87	83.40	1,962	1/7
Zelaya	124,252	83,384	71.76	29.97	81.33	13,926	1/9

Source: *Encuentro* (Universidad Centroamericana, Managua), No. 16 (1980), p. 28.

Managua as a UNESCO advisor. He was accompanied by several Cuban associates. The Nicaraguan crusaders learned from Ferrer's experience and Cuba's mistakes. There were obvious similarities between the Cuban and Nicaraguan literacy campaigns such as mass mobilization, the role of student, worker, and peasant groups, and the military-like atmosphere, slogans, and paraphernalia.<sup>5</sup> Certainly both campaigns considered literacy education a profoundly political rather than simply a pedagogical problem and, like the Cubans, the Nicaraguans put emphasis on getting city youth into the country with the purpose of breaking down city-country antipathy; however, these similarities may be due less to the Cubans' influence than to the fact that Nicaragua's

needs in 1979 were similar to those of Cuba in 1961.

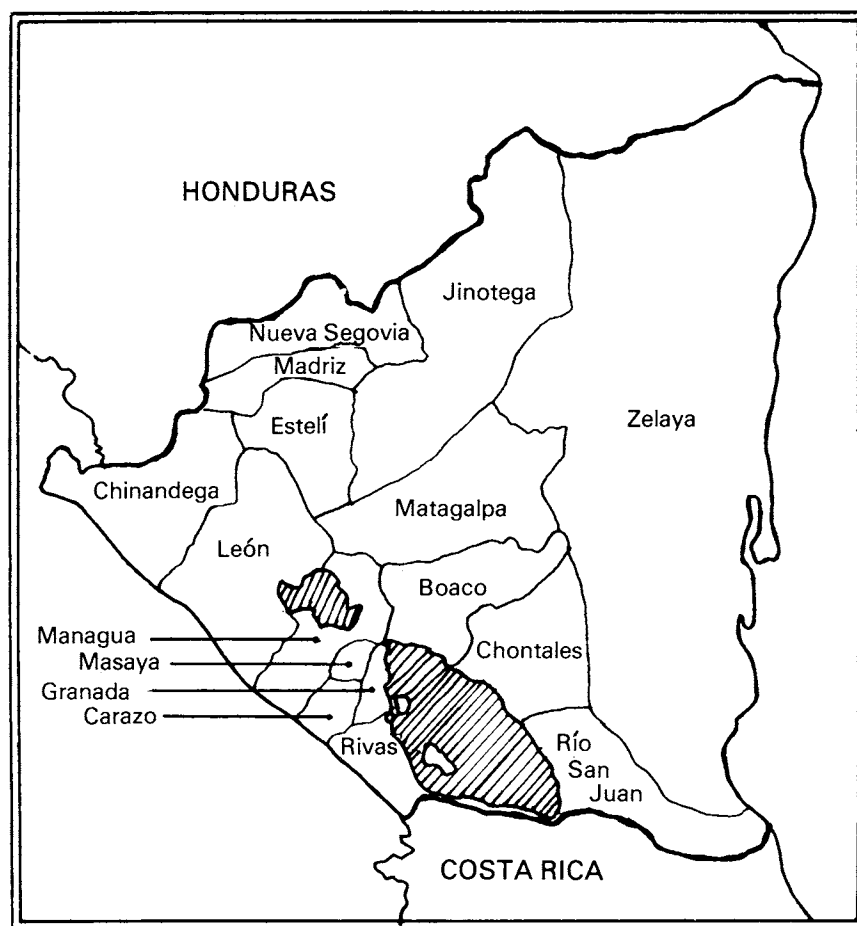
There were also major differences. Nicaragua's task was more formidable: the 1980 illiteracy rate was about 50 percent, Cuba's in 1961 was 23 percent. Nicaragua began its campaign immediately after the revolution; Cuba took two years before getting its campaign under way. Castro's charismatic personality motivated Cuban literacy instructors, but Nicaraguans sacrificed for the revolution and its martyred heroes. Further, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations played a more important role in the Nicaraguan campaign than in the Cuban. The biggest difference, however, was Nicaragua's use of the Paulo Freire method of con-

scientization in literacy teaching. The Freire method had already inspired worldwide admiration, and use in Nicaragua elicited international acceptance rather than the fear aroused by Cuba's stride efforts to politicize its people in the early 1960s. Freire's prestige was such in 1979 that early discussion methodology in the Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade center on Freire's texts.<sup>6</sup>

#### Literacy Census

The last census in the Somo years, that of 1971, showed a percent illiteracy rate, but the figure was suspect owing to the assumption that anyone who had completed one year of school was literate. Furthermore, the disastrous earthquake of 1972 and the war

Figure 2  
Nicaragua: Departmental Illiteracy Levels



OVERALL  
NATIONAL FIGURE: 50.2%

Chinandega	49.4%
León	54.3%
Managua	28.1%
Masaya	46.9%
Granada	42.5%
Carazo	39.7%
Rivas	47.6%
N. Segovia	69.0%
Madriz	68.9%
Estelí	52.3%
Jinotega	70.1%
Matagalpa	71.3%
Boaco	70.9%
Chontales	61.4%
Río San Juan	75.5%
Zelaya	71.4%

Source: George Black and John Bevan, *The Loss of Fear: Education in Nicaragua before and after the Revolution* (London: Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and World University Service, 1980), p. 75.

1978-1979 undoubtedly prevented gains after 1971. Officials of the crusade decided that, despite the difficulties, a fresh literacy census was necessary, not only to determine the number of illiterates but also to determine the zones most in need and to locate people willing to participate as instructors. With hastily trained volunteers the National Census and Statistics Institute launched the literacy census in October 1979, the rainy season, perhaps the worst time of the year to conduct a census. The results differed little from earlier records. Of 1,439,474 persons over 10 years of age, 50.20 percent (722,616) admitted they could not read or write (Figure 1). Some of these were considered unlikely to learn to read and write, leaving a target group of 592,059. In a late November press conference, Minister Tünnerman raised the total number of illiterates

to 869,276 but did not comment on the size of the target group.<sup>7</sup> Additional information brought in by the first instructors in early 1980 raised the total to over 900,000. The census also confirmed that a successful literacy campaign depended on mobilizing volunteer instructors from the Pacific coastal region, where literacy levels were highest, and transporting them to the mountain and Atlantic coastal regions where literacy levels were lowest (Figure 2). Happily for the crusade leaders the October census showed that for every three illiterates considered apt to learn there was one literate person willing to be an *alfabetizador*, or literacy instructor.

#### Organizational Problems

While awaiting the results of the literacy census, crusade officials nevertheless had to make decisions on an array of organizational and

political problems. When should the crusade begin and when should it end? If the crusade were to take place during the school year, what would happen to the regular schools and primary schoolchildren? Were Indian languages to be included? How far should conscientization be pushed? Would the illiterate agree to be educated? What about parents' fears for the safety and health of the young *alfabetizadores* (instructors) in the mountains and border areas? What roles should be given to the militant but still organizing and largely untested groups of youth, women, workers, and peasants? What role would the religious groups have? Assuming that local resources were insufficient for a crusade of such massive proportions, crusade officials knew they had to prepare tidy budgets on the basis of sketchy information and plans in process for presentation to

the international aid community. And all these decisions had to be made in a country where food and medicine were short, housing had just suffered the most disastrous losses in the history of the country, entrepreneurs and professionals were considering taking themselves and their money out of the country, and a new, inexperienced government was still organizing.

Hastily, crusade leaders assembled their organization. On October 11, 1979, when the National Directorate of the FSLN officially declared war on illiteracy, the organization of the crusade was ready (Figure 3).

### Mass Organizations

The formal organization chart faithfully represents the distribution of technical and administrative responsibilities. It does not, however, show the influence of the mass organizations that sprung up so quickly during and after the revolution and were represented on the National Literacy Commission (Figure 4). Because the crusade was to be carried out primarily by secondary school students, the Juventud Sandinista, or Nineteenth of July Sandinista Youth (JS 19 de J), had considerable weight. The movement increasingly raised its voice in behalf of socialism and anti-imperialism and contested power with the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN), which protected the interests of teachers. ANDEN repeatedly rose to the defense of its members to fight rumors and public charges of conservatism and, worst of all, Somoza collaborationism. The campesino union (ATC) and workers federation (CST) also played important roles, as did the new women's and parents' organizations (Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza, or AMNLAE, and Confederación de Padres de Familia, or CPF).

Without adequate educational infrastructure to carry out such a massive task, success of the crusade had to depend on the ability of local membership of these groups to accomplish (on a voluntary basis but under great pressure from the

FSLN) recruitment, assignment, and maintenance. The Juventud Sandinista took responsibility for recruiting literacy instructors, dividing them into brigades by age and sex, and assigning them to departments. It also insured that instructors faithfully attended training sessions. ANDEN organized teachers for workshops and for assignment as "technicians" to brigades. To the ATC fell the not inconsiderable task of finding lodging in the country for the instructors. Continuing the census work and finding classroom space for night-worker students were tasks divided among the Sandinista Defense Committee (CDS), CST, and AMNLAE.

Because of the independent political strength of the FSLN-dominated mass organizations, the National Literacy Commission never exercised much control over the crusade. After the first few weeks the commission ceased to meet regularly. The departmental and municipal literacy commissions, set up with the help of Cuban advisers and under FSLN domination, took on much more responsibility than envisioned by the organizers of the crusade. Indeed, this de facto decentralization had much to do with the crusade's success. That the municipal and departmental commissions took the idea of the crusade and made it a reality further proves the depth and breadth of feeling in Nicaragua in favor of the literacy campaign.

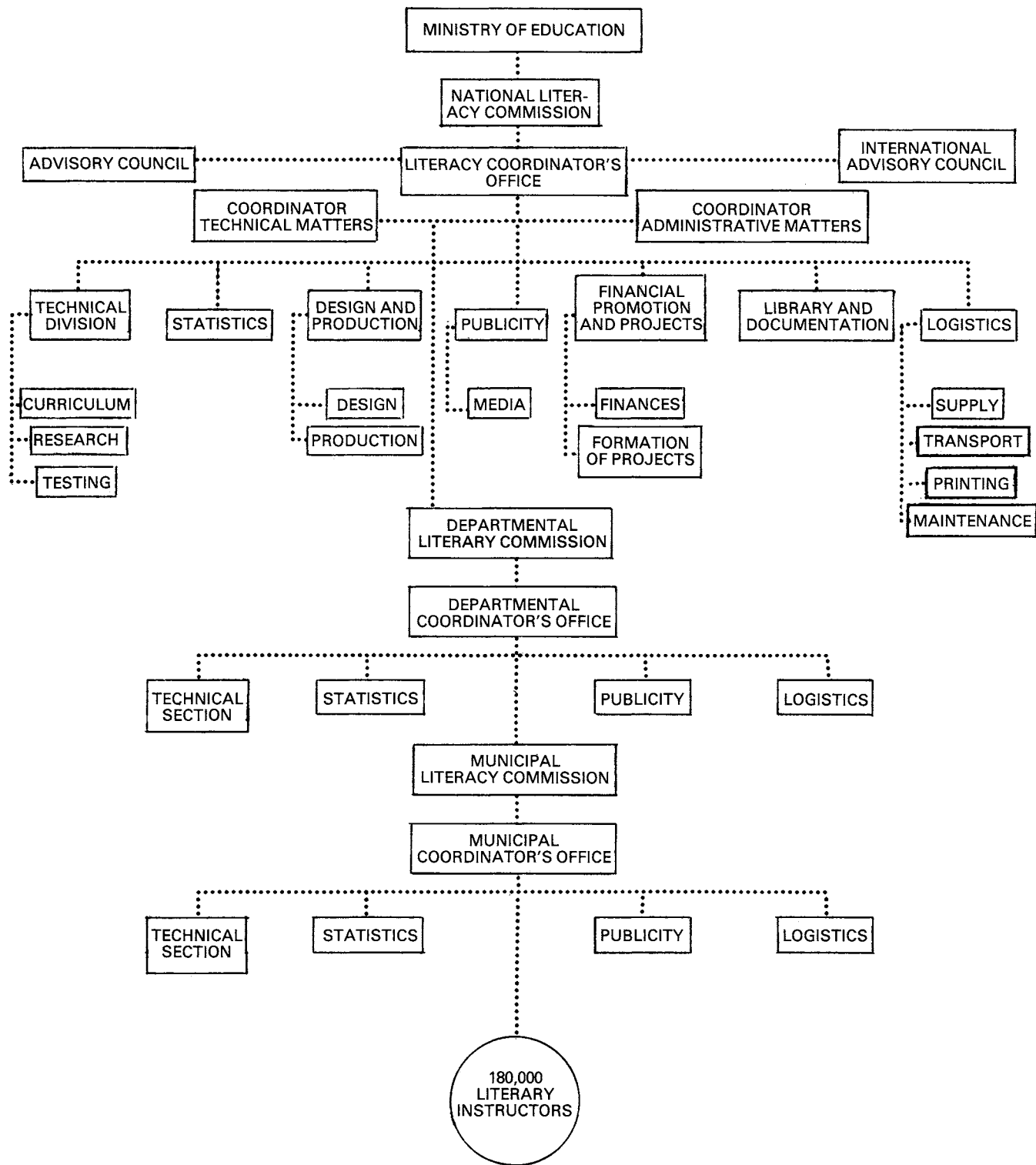
### The Army of Cultural Liberation

The process of recruiting, organizing, and preparing the instructors began in September and October, even before anyone knew how many would be needed. Instructors (alfabetizadores or *brigadistas*, as they were sometimes called) were divided into two groups. The larger group, recruited mostly from secondary schools, was formed into the Popular Army of Literacy Instructors (Ejército Popular de Alfabetizadores, or EPA). Tünnerman and Cardenal repeatedly insisted that participation was voluntary but the atmosphere was such that young people aged 13 to 19 faced considerable pressure to participate. Rumors of penalties for nonparticipating secondary school students hampered recruitment at first, but when it became known that brigadistas would be given academic credit in two or three subjects they had failed earlier, recruitment improved.<sup>8</sup> Secondary school officials took the initiative in forming columns of about 120 students. A column was divided into four squads. All the columns assigned to a particular municipality formed a brigade. Each squad had a chief (a "responsable"), a second in command, and one to three teacher technicians. Ideally, a teacher known to the student brigadistas accompanied the squads. Each brigadista was equipped with a lantern, mosquito net, first aid kit, uniform, and backpack, in addition to the necessary school supplies. Extra



"Commander in Chief Carlos Fonseca, the Teachers have completed their mission." ANDEN (Asociación Nacional de Educadores Nicaragüenses).

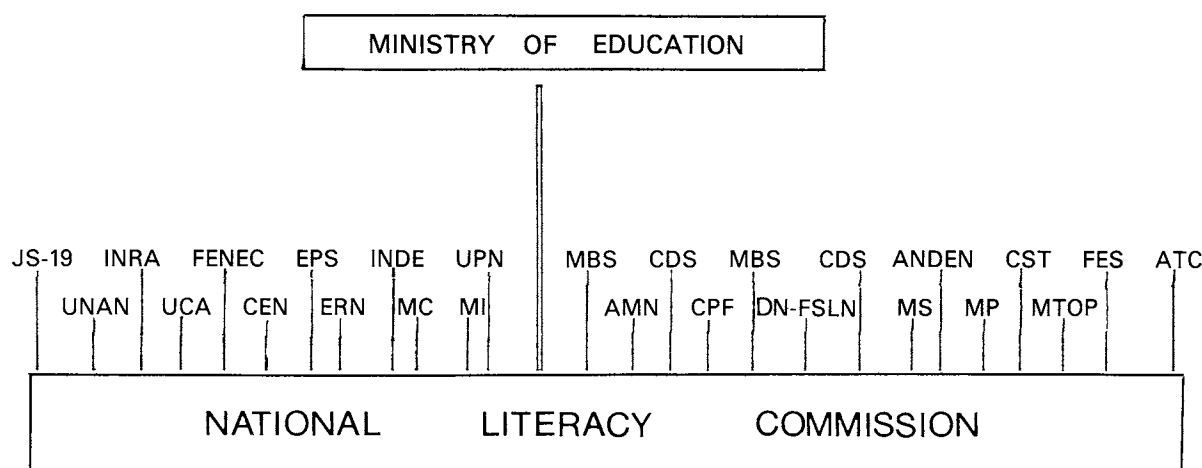
Figure 3  
ORGANIZATION CHART OF NICARAGUAN NATIONAL LITERACY CRUSADE



Source: Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade.



Figure 4



Guide to what the initials mean:

JS-19	Sandinista Youth 19th of July	CDS	Sandinista Defense Committee
INRA	Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform Institute	ANDEN	National Union of Teachers of Nicaragua
FENEC	Nicaraguan Federation of Catholic Teachers	CST	Sandinista Trade Union Federation
EPS	Sandinista Popular Army	FES	Secondary Students Federation
INDE	Nicaraguan Journalists Union	ATC	Association of Rural Workers
UNAN	National Autonomous University of Nicaragua	AMN	Association of Nicaraguan Women
UCA	Central American University	CPF	Parents Confederation
CEN	Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference	DN-FSLN	FSLN National Directorate
ERN	Radio Schools of Nicaragua	MS	Ministry of Health
MC	Ministry of Culture	MP	Ministry of Planning
MI	Ministry of the Interior	MTOP	Ministry of Transport and Public Works
MBS	Ministry of Social Service		

Source: Nicaraguan National Literacy Crusade

food was provided to avoid burdening their peasant hosts.

The second group, the Popular Literacy Instructors (Alfabetizadores Populares, or AP), consisted of workers, professionals, and housewives who maintained their regular working schedules but taught part-time in the afternoons or evenings. In the final offensive from June to August 1980, more Popular Literacy Instructors were recruited to organize neighborhood night schools as Urban Literacy Guerrillas (GUA). Other groups, such as the literacy instructors of the workers' militia and the Army, organized themselves to conduct literacy classes within their own ranks. Special squads were organized for literacy instruction in braille; and even prisoners, many of them former members of

the National Guard, conducted classes (occasionally with the help of prison guards) for inmates.

The Nicaraguans used terminology borrowed from Cuba to identify the two groups of literacy instructors, but there was otherwise little comparison. Nicaraguan brigadistas, by reason of their recruitment, preparation, and mission to the countryside, were subjected to a more intense politicization than were the Alfabetizadores Populares.

Participating teachers received their regular salaries but, regardless of specialty, were required to serve as technical advisers. Few teachers actually taught reading and writing to illiterates; their role was to teach the instructors how to teach. Nor did the teachers participate much in

political indoctrination. That was handled by the FSLN mainly through the mass organizations.

Altogether the Army of Cultural Liberation would eventually comprise approximately 180,000 instructors and technicians. Five squads of 16 brigadistas each formed the vanguard for the Army of Cultural Liberation. In late 1979 these squads, hastily prepared in a 15-day workshop, went to the field in a pilot program to test the Freirean method and to gain experience. Upon their return these 80 brigadistas, using the intensive workshop method, trained 560 literacy instructors who in turn trained 7,000. By March 1980, the 7,000 were ready to train the remaining 180,000.<sup>9</sup>



For purposes of the crusade, the leaders divided the country into six fronts identical to the military fronts of the insurrection. Each of the fronts was named after one of the fallen heroes of the FSLN; for example, the Northern Front (Jinotega, Estelí, Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia, and Madriz Departments) bore the name of Carlos Fonseca Amador, after one of the founders of the FSLN. Brigadistas also named their columns and brigades after FSLN heroes and battles.

Revolutionary enthusiasm alone cannot account for the high number of volunteers. Many had already been committed to improving the literacy rate for years. Although few government officials could be expected to admit in the Nicaraguan revolutionary atmosphere of late 1979 that anything good could have taken place under the Somoza regime, the fact is that as many as 20 specific Nicaraguan groups had been working since the 1960s to eradicate illiteracy. Because of the relative weakness of the Ministry of Education in the 1970s and its heavy focus on primary education, other ministries such as Public Health and Agriculture undertook adult education programs. Half the nongovernmental groups had religious affiliations, but private development groups such as the Nicaraguan Development Foundation (FUNDE), and charitable institutions such as the Red Cross also contributed. Workers' unions also organized literacy programs. As the decade wore on, moreover, literacy programs involving conscientization techniques gradually replaced the

traditional and developmentalist programs.

All these diverse efforts, of course, had merely kept the illiteracy rate from growing in the 1970s (no mean accomplishment given their underfinancing and the 3.5 percent annual population growth rate of Nicaragua). What was missing was a combined effort, a national commitment, and a sense of urgency.<sup>10</sup> These the crusade provided.

#### Use of the Freire Method

Adoption of the Freire method, which involves political orientation, or conscientization, as an essential part of literacy education, was logically consistent with the revolutionary ideology that helped secure the July 1979 victory. The war against the Somoza dictatorship had raised the political consciousness of the Nicaraguan people to a new, high level. It was necessary only to solidify this sentiment and channel it for specific, revolutionary purposes. The crusade planners took it for granted that the literacy workbook would include social and political commentary and that the instructors would receive political as well as technical preparation. The workbook, *El amanecer del pueblo* (Awakening of the People), proved to be a moderate document of social and political commentary, not entirely conforming to Freirean principles. There is no mention of the United States (or any country but Nicaragua) in the lessons and they contain no reference to capitalism, socialism, or communism. It is not Marxist-Leninist. Its condemnation of Somoza's National Guard and

*"From our trenches the literacy instructors salute the first anniversary freeing Nicaragua of illiteracy. We conquered in the Insurrection. We will conquer illiteracy." Sandinist Youth 19th of July.*

praise of the FSLN as the people's vanguard are hardly subjects of controversy. Heroes of the struggle for liberation, Sandino and Fonseca, are important in the workbook; but only one living FSLN figure is mentioned, Tomás (presumably Tomás Borge). There is no mention of elections, political parties, or Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. It is a simple, direct, pro-FSLN nationalist workbook.

The Nicaraguan literacy campaign deviated from Freirean principles in two respects, both underscoring the nationalistic orientation of its leaders. Instead of attempting to create a workbook for each village or region of Nicaragua, as Freire would have preferred, the program deliberately focused on national, revolutionary subjects. Also, instead of developing a dialogue around a single word, as Freire suggested, the Nicaraguan crusade selected a phrase or slogan.<sup>11</sup>

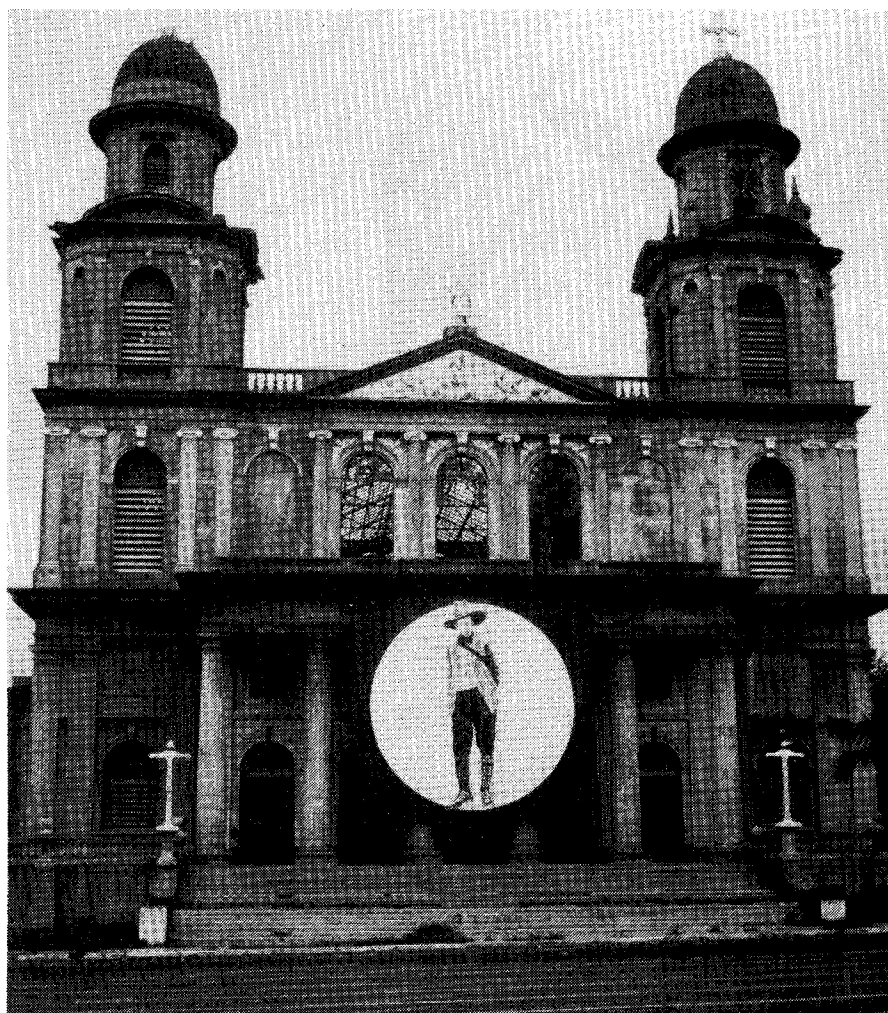
Freire insists that conscientization is a two-way street and this the Nicaraguans accepted. Thus, in preliminary workshops, which were half political and half methodological, crusade leaders emphasized the need to listen to campesinos and to learn from them. Alfabetizadores would live with the campesinos and share their work and living conditions.

Paulo Freire came to Nicaragua on October 24, 1979, for a 9-day visit. True to his philosophy that every teacher must also be a learner, Freire announced that he had come not as a wise man but as a man who wanted to learn. At the end of his visit he gave his blessing to the census, the organization and, most important of all, the progress of conscientization.<sup>12</sup> Six weeks later Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Director General of UNESCO, also committed to the Freire method, came on a short visit to Nicaragua. His kind words about the Nicaraguan effort, along with Freire's blessings, promoted international acceptance of the crusade.<sup>13</sup>

A nationwide publicity campaign paralleled and reinforced the literacy movement. The Sandinista TV System (SSTV), the only television system in the country, reminded listeners every hour that 1980 was Literacy Year and broadcast other literacy slogans as did private and public radio stations. All radio stations set aside the same 45 minutes twice a day for literacy programs called "Puño en alto," from the crusade slogan, "Puño, en alto, libro abierto" (Fist high, book open). Literacy postcards, buttons, decals, lottery tickets, matchboxes, stamps, and T-shirts bombarded the senses. Sophisticated posters and billboards proliferated in the wealthiest districts, and homemade cloth and cardboard signs appeared in poorer barrios. Graffiti praising the second or cultural war of liberation covered walls built after the first war of liberation. Ceremonies and parades contributed to the military atmosphere. Junta members, FSLN commanders, and crusade officials appeared at countless gatherings to exhort workers to participate or to give money. And, just as Sandinistas held up banks to finance the insurrection, groups of youths harassed passers-by and motorists for donations. Some government agencies threatened to dismiss workers who failed to give part of their salaries. Not to participate under such circumstances was to risk being labeled counterrevolutionary.

#### Support of Church and Private Organizations

As the outlines of the crusade against illiteracy became known,



*Sandino portrait on the front of Managua's ruined Cathedral.*

*"Sandino yesterday, Sandino today, Sandino always." CDS (Committee of Sandinist Defense).*

and as pressure built up for involvement, church organizations faced a serious dilemma. Provocative statements by FSLN leaders and members of the Junta de Gobierno seemed to threaten family relations and presage conflict between Marxism and Sandinism and Christianity. Junta leader Sergio Ramírez, after referring to the contributions of Nicaraguan youth to the war, said: "It is difficult to conceive today how the simple opinion of a parent is going to stop a young person with revolutionary ideals...from incorporating himself in the literacy campaign."<sup>14</sup> Bayardo Arce, in a speech November 15, 1979, at the Universidad Centroamericana, did not put the blame for the failures of Nicaraguan education on somocismo; he placed it squarely on the bourgeoisie.<sup>15</sup> Given that the secondary school students who were to make up the largest group of literacy instructors were sons and daughters of middle-class parents, such remarks were discomfiting. Rumors



of forced participation also brought parents' complaints.

While the FSLN leadership took the position that Christianity was not in conflict with Sandinism and certainly had nothing to fear from a literacy crusade, repeated attacks on the old political system from a Marxist perspective, along with the oft-stated goals of politicizing the campesinos, workers, and youth, did little to reassure conservative Christians. Such goals worried any Christian who saw Marx as antithetical to Christ. Furthermore, the revolutionary slogan "Sandino ayer, Sandino hoy, Sandino siempre" (Sandino yesterday, Sandino today, Sandino forever), chanted in crusade gatherings and elsewhere, bore too close a resemblance to the old Christian battle cry, "Cristo ayer, Cristo hoy, Cristo siempre," to dispel the Christians' anxiety. A giant portrait of Sandino hanging over the entrance of the ruined Managua cathedral served as a stark reminder of revolutionary Nicaragua's new direction.

Confronted with the alternative of participation or nonparticipation in the crusade, all church organizations chose participation. Nonparticipation meant loss of prestige and likely charges of counterrevolutionaryism and somocismo. Evangelical groups in particular had invested too much time and money in the rural areas before 1978, especially in the Atlantic coastal area, to risk exclusion. Besides, many of the evangelical groups were already committed to education for revolutionary change.

The Catholic Church, of course, had an even greater role to play. Despite individuals' reservations, the church and its lay organizations marshalled their forces. Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo lent his considerable prestige, gained in the struggle against Somoza, to the crusade; Nicaragua's bishops officially endorsed it. Parishioners, who had already contributed at home and at the factory and in the office, contributed cash to the crusade in special red and black (colors of the FSLN) collection boxes circulated in the churches. The Junta de Gobierno journeyed to Rome to receive the blessing of the Pope. In his speech at the reception for the junta the Pope said:

*I consider that an initiative aimed at taking the bread of culture to every citizen without discrimination is in itself deserving of every praise, as long as it is programmed and carried out with full respect to the rights and religious convictions of the people and also in agreement with the parents of the [participating] students. This respect for the right of parents and the Catholic family to an education in conformity with the religion which they profess excludes the imposition of concepts contrary to their faith.<sup>16</sup>*

Doubtless, the junta would have liked a stronger endorsement, but the Pope's cautious statement, which became the policy of Nicaraguan Catholic authorities, was sufficient to insure the cooperation of Catholic organizations. According to the Nicaraguan Episcopal Conference, some 597 members of religious orders participated as technicians and 4,489 served as brigadistas.<sup>17</sup> Church groups contributed their own posters and slogans, though emphasizing, to be sure, the advantages of literacy to achieve religious goals.

Private development groups with pre-1978 experience in adult literacy programs also offered their cooperation. The Nicaraguan Development Institute (Instituto Nicaragüense de Desarrollo, INDE) contributed \$33,000 in cash to the crusade and also donated equipment and facilities for meetings and classes. INDE had representatives on most departmental and municipal literacy commissions. Like the Catholic Church, INDE prepared its own pro-crusade propaganda campaign, concentrating its efforts on rural cooperatives set up with its aid.<sup>18</sup>

### The Rear Guard

Gradually, as preparations went forward, crusade leaders realized that with so many teachers and teen-agers on the battlefield there would be a problem for those under 12 or 13 years of age. Consequently, a rear guard plan was formulated and slowly put into action. Physical education, art, and music teachers took assignments at primary schools and at Popular Cultural Centers (in formation) to keep primary school-children amused and pumped with revolutionary fervor. During the crusade, the rear guard gradually added activities such as gardening

and crafts. An association of Sandinista children, named after Luis Alfonso Velásquez, a 9-year old FSLN militant killed in action in 1979, organized additional rear guard activities.

### Launching the Crusade

Two weeks before the crusade was to begin Minister Tünnerman closed all schools by government decree in order to use them as final staging and training areas for the brigadistas. Brigadistas received last-minute lessons in literacy training, sanitation in rural areas, camping, and additional political orientation. On Sunday, March 23, the crusaders were ready for battle. They gathered in plazas all over the country to swear to exterminate ignorance and to hear last-minute exhortations by crusade spokesmen. They departed for the trenches the following day. Miraculously, most teaching materials were ready and had been distributed. Transportation, mostly trucks and buses furnished by various agencies, was provided, although it took as long as ten days for some instructors to reach their positions. Pictures of brigadistas marching in uniform, fully equipped, were somewhat misleading: some of the backpacks, berets, Coleman lanterns, and clothing did not get distributed in time.

Theoretically, every squad knew where it was going. Male squads were to go to the most inaccessible areas; female squads were to remain close to the larger towns. Brigades from departments such as Managua with a higher ratio of literacy instructors to illiterates were to go to northern departments where illiteracy was more prevalent. Reserves were to remain in Managua to handle newly discovered illiterates and to substitute in case of difficulty.

The reality was different. Some brigades failed to find their transportation. Many brigadistas had to work out ad hoc arrangements when they found themselves in jurisdictional disputes with other brigadistas. Some could not locate their assigned areas. Others found that the arrangements for lodging made by the teams in charge of logistics were inadequate or forgotten. Nevertheless, most reports indicate that the groups got through

the early confusion with a minimum of desertions and disillusionment.

The brigadistas were not without help. Many parents escorted their children to their assigned areas. Crusade officials handled emergencies through an amateur radio network and had five helicopters on loan from the Mexican government in case evacuations were necessary. (The United States had refused to contribute helicopters for this purpose on grounds of excessive and unnecessary cost.) Minister Tünnerman made available a telephone "hotline" for worried parents of brigadistas.

Campesinos, after a period of hesitation, accepted the youthful invasion. In general, they shared their meager lodging and food, as they had been accustomed to do in times of earthquake and war when Nicaragua's citydwellers fled to the countryside. Adverse reaction occurred most often when politics appeared to override literacy instruction and when brigadistas directly attacked religion. Some campesinos, perhaps at the urging of brigadistas of no strong revolutionary orientation, perhaps as a result of excessively crude efforts at politicizing them, resisted conscientization.

Campesinos reacted differently to the efforts of brigadistas to pursue some of the secondary purposes of the crusade. In general, they yielded to malaria prophylaxis, vaccinations, and to suggestions for improvements in sanitation. However, they tended to resist answering the questions about agricultural production that the brigadistas had been instructed to ask. Many peasants countered that, if the new government wanted to help the campesinos, its agents would ask what they wanted, not what they had. The agrarian census, which was questionable anyway from the Freirean point of view, was quietly shelved. Campesinos happily shared stories, legends, and songs, but the initial collection of flora, fauna, tools, toys, and ornamental objects was done unprofessionally, the result of too little training. This situation improved when special Mobile Cultural Brigades, staffed by university students, were organized to take charge of this activity.

One of the most unusual and perhaps the most successful secondary purposes was the collection of oral history. Over 200 university students, trained in oral history techniques by Mexican specialists, fanned out over Nicaragua to record the history of the insurrection. They too had to overcome the campesinos' initial reluctance to recount their experiences, but the students' willingness to share meager quarters and primitive conditions and a common enthusiasm for the revolution eventually produced results. The History Commission, a subdivision of Nicaragua's Ministry of Culture, now has custody of 7,500 cassettes recording interviews with participants in the revolution.

### Obstacles and Disappointments

Problems, minor and major, interfered with the crusade. Brigadistas found that to enable the campesinos to have time for classes they themselves had to work longer in the fields than they had been led to expect. Many brigadistas had difficulty adjusting to food, fiestas, and illness. Parents often insisted on bringing sons and daughters home. A total of 56 brigadistas died during the campaign; most of them by drowning or in transport accidents, but 7 were killed, presumably by extremist elements opposed to the new government or to the literacy campaign. Desertion, said junta member Sergio Ramírez, was less than one percent, but one report admitted 4.6 percent, entirely attributed to illness.<sup>19</sup> Still, homesickness, physical illness, lack of food, boredom, and parental concern took its toll, if not in desertion, at least in inattention to responsibilities.

Paperwork proved also to be a headache. Brigadistas were supposed to keep a field diary. Few did. Brigadistas had instructions to give intermediate and final exams to show proof of literacy conquests. Many were forced to rely on their own devices when the exams were not delivered on time. These failures understandably frustrated regional supervisors in charge of collecting diaries and statistics on the progress of the crusade. As soon as crusade leaders realized they could not rely on brigadistas or "responsables" to supply census and other information, they recruited students from the universities and from schools of

commerce as record-keepers. Student volunteers went to each municipality collecting information on new *alfabetizados* (literate) and newly discovered illiterates. This information was supplied to crusade headquarters in Managua so that the publicity staff could report on progress. It is intended that these records will be available, in a Museum-Archive of the Great National Literacy Crusade, as proof of Nicaragua's successful effort and for postliteracy planning.<sup>20</sup>

As reports came in from the record-keepers, the number of illiterates in Nicaragua was revised upward finally "to over 900,000." The October census of workers at the Mercado Oriental (Eastern Market) of Managua, for example, turned up 600 illiterates; a second census, in May 1980, listed 1,000.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the target group of educable illiterates increased to approximately 700,000. Whatever the exact numbers, the situation required the reserves, which were called up, and more recruits. During the crusade, the mass organizations were continually pressed to provide more brigadistas.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment to the crusade organizers during its first two months was the doubtful success of conscientization. Campesinos in many areas resisted the political content, and many of the brigadistas were not wholeheartedly behind the effort. Teachers, it is safe to say, had not completely revolutionized their old methodology or learned the new methodology. All involved in the crusade were supposed to participate in the Saturday Sandinist Workshops (Talleres Sabatinos Sandinistas), but the evidence is strong that these were poorly organized and poorly attended. Given the circumstances of haste, the relative newness of the Freire method to Nicaragua, and the inexperience of the brigadistas, little else could be expected. At the highest level of the crusade there was much discussion of conscientization and dialogue; at the lowest there was stumbling, lecture instead of discussion, and even rote learning.

### Evaluation and Results

Half way through the crusade the leaders paused to gauge progress.

Following municipal and departmental meetings, a national congress convened in Managua June 9-11, 1980. While the working sessions exposed the early problems, the tone of the speeches of government officials was resolute and certain of success. The assassination of brigadista Georgino Andrade, who was killed in May by counterrevolutionary assailants, gave speakers the opportunity to demand even greater efforts in the remaining weeks of the campaign. FSLN commanders, recalling the victorious drive against Somoza the year before, exhorted brigadistas to a last supreme effort to eradicate ignorance and rekindle political consciousness. International delegates in attendance—including Raúl Ferrer of Cuba and Margaret Grape-Lantz, representative of the Swedish unions which had promised a gift of 50,000 Coleman lanterns—were obviously moved by the Nicaraguan effort in the face of considerable indifference and skepticism on the part of the outside world. Grape-Lantz apologized for the fact that not all the lanterns had arrived in Nicaragua. She blamed the delay on "capitalism, which is dying," and which "could not be compared to the enthusiasm and commitment of the recently born Nicaraguan revolution."<sup>22</sup> Buoyed by emotional oratory the crusaders girded for the final offensive.

Media coverage intensified in the last few weeks. Once a municipality reached a level of 95 percent literacy (counting only educable adults) it was entitled to declare itself officially a "territory free of illiteracy" (sometimes modified by the overzealous to "territory free of ignorance"). Banners, speeches, awards, and abundant radio, television, and newspaper publicity were accorded the new "free zones." Factories and offices successful in reducing illiteracy held similar ceremonies. Photocopies of the first letters written by recent alfabetizados, usually directed to Borge, Tünnerman, or Cardenal, appeared in newspapers. When the brigadistas returned en masse on August 12, the country held a gigantic celebration of victory at the newly finished Nineteenth of July Plaza in Managua. To the cheers of tens of thousands of brigadistas and the applause of distinguished foreign visitors, Nicaraguans raised a

Figure 5  
REDUCTION OF ILLITERACY RATES IN NICARAGUA BY DEPARTMENT

DEPARTMENT	ILLITERACY RATE (%)		REDUCTION
	October 1979	ACTUAL August 1980	
1. Rama	75.33	12.72	62.61
2. Río San Juan	96.32*	36.17	60.15
3. Nueva Segovia	69.15	12.89	56.26
4. Madriz	67.82	14.25	53.57
5. Puerto Cabezas	75.33	21.88	53.45
6. Estelí	51.67	4.85	46.82
7. Chinandega	47.76	2.23	45.53
8. Jinotega	70.98	25.71	45.27
9. León	53.01	8.06	44.95
10. Chontales	59.05	14.13	44.92
11. Bluefields	75.33	31.58	43.75
12. Rivas	47.43	5.51	41.92
13. Granada	41.71	5.49	36.22
14. Matagalpa	71.94	36.55	35.39
15. Carazo	41.92	10.63	31.29
16. Masaya	47.09	15.88	31.21
17. Boaco	62.08*	32.97	29.11
18. Managua	27.24	6.79	20.45
Nicaragua	50.35	12.96	37.39

\*Inconsistency with Figure 1 apparently represents later recounting.

Source: Segundo Congreso Nacional de la Alfabetización, "Documentación del congreso: informe de la Comisión B." (September 5, 1980). Unpaginated mimeographed report.

**Note:** According to official statistics, 406,056 illiterates had been taught to read. Another 43,000 were expected to complete the lessons in September. The program to educate 60,000 persons from the Atlantic coast whose first language was not Spanish began in September 30, 1980. It is clear that the 12.96 percentage of illiterates is not accurate. Assuming a population of approximately 1,500,000 Nicaraguans over 10 years of age, and accepting the figure of 406,056 new literates, the only way to arrive at the 12.96 percentage is to assume that approximately 100,000 more people would learn to read in the two months after the campaign was over and to leave out 100,000 as uneducable.

banner proclaiming the entire country "free of illiteracy." Crusade officials solemnly reported that Nicaragua's illiteracy rate stood now at 12.96 percent (Figure 5), putting Nicaragua alongside Cuba, Uruguay, and the United States as the most literate nations in the Western Hemisphere. To Carlos Fonseca, martyred hero of the FSLN, who had inspired the crusade by his words, "Also teach them to read," brigadistas responded with banners reading, "Commander Carlos. We have completed this mission. What are your next orders?"

At the second and final Literacy Crusade Congress, held at the Teatro Rubén Darío in Managua September 5-6, 1980, there was

further self-congratulation but also a greater opportunity for evaluation of mistakes and shortcomings than at the first congress. Debates recognized the standard problems of logistics, inadequate training, and the insufficient motivation of many brigadistas. Delegates took less note of the strategic error of delaying instruction in the Miskito and English languages on the Atlantic coast—workbooks in those languages were not ready until September—meaning that the revolutionary government had failed to fulfill its promise of incorporating the peoples of the Atlantic coast into the national life. Altogether, the delegates seemed satisfied that revolutionary breakthroughs in education had been achieved. The congress itself was characterized by

Figure 6

**FOREIGN DONATIONS RECEIVED AS OF AUGUST 15, 1980**  
(In cordobas: 10 cordobas = one dollar)

AUSTRALIA.....	C9,631.30
AUSTRIA.....	193,130.60
BELGIUM.....	1,497,161.60
BRAZIL.....	8,000.00
CANADA.....	2,065,030.88
CHILE.....	184.00
COLOMBIA.....	67,100.00
COSTA RICA.....	47,537.50
CUBA.....	112,463.90
CZECHOSLOVAKIA.....	28,000.00
DENMARK.....	720,000.00
DOMICAN REPUBLIC.....	10,300.00
E. GERMANY.....	14,000.00
ECUADOR.....	105,126.30
EL SALVADOR.....	243.50
ENGLAND.....	3,646,782.00
FRANCE.....	1,202,280.80
GUATEMALA.....	32,286.00
HOLLAND.....	9,726,143.80
HONDURAS.....	13,755.00
HUNGARY.....	750,000.00
ITALY.....	2,380,000.00
MEXICO.....	253,212.70
PANAMA.....	25,100.00
PERU.....	380,000.00
PUERTO RICO.....	6,220.00
SPAIN.....	193,077.80
SWEDEN.....	10,100,000.00
SWITZERLAND.....	10,788,168.00
U.S.....	22,675,163.66
U.S.S.R.....	5,250.00
VENEZUELA.....	679,332.00
WEST GERMANY.....	13,872,491.00
YEMEN.....	20,000.00
YUGOSLAVIA.....	9,000.00
CENT. AM. BANK OF ECO. INTEGRATION.....	100,000.00
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY.....	2,476,756.00
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES.....	1,866,070.13
UNESCO.....	390,000.00
UNICEF.....	200,000.00

Source: *La Cruzada en Marcha*, No. 15 (August 1980), p. 3.

sloganeering and safe political speeches rather than criticism and dialogue. Captives of their exaggerated statistics, the delegates emphasized Nicaragua's obligation to the underdeveloped world to pass on the lessons of the literacy crusade to other nations in process of liberation.

#### International Aid

Delegates at the September congress also gave recognition to international assistance to the crusade. Of the nations sending volunteer instructors, Cuba was by far the most generous with approximately

1,200. The next largest group was a Spanish brigade of 56, followed by a group of similar size from the Dominican Republic. In mid-crusade the Costa Rican government agreed to send 200 retired teachers, but only 50 arrived. The International Federation of Students, based in Prague, organized a group of 20 European students. Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Chile, Honduras, Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, Uruguay, El Salvador, Angola, North Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, France, and the two Germanies contributed small numbers.<sup>23</sup> The crusade turned away most North

American volunteer teachers; no more than three or four such participants could be identified by the crusade offices.

International donors played a significant role in the success of the crusade. By the time the crusade got under way in March 1980 some \$1,500,000 had been contributed from abroad. This amount, added to the \$500,000 collected in Nicaragua, totaled approximately one-tenth of the expected need. Although far from enough, it gave the Nicaraguans faith to carry out their plans. As Father Cardenal repeatedly said, "It was necessary to go ahead as if the money were there."

Figures released at the end of the crusade showed a total of \$8,668,574 in foreign contributions (Figure 6). By far the largest contributor was the United States, which contributed 25 jeeps (worth about \$190,000) and \$2,650,000 in food. The latter was in response to an urgent call from the Nicaraguan government in mid-crusade, noting that the brigadistas were short of food. United States Agency for International Development (AID) officers were not happy at the prospect of explaining the phrase, "Yankees, enemies of humanity," which appears in the FSLN anthem and is printed in the literacy workbook, to U.S. congressmen, but they swallowed hard and approved the grant. Sweden, Switzerland, and Holland each contributed approximately \$1,000,000, mainly through international church organizations. Freire's influence as Special Consultant to the Office of Education of the World Council of Churches helped. The Nicaraguan government also advertised for aid. "We have inherited a country in ashes. An appeal to the British public," headed one request in British newspapers; similar appeals appeared in West European countries. The entreaties, backed up by the organization of Solidarity with Nicaragua groups in Western Europe and the United States, brought in additional funds. The only substantial contributor from the Eastern bloc nations was Cuba, which contributed advisers and teachers, but only \$11,000 in cash. The Soviet Union sent \$525.

#### Crusade Follow-up

Nicaragua's educational planners, fully aware of the difficulties of



maintaining Nicaragua's literacy rate, carefully prepared for the transition from the crusade to normal conditions. Creation of the office of Vice-Minister of Adult Education, announced in September 1980 but planned from the beginning of the crusade, was the first major step in the transition. It is the vice-minister's responsibility to convert the instruments of the successful literacy campaign into a permanent program. Plans call for conversion of nonformal schooling units into Popular Centers of Education (CEP) with experienced brigadistas as coordinators. Literacy commissions, with the same mass organization representation and at national, departmental, and municipal levels, will become adult education commissions. The adult education section of the Ministry of Education has responsibility for carrying the crusade to non-Spanish speaking Nicaraguans and for reducing the illiteracy rate still further.<sup>24</sup>

### Conclusions

It would be a mistake to judge the literacy crusade's impact on Nicaragua solely from the basis of statistical accomplishments. They are impressive enough, even if we do not accept the exaggerated official figures. It would also be a mistake to judge the literacy crusade solely on pedagogical grounds. Given that recent literates, especially in remote areas, may have little opportunity to use their reading and writing skills and recognizing the budgetary problems facing the administrators of Nicaragua's adult education program, the outside observer may readily question the depth and breadth of literacy education. It is even possible to question the value of literacy to Nicaraguan citizens who subsist through agriculture and fishing. Instead, the ultimate success of the literacy crusade will depend on its ability to sustain the revolutionary momentum originating in the "first" war of liberation. If the crusade has revolutionized the attitudes of citydwellers toward Nicaragua's rural areas, as Nicaraguan leaders claim,<sup>25</sup> the year 1980 could be pivotal in the transformation of Nicaragua's political culture.

During the years of revolutionary warfare, Nicaraguans forged a new sense of unity. In 1980 Nicaragua took a giant step toward national dignity and national pride by making a massive effort to make its people literate. The acts of sacrifice of tens of thousands of Nicaraguans helped bridge the traditional gaps between rich and poor, between rural and urban, and between coast and interior. Common sacrifice for the good of all under determined, effective national leadership gave the FSLN an opportunity to consolidate revolutionary gains in other fields. Politically, the crusade was a success. It is not likely that any other Nicaraguan national campaign in the next few years will involve so many Nicaraguans so intimately. Hopes for the consolidation of the Nicaraguan revolution rest heavily on the lessons learned and the sense of unity created by the crusade.

(December 1980)

### NOTES

1. *Primera proclama del Gobierno de Reconstrucción Nacional* (June 18, 1979), p. 15. Translations are by the author.

2. *Cruzada en Marcha*, no. 1 (February 1980), p. 7.

3. *Gran Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización* (Managua, 1980), p. 6.

4. Though personal differences led to Xavier's withdrawal from *La Prensa* and his founding of the *Nuevo Diario* in April 1980, *La Prensa* remained in the hands of another brother, Jaime, and Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal's son, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Barrios. Still another son of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, Carlos Fernando Chamorro Barrios, is editor of the government newspaper, *Barricada*.

5. For an excellent analysis of the Cuban literacy campaign see Richard R. Fagen, *The Transformation of Political Culture in Cuba* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 33-68.

6. Of Freire's numerous publications perhaps his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), is best known. For a convenient summary and analysis see Thomas G. Sanders, "The Paulo Freire Method," *AUFS*

*Reports*, West Coast South America Series, Vol. XV, No. 1 (1968).

7. *La Prensa* (Managua), November 20, 1979.

8. *Nuevo Diario* (Managua), September 16, 1980.

9. *La educación en el primer año de la revolución popular sandinista* (Managua: Ministerio de Educación, 1980), pp. 168-69.

10. Edgard Macías Gómez, "Análisis de la estructura y funcionamiento del sistema nacional de educación de adultos," in Miguel Obando y Bravo, et al., *Educación y dependencia: el caso de Nicaragua* (Managua: Instituto de Promoción Humana, 1977), pp. 131-87.

11. George Black and John Bevan, *The Loss of Fear: Education in Nicaragua before and after the Revolution* (London: Nicaragua Solidarity Committee and World University Service, 1980), pp. 63-64.

12. *La Prensa* (Managua), October 25, November 2, 1979.

13. Open letter by Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, Paris, January 25, 1980, in *Encuentro*, no. 16 (1980), pp. 66-68.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

17. Conferencia Episcopal de Nicaragua, "Compromiso cristiano en la Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización" (mimeographed report, January 8, 1980).

18. "El Instituto Nicaragüense de Desarrollo (INDE) y sus programas FUNDE y EDUCREDITO han desarrollado las siguientes actividades en pro de la Campaña de Alfabetización" (mimeographed report, March 1980).

19. *Patria Libre: Organo del Ministerio del Interior*, I, no. 6 (Managua, August 6, 1980), p. 7.

20. *La educación en el primer año*, p. 173.

21. *La Prensa* (Managua), May 28, 1980.

22. A complete report of the congress is in *Nuevo Diario* (Managua), July 3, 1980.

23. *La educación en el primer año*, p. 171.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

25. *Nuevo Diario* (Managua), August 30, 1980.