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Remarks on Nicaragua



Rafael Pallais

Remarks on Nicaragua,

the form and content of the state that emerged there, and other aspects of the proletarian struggle in progress—by an enemy of economistic ideology and the ruling forms of alienated communication, the state, and the commodity—an enemy of the whole economistic, statist, and Third-Worldist mob.

by Rafael Pallais
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But certainly there is a difference between the passivity of subordination and the ardor of insurrection, between obedience to a general's order and the flame of enthusiasm that freedom lights in the veins of the living. It is this sacred flame that tautens the nerves and for which they strain. These efforts are the pleasures of freedom—would you have freedom renounce them? Do you want the people to surrender themselves to inactivity, to boredom, when what mobilizes the people are these concerns, this activity and interest in public matters?

—Hegel

I

Sandinismo, the precarious victory (not of a Jacobin Leninism, despite false appearances) of an ideological archaism over an even more spent politico-economic archaism, replaced the latter in order to carry out its bourgeois task in a directly spectacular manner. Sandinismo is marked by the social war, which creates the false consciousness of some, compelling them to modernize the ideology of "underdeveloped" alienation, and the historical consciousness of others, compelling them to modernize their whole struggle against such alienation. For the ruling classes it is a matter of immediately opposing the imminent advent of the modernized proletarian negation, giving it an ideological falsification. And to overtake the modernity of proletarians who until recently considered themselves "underdeveloped," to forestall their ineluctable understanding of the bourgeois-bureaucratic double lie—an understanding that concretely threatens to reveal the central lie of "economic development" and, even more dangerously, to join in the current renaissance of the social struggle of the "developed" poor—the global spectacle found nothing better than

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the resuscitation of the broken-down specter of the bureaucratic ideology of revolution (state capitalism).

This means two things: In the first place, that this specter has not been annihilated, that it persists as a latent counter-revolutionary practice and alluring myth of an alternative to a rotten capitalism. Secondly, it means that henceforth the ruling class has exhausted its ability to put forward "new" ideological "solutions" to the ever sharper contradictions that it everywhere stirs up while itself completely trapped in repetition of its old schizophrenic splitting. For wherever the ruling class tries out this already old spectacular technique, proletarians have learned their lesson and thrown themselves into open struggle against the pseudo-worker bureaucrats. While in every other country proletarians ridicule in acts the bureaucratic states in power constituted by Communist Parties and "representatives"—unionists and others—in Nicaragua this spectral, decrepit, and worn-out solution managed to seize the state. But before long it will create its proletarian contradiction and demonstrate its laughable nothingness.

Certainly, the fascistization of Nicaragua was possible, if we take into account only the spectacular-terrorist means the capitalist powers have at their disposal (and it's known that the United States considered this possibility at the start); but it was impossible if one is aware of the resolutely modern nature of what was at stake during the war: the play of forces at the center of this so-called underdeveloped society. A return to order violently imposed from the outside would have meant not only an accelerated radicalization of the popular forms of organization, which is to say the anti-Sandinista forms of organization (for a Vietnam is still impossible in Central America), but would have inflamed the whole region. And the capitalist powers gave proof of their lucidity in not attempting this imposition—just as now they give only the proof of their blindness to their own geopolitical interests when they affirm *manu militari* their intention to try out new and desperate genocidal techniques in "underdeveloped" El Salvador, in an effort to head off the rapid bureaucratization of the area. And if the situation develops as I think it will, we'll see if what is at stake in "underdeveloped" El Salvador is not just a change of government but the proletarian struggle against the state, the social war of the poor against the totality of capitalist alienation.

II

The fact that *Sandinismo* had to impose itself on the armed Nicaraguan proletariat constitutes the best proof of the danger that the proletariat represents for any state. And the Sandinista coup d'état could succeed only to the extent that it obtained from other states their support and recognition as a responsible state, that is to say, as the ideological and practical negation of the proletarian threat. Those who continue to think that the insurrection was the work of the FSLN [Sandinista National

Liberation Front] are full of shit. The poor FSLN, crushed and almost completely sunk in 1977, was quickly set afloat by the quantitative and qualitative growth of proletarian struggles at the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978. And it was proletarians who compelled the FSLN to straighten out its insurrectionary discourse in order to pass from the spectacular terrorism that until then was the Front's only activity (since 1962), to the generalized armed struggle that finished off *Somocismo*. The bureaucratic sagacity of the Sandinistas was shown in their ability to integrate most of the unorganized combatants into the existing cells, already hierarchical and under Sandinista discipline. This was the real beginning of the Sandinista appropriation of the spontaneous popular rebellion, an appropriation that now reaches its natural statist conclusion and with the terrorism of its totalitarian ideology seeks to impose a *posteriori* the theory of the "Sandinista" vanguard and insurrection.

III

As for the world bourgeoisie, it gave its support to the "bureaucratic" state solution above all others because there was no other solution in Nicaragua—no other viable power, starting with the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie itself. The local bourgeoisie's only strength resided in the economy—this *ideology* (i.e., the economy) is being completely expropriated by the Sandinista bureaucracy, which is also counting on the strength and antiproletarian guarantee of a strictly hierarchical statist party. From the point of view of the social division of labor, the bourgeoisie had its greatest deployment during the Somoza dynasty—but only as part of its submissive abandonment of all political practice. It was only recently, and too late, that it understood that such an abandonment would have fatal results upon the collapse of Somoza's state. Politically unprepared, it barely managed to become financially necessary for the insurrection's final preparations. And in payment it received only a weak representative participation in the organs of state. But even here one can judge its lack of foresight, perspective, and bargaining power by the fact that it had to surrender to the bureaucrats—and to the hardliners among them—the really crucial positions: police, army, state security, etc.

Of course, for anyone who understands the world we live in, it was the rapid growth of social war in Nicaragua that wrecked the Somocista regime. But the inability of the national bourgeoisie to maintain order compelled the ruling capitalist sector to look for an acceptable substitute fit to cabalistically carry out this job—thus the FSLN's rise as the only disciplined voluntarism that included just this hypothesis on power in its strategic planning. From the time just following Somoza's fall it was able to give the world's masters sufficient proof of its spectacular suitability. First, it made a forced requisition of all "unsecured" arms (or, those not controlled by Sandinista ideology). Then, it hierarchically restruc-

tured the forces of order, entrusting the political stabilization of the country to the Sandinista Defense Committees. And last, it proceeded to organize a "Popular Sandinista Army" and, more recently, the "Sandinista militias," a body of 300,000 disciplined reservists.

IV

The state is reestablishing itself (see the *Programa de Transformación Estatal* in the *Programa de Reactivación Económica en Beneficio del Pueblo*). That is to say, the masses are being dispossessed of their real struggle, and the social question is no longer posed openly. The bureaucracy presents the social question as if it were once and for all elucidated by the constitution of a "respectable" state (while it's supposed to be "the power of the workers," cf., *Comandante Ortega's* declarations to the striking Plywood Co. workers) and by the "reconstruction" of the economy (i.e., the ruling ideology), in the sense clearly indicated by one Sandinista junta member, Moisés Hassan: "If necessary, we will use force to put an end to seizures and strikes, in order to guarantee national production and development of the reactivation plan" (March 4, 1980).

V

As could be expected, all the lackeys of power—journalists, sociologists, politicians, leftists, with the Third-Worldist mob at their head—laud this revolution for being "conducted" by a responsible bureaucracy while sympathizing with the irresponsible decisions it had to make at the beginning of its reign—to literally expel all other alternatives. Particularly, the expulsion—just days after Somoza's fall—of the *Brigada Internacional Simón Bolívar* (composed mainly of foreign revolutionaries) for Trotskyism, marks the start of construction of a monopolistic ideological infrastructure that condemns without appeal any differing opinion. And the recent police closure of the newspaper *El Pueblo*, followed by the jailing of its editors (sentenced to two years' forced labor) and of the members of the "ultraleft" *Frente Obrero*, marks the moment when this monopoly becomes guaranteed by the police and special detachments of the Sandinista state: conquest of the fundamental conditions of absolutist, totalitarian ideology.

According to the sentence handed down February 12, 1980, by Judge Ordoñez (see *Proceso*, March 10, 1980), *El Pueblo's* crime consisted of having undertaken the public defense of the proletarian movements protesting, by means of a continuing succession of strikes and agitation, the Sandinista seizure of power. These struggles were waged by workers who either began quite simply—and dangerously—to take the Sandinistas at their word, to take their promises literally, or even more dangerously, began to understand in practical terms—after going to war and destroying the powerful Somocista apparatus—their struggle's possible content if they went beyond such promises. They have in fact already gone beyond these

promises in spontaneously searching for autonomy. Evidently it's these workers who are the target of the daily Sandinista calumnies accusing them of "not comprehending the historical moment," of being "idealists," etc. Inverted in the ideology of this new ruling class is its fear of a proletariat that threatens to understand only too well and too quickly that the only power in Nicaragua is, for the moment, the Sandinista state bureaucracy—a clique of *compañeros* dismayed by their precipitate social promotion—a clique in whose heart is unleashed the worst corruption possible in a totalitarian state. The proletariat begins to understand that not to be Sandinista is to be a "counterrevolutionary dog," whether in or out of Nicaragua. So like Somoza in his time, *Sandinismo* uses the spectacular screen of terrorism and conspiracy (regarding *Frente Obrero*, the Sandinista police asked just one question: "Where did they hide



their arms?") in order to initiate strict control over the population as a whole. This job is "self-managed" by the CDS (*Comités de Defensa Sandinista*), "the eyes and ears of the revolution," modeled after the fearful *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* in Cuba. A CDS order distributed in Managua in September 1979 sums up their objectives: "You should watch all night over the streetcorners, noting every passing car, its make, color, and number. When you hear the dogs barking [for if "revolutionary dogs" on a Sandinista diet participate in the surveillance of men, it's because, as we've seen, all who refuse to do so have become "counterrevolutionary dogs"—author's note], watch who's passing by and figure out where he's going. Post a lookout over the neighbor coming home late and see if he arrives with packages or friends. Watch those houses where cars come at night, and take down the relevant information. When you see a stranger in the neighborhood, watch and follow him to see what he's doing. We must not let even one movement escape our notice, since these people could be counterrevolutionaries." (*Cambio* 16.) It's a new official—and officious—"state of emergency," generalized and justified by fantasized "counterrevolutionary harassment" [written 1980—trans.], just as Somoza based his "martial law" on the fantasized existence of "Sandinista harassment," and just as the Bolshevik regime's Terror was justified and screened by the real existence of the White Generals' harassment.

VI

Recent events—the illegalization of the Nicaraguan Communist Party, followed by the "judgment" of 28 members of its hierarchy, accused of "sabotaging the economic reactivation plan" and having "provoked 19 factory seizures" by the workers; the resignation of two "bourgeois" members of the governing junta (Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo); rumors of the resignation of the "democratic," "liberal," or "moderate" Sandinista *tercerista* Eden Pastora; the formation of the so-called Council of State; and the hastening of the formation of the Sandinista "one party"—mark three essential, intersecting processes: (1) the irreversible moment in the terrorist appropriation of the state and of the division of labor by the bureaucratic ideology armed with *Sandinismo*; (2) the fact that, from now on, it will be in the bureaucracy's interior that the Sandinista ideology will put its strategems to work, in the struggle between factions and individuals more or less extremist in their statist tendencies while basically submissive to the ideology of the state and, to this extent, its servants; and (3) the purification of the antagonism between bureaucratic power and the proletariat, so that they both lose their "democratic" and "bourgeois" illusions while opening a path to the modern struggle: alienated communication in the commodity (disguised as "the economy") and the state, against the anti-economic and anti-state



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project of the revolutionary disalienation of this communication. Even when this struggle has not become conscious for any of the contenders, the anti-Sandinista proletariat will base its actions—with or without success—on this radical option, because there's no other alternative.

In regard to these proletarians it is necessary to clarify the following: Contrary to the "authorized" opinion of imbecilic sociologists, Marxologists, and other Third-Worldist intellectual whores, according to whom an "underdeveloped" country is matched with equally "underdeveloped" proletarians, we maintain—the recent history of uprisings and rebellions in these countries confirms our thesis—that neither these countries nor their proletariats are in any way underdeveloped. On the contrary, they are *modern*. "Underdeveloped" and "Third World" are only the ideology the ruling classes use to inveigle proletarians and to hide their panic at this growing modernity that seriously threatens to put an end to their rule. This ideology is the only thing underdeveloped here—as proved in the "incomprehensible" necessity for military despotism of most so-called underdeveloped countries. In Nicaragua, *Sandinismo* is this despotism through which the bourgeoisie wants to save its form, even when this leads to the directing of this despotism against the impotent national bourgeoisie itself. *Sandinismo* itself furnishes good evidence of the proletariat's modernity: no "democratic opening" is possible where proletarians take advantage of the most minimal freedom, the least relaxation of domination, to take possession of the whole division of labor, to freely communicate, to dissolve the state and the commodity.

But on a deeper level, the proletarian modernity of countries that as yet produce few commodities is the result of the universal development of the commodity: "The proletariat of backward countries . . . knows the backwardness of these societies as the simple quantitative underdevelopment in the local production of commodities. The commodity, obviously, does everything it can to overcome this insupportable insufficiency in order to develop the material base of the abundance that gives the best guarantee of its independence and to further the submission of the workers to its alienation, to the poverty of the commodity. The commodity puts on its old quantitative clothing to fool the workers and to drown them in abundant consumption. But the alienation already eroding proletarians' daily life is no less real, no less lived for the quantitative/observable fact that they still produce and consume few commodities. The question of the commodity's penetration, of the mercantile relation as the dominant form of exchange in society, cannot be treated as simply a quantitative one—following the habits of Third-Worldist thought already reified by its submission to the ruling commodity form. For the proletariat, alienation is a qualitative condition of its existence, a condition that does not gain reality through accumulation but that accumulates only because it is already real. The very bases of this alienation already contain the totality of the most modern commodity, alienation—this reality cannot be permanently excluded from the consciousness of the proletariat." (*Incitación de la refutación del Tercer mundo*, El Milenio, Mexico 1979; French version: *Incitation à la Réfutation du Tiers Monde*, Editions Gérard Lébovici, [13, rue de Béarn, 75003 Paris] 1978.)

VII

Then what is the social question in Nicaragua, the question the bureaucracy has tried so hard to conceal?

We say: Despite the fact that in Nicaragua the problem is not as developed as elsewhere, the question is posed in the same form and by the same subject. It's a matter, of course, of the *proletarian* question. This is nothing but the question of the infinite thirst for possible wealth, counterposed to the current, unbearable poverty. While the bureaucratic ruling class tries, cost notwithstanding, to hide it, by socially organizing its invisibility or, if necessary, by repressing it, the proletariat alone is capable of making poverty ever more visible, ever more public. While the bureaucracy, in hopes of safeguarding its pseudo-rich and privileged position in the state, busies itself with administering the lies and illusions that this society has everywhere imposed on poverty and wealth, the proletariat has no other choice but to confront the poverty of its own life and to fight that which alienates all wealth: the state, the commodity, and their ideology. The bureaucracy's self-interest drives it to search for

ways to resolve the problem and the state/commodity contradictions of administration. The proletariat's self-interest drives it to *destroy* the problem, together with its contradictions. To resolve the problem means: the state and the commodity become self-managed, eternalized. To destroy the problem means to destroy the commodity-state and its antithesis, the proletariat. Since, as the history of the wrecked proletarian project confirms, a contradiction cannot be resolved by eliminating just one of its terms but only by locating the contradiction of the contradiction. *Contraria contrariis curantur.*

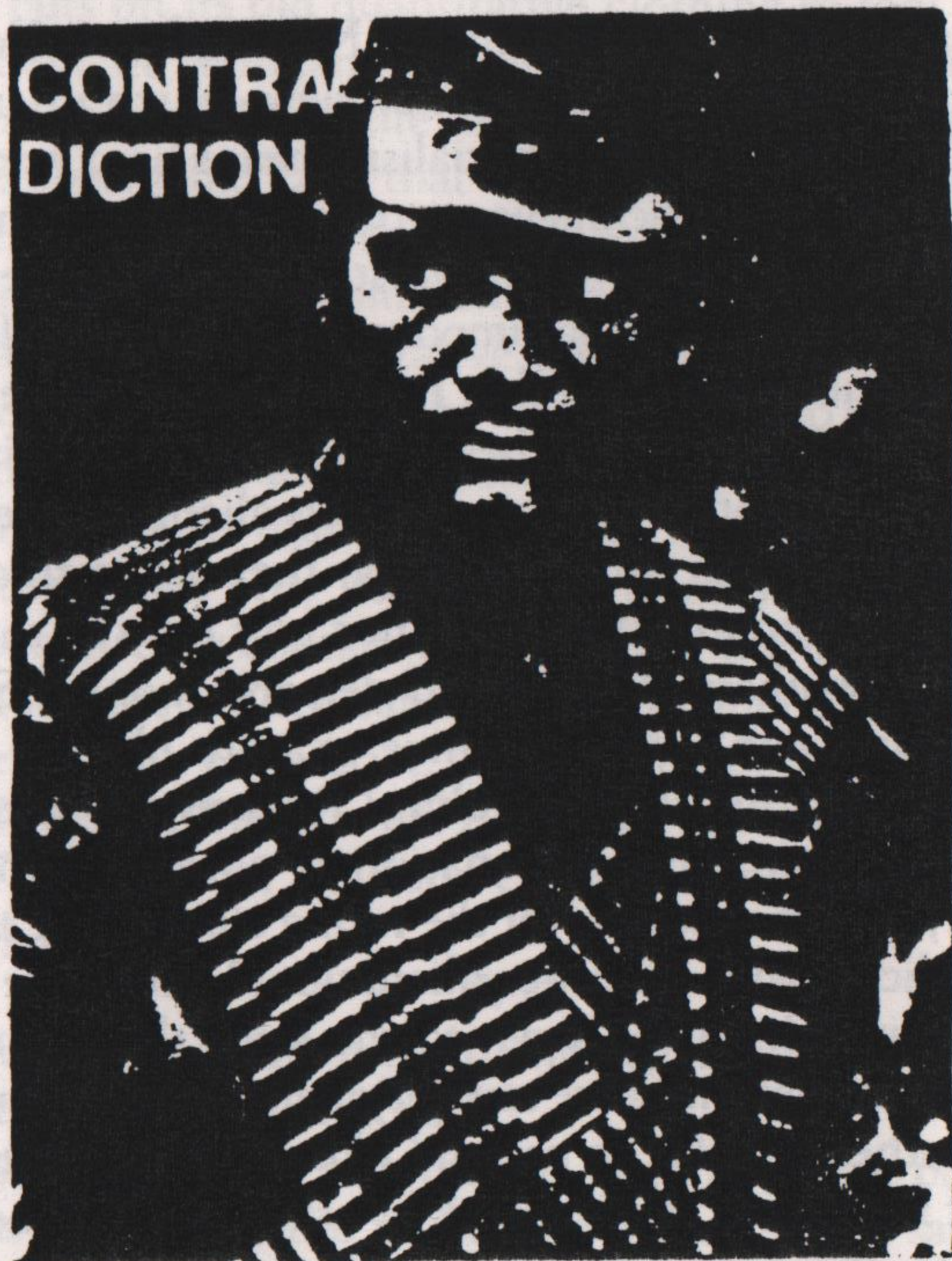
VIII

Those who look at the course of events in Nicaragua, and now in El Salvador, solely from the Sandinista point of view—which inscribes itself in the tradition of Ebert's socialism: "Socialism means hard work"—would like to persuade us that the Nicaraguan workers, at the moment (and for some time to come) subjected to the worst ideological superexploitation, go on strike to make the usual impoverished demands for money and other "economic nonsense" and that nothing more can be expected from the revolutionary capacities of these proletarians. Convinced that the world is economic in nature and having thus alienated their critical capacities to the benefit of the ruling ideology, they see in this manifestation of still poor proletarian practice the *nec plus ultra* of the struggle against poverty. The workers of the world demand money. So? Don't they vote as well? And don't they continue to work like the damned? Has the bourgeoisie suddenly stopped ruling? Perhaps the alienation of the workers' struggle against their alienation is no longer the *central* alienation, the only one that counts for the ruling classes, the alienation that leads to complicity with all other alienations? You have to really want to be a rat or—which comes down to the same thing—a miserable leftist to pretend that proletarians are revolutionaries when they demand better salaries and other crumbs, to pretend like all union bureaucracies that the proletariat is going to abolish work by asking for still more work. On the contrary, to the extent that he reaches this modern point of struggle, every self-respecting proletarian better understands that in order to genuinely enrich himself he must refuse the stupid pretexts of the belly and the economy, the gross "materialist" lies of the ruling ideology, with the aim of radically posing the question of the world's true wealth, with the aim of really knowing what constitutes its poverty. And it is just this that the struggle of the supposedly integrated workers emphasizes: neither wealth nor poverty are or has ever been a "materialist" or "economic" question.

IX

The economy is reestablishing itself, that is to say that the spectacular mercantile "reality," the illusory objectivity that separates—*ideology*—is

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arising from the ashes to which it had momentarily been reduced by the thunderbolt of war. (Except for the Sandinistas and the bourgeoisie, there was no economic question during this war: everything was a matter

of communication, plunder, proletarians regaling themselves, the whole world.) Here too Illusory Being, through the interposed Sandinista bureaucracy, effects the ideological reconstruction of reality. As a summary analysis reveals, illusions can function neither as pure subjectivity nor as pure objectivity but only as the false identity of both, as illusion of reality and real illusion. The hardest thing to understand is that an act that seems real can produce a truly illusory result—but here is the whole technique of modern spectacular alienation. The reproduction of life in our society is real, but the life produced is a false, illusory one—the life of the modern poor. The economy is the pseudolegitimation in consciousness of this concrete fabrication of illusion that from the reality of illusion extracts the illusion of reality necessary to its maintenance.

And so it's not for nothing that the Nicaraguan Stalinists' aggressive and obsessive resistance to all critique is shown by the reproaches of "theory" and "theoretical" that they direct at their enemies. This attitude is the false consciousness of the ruling class that requires the members of the society putting them to the question that they stay within the boundaries of the real and not concern themselves with the delicate business of the social construction of the real or with what the actual owners and directors decide. In its statist delirium this spectacular technique stops at nothing: when confronted recently by members of the Permanent Commission for Human Rights, and by their intention to continue their concern with "violations" of those rights in "Sandinista society," the Nicaraguan Stalin Tomas Borgé prophesied: "You must disappear. The only organization with the moral authority to defend the rights of man in Nicaragua is the Sandinista Front." (*Cambio 16.*)

But regarding this tropical Stalin whom Somoza's thugs supposedly emasculated, one can already read on the walls of Monimbó (Masaya) this ardent and no less prophetic inscription:

*Pudimos con un güevón
¿Por qué no con un capón?*

[We took care of a dumb prick—
so why not a gelded chick?]



...not as pure objectivity but only as the false identity of both, as illusion
...life in our society is real, but the life produced is a false, illusory one - the
...of illusion extends...
...and obsessive...
...is the false...
...of the society...
...boundaries of...
...purpose of the...
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