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Literacy and the Pedagogy of Liberation: Nicaragua

in the Latin American Context, 1979-1989

By

Luis Guajardo

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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Dedication

To my wife Jean
and our daughters Nadia and Kelly...

without their support, love,
and patience this thesis
would have never
been completed

También a mis padres,
Olga León y Eduardo A. Guajardo...

de cuya sabiduría creció esta
ansia por el saber y la lectura
que se refleja hoy en
estas páginas

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ABSTRACT

While there has been recently an increased awareness regarding the problem of illiteracy within industrialized nations, this problem is incomparably more serious in developing countries. Illiteracy is also more clearly seen in these countries as a result of external and internal structures of dependency and oppression. Internationally, most of the illiterate are found in the dependent countries and, in these poorer societies, they are also the ones who suffer most from the unjust and oppressive social structures to which illiteracy is related.

In Latin America, the response to dependency and oppression has resulted in a growing movement towards liberation which is clearly reflected in the current socio-political struggles as well as in the development of discourses and practices which seek the realization of such a liberation. Within these practices, Paulo Freire's proposal for an education for liberation has become the most influential paradigm underlying the new approaches to literacy and popular education. In this context, Nicaragua's revolutionary experience is seen as one of the most dramatic attempts towards liberation and the implementation of these new approaches to literacy and adult education.

Exploring the socio-historical roots of dependency and oppression in Latin America, this study offers a critical analysis of liberation pedagogy and its concrete application in Nicaragua. A major conclusion of the thesis is that while liberation pedagogy is indeed a genuine and innovative educational response to the problem of illiteracy and oppression, its contribution to radical social transformation is more limited and complex than the theory assumes. The case of Nicaragua, with its achievements and shortcomings, is presented as a clear illustration of this phenomenon.

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It would be tiresome to name the number of institutions and people, in Canada, Nicaragua and Chile, who helped me in collecting the documentation and assisted me with valuable observations. Special recognition should also be made of the many people I met in Nicaragua, especially popular teachers and students, who willingly shared their thoughts and experiences with me. My gratitude to them all.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Methodology

This study attempts to provide a critical understanding
of the new literacy and popular education alternatives being
developed within liberation pedagogy in Latin America, and
the extent to which the Nicaraguan experience illustrates
some of the potential and limitations of this pedagogy.
Although liberation pedagogy evolved mainly out of Freire's
work on literacy, it has developed into a multifaceted
theory and practice of education in Latin America--broadly
referred to as "popular education." Underlying this
pedagogy, and Freire's educational thought to which is
related, there are various levels of philosophical,
educational, and socio-political influences--namely a
mixture of Christian and pro-Marxist dimension nourishing
the Latin American political radicalism which this pedagogy
reflects. The thesis explores further the various dimensions

of this pedagogy and its applicability in the Nicaraguan
revolutionary experience (1979-1989).

The proposition of Nicaragua as case study for
assessing liberation pedagogy is based on a number of issues
in which clear links can be traced between the aims of this
pedagogy and the process of educational and social change
undertaken in that country. First, conscientization, a
central feature of this pedagogy, played an important role
in the Nicaraguan revolutionary process. Secondly,
underlying the proposed revolutionary change there was an
important convergence between radical Christian and
pro-Marxist sectors which advocated people's power and the
role of a liberating education in achieving this aim.
Finally, revolutionary Nicaragua set forward a major process
of educational reform, particularly on literacy and popular
education, which to a large extent was undertaken under the
inspiration of this pedagogy. Furthermore, Freire himself
participated personally at some stages of this process, and
fully endorsed it.[1]

Although the above-mentioned issues provide basis for
assessing liberation pedagogy, the Nicaraguan case presents
nonetheless some limitations for such an assessment which
should be acknowledged. First, there is the fact that
liberation pedagogy itself is a theory very much under

formation—many of its claims are still highly
hypothetical—making it difficult to "assess assumptions,"
the feasibility of which have not been fully confirmed by
real practice. Secondly, although the influence of this
pedagogy is found throughout Latin America, it should be
noted that there are important differences among the various
countries of the region which undoubtedly would affect the
applicability of this pedagogy in accordance with the
specific reality of each country. Thirdly, the Nicaraguan
experience witnessed a major political obstacle—the U.S.
imposed war which seriously undermined not only the
applicability of this pedagogy but also the whole process of
social change. Finally, there are limitations which are
particular to the study itself, as the author could not
afford the time and resources which might have been
necessary to conduct a more comprehensive research.

The general objective of the thesis can be broken down
into a number of more specific questions which this study
seeks to address. Some of these are: What is the extent of
illiteracy in Latin America and what are the major lines of
thought which attempt to explain and propose solutions to
this problem? What are the principal claims of the emergent
liberation pedagogy and how are they embodied in the new
approaches to literacy and popular education? What does

liberation mean in a context of dependency and oppression, and how does it relate to educational practice and theory? Why does liberation pedagogy place special emphasis on the interaction between language, consciousness and culture; does it bring any new insights into the process of literacy development and learning in general?

In relation to Nicaragua, the study attempts to pin-point the relevance of this pedagogy to the revolutionary transformation of this country and, more specifically, the extent to which the ensuing skills associated with literacy and popular education have been instrumental to that transformation. As a critical development of popular culture and expression is an important objective of liberation pedagogy, to what extent has this objective been realized in Nicaragua? Finally, what can be learned, in terms of successes and failures, from the Nicaraguan experience as assessed from the Latin American perspective?

Methodology

As the aim of the study is to develop a "critical understanding" rather than testing empirical hypotheses, a descriptive and interpretative analysis is appropriate. The multifaceted dimensions of liberation pedagogy (philosophic,

educational, and socio-political) are explored in a specific

area, context and time, based primarily on historical

description and analysis of pedagogical experiences,

principles, and documents. A historical perspective on

educational research is based upon Skager and Weinberg's

view that:

> Historical knowledge allows the student of
> education to relate the present to its sources,
> and to see specific activities and practices in
> the light of how they came to be.... Historical
> research gives us that perspective, from which we
> can evaluate the present and promote innovations
> for the future.[2]

While historical description provides the basis for

analysis, the study goes further to deal with a particular

theory and philosophy of education. Therefore, the study is

also based on educational philosophical inquiry inasmuch as

"methodologies are frequently based on some 'theory' of

education. In this sense, the philosophic activity is the

scrutiny of these theories, as well as the evaluation of the

extent to which experience validates these theories.[3] In

addition, the study is complemented with field-work and

on-site observation undertaken in Nicaragua.

Data Collection

Most of the bibliographical research dealing with the theoretical aspect of the thesis was undertaken at Canadian university libraries at Dalhousie, McGill, and the University of Toronto. Data and data collection are derived from two major sources: documentation, and on-site observation and informal interviews undertaken in Nicaragua.

Documentation

For Latin America: Most of the documentation dealing with literacy in Latin America (rates, tendencies, trends in adult education, and others) was collected in Santiago (Chile) at UNESCO's Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (OREALC). In the same country, important material and publications dealing with popular education in Latin America were collected from CIDE (Centre for Research and Development in Education). In addition, valuable documentation and bibliographical material were received from UNESCO-CREFAL (Regional Latin American Centre for Adult Education and Functional Literacy) in Mexico.

For Nicaragua: Most of the documents, primers and support material for literacy work, as well as pedagogical resources dealing with adult education, were collected at the

Sub-Ministry of Adult Education in Managua. Valuable resources dealing with the 1980 Literacy Crusade (records, testimonies, etc.) were made available from the National Museum of the Crusade. CEPA (Educational Centre for Agrarian Promotion) provided important pedagogical material of popular education used in the countryside before and after the Revolution. At the same Centre, in conjunction with the CAV (Antonio Valdivieso Ecumenical Centre), important popular education material used within the Christian Base Communities, was obtained. Much of the data dealing with cultural development and a variety of publications and documents on this matter were gathered at the Nicaraguan Ministry of Culture. In addition, other publications such as magazines, newspapers, bulletins and books which emerged with the Revolution were acquired at bookstores and kiosks in Nicaragua.

Field-work in Nicaragua

For a period of five weeks (July 17 to August 22 of 1986) field-work was conducted in Nicaragua. This included visits to a number of grass-roots organizations and attendance at various activities dealing with literacy and popular education. This was especially so in relation to the CEPs (Collectives of Popular Education) where the writer was

able to observe class activities and talk to participants (students and popular teachers) through direct conversations or informal interviews. Topics dealt with in these discussions included people's perceptions regarding the effect of their newly acquired literacy on their lives, pedagogical experiences at the CEPs, and the overall impact of the new education in relation to people's social roles in the family, workplace, trade and other organizations, as well as on the development of communication skills and personal expression.

Similarly, in regard to programs and activities dealing with adult education, valuable contact was made with officials at the various centres visited such as the National and Regional offices of the Sub-Ministry of Adult Education, CEPA, CAV, and the Ministry of Culture. Equally valuable was attendance at routine meetings of a variety of Christian Base Communities—particularly significant given the importance of Catholicism in the country and the role of the "grass-roots" Church in promoting popular education. The same holds true with respect to cultural workshops and activities such as those of groups promoting popular theatre, popular media, and literacy through literary and popular expression. In all of these cases, contact was made with the participants and organizers of these activities.

(More detailed information about field-work is provided in notes accompanying chapters dedicated to Nicaragua and in "Appendix I").

Significance and Scope of the Study

This thesis attempts to contribute to the understanding of liberation pedagogy in the Latin American context and in the concrete experience of Nicaragua. This study responds to the need for a holistic and interpretative view of the various aspects underlying liberation pedagogy, many of which have been studied in a rather isolated manner, removed from an analysis of the historical context. Given the influence of this pedagogy in the region, as exemplified by the case of Nicaragua, the further examination of the potential and shortcomings of this pedagogical trend (both in theory and practice) is considered to be of vital importance.

The study, however, does not deal with all theoretical aspects of liberation pedagogy, nor with all aspects of the educational and social change which have been undertaken in Nicaragua--an objective which would have been impossible to realize in the short period of time the writer could afford to stay in the country and given the very limited research facilities available. The focus is mainly on the influence

of this pedagogy within the new literacy and popular
education approaches in the regional context and the
specific impact of these within the revolutionary
transformation of Nicaragua.

Thesis Organization

The thesis is organized in six chapters. Chapter 1
(Introduction) introduces the subject of the study and the
methodological aspects regarding the same. In addition, it
provides a general socio-historical perspective regarding
literacy development, trends, and a rationale for its
promotion. The purpose of this is to provide a basis upon
which to introduce the specifics of the subject concerning
the Latin America context.

Chapter 2 (Illiteracy and the Politics of Adult
Education in Latin America) describes Latin America's
dependency, pointing out how the existing levels of
illiteracy and poor educational conditions can be explained
in terms of the dependent socio-historical evolution of the
region. The state of illiteracy and its quantitative
dimension is described, and its relation to the major
factors which determine the state of adult education as well
as to those which influence the process of policy formation
is discussed. In order to illustrate these factors, some

examples of the major adult education reforms in the region
are presented.

Chapter 3 (Literacy and the Pedagogy of Liberation)
traces the emergence of Freire's pedagogy as part of the
larger Latin American search for liberation. As the
pedagogical contribution to this search is seen in terms of
the generation of alternative knowledge, a discussion
follows regarding the potential of literacy and popular
education in helping generate that knowledge by means of
educational and cultural intervention. The relationship
between popular education and popular culture is also
analyzed, with special emphasis on the interaction between
language, learning, and conscientization. From the
perspective of sociolinguistics and communication theory,
language is further discussed in view of some of the
specifics of reading and writing.

Chapter 4 (Conscientization and Revolutionary Change in
Nicaragua) describes some of the outstanding processes of
conscientization undertaken in Nicaragua and how some forms
of popular education played an important role in promoting
both a critical awareness and people's engagement in the
insurrection. The call for the building of a new society,
accompanied by a new form of education to accomplish that
objective, is further analyzed. Special reference is made to

the most dramatic popular education attempt undertaken by the Sandinistas which was the implementation of the National Literacy Crusade of 1980.

Chapter 5 (Post-literacy and Popular Education in the "New Nicaragua") focuses on the post-literacy and popular education programs which developed after the Literacy Crusade. The role of popular education in strengthening people's power through mass organizations, in shaping a new cultural formation and a new pedagogy aimed at channelling grass-roots participation is further discussed. As an illustration of these programs and initiatives a closer analysis is pursued in relation to the Collectives of Popular Education (CEPs) which developed as the basic unit of the new Program of Popular Basic Education.

Chapter 6 (Conclusion: Nicaragua in the Latin American Context) concludes the study by summarizing liberation pedagogy and its influence in the new approaches to literacy and popular education. The Nicaraguan experience is seen as a dramatic example of the unresolved dilemma regarding the feasibility of radical educational reforms undertaken in the context of poor and dependent countries.

Before turning to the specifics of literacy and liberation pedagogy in Latin America, a developmental and socio-historical perspective on literacy follows.

Literacy in Socio-historical Perspective

Since printing was invented, literacy has traditionally been related to the perceived effects which are associated with its acquisition. Almost without exception, these effects are seen as something worthwhile to achieve for individuals and societies. Similar to schooling, with which it is commonly associated, literacy brings social recognition for those people who possess these skills and a sense of shame or deprivation for those who lack them. This positive value attributed to literacy is reinforced by statistics which usually show a correlation between a country's literacy rates and its degree of development.

In attempting to explain the effects of literacy on individuals and society, Goody's research in social anthropology led him to conclude that the invention of literacy brought such a change into the "technology of the intellect" that it can be considered as the "dividing line" that marks the transition from traditional to modern societies.[4] This positive effect associated with literacy may explain why the promotion of literacy has frequently been connected to the promotion of development in less developed areas.

Literacy and Development

Especially since the 1950s, the perceived positive correlation between levels of literacy and education and those of socio-economic development has captivated the interest of researchers, social planners, and policy-makers. As development was measured mainly in terms of economic growth, it was easy to make the correlation between the higher levels of educational attainments of rich countries, and the semi-literate character of the poorer ones in the Third World.

Since, at that time, development conditions were described in terms of the presence or absence of necessary elements, much of the analysis was devoted to diagnosing those elements which were missing in underdeveloped areas and those which must be added to ensure success. The importance of literacy was assumed to be demonstrated by its absence in situations of stagnation or low productivity. The identification of a minimal level of adult literacy as one of the missing pieces in the development puzzle became then wholly coincidental with Rostow's theory of minimum conditions and stages for progress.

However, it was not until the late 1950s that the correlation between education and development became more

coherently expressed with Shultz's theory of human capital. Shultz's theory made a strong case for treating education as a source of human investment from which individuals or nations could gain returns proportional to their investments.[5] For human capital theorists, the approach to literacy was unequivocal: the illiterate are an obstacle to development and therefore drastic measures should be taken to reduce their number.

Under the influence of this theory, Bowman and Anderson and others began to demonstrate through comparative studies that adult literacy rates of 30 to 40 percent were a minimum condition or threshold for economic development.[6] The role of education was not only seen in terms of economic gains, but was also related to the promotion of those socio-psychological conditions and values favourable to sparking the process of development. Modernization theory thus provided both the theoretical framework relating development to changes in values and attitudes, and the basis for implementing the policies necessary for a country to move from a traditional, underdeveloped state to a modern, developed one.

Literacy and Modernization

Although modernization theory does not deal with
education per se, some of its basic propositions relied
strongly on the effects of education--especially literacy
and schooling--on the development process. Studies
associated with modernization theory were largely based on
the assumption that certain socio-political characteristics
of traditional (i.e. illiterate, underdeveloped) societies
(such as the instability of governments, rigidity of social
classes, deep urban-rural and sex disparities, and limited
social mobility) fostered a set of attitudes which impeded
development.

Illiteracy and underdevelopment were seen as both the
result and expression of these attitudes and the traditional
value systems governing these societies. It was proposed
that this kind of value system forges a type of personality
which Hagen described as "non-creative" or "authoritarian";
and McClelland noted as being marked by a low need for
achievement and autonomy.[7] In short, a type of personality
which, instead of being governed by rational principles, is
mainly influenced by contemplative-religious values of magic
and traditional nature.

On the other hand, literacy and schooling are seen as closely related to the process of modernization. According to Lerner there is a high correlation between literacy and other modernization variables such as urbanization, mass communication, industrialization, and political participation. For him, "literacy is indeed the basic personal skill that underlies the whole modernization process." Similarly, Inkeles and Smith related schooling to socialization in modern values.[8]

A major source of criticism of modernization theory has been its underlying ethnocentrism, in that it departs from a given model of development (that of the industrialized world) which sets the standard by which Third World countries are measured. With regards to literacy development, there are also some aspects which seem to contradict modernization theory. One of these is the high rate of illiteracy which exists in modern and highly developed countries like the United States. In recent studies, St.John and Harman have shown that 57 million people are illiterate or functionally illiterate in that country; while Kozol reports a number of 60 million.[9] As these authors show, such people are mainly found within the marginalized sectors of that society: the poor and ethnic disadvantaged minorities.

On the other hand, while most of the countries of the
Third World have undertaken literacy campaigns, either under
the functional or another approach, only a few of them have
achieved the expected results. By contrast, in those
countries where literacy efforts have been closely connected
to an egalitarian social change, important literacy progress
has been made, even when modernization indices did not
change in the same way as has been the case of China,
Tanzania, Cuba, and more recently, Nicaragua.

This seems to indicate that although modernization is
related to the promotion of literacy, especially by boosting
the process of schooling, it does not eliminate illiteracy
in absolute terms. So, although basic education may become
available to all, if the socio-economic system destines
people to function with a minimal use of their literacy
skills, a process of marginalization takes place which
results in people becoming ultimately illiterate, or
functionally illiterate, through a lack of use of those
skills. Thus, without diminishing the effects of
modernization, it appears that illiteracy, whether in
developed or underdeveloped countries, is closely bound to
the problem of inequity and social discrimination within the
various areas of society. It was, nevertheless, the
modernization view of development which provided the main

input to UNESCO's literacy efforts in the Third World during this period.

UNESCO's Literacy Programs

In effect, it was under the influence of this modernization view that UNESCO proposed to move from "rudimentary literacy" to "functional literacy." Rudimentary literacy was the term given to UNESCO's earlier definition (1951) which stated that "A person is literate who can with understanding both read and write a short, simple statement of his everyday life."[10] The functional definition resulted from the World Congress of Ministries of Education for the Eradication of Illiteracy, convened by UNESCO in Teheran (1965). This new definition stated that "Literacy instruction must enable illiterates, left behind by the course of events and producing too little, to become socially and economically integrated in a new world."[11] Thus, functional literacy would combine the teaching of literacy and numeracy in order to better prepare a nation's potential work force for productive labour.

The same Congress provided the basis for UNESCO's major effort in promoting literacy in the Third World through the Experimental World Literacy Program (EWLP). The EWLP attempted to prove, on an experimental basis, a causal

correlation between literacy and development as well as the
fact that the functional approach was the most appropriate
in demonstrating such a correlation. The EWLP ran from 1967
until 1973, in eleven Third World countries. In spite of the
selective focus of the experiment--as opposed to massive
campaigns, it was applied instead in those regions and
economic areas in which the program was considered more
likely to succeed--the results were not as great as
expected, and out of the one million adults who participated
only 120,000 attained literacy during its six years of
operation.[12]

It is fair to recognize, however, that those who
succeeded, according to the final evaluation, had in fact
experienced most of the changes expected. Thus, among other
things, the newly literate became persons who: actively seek
information likely to help solve mainly personal problems
generally posed in vocational terms; take advantage of their
new literacy skills to maintain personal bank and savings
accounts; and aspire to reduce the size of their family in
exchange for the prospect of a higher material living
standard.[13]

A major criticism of the EWLP has to do with the
behaviourist approach underlying the changes promoted. The
illiterate is provided with a "stimulus" (the prospect of

personal material benefit) and the means (literacy skills)
in order to provide a "satisfactory response" which, in
turn, brings the "reward" of greater access to material
consumption. It has also been noted that the changes sought
were bound to a particular model of society: the modern,
industrialized capitalist model. As stated by Street,
earlier UNESCO literacy efforts "subserved the interests of
foreign investment and multinational companies on the
premise that productivity and profit could be raised if
'literacy levels' were raised."[14]

Another important criticism of the EWLP has to do with
the little respect for the cultural autonomy of indigenous
and subordinated groups which underlies this approach. As
seen earlier, theorists advocating modernization assign to
literacy and schooling an important role in the promotion of
cognitive abilities and modern attitudes which are
compatible with development. It is held that without an
intense mental training, such as that provided by literacy
and schooling, the subjects have access to only a concrete
way of thinking, hindering their access to more demanding
analytical stages.

Without denying these effects of literacy and
schooling, one problem with this view is that it fails to
recognize that mental abilities are greatly shaped by

socio-cultural contexts. Cole, for instance, through
experimental studies on cognition and learning with African
groups, was able to identify all of the "normal" cognitive
abilities, with the only difference being in the way they
were organized and used.[15] This indicates that learning
follows the ways in which knowledge is organized and the
mental processes structured in a given socio-cultural
context. For this reason, instead of assuming the
superiority of a given culture, one should think rather in
terms of cultural differences, recognizing that every
culture has its own cognitive styles which are inherent to a
particular group, and as such cannot, in fairness, be
measured by the categories of another cultural group.

What seems to be clear, however, is that in this kind
of strategy the illiterates are seen in relation to a model
which is not their own and to which they must adapt. In
order to do this, they are manipulated as an object; and
once inserted into their milieu remain in much the same
condition as before, driven by processes which they neither
manage nor understand. As Infante points out, in programs
such as these, human beings continue to be considered as
"spectators" rather than "actors" in the social processes,
even if they can improve occupational levels or reduce the

size of their family group, as prescribed by the creed of
modernization.[16]

In light of these criticisms and the open debate
regarding the nature and consequences of development which
emerged in the 1970s, the EWLP's assumptions were critically
reassessed ten years later. The tone of this reassessment
undertaken by a UNESCO team of experts is persuasively
reflected in the kinds of questions they raised:

> To what extent has the new literate become
> dependent on which external socioeconomic
> processes and forces? Has literacy enabled the new
> literate to know and understand these processes
> and forces? To come to grips with them? To have a
> voice in controlling them?[17]

It appears that at the root of these questions lies the
recognition of the shortcomings of a model of development
predominantly based on the assumption that underdevelopment
was simply the result of an uneducated population which
needed to be literate in order to reach a higher level of
economic growth. Under this evaluation it became apparent
that underdevelopment and illiteracy were also connected to
more structural factors within and between countries such as
inequities in the economic system, income disparities, lack
of participation, and cultural and political discrimination.

From the 1970s on, development and literacy efforts came

to be viewed as an integral process of social change aimed
at removing those structural factors which, by impeding a
meaningful development for subordinated groups, made those
literacy efforts irrelevant. Thus, the UNESCO experts
suggested that the restricted concept of functional literacy
needed to be expanded to include those other dimensions of
the development process, including "social, cultural, and
political change and economic growth... enhancing popular
participation."[18] Furthermore, UNESCO has, of late,
recognized Freire's claim that literacy is related to
liberation by defining it as "... not just the process of
learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but
a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full
development."[19]

From Dependency to Liberation in Latin America

Contrary to the assumptions of modernization, a quite
different interpretation of the state of illiteracy, poor
educational conditions and underdevelopment found in the
Third World is provided by dependency theory. As a matter of
fact, dependency approaches emerged from Latin America
during the 1960s as a critical reaction to modernization (or
"developmentalist ideology" as it is labelled in the
region). This reaction reflected the growing distrust

concerning both modernization interpretations and proposed solutions to the problems of the region as shown by the main exponents of dependency theory (Cardoso, Frank, Furtado, Galtung, and others).

It should also be remembered that this decade started in Latin American with the Cuban Revolution (1959) which brought to the region new socio-economic paths of development. In fact, the Revolution provoked such an impact in the region, shaking up institutions, unleashing students and workers' revolts, and a generalized political effervescence especially directed against U.S. domination, which Frank synthesized as Latin America's dilemma between "underdevelopment or revolution."[20] In this context, equally important was the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference of Medellín (1968) in which the Church not only encouraged liberation as a legitimate response to dependency and oppression, but also directed its influential power in the region towards this objective.

In fact, much of the frustration in the region sprung from the unfulfilled assumption underlying modernization, namely, that underdevelopment was mainly a problem of deprivation which, while being gradually removed, would give way to the endless and inevitable character of development. Contrary to this, dependency theory began to show that

underdevelopment was not so much a problem of deprivation as one of internal and external dependency within and between countries. Underdevelopment, it was argued, is an historical phenomenon resulting from Third World inclusion within an international system of domination which can only be overcome by changing those structural relations of dependency which generate it. As further advanced by liberationist approaches, insofar as underdevelopment is equivalent to domination, development should be better expressed in terms of liberation.

In this way, and free from the deceptive illusions of an imminent development for all nations via modernization, the concept of development itself began to be challenged. Curle noted for instance that the notion of development implies more a question of justice and social solidarity than one of wealth. Goulet suggests that its final outcome should not be measured solely in terms of indices of growth but rather in terms of people's participation in controlling the process instead of adapting to a system imposed upon them from above. Gutiérrez proposes that development should be better replaced by the concept of liberation as this, superseding the mere economic aspects, implies a broader dimension of freedom involving all forms of human oppression.[21]

Although dependency theory, similar to modernization theory, does not deal with education per se, many of its socio-political principles provide an important basis for understanding the main socio-historical determinants of education in dependent contexts. Thus, in accordance with the dependency view, Latin America's high levels of illiteracy and discriminatory access to education are explained in connection with the region's dependent patterns of capital accumulation and the subsequent political domination needed for the enforcement of such patterns. Subordinated groups who, having little access to formal education, would most likely become the potential beneficiaries of literacy and adult education programs, are left with little power and organization to influence educational policies in their favour.

In this sense, the resulting elitist character of schooling in a dependent context seems to support Carnoy's characterization of education as a form of "cultural imperialism,"[22] a kind of education which, even if expanded, in the absence of a process of social equalization, would only lead to, in Illich's terms, an "increasing allocation of public funds for the education of a few and increasing acceptance of social control by the many."[23] It has been Freire however, who has been the most influential thinker in

unmasking education as a form of domination, while proposing at the same time a pedagogy of liberation.

Literacy and the Pedagogy of Liberation

The emergence of Freirean pedagogy is, however, only part of a more general response to Latin America's situation of dependency and domination. In fact, underlying this response are the signs of an intellectual shift which, replacing the developmentalist ideology, has placed the dialectic oppression-liberation as an inescapable category in understanding current socio-historical events in the region. This shift is the one which nourishes the various discourses and practices which, whether on pedagogical, theological, political, cultural or literary levels, are equally united in the same search for liberation. In effect, these discourses and practices are a clear reflection of liberation as both an expression of hope for the oppressed majority and a concrete programmatic agenda for social transformation.

An important feature of this pedagogy relies on the role of education in transforming the individual's consciousness so that people can positively transform their conditions of life. As this pedagogy gives special attention to the dialectic between power structures and human

subjectivity it has revindicated the potential role of culture and language in mediating this dialectic. It proposes that any meaningful literacy or educative work directed toward subordinated sectors must be inserted within popular culture or the ways in which these groups live and act. Popular culture is considered to be the indispensable frame of reference from which these groups can not only assume their education but also use it to benefit their struggles for liberation. Learning is seen, then, as a form of conscientization, as a dynamic process of raising awareness and creating alternative forms of knowledge capable of leading to social transformation.

Thus, whereas modernization related literacy mainly to economic gains and integration of the subordinated sectors within the existing social structures, liberation pedagogy makes of it a means of conscientization—a way of raising awareness among the illiterate so that they can engage in a process of social transformation of those structures which create illiteracy and marginalization in the first place.

It is argued that insofar as illiteracy is the reflection of the cultural and symbolic domination by means of which powerful sectors keep the subordinated groups in a state of alienation, literacy, within a liberating perspective, becomes a powerful counter-cultural weapon

which, breaking that state of alienation, leads these groups to struggle for their own liberation. Indeed, as indicated above, UNESCO has recognized the Freirean claim that literacy should be seen as "a contribution to the liberation of man and to his full development."

Without a doubt this pedagogical theory places quite ambitious goals upon literacy, cultural, and educational intervention; not to mention the intrinsic interconnection it makes between educational practice and political engagement. In addition, the liberating proposal underlying this pedagogy implies a number of assumptions and claims both in educational practice and political theory which are still being questioned and debated among theorists and practitioners.

Some of the most challenging questions are: to what extent can literacy, as a form of cultural and educational intervention, in fact lead to a radical transformation of society? To what extent does conscientization, if achieved, necessarily lead the semi-literate masses to get involved in political action for social change? If the oppressed find themselves submerged in their state of alienation and, therefore, unable to make decisions for themselves, who then determines which is the best liberating strategy for them to follow? Given the ambitious and highly idealistic objectives

associated with literacy and conscient:zation could it not
bring greater frustrations to the oppressed if the expected
changes do not come about as a result of the
literacy/conscientization process? This is especially
relevant inasmuch as this association rather than being
confirmed by hard evidence remains more a desirable
proposition.

However, and notwithstanding the many issues still
unsettled within the theory, liberation pedagogy has indeed
become the most important trend influencing adult education
in Latin America, particularly in relation to the new
approaches to literacy and popular education. In this sense,
the revolutionary context of Nicaragua and the dramatic
application of this pedagogy in that country offer a very
valuable and challenging case in which this pedagogy can be
more closely scrutinized. In fact, this thesis is an attempt
to address this major question: what are the conditions
underlying the emergence and influence of this pedagogy in
Latin America and what has been its specific relevance
within the Nicaraguan experience?

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

[1]Freire participated as a consultant in the initial stages of the National Literacy Crusade of 1980. In a later visit to the country and after observing the various programs of popular education being undertaken, he declared, "in very few countries have the people been capable of educating each other. A program of the people for educating the people: this is what I have seen in Nicaragua." (Topics, 12 September 1983, p.9).

[2]R. Skager and C. Weinberg, Fundamentals of Educational Research (Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1971), p.50.

[3]Ibid., p.63.

[4]Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," Comparative Studies in Sociology and History 5, (1962), pp.304-45; J. Goody et al., Literacy in Traditional Societies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[5]Theodore Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital," American Economic Review 51 (March 1961), pp.1-17.

[6]Mary J. Bowman and Arnold Anderson, "Concerning the Role of Education in Development," in Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity, ed. Clifford Geertz (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1963), pp.245-79.

[7]Everett Hagen, On the Theory of Social Change (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1962); David McClelland, The Achieving Society (Princeton, N.Y.: D. Van Nostrand Co, 1961).

[8]Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Societies (Glencoe II.: The Free Press, 1958). Quoted in H. S. Bhola, Campaigning for Literacy (UNESCO: Paris, 1984), p. 29; A. Inkeles and D. Smith, Becoming Modern: Individual Change in Six Developing Countries (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[9]Carman St.John Hunter and David Harman, Adult Illiteracy in the United States (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979); Jonathan Kozol, Illiterate America (New York: Doubleday, 1980).

[10]UNESCO, World Campaign for Universal Literacy (United Nations Economic and Social Council, Document E/3771, 1963).

[11]UNESCO, World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy, Final Report. Teheran, Iran 8-9 September, 1965, (Paris, UNESCO), p.29.

[12]UNESCO, The Experimental World Literacy Programme: A Critical Assessment (EWLP) (Paris: UNESCO, 1976).

[13]Ibid., p.178.

[14]Brian Street, Literacy in Theory and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p.184.

[15]Michael Cole, The Cultural Context of Learning and Thinking (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

[16]Isabel Infante, Educación, comunicación y lenguaje. Fundamentos para la educación de adultos en América Latina (México: Centro de Estudios Educativos, 1983), p.69.

[17]UNESCO, EWLP, p.181.

[18]Ibid., p.122.

[19]Leon Bataille, ed., A Turning Point for Literacy. Proceedings of the International Symposium for Literacy, Persepolis, Iran 3 to 8 September 1975 (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1976), p.273.

[20]Andre G. Frank, Latin America: Underdevelopment or Revolution? (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969).

[21]Adam Curle, Education for Liberation (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1973); Denis Goulet, "'Development'... or Liberation," International Development Review XIII, No.3 (September 1971), pp. 6-10; and A New Moral Order: Studies in Development Ethics and Liberation Theology (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1974); Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973).

[22]Martin Carnoy, Education as Cultural Imperialism (New York: David McKay Company, 1974).

[23]Ivan Illich, Deschooling Society (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p.10.

CHAPTER 2

ILLITERACY AND THE POLITICS OF ADULT EDUCATION

IN LATIN AMERICA

This chapter examines, from a socio-historical
perspective, the state of illiteracy and adult education
within the dependent context of Latin America. After
describing the quantitative dimensions of illiteracy and the
social and educational needs of the adult population, the
chapter deals with the role of ideology and the state in
determining the process of policy formation within the field
of adult education. A more detailed analysis of the
underlying politics of such policies is illustrated through
some of the most relevant examples of adult education
reforms undertaken in the region.

Illiteracy and Dependency in Latin America

The Mexican historian-philosopher Leopoldo Zea points
out that dependency and oppression have been Latin America's

birthmarks ever since the continent was seized and brought
under the economic, political, and culture dominance of the
Western imperial powers during the sixteenth century. In his
view, domination by the conquistadores was greatly
accomplished by the introduction of a new language, culture
and society which were imposed upon the aboriginal peoples,
after their own cultures and languages were virtually
destroyed.[1]

The kind of culture which was imposed would stamp the
character and future socio-historical development of Latin
American societies. As distinct from the colonizers of North
America who brought with them the post-Medieval ideas of
modernity, the Iberian powers Spain and Portugal brought
those feudal organizations and Medieval values which still
prevailed at the time of the conquest. Comparing the
conquest of Latin America and the colonization of North
America, Carlos Fuentes notes:

> You [the United States] started from zero, a
> virgin society, totally equal to modern times,
> without any feudal ballast. On the contrary, we
> were founded as an appendix of the falling feudal
> order of the Middle Ages...the Latin American
> drama stems from the persistence of those feudal
> structures over four centuries of misery and
> stagnation.[2]

Medieval refers to the pyramidal organization of the colonial society in which the Church and the elites, located at the apex, enjoyed all forms of power and privileges, while at the base remained the impoverished majority. Feudal refers to the distribution of the expropriated lands which were granted to a few landlords who in turn established a working relationship with the indigenous population based on serfdom. This would be the origin of the subsequent latifundia--large landed estates with primitive agriculture and labour often in a partial state of servitude--which still persist in some parts of the region.

The first half of the nineteenth century was marked by high expectations of change as the colonies engaged in a continental movement for national independence. This movement was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment and the liberal ideas which accompanied the bourgeois revolutions in Europe (England and France) and the revolution of independence of the United States. Yet while the Spanish creoles unanimously embraced the liberal ideas proclaimed by the independentists, their main concern was to rid themselves of the Spanish rulers in order to become a new ruling class.

In fact, once independence was won, many of the patriotic leaders who wanted to extend this reform movement

to replace the colonial society with the establishment of a modern republic, were soon removed from power by the national oligarchies. Whereas the European bourgeoisie defeated feudalism and the oligarchies, replacing these with the new capitalist state and the industrialization and democratization of their society, the achievement of political independence in Latin America left many of the traits of the colonial society almost unchanged. Andre G. Frank, explaining dependency and the short-sighted historical role played by Latin America's national elites, has described them as "lumpenbourgeoisie" who promoted a lumpen form of development.[3]

Indeed, independence meant mainly a transfer of power from the Iberian crown to the ruling creole classes. It was a change at the apex of the pyramidal structure of power which in no significant way affected the majority located at the base of the colonial society. According to Lambert, "The nineteenth century caudillos and aristocrats had shaken off colonial domination in the name of political freedom, but had retained the colonial and social structure."[4] For the vast majority of Latin Americans however, little--if anything--had changed.

The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by internal struggles between the conflicting interests of the

ruling classes. On the one hand the creole oligarchy which replaced the Spanish rulers defended the preservation of the inherited colonial society. On the other was the growing influence of a national bourgeoisie which advocated the creation of a new modern state favouring urban and industrial development. In spite of these differences however, the ruling classes equally agreed on a developmental pattern tied to foreign influence, especially that of the European non-Iberian nations and the United States. It was thought that if liberalism was a key factor in the progress of those nations, then adopting the liberalist philosophy and increasing trade with those countries would be the surest way to break with the Iberian past and advance into the modern world.

However, quickly it became all too clear that through this opening to the modern world, Latin American countries had become the object of capitalist expansion by those more industrialized nations. Thus, in the same way as Iberian domination was soon replaced by new ruling elites, these elites in turn became dependent upon the new imperial powers whose influence they had sought. In this way, Iberian colonialism was gradually replaced by new forms of neocolonialism. The "liberated" countries of Latin America found themselves commercially dependent first on England,

and subsequently on the United States as they sought a rapid
process of development. This process was complicated by a
further cultural dependence on France, where Paris set the
standards in culture and refinement. As Zea puts it:

> To free ourselves from the cultural domination of
> the Iberian metropolis, we adopted the models of
> the so-called Western culture.... But, in so
> doing, perhaps unconsciously, we adopted a new
> form of dependency, that of the men and interests
> of those who were an expression of the culture and
> philosophy imitated.... We substituted the Iberian
> colonialism for the neocolonialism of today.[5]

In this context, schooling, along with other social
institutions such as the Church and the Army, were
originally introduced in Latin America as an extension of
Iberian domination. The role of education was related to
teaching the language and religion of the colonizers as
well as for preparing the younger elite for their
administrative roles in the colony. It is in this sense that
the kind of education imposed by Western powers upon the
colonized world has been characterized as a form of
"cultural imperialism" by Carnoy.[6] This has indeed been the
case of Latin America in which education has traditionally
functioned as a means of legitimizing the status quo
favourable to the elites. According to Benton:

>The feudal way of life that still persists in much
>of Latin America has not been conducive to
>large-scale education. The oligarchic tradition
>may have given, and may still give, a relatively
>small elite an education fitting their
>self-conceived aristocratic roles, but the great
>masses of the people are receiving little if any
>education, and this little of poor quality.[7]

Benton's diagnosis about the state of education in

Latin America during the 1960's still seems applicable to

many of the less developed countries of the region,

particularly in relation to the great masses having little,

if any, access to education. In effect, this diagnosis is

clearly supported by the high levels of illiteracy found in

the region, as will be shown below.

Overview of Illiteracy in Latin America

In 1979, the Latin American and Caribbean Regional

Conference of Ministers of Education and Economic Planning

under the sponsorship of UNESCO and the Organization of

American States (OAS), met in Mexico to analyze the state

and prospects of education in light of regional development.

Among the various issues discussed, the Conference was

especially astonished to recognize that out of the region's

adult population of 163 million, 45 million were illiterate

(more than 20 percent). In response to this and other

educational deficits, the Conference launched the Major

Project of Education through which local governments

committed themselves to improve education in general and,

particularly, to eliminate illiteracy by the year 2000.[8]

Before giving a more detailed picture of the region's

illiteracy situation, we should acknowledge some of the

difficulties in determining exact figures as well as

comparing these among different countries. These

difficulties arise from the various definitions of literacy

and age spans considered, as well as from the instruments

and procedures used in collecting data. Thus, while in some

countries literacy is defined in relation to the amount of

schooling, other countries use the census criterion in

which individuals are required to perform a task or are

simply asked if they can write their name or read a

newspaper. Since the latter is the most documented and

prevalent in Latin America, statistics provided are based on

this criterion.

It is hoped that these statistics will enable us to

appreciate some of the quantitative dimensions of the

problem of illiteracy in the region. Nevertheless, we should

bear in mind the approximate character of the figures. Total

reliability may clearly be questioned on different grounds

as has been pointed out.

Table 1: Illiteracy Rates for Latin American Countries
for Population of 15 Years and Over

Country	1970	1980	Ranking
Argentina	7.4	6.7	Less than 10%
Chile	11.0	7.5	
Costa Rica	11.6	7.0	
Cuba	--	3.9	
Uruguay	6.1	6.1	
Brazil	33.6	24.5	10-24.9%
Colombia	19.1	13.7	
Ecuador	25.8	18.7	
Mexico	25.8	16.1	
Nicaragua	42.1	13.0 *	
Panama	21.7	14.2	
Paraguay	19.8	14.3	
Peru	27.2	18.5	
Venezuela	23.5	17.7	
Bolivia	37.3	36.7	25-39.9%
Dominican Republic	32.8	26.4	
El Salvador	42.9	35.3	
Honduras	40.5	31.4	
Guatemala	53.8	47.3	Over 40%

* After 1980 National Literacy Crusade

Sources: UNESCO-OREALC, Dimensiones cuantitativas del
analfabetismo en América Latina y el Caribe, Santiago,
Chile, 1981.

As Table 1 reveals, there is a rather large disparity
in illiteracy rates among various countries, despite an
overall improvement in the decade of the 1970's. In the same
table, countries have been grouped in accordance with their
current (1980) illiteracy rate index. The first group, with

less than 10 percent (Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba,
Uruguay), shows high levels of educational achievement
which would suppose very specific literacy efforts towards
well-defined segments of the population.

Next comes the largest group (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico,
Peru, Venezuela, etc.) whose illiceracy rates, ranging from
10 to 24 percent, would require greater efforts in order to
achieve a reduction. The situation for the third group
(Bolivia, El Salvador, Honduras, and Dominican Republic)
which ranges from 25 to 39 percent illiteracy rate, not to
mention Guatemala with more than 40 percent, is much more
serious. Unless these countries undertake radical measures
to deal with the problem, it is unlikely that illiteracy
will be eliminated from the region by the year 2000, as
targeted by the Major Project.

In light of those literacy efforts in terms of planning
and target population which are most urgently needed in the
region, the global figures of Table 1 may be broken down to
show, more specifically, who these illiterate people are and
where they are located in terms of area (urban or rural),
sex, and age. This is shown in the tables below.

Table 2: Illiteracy Rates by Area in 14 Countries
(Population age 15 and Over)

Country (Year)	Rates (%)		No.of Illit.(thousands)	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Bolivia (1976)	16.0	53.0	183.4	828.8
Brazil (1970)	20.0	53.3	6.381.3	11.765.7
Costa Rica (1973)	4.9	17.0	23.2	98.1
Chile (1970)	6.6	25.6	276.3	318.5
Ecuador (1974)	9.7	38.2	153.3	779.4
El Salvador (1971)	21.8	59.0	180.2	636.5
Guatemala (1973)	28.2	68.4	291.4	1.235.2
Honduras (1974)	19.1	50.3	111.2	595.5
Mexico (1970)	16.7	39.7	2.621.7	4.072.0
Nicaragua (1971)	19.4	64.6	94.3	316.4
Panama (1970)	6.3	38.1	26.2	149.2
Paraguay (1972)	11.4	25.9	61.6	195.1
Peru (1972)	12.8	51.9	583.4	1.486.9
Uruguay (1975)	5.2	11.0	87.5	37.0

Table 3: Illiteracy Percentages by Sex in 17 Countries
(Census taken during the 1970's)

Country	Male	Female
Argentina	6.5	8.3
Uruguay	6.6	5.7
Chile	11.1	12.8
Costa Rica	11.4	11.8
Paraguay	14.9	24.5
Colombia	18.0	20.2
Peru	16.8	38.2
Venezuela	20.3	26.6
Panama	21.0	22.2
Mexico	21.8	29.6
Ecuador	22.7	30.4
Bolivia	24.8	49.0
Brazil	30.6	36.9
Dominican Republic	31.2	34.3
El Salvador	39.2	46.4
Nicaragua	42.0	42.9
Guatemala	46.1	61.5

Sources: UNESCO-OREALC, Dimensiones cuantitativas del
analfabetismo en América Latina y el Caribe, Santiago,
Chile, 1981.

Table 4: Illiteracy Rates by Age Groups
(Census taken during the 1970's)

	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50&+
Arg.	4.1	4.3	4.6	5.0	5.4	6.1	7.2	13.2
Boliv.	14.8	20.3	26.7	35.3	41.8	49.0	52.5	66.3
Brazil	24.3	26.5	29.9	31.3	34.7	37.1	40.4	48.0
C.Rica	4.2	5.8	8.2	11.7	15.0	15.9	16.1*	22.0
Chile	4.0	6.0	7.8	9.8	11.9	16.4*	24.2**	
El Sal.	26.6	31.3	38.1	43.6	51.6	56.4*	61.2**	
Guatem.	43.4	47.4	52.2	54.7	56.9	58.3	61.4	63.1
Mexico	15.0	18.0	22.3	23.8	27.8	37.3***		
Nicar.	33.9	36.5	41.3	42.2	47.2	46.9	50.1	50.0
Panama	11.0	14.4	16.8	19.7	24.0	25.4	26.4	36.7
Paraguay	9.0	10.8	13.4	16.3	21.1	22.5	26.3	37.9
Peru	11.4	15.5	21.7	28.6	--	--	35.0	47.7
Uruguay	1.4	2.1	2.1	2.7	3.6	4.6	5.7	12.1
Venez.	3.3	13.7	17.4	20.8	25.5	28.8	32.7	46.8

*   45-54 years
**   55 and over
*** 40 or over

Sources: OEA-IASI, _América en cifras 1974. Situación_
cultural: educación y otros aspectos culturales, Washington,
1974.

A glance at Table 2 shows the great difference between
illiteracy rates in urban and rural areas. Census reports
taken during the 1970's in 14 countries whose population
aged 15 years and over represented 69 percent of the
region's population, showed an average rural illiteracy rate
three times higher than the urban.

Table 3 shows that although the difference in
illiteracy rates by sex is on average 6 percent higher for
females than males, this difference is remarkably

substantial in some countries--double in the cases of Peru and Bolivia and still quite high in Paraguay, Guatemala and Mexico. Finally, table 4 shows that there is a substantial difference in the illiteracy rate in relation to age group. While the general tendency of reducing illiteracy rates is clearly visible among younger population categories, little progress can be observed among the older groups.

Another aspect which should be taken into consideration when providing a general overview of the illiteracy situation is the existence of the indigenous population. Although official statistics for indigenous populations and illiteracy rates among them are rather scarce, it becomes evident that those countries with large indigenous populations such as Bolivia, Guatemala, and Honduras have higher illiteracy rates. The state of isolation and disregard for indigenous groups, along with linguistic and cultural barriers, may be held responsible for this situation.

Drawing from the quantitative data on illiteracy in the region, one can see that the eradication of the problem would imply tremendous efforts in promoting literacy as well as far-reaching improvements within adult education as a whole. In order to discuss the developmental prospect of literacy and adult education in Latin America, we should characterize in greater detail the social and educational

needs of this population and the process of policy-formation
which seeks to address these needs in the region's adult
population.

The Politics of Adult Education in Latin America

If adult education, perhaps more than formal education,
is shaped to a large extent by the socio-economic conditions
in which it takes place, we can say that in the context of
Latin America it is essentially defined in relation to
poverty. It is an education for the poorer sectors of
society, either those who are illiterate or who have little
schooling.[9]

Adult education was considered initially as a
short-term solution or a temporary compensation for
deficiencies in the school system but the persistent
educational needs of Latin America's adult population
contradict such an idea. It was thought that illiteracy
would be rapidly reduced through the combined strategy of
expanding the school system for the younger generations and
implementing literacy and basic education programs for the
adult population. However, despite all efforts at both
levels, the high rates of illiteracy which still prevail
show the complexity of the problem. Nor has the present
situation of the school system improved much: roughly 1 out

of every 4 school-age children does not attend school (23 percent).[10]

Moreover, these figures do not reflect all of the educational needs of the poor. Faced with the region's increasing levels of poverty, theorists in the field are forcefully proposing that adult education should become a form of "education for survival" which could help the poor meet their basic needs. Latapí makes a strong appeal for focusing adult learning in light of present and prospective levels of poverty in the region. As he acknowledges, out of the present Latin American population of 310 million, 40 percent live below the poverty line (125 million) and 19 percent in extreme poverty (56 million). Most of this population is comprised of rural and young people (55 percent are younger than 15). Toward the year 2000, however, the number of poor will reach 170 million while extreme poverty will double (112 million), and these people will be concentrated mainly in the cities.[11] Education for survival stresses the need to extend the traditional adult learning curriculum, based mainly on literacy and basic education, to include a wide range of more pragmatic skills and forms of knowledge which could help the poor meet their basic needs--in terms of work, food, housing, health. Moreover, it is argued that those more radical approaches within the field, such as those related to conscientization which seek

to generate a macro-social change, should start by
addressing these more urgent and immediate needs of the
poor.

In this context, the perceived relationship between
poverty and the unfulfilled educational needs of the adult
population, such as those reflected by high rates of
illiteracy, is giving way to the implementation of new
educational strategies to help meet these needs. As noted by
Nagel and Rodríguez, there seems to be a growing consensus
among policy-makers and practitioners in the region
concerning the need for a radical intervention in the
development of literacy and adult education:

> The conviction of the necessity of literacy work
> is being expressed lately with a reinvigorated
> strength within Latin American and Caribbean
> countries. Nobody questions now that education is
> a right, and the various governments subscribed by
> acclamation to the Mexican Declaration of 1979. It
> may be said that there is the germ of a political
> will which is being collectively expressed and
> committed to promote actions aimed at the
> eradication of illiteracy.[12]

It has also been noted that, as well as contributing to
the struggle against poverty, adult education should lie at
the basis of any attempt towards democratization. The fact
that we live in a literate society where power and
decision-making are intrinsically related to the mastery of
information and technology, the acquisition of basic

educational skills by the majority becomes indeed an indispensable requisite for greater participation. Moreover, Rama suggests that, if training and education--contrary to the postulates of human capital theory--do not bring an immediate influence upon income distribution, education does play a role in promoting greater popular participation which can ultimately influence the distribution of income.[13]

This consensus concerning the needs of adult education however, clearly contradicts what governments actually do. For instance, concerning enrolment in adult education, by 1970 no country had reached even 10 percent of the illiterate population, and in most Latin American countries it was less than 5 percent.[14] Given the lack of statistics for expenditure in adult education, a revealing clue can be noted: Mexico, which doubled expenditure in this area between 1980-82, by 1982 had spent on adult education only 3.4 percent of the total educational budget.[15] This minimal concern for adult education on the part of local governments--despite their stated interest in the field--is in clear contrast with resources allocated to the formal system. Thus, for instance, the rapid educational growth between 1960-1970 was experienced mainly in higher and secondary education (247.9 and 258.3 percent respectively), while primary basic education only grew 167.5 percent, and

the illiteracy rate showed a very modest decrease in comparative terms.[16]

In order to explain these contrasts, first, between adult education needs and the poor response of local governments and, secondly, the uneven growth between formal and non-formal education systems, we should look at the major ideological influences underlying the process of policy formation within the field.

Ideology and Adult Education Policy

The two major views of society and the role which they assign to education are also found at the centre of the discussion concerning policy formation in the region. On the one hand, the structural-functionalist view, which sees society mainly in terms of consensus and progressive adjustment, gives rise to the liberal-conservative kinds of ideologies underlying, for instance, the proposal for modernization. On the other, the conflict view which sees society mainly in terms of conflicts or class struggle, gives rise to Marxist-oriented kinds of ideologies which dependency theory and liberationist approaches are examples.

Thus, where liberal-conservative ideologies relate the role of education to the promotion of equality of opportunity and social development for all, Marxist-oriented types see it as a coercive instrument of the state which

reproduces the ideological and material interests of dominant classes. The ways in which this reproduction works in the large society is seen, however, from a variety of perspectives within this approach--ranging from a rather mechanical reproductive view by orthodox Marxists to a more flexible one by neo-Marxists and liberationist thinkers.

Thus, reproduction has been seen mainly in economic terms by Bowles and Gintis, in cultural and sociolinguistic terms by Bourdieu and Bernstein, in terms of hegemony by Gramsci, under the form of resistance by Giroux, and as oppression-liberation by Freire.[17] The relationship which links education to the reproduction of the interests of society's dominant classes, is generally referred to as the "correspondence principle."[18]

Perhaps due to Latin America's situation of dependency and oppression, it is this latter theoretical approach--based on the correspondence principle--which is most commonly found in the literature and more widely accepted within the field of adult education. In this way, high levels of illiteracy and the elitist character of education are explained in connection with dependent patterns of capital accumulation and a division of labour which sharply defines dominant and subordinated sectors within society. Thus, where the former sector enjoys power and access to higher levels of education, the latter has

little access to it and, at best, obtains a compensatory kind of nonformal education, if at all. As mentioned earlier, the rapid educational growth during the 1960s did not greatly benefit these sectors since the human capital approach underlying modernization rested mainly upon the formal system, as greater returns were expected from this than from the non-formal one.

From the perspective of the correspondence approach, there is little prospect for literacy and adult education due to the region's patterns of development and the weak position of the adult population in influencing policies in its favour. Moreover, it is often perceived that this education ultimately seeks the integration of subordinated groups into the capitalist society, rather than the organization and mobilization of these groups. Thus, as noted by García-Huidobro, since the various proposals for adult education (fundamental education, functional education, community development, and lifelong education) seem to have emerged from the historical evolution of internal domination and external dependency rather than from the evolution of a deeper knowledge within the field of adult education itself, it has become clear that all of these tendencies have been looked upon with a great deal of political and ideological criticism in the region.[19]

As a result, the proposition that adult education finds itself at the crossroads between an education for domination--which seeks to integrate the subordinated groups into the status quo--and another for liberation--which stimulates the emergence of a popular collective subject for social transformation--has become widely accepted in the region. On the one hand, poverty is assumed to be caused by marginalization and the solution seen as a more developed and integrated society. On the other, critics demystify this interpretation by pointing out that poverty is exploitation and oppression and call for radical change.[20]

Without denying the basis for these contrasting proposals, it appears that a rigid application of the correspondence principle, sometimes taken to the extreme, often obscures a more comprehensive view of adult education. For instance, the hypothesis which defines illiteracy exclusively in terms of its assumed "functionality" in Latin America's dependent capitalism is an extreme application of the correspondence principle. This hypothesis proposes that while illiteracy was "functional" to an economic system based mainly on agriculture and raw material exports for which literacy skills were not needed, the shift of the economy towards industrialization and capitalist expansion during the 1960's required more qualified workforce, making illiteracy, in turn, "dysfunctional" to the new economic

model. According to this view, illiteracy became
dysfunctional to capitalist expansion due to: (1) the need
for skilled labour to cope with the new technology, (2) the
market, as increased production of goods made it necessary
to integrate those marginalized illiterate sectors into the
new patterns of consumption, and (3) the growing use of the
media which enabled the dominant ideology to manipulate the
masses.[21] In this view, not much credit is given to the
efforts proclaimed by local governments, because:

> Insofar as the contradiction which characterized
> our dependent capitalist societies is not
> resolved, it is impossible to radically solve the
> illiteracy problem in our peoples. There can not
> be a literate people if there is not a liberated
> people.[22]

One point of contention with views such as this is that
they not only oversimplify matters but lead to serious
contradictions. For instance, a unilateral acceptance of the
functionality of illiteracy--and the lack of education in
general--to the capitalist system, would also imply
acceptance then of the idea that literacy and schooling are
dysfunctional to this system. This would mean, then, that we
have to ignore the important role played by the school
within the capitalist state as a means of social control and
affirmation of dominant ideologies.

However, even if one considers literacy and basic adult education as sources of labour skills, there is the opposing view that "the profile of qualifications (basic education) offered by adult education training seems not to have been a decisive nor even a massive requirement of the Latin American industrial structure between the 1950s and the 1970s."[23] This view is reinforced by the fact, already mentioned, that the policy-planning ideology resulting from the theory of modernization offered a very modest place indeed for adult education. As C. Torres suggests, the process of policy formation within adult education in Latin America is influenced more by political rationality than by economic or technological pursuits.[24]

This seems to indicate that a rigid application of the correspondence principle based mainly on economic grounds understates the more complex and sometimes contradictory elements that influence the process of policy formation. Moreover, to simply view illiteracy as functional for the dominant classes, and the state's efforts as only guided toward keeping up appearances, is to hold to the misleading conception of a dominant class which is fully hegemonic, conscious of its ends, and infallibly aware of the best ways of fulfilling them. Rather, it appears that the Manichaean and monolithic view of the state is giving way to the idea that "the state is not a monolithic, impregnable front where

contradictions and spaces do not exist" but rather a place

of ambiguities and tensions between opposing interests.[25]

On the other hand, despite the perceived limitations of

the state, it is clear that the educational needs of the

poorer sectors of society are of such magnitude that "it is

not possible to do without the state," as it will always be

"responsible for macro-social development".[26] In fact, no

government seems to deny the principle of universal

education as the responsibility of the state, nor the

state's engagement in national and international commitments

such as that of the Major Project. Although these

commitments may seem dubious, the point, nonetheless, is

that they provide a concrete framework for pressure and

demands on policies to which the state has already

subscribed.

This more flexible view of the state, however, does not

mean to downplay its instrumental character to society's

dominant classes and their external connections, but rather

underlines as well its character as "national state." In the

latter view, the scope of the state goes beyond the

exclusive interests of the allied classes to seek the

cohesion of society as a whole. Thus it also responds,

within a relative degree, to pressures and claims from those

subordinated classes which are also components of that

whole. It is our contention that, with the exception of

extreme right-wing civil or military regimes, there is

always a degree of flexibility which affirms the relative

autonomy of the state. As proposed by Poulantzas, if the

state:

> ...still maintains its character as a national
> state, this due among other things to the fact
> that the State is not a mere tool or instrument of
> the dominant classes, to be manipulated at will,
> the task of the State is to maintain the unity and
> cohesion of a social formation divided into
> classes.[27]

In this way, it can be said that the state, depending

on the composition of its forces or the political goals

sought and the class alliance needed to implement them, may

well undertake policies which to a certain extent may even

contradict its own overall ideological scope. From this more

flexible view of the state it is also possible to

understand, for instance, the various politico-ideological

options influencing a variety of adult education tendencies

existing in the region.[28]

A typical case of contradiction within dominant classes

vis-à-vis the capitalist state is provided by reformist

regimes which, facing resistance from conservative sectors,

use adult education as a way of gaining legitimacy or

popular support for their reforms. As will be illustrated

below, in these cases literacy has been promoted among

peasants in order to obtain their support for agrarian

reforms and also to acquire their favour at the polls when
illiteracy had been an impediment to the exercise of the
right to vote.

In this sense, while those views which see the state as
promoting an integrating education, and popular and
non-governmental organizations a liberating one, seem to
oversimplify the situation, they do, nonetheless, indicate a
trend. However, as pointed out by García-Huidobro, in the
concrete practice it is possible to find programs with a
clear anti-popular orientation which generate contradictions
and, therefore, spaces of conscientization and popular
organization, or liberating programs, the practical
undertaking of which contradict their stated aims. The same
author concludes that, cultural and educational
domains--whether under or beyond the state--inevitably
become sites of tension between opposing classes and
interests; and that, while under particular circumstances
the possibility of gains for subordinated groups may be
better or worse, that possibility is neither guaranteed nor
absolutely impeded.[29]

Based on this understanding of the state and its
influence on policy formation, brief reference will now be
made to some of the outstanding examples of adult education
reforms in the region. The cases of Cuba, Brazil, Chile, and
Peru presented below are seen neither in terms of the

success or failure of these experiences, but rather as vivid examples illustrating the politics underlying the relationship between the state and the practice of adult education in Latin America.

Some Examples of Adult Education Reforms

Cuba

The case of Cuba clearly illustrates the relationship between adult education reforms and the politics of the state in a revolutionary context. As Fagen has shown, the overall pursuit of educational reforms in Cuba was directed towards the enhancement of the new political culture and values springing from the 1959 Revolution. Education was supposed to fulfill Che Guevara's ambitious and far-reaching goal of creating the "New Man" which would begin with the concrete task of building the basis for the new egalitarian society. It was in this context of setting the stage for the subsequent social and pedagogical changes that the Literacy Campaign was launched in 1961, resulting in turn, in one of the most successful literacy endeavours to date.

It seems ironic, however, that UNESCO's conclusion, reached during the 1970s, regarding the need to relate literacy development to social achievements, had already

been a key factor in the Cuban success more than a decade earlier. And, even more ironic is the fact that "the only major literacy program of the nineteen sixties which had not been funded by UNESCO was the only one that proved to be a real success" as noted by Kozol.[30] This is not to mention the fact that this same institution withheld the final report on the Cuban Literacy Campaign, undertaken by its own experts, due to the "ideological connotations" it contained.[31]

After a thorough study of the Campaign, the report acknowledged that within one year 707,212 people became literate, reducing the illiteracy rate to 4 percent from the previous 41.7 percent and 11.6 percent in rural and urban areas respectively; moreover it suggested that the massive undertaking—a literacy force of 268,420 volunteers, including students, workers, housewives, and teachers had been mobilized throughout the country—and the popular revolutionary mystique, may account for the success of the Campaign.[32]

As a matter of fact, the Cuban experience seems to indicate that the promotion of literacy and other educational goals is better achieved when the acquisition of such goals is perceived by the majority as a way of participating in changing society to meet their own needs (housing, land, food, heath care, etc). As noted by La

Belle, "the literacy program would have to be judged as a
great success and certainly unmatched in Latin America. The
question is why did it work so well? I believe the major
reason rests with the Revolution itself."[33] Indeed, as far
as literacy and cultural development are concerned, not to
mention the overall social improvements for the majority,
especially if measured by regional standards, Cuba stands as
a unique experience in the region as recognized even by
scholars who do not necessarily agree with the goals of the
socialist enterprise.[34]

Brazil

The pattern of adult education reform undertaken in Brazil
during João Goulart's government (1960-64) represents a
typical case of a populist government which sought popular
support for its struggle against the national oligarchy. The
government represented the interests of the emergent
bourgeoisie and middle classes which aimed to replace the
oligarchical, still semi-feudal Brazilian society, with a
more modern society with urban predominance. Therefore, in
order to impose the reforms resisted by the oligarchy, the
government sought a political alliance with the growing
working class, which had emerged from the ongoing process of

industrialization and urbanization, and the peasants, who

were usually in conflict with the powerful landowners.

In this context, the government began to promote a wide

range of adult education programs with special emphasis on

literacy throughout the country. It was at this time, amid

the support for the reforms by the Catholic Church and

middle class intellectuals, that Paulo Freire started to

develop his pedagogy which was extended soon after

throughout the country with the government's acquiescence.

It was clear that besides the economic rationale for

promoting literacy, the government had also an important

political goal. In effect, since Brazilian electoral laws

allowed only literate people to vote, it was expected that

the reduction of illiteracy among those sectors benefiting

from the reforms would add a broader constituency to the

political base of the government.

However, although illiteracy was drastically reduced,

it soon became clear that Freire's pedagogy had gone beyond

the government's electoral purpose, fostering a social

movement based on workers and peasants' participation: "An

indication of this is that in only 12 months 1,300 peasants'

unions were created in areas of intense popular education

activities."[35] Similarly, in the northeastern region which

by 1960 had 15 million illiterates out of a population of 25

million, it was expected that by 1964, the year of the coup

d'etat, literacy efforts would have added 80,000 new

electors to the 90,000 already existing, just in the state

of Sergipe alone. And the number of "circles of culture"

(grassroots units for literacy and popular cultural

development) were expected to reach 20,000. As Sanders

notes, this electoral factor, resulting from a vast number

of new literate able to vote, precipitated the crisis of

1964:

> The Brazilian governmental change of 1964 had many
> causes, but none was more fundamental than the
> fear of the upper and middle classes that the
> country was undergoing a shift of power in which
> the majority of the population, the illiterate and
> semiliterate, would gain a voice commensurate with
> their number.[36]

At this stage, Freire believed that, despite the

constraints of a nominal democracy, "dialogue" was still

possible, and that the weakness of a popular program could

be corrected through the dialectic process of

implementation-transformation. However, as Wefford notes, in

1964, Brazilian reactionary forces called for arms instead

of the ballot box in order "to correct the process of

transformation."[37] Under the new dictatorial regime

conscientization was replaced by a functional approach

emphasizing training and technical knowledge for the

insertion of marginal sectors into the authoritarian

capitalist mode of modernization. To accomplish this, the

government created the Brazilian Literacy Movement (MOBRAL)

which took charge of all adult education programs under the

new socio-political objectives.

Chile

During the regime of the Christian Democratic government

(1964-1970), Chile underwent a remarkable process of social

reform which had an important impact on educational

development. Among others, two main explanations can be

noted regarding these reforms: at the national level, there

was a serious attempt to expand the process of modernization

and social opportunities in order to close the gap between

the still-marginalized sectors and the already large

middle-class. On the international level, Chile was chosen

as the pilot country for the Alliance for Progress programs

through which the United States attempted to countervail the

effect of the Cuban Revolution of 1959. It was expected that

Chile's long democratic tradition, free of oligarchies and

guerrilla warfare, would show other countries in the region

the feasibility of a "Revolución en Libertad" ("Revolution

in Freedom").

In this context, adult education was an important

component for the implementation of the Agrarian Reform, and

provided literacy and organizational skills for the

management of the large number of peasants' cooperatives being formed. Through the influence of the most progressive sector of the governing political party, Paulo Freire (who had just gone into exile after his release from jail in Brazil) was appointed director of adult programs and given a great deal of flexibility to publicize and implement his pedagogy. The reforms, however, brought a heated debate and a process of increased political polarization around the centrist regime: while for the left the reforms did not go far enough, for the right, they paved the road towards communism. Ultimately, the 1970 election favoured the leftist candidate Salvador Allende and the Popular Unity government was formed.

Although it was conceivable that Popular Unity's education policies would become increasingly instrumental in paving the way to the "Chilean road towards socialism," those applied on the adult level encountered little resistance in comparison with the national scandal provoked by the National Unified School proposal (Escuela Nacional Unificada). This proposal attempted to bring sweeping changes into the public educational system in order to reduce class differences. Although the proposed educational changes were perceived as being "Cuban-style" reforms, they were considerably less far-reaching. Nevertheless, they were significant enough--as well as highly ideologically

expressed--to be perceived by powerful sectors as a threat
to the family and freedom of education.

While it is true that the Government's insistence on
implementing such a proposal added fuel to the fire, helping
to unite the political opposition and awakening concern from
the Church and the Army, nevertheless there seem to be
insufficient grounds for Farrell to see in this "the role of
education in the destruction of a revolution" as he
subtitled his important work on the subject.[38] Certainly,
it served as another excuse, unnecessarily given to the more
reactionary factions of the opposition, for a coup d'etat
which was already underway, obviously for reasons that went
beyond that particular educational project.

Peru

In 1968, Velasco Alvarado led a military coup d'etat which
undertook a revolutionary project of reforms, known as the
Plan Inka, in order to change the oligarchic and
semi-colonial structure of Peruvian society. With strong
control of the country, the military was able in a short
period of time to nationalize the banks and main natural
resources (mines and petroleum), initiate an Agrarian Reform
and, adopting a non-aligned foreign policy, proclaim
independence from U.S. influence.

Given the nationalist and anti-oligarchic character of the reforms (most of the generals had risen from the ranks and were of lower social class origin), the government easily enjoyed the support of leftists and Christian intellectuals, the petite bourgeoisie, as well as peasant and workers' organizations. A populist ideology combined with a radical, indigenous socialism underlay the political discourse of the intellectuals within the government.

Although the revolutionary extent of the government has been a matter of debate, it is undeniable that important social changes were accomplished. One of these changes was the implementation of a comprehensive educational reform which expanded the school system to the lower classes and remote areas. On the adult level, an ambitious national program of Alfabetización Integral (ALFIN: integral literacy) was created in 1972. The direction of the program was entrusted to a group of intellectuals, many of them ex-priests and seminarians, whose enthusiasm for liberation theology and Freire's pedagogy gave them the impetus for grassroots work among the peasants. Thus, ALFIN's literacy work would combine conscientization and training to allow popular participation in the structural changes being promoted and in a more efficient production.

However, very soon the limits of the whole reform process became clear as the government felt superseded by

groups to which it had delegated power and which carried reform further than intended. It became clear that the revolutionary discourse came mainly from a radicalized petite bourgeoisie and from leftists who took advantage of the momentum rather than from real ideological changes in the state apparatus. Thus, when class tensions intensified and the military felt increasingly overpowered by a more vocal social movement which it no longer controlled, Velasco Alvarado was overthrown in 1975 and replaced by Morales Bermúdez. This change may also reveal that as the military increased their own gains as a social group their challenge to the status quo diminished and they started to back down from the reforms. ALFIN personnel were replaced and the program's original aim was gradually co-opted by the new authorities and it was finally cancelled in 1977.

Despite some modest achievements of the program (out of 547,294 people registered 241,265 [44 percent] became literate during the most intense first three years)[39] there was a sense that the enterprise as a whole had failed. There seems to be a consensus regarding some of the causes for this failure. It has been noted that in the conception of the program itself there were important contradictions, "the most fundamental being that between a process of mobilization and conscientization within a reformist project which could neither accept conscientization nor mobilization

of the masses in an independent fashion."[40] Similarly,

Anthony Burton, who had personally participated in the

program, generally agreed with Reimer's remarks on the

reasons why projects such as ALFIN fail:

> Reimer argued that an unavoidable contradiction
> existed in the case of projects like ALFIN, which
> can be stated in this way: State bureaucracies
> must, necessarily, promote and maintain social
> control. They may sometimes sponsor educational
> programs that are aimed at open-ended learning and
> "consciousness-raising," but they can never permit
> these to function for very long, because such
> kinds of learning, to the extent that they become
> effective, will conflict with the need for social
> control and with other political priorities.[41]

There were also contradictions within the state

bureaucracy and institutions. As projects like ALFIN had

been placed in the hands of ad hoc commissions enjoying

privileges out of the reach of the normal bureaucracy,

resentment and uncooperative attitudes arose. Similarly, the

process of radically challenging the status quo backfired

on senior bureaucrats who felt that their positions in a

highly stratified society were threatened. Another major

weakness of the ALFIN program seems to be related to the

leaders' idealistic, petit bourgeois vision which tended to

replace a true knowledge of reality with their personal

vision of it: "The ALFIN leaders generally had little

experience of the masses and tended at times to theorize

about them in ways that were romantic and essentially
patronizing."[42]

P E R S P E C T I V E

From a socio-historical perspective, one can see that
high levels of illiteracy and the unfulfilled social and
educational needs of a great portion of the population are
indeed connected to dependency and the unjust social
structures prevailing in the region. The perception of
illiteracy and poor educational conditions as symptoms of
inherent social disparities, rather than their cause, has
influenced a critical approach towards the underlying
politics determining policy formation, the role of the
state, and the prospects for development within adult
education.

We have argued that a rigid application of the
correspondence principle often obscures a more comprehensive
view of the various elements influencing the process of
policy formation. Neither the exaltation of illiteracy as a
"social symptom," which often leads to rigid postulations
that nothing can be done in education until society changes
nor the opposite extreme view of literacy as a social good
which, per se, brings development and democracy, seems to be
acceptable. In addition, the four examples presented show

that political rationality sometimes prevails over economic determinants in implementing reforms in adult education.

On the other hand, since of the four cases seen, Cuba seems to be the only "success story," one might be tempted to conclude simplistically that a similar success can only be achieved by following the patterns of the Cuban experience. Such a conclusion, however, would imply a mechanical perspective on the changing nature of social processes as well as an oversimplification of the particular conditions of each country. It would also mean relinquishing the possibility of building a more flexible democracy, as Cuba faced with an imperialist threat from the U.S. and the prevailing ideological rigidity of the time was forced to do.

Similarly, to consider only the violent termination of progressive experiences in the other countries or major political defeats at the macro level of society, obscures the tremendous advances in grassroots development and popular organization which have largely survived and resisted the repressive policies imposed by military dictatorships, especially as exemplified by the cases of Brazil and Chile.[43]

In this respect, it seems paradoxical that Latin America's political crisis of the 1970s, which gave rise to the most brutal attempts at "saving democracy," should also

have coincided with the maturation of liberationist tendencies throughout the region. This seems to reinforce once again the notion that much more complex kinds of relationships exist between superstructure and structural levels of society.

Nowhere else, with the possible exception of the theological domain, has the maturation of liberationist thought been more vividly manifested than within liberation pedagogy and its dramatic influence on the new approaches to literacy and popular education. This pedagogy, which has radically changed the practice of adult education throughout Latin America, will be the focus of the next chapter.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

[1]Leopoldo Zea, Dependencia y liberación en la cultura latinoamericana (México: Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1974).

[2]Carlos Fuentes, "The Argument of Latin America: Words for the North American," Whither Latin America?, eds., Paul Sweezy and Leo Huberman (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1963), pp.10-11.

[3]Andre Gunder Frank, Lumpenbourgeoisie and Lumpendevelopment (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).

[4]Jacques Lambert, Latin American Social Structure and Political Institutions (California: University of California Press, 1967), p.5.

[5]Leopoldo Zea, Dependencia y liberación en la cultura latinoamericana, p.33. Quotations translated from the original Spanish by the writer unless otherwise indicated.

[6]Rejecting the supposedly progressive character of schooling during colonization, Martin Carnoy asserts, "We argue that far from acting as liberator, Western formal education came to most countries as part of imperialist domination.... The imperial powers attempted, through schooling, to train the colonized for roles that suited the colonizer"; Education as Cultural Imperialism (New York: David Mckay Company, 1974), p.3.

[7]William Benton, The Voice of Latin America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p.42.

[8]The Major Project proposed three main objectives to be accomplished by the year 2000: 1) to provide some form of education for all school-age children; 2) to eliminate illiteracy and to extend the quantity and quality of educational services for the adult population; and 3) to improve the quality and efficiency of the educational systems by undertaking the reforms needed. For more details on the Mexican Conference see, José Blat Gimeno, Education in Latin America and the Caribbean: trends and prospects, 1970-2000 (Paris: UNESCO, 1983); and for the Major Project see, UNESCO-OREALC, The Major Project on the Field of Education in the Latin American and the Caribbean Region (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO-OREALC, 1981).

[9]Juan Eduardo García-Huidobro, Educación de adultos: Necesidades y políticas (Santiago, Chile: CIDE, 1985), p.9

[10]José Nagel and Eugenio Rodríguez, Alfabetización: políticas y estrategias en América Latina (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO-OREALC, 1982), p.12.

[11]Pablo Latapí, "Prospectiva de la educación de adultos a la luz de la pobreza," La Educación 97, (Jan-April, 1985), pp.2-9; (OAS, Washington D.C.).

[12]Nagel and Rodríguez, p.35.

[13]Germán Rama, "Estructura y movimientos sociales en el desarrollo de la educación popular," in La educación popular en América Latina, ed. R. Parra et al. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapeluz, 1984), p.36.

[14]Aldo Solari, "Desigualdad social y educación de adultos en América Latina," Ensayos sobre la educación de adultos en América Latina, ed. Carlos Torres (México: Centro de Estudios Educativos, 1984), p.33.

[15]A. Castillo and P. Latapí, Educación no-formal de adultos en América Latina. Situación actual y perspectivas (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO-OREALC, 1983), p.42.

[16]UNESCO, "Conferencia de Ministros de Educación y Ministros Encargados de Ciencia y Tecnología en Relación con el Desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe." Venezuela, December 6-15, 1971. (Mimeograph.).

[17]Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis Schooling in Capitalist America (New York: Basic Books, 1976); Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (London: Serge Publications, 1977); Basil Bernstein, Class, Code and Control: Theoretical Study Towards a Sociology of Language (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1971); and, Class, Code and Control: Towards a Theory of Educational Transmission (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1977); Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Prison Notebooks (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Henry Giroux, Theory and Resistance in Education (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1983); Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970).

[18]Henry Giroux, Theory and Resistance in Education (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1983), p.84.

[19]Garcia-Huidobro, Educación de Adultos, p.14.

[20]Ibid., p.14.

[21]See CELADEC, Aprender a leer la realidad para escribir la historia (Lima: CELADEC, 1982), pp.22-25.

[22]Ibid., p.25.

[23]Carlos Torres, "The Political Economy of Adult Education in Latin America," Canadian and International Education 13, 2, (1984), p.24.

[24]Ibid., p.26.

[25]Jorge Werthein, "La Educación de Adultos en los Procesos de Desarrollo Rural," paper presented to Consulta Técnica Regional de Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe, La Habana Sept.5-10, 1983, (Santiago, Chile: UNESCO-OREALC), p. 14. (Mimeograp.).

[26]Ibid., p.15.

[27]As quoted by C. Torres, "The Political Economy of Adult Education in Latin America" p.30.

[28]Latapí provides the following schema illustrating the various tendencies of adult education programs in accordance with their politico-ideological options:

Politico-ideological Option	Tendencies
Affirming Capitalist Development	1) Extentionist * 2) Promotional *
Progressive Structural Change	3) Educ-conscientization 4) Economic organization 5) Political organization
Radical Change	6) Political education 7) Political Mobilization

* While the "extentionist" tendency emphasizes training and efficiency for greater production, the "promotional" tendency emphasizes community organization for improving living conditions within the existing socio-economic system.

Matching the various tendencies with the various types of political regimes, he shows a wide variety of tendencies, even within the same political regime, underlying the programs; Latapí, pp.9-14.

[29]Juan E. García-Huidobro, Educación de adultos: Necesidades y políticas (Santiago, Chile: CIDE, 1985) pp.48-9

[30]Jonathan Kozol, Children of the Revolution (New York: Dell Publishing, 1978), p.75.

[31]The Italian scholar, Anna Lorenzetto, headed the team of experts designated by UNESCO to study the Cuban Campaign. Although the official report was published in English, French, and Spanish in 1965, it was not readily available through UNESCO for more than ten years. The Cuban government, at its

own cost, had to make available the Spanish version, while a summary of the English version was published in 1968 by the Canadian magazine Convergence released by OISE.

[32]Anna Lorenzetto and Karel Neys, Methods and Means Utilized in Cuba to Eliminate Illiteracy (Havana: Cuban National Commission for UNESCO, 1965).

[33]Thomas La Belle, Nonformal Education and Social Change in Latin America (California: UCLA Latin American Centre Publications, 1976), p.106.

[34]As Jaime Benítez notes: "It would be foolish not to realize what Castro initially created in the Cuban Revolution was a veritable Sermon on the Mount, at which one cannot sneer. Who can be against a creed that reads: Distribute the land, give it to the poor, educate the unlettered, care for the sick, share the wealth, make public what is private, make the stranger's your own, raise up the humble and level the proud?" The U.S., Cuba, and Latin America (Santa Barbara: Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1961), p.6.

[35]CELADEC (Latin American Evangelic Commission of Christian Education), Educación popular: Fundamentos teóricos y peculiaridades de la educación popular en América Latina (Lima: CELADEC, 1980) p.119.

[36]Thomas Sanders, "The Paulo Freire Method: Literacy Training and Conscientizacion," Education and Development: Latin America and the Caribbean, ed. T. La Belle (California: UCLA Latin American Centre, 1972), p. 599. See also Daniel Morales-Gómez, "Educación y gobierno militar en Brasil," in La educación y el desarrollo dependiente en América Latina, ed. D. Morales-Gómez (México: Gernika, 1979), pp.257-87.

[37]As quoted in CELADEC (1980), p.123.

[38]Joseph Farrell, The National Unified School in Allende's Chile. The Role of Education in the Destruction of a Revolution (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986).

[39]CELADEC, (1980), p.148.

[40]Ibid., p.140.

[41]Anthony Burton, "The Submerged and the Seers: Adult Literacy in Peru, 1973-1974," Anthropology and Education Quarterly 4 vol.XI (1980), p.245.

[42]Ibid., p.247.

[43]Thus, the Brazilian movement on popular culture and popular education which emerged during the 1960's h s largely spread in the various forms of popular organizations and Christian Base Communities throughout the country. Similarly, in Chile today there are clear signs of a renewed commitment towards alternative forms of culture and popular education experiences whose qualitative development was, to some extent, unknown during the Allende period.

CHAPTER 3

LITERACY AND THE PEDAGOGY OF LIBERATION

Within the framework of Paulo Freire's educational

thought, this chapter traces the development of liberation

pedagogy in Latin America and its influence in the new

approaches to literacy and popular education. Since this

pedagogy views education as a means of conscientization,

special attention is placed on literacy and cultural

transformation for the creation of an alternative knowledge

which may lead to social transformation. An important part

of the chapter deals with the relationship between literacy

and popular education vis-à-vis popular culture, the ways in

which the process of reading and writing, and learning in

general, relates to people's own symbolic universe.

Freire's Liberating Pedagogy

Although Freire's involvement with literacy work

started during the early 1960s with Brazilian peasants and

continued later in Chile, it was not until his pedagogy

received the endorsement of the Second Latin American

Episcopal Conference (Medellín 1968) that his ideas became

rapidly disseminated throughout the continent. The

Conference's support for such a pedagogy, along with its

call for radical social change and declared "preferential

option for the poor", was a clear reflection of one of the

most dramatic changes of the regional Church's stand on

socio-political issues. In fact, the Conference not only

affirmed the right of the poor to organize and struggle for

their liberation, but also promoted a wide variety of

programs and grassroots organizations which were to develop

along the lines of Freire's pedagogy.[1]

Thus, right from the outset we can see that the main

thrust of Freire's pedagogy centres upon the human potential

for creativity and freedom in the midst of politico-economic

and cultural oppression. It aims at uncovering and

implementing liberating alternatives in social interaction

through consciousness-transformation. Freire views education

as a theory of knowledge put into practice:

> I see education as the practice of freedom above
> all as a truly gnosiological [sic] situation....
> In the educational process for liberation,
> educator-educatee [sic] and educatee-educator are
> both cognitive subjects before knowable objects
> which mediate them.[2]

This act of knowing, however, goes beyond the restricted educational practice monopolized by the school and the pre-packaged knowledge it offers. The kind of education which treats knowledge as a monetary unit that can be deposited in the empty heads of the students for future capitalization is what Freire calls "banking education". As opposed to this, in liberating education the act of knowing is regarded as a fundamental existential feature of becoming and being in the world. Thus, learning is an all-embracing process which, although culturally conditioned to the surrounding reality, also offers the potential for creativity and transformation. In serving this purpose, education becomes a "cultural action for freedom" which relies on two major interrelated principles: dialogue and conscientization.

Dialogue is understood by Freire as "the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world".[3] Whereas the vertical nature of banking education is essentially monological--one voice, that of the teacher-authority who "knows" and imposes his/her knowledge upon the student--the horizontal nature of the liberating approach becomes synonymous with dialogical education--two voices, two subjects interacting and sharing their knowledge

of the world. In banking education, as the learners
passively adapt to the school situation, they uncritically
accept the status quo, becoming spectators rather than
creative human beings; human beings who are in the world but
not with the world. Furthermore, according to Freire,
dialogue is more than just a desirable methodological
feature; it is an essential way of being and becoming
conscious of--and learning from--our circumstances, which is
in turn the first step towards transforming reality.

Conscientization is characterized as a process in which
persons achieve a deepening awareness, both of the
socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and their
capacity to transform that reality. It is a process which
marks the transfer from "intransitive or naive
consciousness"--which does not deal with problems, assigns
too much value to the past, and tends to accept mythical
explanations--to a "transitive or critical consciousness"--
one which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, and
replaces magical explanations with real causes. Through this
process the oppressed persons reject the oppressive
consciousness which dwells in them, becomes aware of their
situation and, finding their own language, become able to
understand and challenge their oppression.

In fact, behind conscientization lies Freire's strong
stand regarding the cultural side of domination. In his
view, domination does not only work by means of force but,
perhaps just as importantly, through the more sophisticated
means of symbolic domination--imposing a dominant culture,
i.e., types of language, knowledge, values, and attitudes.
In this way, the world of the oppressed becomes the "culture
of silence" as it is subjected to the symbolic violence or
"cultural invasion" from the dominant culture. It is in this
sense, then, that conscientization emerges as a
counter-cultural weapon, giving voice to the oppressed as
well as showing concrete avenues for their engagement in the
struggle for liberation:

> We wished to design a project in which we
> would attempt to move from naiveté to a
> critical attitude at the same time we taught
> reading. We wanted a literacy program which
> would be an introduction to the
> democratization of culture, a program with
> men [sic] as its Subjects [sic] rather than
> as patient recipients.[4]

According to Freire, for learners to become active
subjects of their own educative process involves "praxis" or
a dialectic relationship between action and reflection.
Neither action nor reflection alone are conducive to a truly
educative process as it requires both critically reflective

action and critical reflection that is informed by practice.
In liberating education the participants ought to be fully
involved in the three fundamental stages of the
conscientization process: investigation, thematization, and
problematization. In all of these stages the educators or
external agents are to become immersed in the setting and,
in conjunction with volunteers or "co-researchers" from the
community, decide upon the various aspects of the program to
be implemented. In order to appreciate some of the specifics
of Freire's method, a brief summary is presented below.

Phases of Freire's Conscientization Method

In the first step of the program the investigation is
directed toward the identification of the problematic
situation ("the limit situation") faced by the community and
the socio-cultural contextualization of such a situation.
This leads to investigation of the "thematic universe" or
"generative themes" embedded in the community--common ideas,
values, beliefs, hopes, and challenges of the people. The
themes are "generative" because they move from one to
another and each unfolds into new themes. The results
obtained by observation and analysis of the situation are to
be "codified" and "de-codified". That is to say, they are
presented through a variety of means such as drawings,

photographs, and dramatizations, so that people can both better identify the situation and stimulate reflection. The themes and observations emerging from the discussion are to be recorded in order to later implement the learning units, the content of which is presented to the group not as solutions, but rather as problems to be resolved.

Once the most recurrent aspects of the existential situation have been determined (these will then be reflected upon by the learning units), the coordinator and volunteers prepare new didactic material for further discussion with the group. The participants, organized in the "culture circles", are then asked to critically reflect, analyze and describe (problematize) the situations presented by the material. They would also be asked to compare if they perceived changes between their initial understanding of the theme and the present one, and to explain the reason for the eventual change. As a way of summarizing the activities, consensus is sought regarding possible solutions to the problems which leads to new tasks to be undertaken by the group.

In the case of a literacy program, the emphasis is placed upon the investigation of "generative words". The objective of this is to discover "the vocabular universe" of the community where the literacy program is to be

undertaken. The generative words are selected in view of both their semantic relevance to the existential situation of the people and also for their "phonemic richness" which can be used as models for other words following the same sound patterns. The technical linguistic criteria in selecting the generative words has to match with the conscientization purpose: words which have the capacity to "speak" to the learners' concerns in their concrete socio-cultural sett ng.

The words, once chosen, are to be codified and graphically presented to the people through drawings or photographs which relate to the meaning evoked by the words. The pictorial representations of the world should refer to the thematic universe being explored with the people. These should show daily activities and situations lived by the participants in their community. The final "preparation phase" includes the elaboration of cards or slides with the breakdown of the phonemic families (the syllables) which correspond to the generative words. These will be needed later for observation, selection and combination of "parts" into words and sentences.

Finally, once the generative words from the vocabular universe are selected and the codified words are presented for group discussion, the actual literacy/conscientization

program starts. An example provided by Freire himself

illustrates the approach.[5] Analysis of the codification of

the word "favela" (slum), reveals that the problems of food,

shelter, clothing, health, and education emerge. A slide or

card with the word FAVELA is then presented alone, and then

another one with the word broken into its three "pieces"

(syllables): FA - VE - LA. The presentation of phonetic

families then follows:

FA	FE	FI	FO	FU
VA	VE	VI	VO	VU
LA	LE	LI	LO	LU

Learners can immediately recognize the five vowels

which, as distinct from English, in Spanish and Portuguese

are always pronounced in the same way. They are now ready to

start making up their own words, freely selecting and

combining syllables. They can produce "real" words (e.g.,

VELA = "candle"; VIVO = "I live", or, "alive") and can also

play with "funny" or invented words. Practice of word

formation continues through the presentation of

codifications and generative words. Furthermore,

participants can start the practice of writing from the very

first session. They thus discover a number of language rules

while developing a variety of skills together with the

realization of their enormous potential for learning.

To conclude, it is clear that Freire's liberating concept of education and the proposed literacy model imply a set of methodological, pedagogical, and philosophical assumptions which are quite different from those underlying the functional approach. Under Freire's influence the focus on literacy was radically removed from its "functional" role of literacy in promoting development to critically assess the kind of literacy and development being promoted, for whom and by whom. The assumed "neutral" and inherent "positive value" of literacy at any cost was turned to the question of the politics of literacy: its connection to ideology, power, cultural and linguistic domination. This shift in understanding literacy is clearly reflected on the renewed literacy definition adopted by UNESCO at the Persepolis Symposium (Iran, 1975). Literacy was herein defined as:

> ... not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man [sic] and to his [sic] full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man [sic] lives and of its aims; it also stimulates initiative and his [sic] participation in the creation of projects capable of acting upon the world, of transforming it, and of defining the aims of an authentic human development.[6]

The Persepolis Declaration further declares that literacy may become both: either an instrument of alienation by integrating people without their approval or participation into a foreign model of development or, alternatively, as vehicle to expand their critical consciousness and creative imaginations, enabling them to participate as responsible agents in all decisions affecting their destiny.[7]

Perhaps the clearest influence of Freire's ideas, however, is to be found in the widespread pedagogical innovations which emerged in Latin America under the form of popular education. As opposed to banking education, popular education has meant a serious attempt at basing the educative process on the symbolic universe of the subordinated groups--popular culture. Popular education has also promoted a pedagogical mode in which learning is seen as a process of cooperative and participatory inquiry. As will be seen below, the final aim of this process is to seek a kind of knowledge which is instrumental to people's organization and collective action for liberation.

Popular Education and Popular Culture

The best way to understand the new practice of popular education and its relationship to popular culture, including

Freire's own pedagogy from which this derives, is to look at

it in light of the major change in Latin American thought

with which it is connected. In effect, after centuries of

old and new forms of colonialism, this change takes the form

of a dramatic search for Latin America's identity in its

intrinsic dialectic of oppression-liberation. Enrique Dussel

captures the nature of this new development while wondering

about the possibilities of developing a Latin American

philosophy:

> Is an authentic philosophy possible in our
> continent which is underdeveloped, dependent and
> oppressed even culturally and philosophically?
> Such a philosophy is possible but with one
> condition: that from a self-awareness of its own
> alienation and oppression, it begins to think from
> that oppression and deepen that thinking from
> within the liberating praxis, becoming in turn a
> liberating philosophy itself.[8]

It is this process of thinking from oppression, and

therefore, from the possibilities of liberation, which is

being reflected in the various discourses and practices

emerging from the region (whether on pedagogical, political,

theological, or cultural levels, including the social

sciences). In effect, as awareness of oppression became

sharper and the rationale of domination begins to unravel,

the quest for liberation is being increasingly expressed as

a search for an alternative knowledge and a new language

capable of grasping the oppressive reality while at the same time envisioning avenues for its transformation.

It is as a part of this intellectual and socio-political ambience that popular education emerges as a conscious and concrete effort to help in the search for that alternative knowledge which may lead to social transformation. And it is in light of this purpose that its unique pedagogical and political option becomes distinguished from the politics of banking education. For, while the latter is concerned mainly with transferring existing knowledge, popular education aims at generating new knowledge that will be instrumental to people's struggle for liberation. In this sense, popular education takes the form of an investigative activity.

Although this political option is understood in a broad sense and goes beyond the boundaries of a given political party, no doubt it more closely resembles neo-Marxist and liberation theology lines of thought. As opposed to orthodox Marxism's monolithic reliance on "the party" and its postulates (and, as opposed, in terms of theology, to a hierarchical Church with its abstract dogmas), this political option reflects, rather, the growing awareness that politics is also decided on the cultural plane—in the immediacy of people's daily activities, local concerns and

forms of organizations. This reflects a growing appreciation

for the autonomy and spontaneity of the people in

determining their own forms of organization and political

agenda, without the prescription of an external "logos"

imposed from outside.

It is through this pedagogical involvement of

reflecting from within people's concrete practices and

symbolic universe that popular education concretizes its

political endeavour. Referring to the political contribution

of popular education to the processes of liberation, García

Huidobro points out that this contribution weighs heavily on

the transformation of culture because:

> The conviction gathers weight that it is on the
> cultural plane that the destiny of democracy and
> socialism is decided. It is through culture that a
> people becomes conscious of its historical
> possibilities of living a better life. And it is
> on culture that the meaning of that possibility is
> shaped; where a new intellectual and moral
> direction for society is forged.[9]

Thus, it is in the light of Freire's proposal of

education as "cultural action for freedom," with this action

being directed towards the oppressed majority, that popular

education emerges as a process intrinsically related to

popular culture or the symbolic universe of that majority.

In effect, recognition of the unique symbolic identity of

subordinated groups, and its potential for transformation, becomes in fact the most relevant point of connection between popular education and popular culture. For, since popular culture constitutes the unique place of reference from which the subordinated sectors make sense of their daily existence, the world, and society, it becomes also the inevitable point of departure for any learning or conscientization process to be undertaken by them.[10] We will look now in greater detail at the specifics of both popular education and popular culture and the ways in which the two relate to one another.

Scope and Orientation of Popular Education

The recognition of Latin America's identity in terms of oppression-liberation as mentioned above, keenly grasped by Freire in the field of adult education, has influenced the emergence of new attitudes and ways of approaching the poor in the region. This is reflected in a wide variety of innovative pedagogical experiences which, sharing a number of similar characteristics, are being identified with the emergence of a new educational paradigm. Patricio Cariola proposes that in order to understand this new paradigm of "education as participation" as he refers to it, it is necessary to contrast it with the previous ones marking the

historical educational development of Latin America: "the
ecclesiastic", "the liberal", and "the developmentalist or
modernizing" one.[11]

Cariola traces the emergence of this new paradigm to
the 1960s and views it as intrinsically connected to the
widespread disillusionment provoked by the unfulfilled
promises of modernization. He asserts that although this new
paradigm embraces education as a whole, it is more clearly
reflected in the area of non-formal education, especially in
the new forms of popular education. Some of the major
features of this new paradigm are revealed, then, by the
dominant characteristics of these programs which, as he
points out:

> ... are consciously directed towards social
> change, in its cultural and political dimension.
> The analysis and concern for economic factors are
> present but more in terms of that change than of
> growth and productivity. They are concerned with a
> cooperative and integrated growth, the human
> dimension of productivity, a new kind of relation
> between people; culture and the values of the
> people; in short,--although in often vague
> terms--a different kind of development, an
> alternative model of society.[12]

Regarding the educative content of these programs, we
should acknowledge that, although a great number are
dedicated to literacy and basic education, there are also
other contents which respond to the specific needs of the

diverse adult population. For the same reason, the programs

take place in a variety of rural and urban settings and make

use of a variety of pedagogical means and resources

including local radio stations and the media, peasants' or

workers' union halls , and private or church community

centres. It is important to point out that popular education

is defined not so much in terms of specific educative

content or setting but more by the orientation of the

educative process and methodology in light of the liberating

commitment.

While the popular education approach seems to be the

dominant one, this does not imply that all adult education

programs taking place in the region are characterized by

such an approach. There are programs which, while invoking

Freire's methodology in its formal aspects, do not follow

the liberating commitment which is essential to his

methodology. Similarly, Cariola acknowledges that although

participation is central to all these programs, there are

clearly two major ideological perspectives in understanding

the ultimate reach of such participation: one which attempts

to integrate the subordinated sectors to the status quo, and

another which "aspires to generate a cultural project

arising from the subordinated sectors themselves."[13] It is

within this latter perspective that popular education is better defined.

Although attempts have been made to reach a more comprehensive understanding of popular education, we should recognize that it is a practice which is still developing in both theoretical and practical aspects. In effect, there still remain a number of issues and assumptions which need further testing, clarification and evaluation. We cannot forget that the initial stages of popular education were marked by scattered actions and confusion and that many initial attempts ended in disillusionment and dispersion once the groups realized, for instance, the fragility of the programs in challenging the system.

A number of possible explanations can be mentioned with respect to some of the failures and confusion surrounding the initial stages of popular education--obviously, without overlooking the trial and error period to which any new theory or practice is subjected. One of these has to do with Freire's own confusion and naiveté which he acknowledged and tried to rectify later. An example of this is the oversimplification of the complex relationship between theoretical formalization and the applicability of this to reality. This is particularly clear in regard to Freire's

earl_ understanding of conscientization as he himself

acknowledges it:

> In _Education ror Freedom,_ while considering the
> process of conscientization, I considered the
> moment when social reality is revealed to be a
> sufficient psychological motive for attempting to
> transform the reality which is discovered.
> Obviously, my mistake was not that I recognized
> the fundamental importance of knowledge of reality
> in the process of change, but rather, that I did
> not take these two different moments--the
> knowledge of reality and the work of transforming
> that reality--in their dialectic relationship. It
> was as if I were saying that to discover reality
> already meant to transform it.[14]

Out of this and other related pitfalls, one can explain

the initial idealization of consciousness held by the

oppressed. Since they suffer the most from the unjust

society, it was too readily supposed that they would easily

develop a clear consciousness of their situation. This

assumption did not take into consideration the fact that

their consciousness was also permeated by the dominant

ideology and the symbolic and socialization practices

related to this which cannot be swiftly changed. In brief,

it became clear that the initial spontaneity and enthusiasm

could not easily compensate for the lack of a more

comprehensive theory which would connect those initial

popular education attempts with the various other factors

intervening in the complex social fabric.

However, with the dissemination of popular education throughout the region, important efforts have been made in theory and practice as well as in the systematization of these experiences. There has also been a growing interest in this field which is clearly reflected in the number of research centres, publications, and national and regional meetings devoted to the subject. Out of these efforts, the dominant definition of popular education being proposed is that which sees it as "a process which contributes to the struggle for the creation of a new cultural hegemony, politically, ideologically and antagonistically different to that of the dominant classes."[15]

Thus placed in the context of class struggle, popular education is conceived as an instrument which accompanies class transformation from its material to its political existence. Its goal is to provide a conscious direction to the spontaneity emerging from the subordinated classes. Consequent with the aim of creating a new hegemony, popular education seeks to embody a new project of social relations, different from the existing one which has been imposed by the dominant classes and ultimately, a new conception of the world and a more just society. The point of departure for the new project is popular culture as it is being critically reassessed.

Popular Culture and Alternative Knowledge

A better understanding of popular culture can be attained by referring to two extreme versions of culture which, according to Giroux, are becoming equally inadequate in light of more recent developments in the subject-matter. On the one hand is the orthodox Marxist model of "base and superstructure," where culture is seen as a mere reflection of the economic structure of society. On the other, is the traditional conservative model which associates culture with special knowledge and educated manners, or with the elitist version of high culture. In both of these versions of culture, Giroux contends, the lived experiences of subordinated groups in society do not count as valuable sources of cultural production.[16] In one case their consciousness is considered to be a mere recipient of superstructural determinations, while in the other the refinement associated with culture is incompatible with these groups who are primarily struggling for their very material subsistence.

Culture is looked upon here as both a human product as well as a continual process through which human beings, regardless of their class position or type of acquired knowledge, interpret, organize, and make sense of their

world and daily experiences. This is a process which is
mediated by the various systems of meanings (i.e., symbolic
structures, language, customs, social relations), through
which reality is built, reproduced and understood by the
subjects. As noted by Gramsci, this active search for
meaning makes of every human being a philosopher, as every
person or social group bears a particular kind of
world-vision.[17] These forms, however, become hierarchically
subordinated to those proposed by the dominant classes whose
control over the symbolic-ideological apparatus allows them
to legitimize and impose their particular world vision upon
the rest of society.

The imposition of cultural hegemony is, however, never
complete as it cannot preclude, for instance, the real
experiences of subordinated groups and their various forms
of resistance as well as other co-existing cultural
expressions. On the contrary, Gramsci sees civil society as
a terrain where different cultural meanings and experiences
of reality are permanently in dispute. That is why Williams
suggests that the strict model of "base and superstructure"
should be better understood in a dynamic way. That is, as a
relational field where "dominant culture" interacts with
other "residual" and "emergent" cultural formations as well

as with those differing experiences and "structures of
feelings" that different groups produce.[18]

In this way, popular culture is understood as the
conception of the world of the subordinated classes, the way
by which the oppressed make sense of their world in their
concrete setting and class situation. This task of making
sense implies then a particular symbolic universe, an
indigenous kind of knowledge, which organizes and makes the
concrete experiences of subordinated groups meaningful to
them. The readiness to perceive the negative character of
many of the components of popular culture—syncretism,
dispersion, incoherence, or traditionalism—can be explained
inasmuch as this does not constitute a monolithic entity
and, contrary to dominant culture, lacks the power to impose
hegemony upon the rest of society.

This particular socio-historical condition of popular
culture may also explain two extreme attitudes toward it.
One of these denies the existence of popular culture on the
grounds that every society is a whole bound to only one
cultural model wherein all differing traits are considered
"abnormalities", "deviations" or "deformations" of the
model. The other revolves around the idealization of popular
culture: either in its political, messianic potential of

regenerating the whole society or as a romantic evocation of the past, before colonial and capitalist domination.

As opposed to these extreme views, the interpretation which is becoming more prevalent is that which sees popular culture in relational, concrete and historical terms. That is to say, it is conceived as the culture which is opposed to--and inversely defined in relation to--the dominant culture; and, although it is affected by this relativism, it still retains its own particular symbolic autonomy. Thus, in this view, to speak of popular culture is to speak of the society as a whole which creates it and, for the same reason, rejects it and its possessor: the subordinated sectors of society. As noted earlier, it is precisely from the affirmation of popular culture's symbolic identity and its seminal kinds of knowledge that popular education inserts its proposal for cultural and social transformation.

In fact, this symbolic universe of popular culture--its indigenous forms of wisdom and knowledge, how it is produced, transmitted, regulated and transformed--has become an important field of inquiry in Latin America's search for an alternative knowledge. In order to illustrate this, it is worth considering two examples which, reflecting this trend, have brought forward important insights into the practice of popular education: the emergence of various

forms of participatory research, and the reassessment of popular religiosity.

Participatory Research. In Latin America the various forms of participatory research began to develop in reaction to the North American and European scientific model based on empiricism and positivism. In effect, by the mid-1960s, many of the assumptions underlying this model--emphasis on instrument construction, statistical precision, separation between subject and object, theory and practice, and the dazzling illusion of objectivity and scientific credibility--began to be strongly criticized as being incompatible with the more urgent needs of the region's population, namely, the need for social change and a committed knowledge to aid in its realization. Explaining Latin American and Third World contributions to s` `al science research, Hall points out that this can be seen as "an attempt to find ways of uncovering knowledge that work better in societies where interpretation of reality must take second place to the changing of that reality."[19]

Thus, as opposed to the academicist and purist character of positivism--as a pretended self-sustained body of knowledge free of ideological and social connotations--participatory research is conceived as a process in which

the community participates in the analysis of its own reality in order to promote a social transformation for the benefit of the participants. Therefore, it is a research, educational and action-oriented activity.[20]

As Marcela Gajardo notes, participatory research in Latin America started to develop closely related to the various programs of agrarian reform undertaken at the end of the 1960s, especially in Chile, Peru, and Colombia. It was perceived that for these reforms to succeed they should also take the form of an educative process understood as "an act of production and communication of knowledge in accordance with the reality and situation faced by the peasants, seeking to awaken their consciousness in view of their own possibilities and interests."[21] It was within this context that Freire initiated his pedagogical proposal connecting action and research. His intention was to study people's thought, their vocabular and thematic universe, in a process by which they would become co-researchers in the study of their own reality and, therefore, conscious agents of the proposed changes. These initial attempts would mark in turn the beginning of participatory research experiences in the region.

There have been various attempts at developing theoretical models as well as a concrete application of

participatory research in a variety of fields in Latin America. Some outstanding experiences which can be mentioned, among others, are Bosco Pinto's "thematic methodology," Francisco Gutiérrez' model of "comunicación popular," Darcy De Oliveira's exploration on "militant observation," Augusto Boal's experiences with "popular theatre," and Octavio Fals Borda's model of "investigation and action."[22] All of these investigative experiences are based on similar assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge in a class-divided society, a good example of which can be found in Fals Borda's theory.

Fals Borda's theoretical model is based on the distinction between "official dominant knowledge" and "emergent knowledge." The former defines itself as "the scientific" and, being congruent with the interests of the dominant groups, is transmitted through their ideological apparatus. The latter generates from the various forms, attitudes, behaviour, techniques and strategies adopted by subordinated groups in order to defend themselves from all attempts to dissolve or neutralize them. As noted by Vío Grossi, these two kinds of knowledge respond to a different logic, both equally valid for the purposes they pursue. In this, "the task of participatory research is therefore to articulate, systemize and to develop that alternative

knowledge" which is embedded in the symbolic universe of subordinated groups.[23]

Popular Religiosity. Perhaps the clearest manifestation of popular culture in Latin America is that found in the various forms of popular religiosity, a field which has gained wide attention with the emergence of liberation theology. Pablo Richard, one of these theologians, notes that although popular religiosity had been studied by sociologists and anthropologists, their point of view was rather an academic one, far removed from the concrete situations of the people. Similarly, both liberal and Marxist intellectuals had long despised popular religiosity as a form of alienation and opium of the people. It was also thought that popular religiosity was doomed to disappear under the effect of "secularization", a resulting trend associated with modernization. However, as noted by Richard, secularization in Latin America has taken a very different development:

> We come to the realization that this phenomenon [secularization] is very much a European one and perhaps it affects our Europeanized bourgeoisie but has little affect on the people. Secularization in Latin America does not come, as in Europe, through technological and scientific evolution, but through the increasing politicization of the masses. We can see that this politicization, far from weakening popular

religiosity, has injected upon it a strong
liberating potential and a revolutionary ethic.[24]

In fact, the appraisal of popular religiosity weighs
heavily on the attempts to uncover subterranean popular
wisdom and the ways in which this relates to the oppressive
situation endured by the poor. It is proposed that beneath
what appears to be superstitious symbolism, there lie
concrete forms of resistance and mocking defiance toward the
invading political and symbolic powers.[25] Similar to the
broad scope in which popular education conceives the
learning process--beyond the institution of the school--
liberation theology also seeks to understand religious
practice beyond the institution of the Church and associated
rites. Although the areas of reflection of both theoretical
approaches are different, they share, nonetheless, important
points of convergence, such as their attempt toward
reflection from daily practice and experience, their common
liberating commitment toward the subordinated sectors, and
their respectful attitude toward popular culture. Perhaps
the most important point of convergence in terms of
practical implications is that found within the Christian
Base Communities in which conscientization and
evangelization have become one and the same process of
learning and community organization for the subordinated

sectors.[26] Similarly, both popular education and liberation

theology emphasize the search for a liberating language

capable of embodying people's concerns from their own

symbolic universe, as noted by the theologian Frei Betto:

> The religious discourse of the popular pastoral
> can only be a liberating one if it departs from
> peoples' discourse and adopts a new language
> capable of giving a new content to its form of
> symbolic expression. This new language should not
> be confused with an explicitly political language
> elaborated in accordance with the academic
> rationalism of the intellectual elite. It is a
> question of discovering, departing from people
> themselves, a language which is specifically
> religious and intrinsically liberating.[27]

Finally, the emphasis on popular culture and

alternative knowledge does not imply, whatsoever, that the

specialized--scientific and technological--knowledge as such

should be dismissed. It means rather to question this

knowledge in terms of its social use and purpose in the

class-divided society; that is, in terms of the poor

majority who often suffer from its side effects. The aim is

rather to achieve, in Freire's terms, a "cultural

synthesis," by means of which popular culture and

specialized knowledge can co-exist and benefit each other in

a dialogical relationship rather than the present one of

domination.

In accordance with the tremendous importance assigned to language and popular culture development by liberation pedagogy, a more detailed view relating language and the process of reading and writing is pursued below.

Language and the Process of Reading and Writing

Perhaps as a result of the emphasis on the functional role of literacy and the predominantly behaviourist approaches to language pedagogy and teaching, the rather narrow view of language which still prevails can be explained. This view lies at the base of those approaches which see language mainly as a finished product and its role limited to its instrumental capacity as a means of communication. However, modern trends in psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics, and language pedagogy, influenced by Piaget, Vigotsky, Chomsky, and others, are increasingly stressing the view of language as process and creative potential.[28] This means to consider language not just as an external means of communicating a pre-existing reality, but as an essential factor in the configuration of reality itself, that of individuals' cognitive development as well as speaking subjects. J. Donald takes this view even further:

I take language to be **productive** rather than **reflective** of social reality. This means calling into question the assumption that we, as speaking subjects, simply use language to organize and express our ideas and experiences. On the contrary, language is one of the most important social practices through which we come to experience ourselves as subjects. My point here is that once we get beyond the idea of language as no more than a medium of communication, as a tool equally and neutrally available to all parties in cultural exchanges, then we can begin to examine language both as a practice of signification and also as a **site** for cultural struggle and as a **mechanism** which produces antagonistic relations between different social groups.[29]

The contrasting views on language noted above form part of the current controversy regarding the most appropriate methodology for language teaching. On the one hand, the behaviourist approaches, clinging to the view of language as a finished product and equal for all, favour instruction with basal readers, using standardized textbooks with sequenced sets of grammatical forms and skills to be learned through drill and repetition. Students are expected to move progressively from simple to more complex linguistic units and skills culminating in the mastery of reading and writing. (The North American "back to basics" response to the school illiteracy crisis is based on this traditional approach).

On the other hand, in direct contrast to the basal reading methodology are the most recent trends associated with the whole language approach. As this approach is based on psycho-social-linguistic and cognitive psychology, emphasis is placed on both the creative potential of language and that of students who are seen as actively searching for meaning instead of form. Contrary to decoding sequenced bits of language from print--through behaviourist principles of cause-effect or stimulus-response--the stress here is on the holistic process of constructing meaning as students interact creatively with a variety of texts and communicative situations which are meaningful to them.

An important contribution to this latter approach has come from more recent research in reading theory. Recent studies indicate that reading is a dynamic and complex interaction between the text and the previous experiences, cognitive and learning styles which the student brings to the text. Whereas traditional approaches consider meaning to be embedded in the text and equally available for all once the barrier of grammatical forms is surpassed, holistic approaches view the text as a starting point with which students interact to creatively construct meaning in light of their unique experiences and backgrounds.[30]

This wider view of language has also made advances in the field of sociolinguistics and the sociology of knowledge, especially in relation to the great deal of attention which these disciplines place on the relationship between language and knowledge in the socialization process. This attention is directed towards the various means by which individuals produce and reproduce reality in their concrete socio-cultural situation. It suggests that language plays a fundamental role in the provision of sociolinguistic codes which are, in turn, essential to the process of "knowing reality" inasmuch as this is, in terms of Berger and Luckmann, socially and linguistically constructed.[31]

Perhaps the most serious sociolinguistic attempt at explaining those codes and language practices which mediate the forms of knowledge within the various groups of society, is that provided by Bernstein.[32] Based on his research on the linguistic practices of children from different social classes, Bernstein proposed his classic distinction between a "restricted" and an "elaborated" code. He found that the restricted code, which is associated with the lower classes, proved to be lexically and syntactically limited and strongly context-dependent and suggests that this code, due to its reduced provision for verbal alternatives, hampers the capacity for analytical and abstract thinking.

On the other hand, the elaborated code, which is associated with the middle to upper classes, is characterized as being linguistically richer and more complex as well as less context-dependent. Providing a wider range of verbal alternatives (which are themselves more specifically qualified and logically oriented), this code is seen as being more conducive to formal and abstract ways of thinking. And it is the one which informs the school's cultural transmission.

According to Bernstein, sociolinguistic codes are regulative principles which, tacitly acquired in the process of socialization, reflect both the limits of a social order and a generative grammar which enable individuals to enact their symbolic and material practices. Ultimately, these codes are the essential means of society's cultural transmission through which the subjects--whether at the macro-level, the school, or the family--are selectively created, located, and opposed to each other.

Closely related to Bernstein's understanding of codes and modes of cultural transmission, especially school transmission, is Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" which refers to those differentiated systems of meanings, linguistic and social competencies, tastes, and values belonging to the various social classes.[33] This

concept developed as a counterpart of "economic capital" and out of the controversy over the extent to which social inequality can be reduced via the equalization of educational opportunities. Bourdieu argues that this equalization cannot be achieved by relying on "economic capital" alone, because, as he contends, educational success is not so much the result of this but, rather, of the unequal distribution of "cultural capital" which children from the various social classes bring to the classroom.

In this way, both Bernstein and Bourdieu show how the symbolic and linguistic practices legitimized by school transmission allow the dominant culture to produce and reproduce itself, while the experiences of subordinated groups are denied as they are absent from the school curriculum. Thus, despite the school's appearance of neutrality, in fact it asks these students to think and perform in a way that is quite alien to their own socio-cultural background. In this way, dominant ideologies domesticate subordinated groups, perpetuating the paradox of neutralizing their access to power in the name of c.lture.

If this deeper view of language brings some important insights into the schooling process in general, its contribution proves much more crucial still when dealing with literacy insofar as this is first and foremost an act

of language, an act of communication (written

communication). As such, then, the sociolinguistic view of

language should also be complemented with a view of

communication theory regarding the nature of this particular

kind of communication put in place by writing. Furthermore,

not only is literacy a form of communication but also the

educative process itself shares the same basic factors

implied in the communicative situation as indicated in the

schema below:

Communicative Situation	Factors of the Communicative Situation
ORAL:	Speaker >...< Message >...< Listener
WRITTEN:	Writer >...< Text >...< Reader
EDUCATIVE:	Teacher >...< Content >...< Student

Thus, the process of communication, whether in oral,

written, or educative situations, implies a "speaker"

(writer; educator) who sends a "message" (text; educative

content) which is received by the "listener" (reader;

student). We should emphasise, however, that in a dialogical

education these roles are interchangeable. That is to say,

both educator and student are, at the same time, senders and

receivers which are reciprocally affected by the interchange

of their messages. Based on this scheme it is possible to understand some important aspects regarding literacy as a form of written communication.

To begin with, it should be recognized that the interaction between the factors mentioned above is conditioned by the existence of a particular "code" which, shared by both the sender and the receiver, makes such an interaction a communicative one. It allows the sender to "codify" his/her message in a particular "code" which can, in turn, be "decodified" by the receiver in a way which makes it comprehensible. In this sense, we must be aware that literacy, while closely related to oral communication, is mainly concerned with the written communication which implies, in turn, some specific forms of codification (writing) and decodification (reading) regulating the same.

Since written communication is undertaken in the absence of the interlocutor's physical presence it can make no provision for further clarification within the text, nor can it make use of the extra-linguistic devices of oral discourse such as voice tone and gestures. Hence, writing must adhere more closely to socially accepted standards governing written communication, standards which are those of the middle class and, therefore, linked to the elaborated code. In view of this, the writer is forced to organize the

content in a more structured form, making more difficult the codification process.

Similarly, in dealing with reading, the illiterate is confronted with a code which is usually far removed from his/her customary oral practice or restricted code. In order to have access to this code, the illiterate has to develop a number of new skills which may ultimately affect his/her cognitive and cultural conformation. Although this potential cognitive change may result in a form of conscientization, it is also true that it can bring negative implications in generating forms of cultural invasion and manipulation.

Looking at literacy then from the perspective of communication theory, we can see that while reading deals with "decodification" of the message (with the reader), writing does this with the "codification" of it (with the writer). Thus, while it is true that reading places the persons in front of a cognitive structure which may not be his/her own, it is also true that writing provides them with the possibility of expressing themselves. However, if the literacy program presses them to write as they have read, in accordance with the elaborated code, they may become the object of cultural alienation.

On the other hand, if writing is seen as a means by which groups can express themselves, even though this can be

done in the restricted code, the literacy process will foster the development of their own culture. While gradually developing their expression and perception of reality, learners become better prepared to interact critically with a larger variety of written material and the media. Most importantly, writing also offers the opportunity to get people involved in creating their own written materials and means of communication. A good example of this is "comunicación popular," a grassroots form of communication whose success in Latin America, according to White, rests upon the use of a liberating language which addresses people's concerns from their symbolic universe while allowing, at the same time, the development of the groups' own culture and expression:

> The most characteristic aspect of "comunicación popular" is this new language of liberation which colours every aspect of their life: their life as cultivators of the soil, their religious views, their relations within the community, but especially their relation to the hierarchy of patrons on which they were formerly dependent. It is a language which has arisen out of the common experience of suffering and the reflections of the more perceptive and philosophical among them. It is given authority by their long group discussions. This new language with a new view of history becomes the means by which peasant groups can communicate with other communities and with external allies.[34]

It is indeed the search for this liberating language
that is one of the essential principles underlying the whole
conscientization process. As Berthoff points out in the
Foreword to one of Freire's latest works, "Liberation comes
only when people reclaim their language and, with it, the
power of envisagement, the imagination of a different world
to be brought into being."[35] As mentioned earlier, the kind
of popular culture and expression emphasized by liberating
literacy should neither be confused with the folk view of
popular culture (as something picturesque and disconnected
from peoples' historic struggles for survival), nor with the
idealization of it. This emphasis should be rather seen as
an attempt at both understanding the eventual development of
peoples' consciousness as reflected in their cultural
expression, and bettering the implementation of the
educative program in accordance with such a development. As
noted by Freire:

> Understanding the oppressed's reality, as
> reflected in the various forms of cultural
> production--language, art, music--leads to better
> comprehension of the cultural expression through
> which people articulate their rebelliousness
> against the dominant. These cultural expressions
> also represent the level of possible struggle
> against oppression.[36]

Thus, for instance, through the linguistic forms of popular culture expression such as folk sayings, songs, tales and legends, the groups can discover and discuss their perception of reality. They can re-create their culture by critically discriminating between those liberating elements which are to be encouraged, and those alienating ones which are to be dismissed. However, although the re-creation of the existing cultural forms is important, the process should also be oriented toward the creation of new forms, emerging from the learners' new ways of understanding and expressing their world. In so doing, literacy can greatly contribute to the popular education objective of rescuing people's own collective memory and history which, having been dispersed and fragmented, should become more explicit in order to strengthen the group's sense of identity and common destiny.

Kazemek suggests that, by using the expressive and creative function of language, literacy does not restrict itself to learning involving only how to act in social situations for pragmatic purposes, but also how to act within the space of texts. Considering that functional literacy is not enough and that literacy is rather a long, developmental process, he proposes that this process benefits greatly from stimulating the individual's creativity on the space of texts first and then these skills

can be easily transferred to other more pragmatic,

functional purposes:

> After learning how to act within the space of
> different poems, by reading and writing them,
> after learning how to interpret and manipulate the
> compressed and symbolic world inside lyric poems,
> after connecting the world inside the poems to
> their own lives, the adults have been better able
> to move out from the poetry to other functions of
> reading and writing.[37]

Kazemek further complains that "expressive discourse is

especially important, but, ironically, it is the form of

discourse usually missing from adult literacy programs and

materials."[38] This complaint may be justified in the North

American context, which is the context of his own

experience. However, as we have mentioned, this is not the

case in Latin America where the goal of developing popular

culture and expression is an essential component of the

liberating literacy programs. In fact, even the most

well-known poets and writers have found in popular culture

and peoples' liberating struggles an important point of

inspiration for their creative activity.

On the other hand, the aim inherent in a liberating

approach to literacy of developing popular culture and

expression can only be achieved by making of reading and

writing a truly socio-historical practice, one which

dialectically involves the text with its context (people's concrete historical world and experiences). Reading and writing would then be seen as a social practice of production and reproduction of meaning which is never separated from the larger economic and material forms of production. In Freire's terms, reading and writing implies praxis, a critical and reciprocal interaction between the world and the words:

> Reading the world precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world. As I suggested earlier, this movement from the word to the world is always present; even the spoken word flows from our reading of the world. In a way, however, we can go further and say that reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of writing it or rewriting it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work. For me, this dynamic movement is central to the literacy process.[39]

Thus, from a deeper understanding of language and its essential role in connecting the subjects to the world, one can see that the public outcry over the illiteracy problem and the remedial "back to basics" proposal point to a real situation but also hides the fact that this problem is both cause and manifestation of a previous one: the diminishing capacity for critical thinking. Interestingly enough, this public outcry over the illiteracy problem has been strongly felt in the North American context where, in Shor's terms,

"student alienation... is the biggest learning problem in school"--or a symptom of "the closing of the American mind" as Bloom puts it.[40]

This seems to affirm Freire's hypothesis that the capacity to read and write within the text is only a secondary manifestation of the previous ability to read the world (the context), of making creative connections between the self, the text, and the world. As he states, "Reading is re-writing what we are reading. Reading is to discover the connections between the text and the context of the text, and also how to connect the text/context with my context, the context of the reader".[41] In this view, illiteracy is not only a Third World problem but also one which equally affects the industrialized world. It appears that this hypothesis holds important implications for literacy and pedagogical practice in both worlds as shown in Freire's latest works co-published with North American educators.[42]

Finally, it is in view of the recognition of the various sociolinguistic codes, language practices, and cultural capital of the various groups that liberating literacy places a marked emphasis upon the language and culture from which the oppressed make sense of the world. It is also on this ground that liberating literacy opposes functional approaches. As we saw in Chapter 1, functional

literacy not only ignores the question of power and critical thinking in relation to language but distorts reality by presenting language as one and the same, "equally" and "neutrally" available to all parties regardless of class and cultural differentiations.

Thus, by denying the language, culture, and lived experiences of the poor, functional literacy makes them feel "illiterate", "guilty", for not having the education, language and cultural skills of dominant classes. In short, it stamps upon them the consciousness of their cultural inferiority which will condition in turn their submission to the unjust society. As opposed to this, liberating literacy aims toward those strategies wherein the real experiences of the subordinated groups, their language and cultural capital, can be critically validated and transformed through a pedagogy rooted in the domain of their own symbolic background.

In conclusion, one can see how important it is for literacy and pedagogical practice to be aware of the kind of strategy by which the speaker/writer interacts with the listener/reader and the kind of code which structures the message. As we have seen, this strategy can either take the form of a vertical, dominating kind of communication or one which, being horizontal and dialogical, contributes greatly

to a liberating literacy and pedagogical development.

Language, and the codes used, may either further alienate

the groups or serve as a means of conscientization. Thus,

the fundamental question raised by liberation pedagogy is

concerned not just with learning to read and write but with

the final purpose of this objective within the larger

society.

P E R S P E C T I V E

Taking as its point of departure Freire's educational

ideas, this chapter has traced the development of a new

pedagogical paradigm in Latin America. While this paradigm

emerges in the midst of the region's search for liberation,

the practice of popular education and literacy have

developed in ways which take seriously the proposal of an

education responsive to the interests of the subordinated

groups. In this, the reassessment of popular culture and the

search for an alternative knowledge, have become an

essential feature of this pedagogy.

Since liberating education places special emphasis on

language, culture, and the transformation of consciousness,

this pedagogy has been especially concerned with developing

new approaches to literacy. Literacy work and the general

process of reading and writing are focused within the symbolic universe of the learner and their socio-historical context to achieve a kind of learning which is expressed in greater levels of conscientization. However, while the Freirean approach to literacy seems quite plausible, there are, nevertheless, a number of assumptions underlying his educational philosophy and the proposed model of popular education from which it derives that need a more critical examination.

As mentioned before, the Latin American dialectic between oppression and liberation has provided the basis for a new epistemology of liberation, and Freire has built upon this his eclectic philosophy of existentialist, Marxist and Christian influences. Existentialist thought accounts for Freire's insistence that human beings are beings in-the-world and with-the-world in which their actuality is fully realized in terms of both individuality and collectively as history-makers. Dialogue is an existential necessity by means of which human beings not only communicate with each other and the world but also assume their role as subjects in their endless process of humanization. This process is, however, interrupted by social forces which, bringing oppression and alienation, cut off the process of humanization. A liberating call is made

then in order to reclaim and restore the humanity which has been stolen from the oppressed.

Freire's Marxist influence is seen in his social class analysis to which he connects the problem of alienation, and in his advocacy of social revolution as a means of achieving greater humanization. Marxism lends the analytical tools for understanding oppression as well as the practical methodology, class struggle, by means of which the oppressed can liberate themselves. As the undertaking of this liberating process implies faith and hope, the Christian influence in Freire's work becomes apparent, especially in terms of liberation theology which considers that justice and brotherhood are necessary conditions for building the Kingdom of God on earth--a Kingdom without oppressed or oppressors, or, in Marxist terms, the classless society. Furthermore, Freire goes on to suggest that the imperative of liberation is not only made in the name of the oppressed but it is also a way of "saving" the oppressors themselves who also become dehumanized, and deprived of their possibility to dialogue as they deny the humanity of others.

As Freire criticizes the present alienating and oppressive society, he calls for educational, cultural, and social reconstruction. Within adult education this call has provided the basis for a pedagogical model under the form of

popular education, a model whose final goal is to develop an alternative knowledge and politica¹ strategy to accompany and lead the subordinated classes in their struggles against the dominant groups in society. Since dependent capitalism and imperialist domination are seen as the causes of oppression and dependency in Latin America, the new society that popular education seeks to bring about is a socialist-type state or a participatory democracy based on greater levels of people's participation. La Belle, however, makes a valid query to this pro-socialist proposal underlying popular education in questioning the feasibility of conducting such programs within the capitalistic orientation of nearly all of the Latin American economies.[43]

Also underlying Freire's theory are some simplifications and a sort of messianism which could seriously hamper the very foundation of the humanization and freedom his theory calls for. Firstly, there is a simplistic dichotomization of society into oppressed and oppressors. Although social class distinctions in Latin America especially in the poorer countries of the region are somehow more evident than, let us say, those of industrial societies, the operational application of such a dichotomy still remains elusive. It is even more difficult in countries in which the larger sectors belong to the middle

segments of society and therefore cannot be easily

associated with either the oppressed or oppressor sectors.

Secondly, underlying conscientization is the assumption

of a value-laden hierarchy of consciousness, from the

inferior level of the "intransitive" (naive, magical) to the

superior level of the "transitive" (more critical and

rational). This hierarchy places the educator in a serious

dilemma in having to choose the proper level of

consciousness at which the learner is expected to arrive as

a result of the conscientization/educative process: if

access to a more transitive kind of consciousness is, a

posteriori, a result of conscientization, how can one tell

if learners are freely choosing their own options and not

those of the educator who facilitates or catalyses the

learning/conscientization process? Moreover, recognizing the

political and ideological nature of education, as Freire

repeatedly insists, is there not here the possibility of

converting the educative process into a means of political

and ideological indoctrination?

As Freirean educational theory delves deeply into

political theory and social revolution, his concept of

conscientization may also become vulnerable to the dangerous

temptation of prompting a new version of political

messianism or sectarianism. Inherent in the process of

humanization are moralistic values of good and evil. If some
selected people--those of cognitive superiority by virtue of
their level of consciousness--can not only make the right
moral distinction but also determine the best strategy for
its advancement, then the messianic and sectarian temptation
will always be there.[44]

There is also in Freire's theory an overstated reliance
on rationality as the privileged motivation of human
behaviour. This reliance underestimates other non-cognitive
ways of being in the world and, for the same reason, seems
to contradict a more positive regard for popular culture;
the culture of groups for whom rationality may not
necessarily be the mainspring of their behaviour and way of
inserting themselves in the world. Thus, even accepting that
conscientization may lead to a proper understanding of the
best solution to a given problem, there is still no
guarantee that such understanding will necessarily lead to
action or the expected revolutionary engagement. Worst of
all, as noted by La Belle, in the absence of concrete
alternatives to translate such understanding into action the
oppressed is likely to become even more frustrated.[45] It can
also be argued that in many cases such an engagement rather
than resulting from a theoretical discernment is no more
than an instinctive reaction by means of which subordinated

groups must assure their very material survival. This

relationship between conscientization vis-à-vis people's

felt needs and hopes for improvement is clearly illustrated

by the highs and lows of the conscientization processes in

Nicaragua, as will be seen in the next two chapters.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

[1]In a way, the Church tried to compensate for its historical failure towards the poor in the various spheres of society. Education was one case in point as the Church's attention in this area had been mainly directed to the education of the elites with whose values and interests it was identified: "Medellín recognized these failings by advocating for the illiterate and semiliterate masses radically new educational programs based on the pioneer work of Brazil's educational philosopher, Paulo Freire." (Penny Lernoux, Cry of the People [New York: Penguin Books, 1982], p.40). With similar objectives in mind, the Conference also provided the basis for the Christian Base Communities which were conceived as small grassroots organizations where people could get together in order to reflect on and discuss their problems and aspirations. These communities have spread rapidly throughout Latin America and have diversified in several ways but in all of them conscientization and evangelization are undertaken as one and the same liberating process: "Because the orientation is a liberating one based on the techniques of consciousness-raising, particularly in the reading of the Bible, these groups develop a dynamic of their own. They soon add appendages such as schools, cooperatives and health units." (Ibid, p.41).

[2]Paulo Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p.149.

[3]Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York: Seabury Press, 1970), p.76.

[4]Paulo Freire, Education as the Practice of Freedom (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), p.43

[5]See Freire, Education for Critical Consciousness, p.82.

[6]Leon Bataille, ed., A Turning Point for Literacy. Proceedings of the International Symposium for Literacy, Persepolis, Iran 3 to 8 September 1975 (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1976), p.273-4.

[7]Ibid., p.274.

[8]Enrique Dussel, as quoted by Leopoldo Zea, Dependencia y liberación en la cultura latinoamericana (México: Edit. Joaquín Mortiz, 1974), pp.39-40 (source not indicated).

[9]Juan E. García Huidobro, Perfilando una pregunta: ¿Aporte político de la educación popular? (Santiago: CIDE, p.13.

[10]Ibid., p.16

[11]Patricio Cariola, "Educación y participación en América Latina", Socialismo y Participación No.14 (1981) [Lima, Perú], p.130.

[12]Ibid., p.137.

[13]Ibid, p.139.

[14]Paulo Freire, Risk 11:1 (1975), p.15. Similarly, Freire acknowledges his initial naivety in overplaying the role of education in transforming social reality, without understanding properly the political aspects implied in such a transformation: "During that period I was still not totally clear about the political nature of education, and I think my first book, Education for Critical Consciousness reveals this lack of political clarity. For instance, I was not even able to touch politics in this first book....This book contains naive assumptions that I feel I have transcended in my second and third books. All of my thinking and searching were and are really part of a political framework, without which my efforts would be senseless." (The Politics of Education [South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1985], p.180).

[15]CELADEC, Educación Popular: Fundamentos teóricos y peculiaridades de la educación popular en América Latina (Lima: CELADEC, 1980), p.9.

[16]Henry Giroux, Theory and Resistance in Education (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1983), pp.124-25.

[17]Antonio Gramsci, Selections from Prison Notebooks (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

[18]Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[19]Budd L. Hall, "Participatory Research, Popular Knowledge and Power: A Personal Reflection", Convergence 3, XIV, (1981): 8.

[20]See Francisco Vío Grossi, "Sociopolitical Implications of Participatory Research", Convergence 3, XIV (1981): 41.

[21]Marcela Gajardo, "Evolución, situación actual y perspectivas de las estrategias de investigación participativa en América Latina," in Teoría y práctica de la educación popular, ed. Marcela Gajardo (Ottawa: IDRC, 1983), p.415. This article offers a good discussion on the origins and trends of participatory research in Latin America.

[22]João Bosco Pinto, Metodología de la investigación temática (Bogotá: IICA-CIDA, 1969), and Educación liberadora. Dimensión, teoría y metodología (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Búsqueda, 1976); Francisco Gutiérrez, Pedagogía de la comunicación (San José, Costa Rica: Edit. Costa Rica, 1974); R. and M. Darcy De Oliveira, The Militant Observer. A Sociological Alternative (Geneva: IDAC, 1975); Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed (New York: Urizen Books, 1979); Octavio Fals Borda, Science and the Common People (Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia: International Forum on Participatory Research, 1980).

[23]Francisco Vío Grossi, "La Investigación participativa en la educación de adultos en América Latina: Algunos problemas relevantes," in La investigación participativa en América Latina compiled by Gilbero Vejarano (México: CREFAL, 1983), p.44. See the same article for further exploration on Fals Borda's and other Latin American authors' understanding of alternative knowledge.

[24]Pablo Richard, "Religión del pueblo y política," in Apuntes para una teología nicaragüense, ed. [no indicated] (San José, Costa Rica: Co-edited by CAV and Instituto Histórico Centroamericano), p.177.

[25]As put by another liberationist theologian: "Popular religiosity is not merely archaic survival....It is a protest from below against a strange, new reality imposed from above....Since its adherents are powerless, their protest cannot yet assume an overtly political form and must confine itself to the symbolic plane. Popular religion, therefore, is camouflaged politics." (Rubem Alves, as quoted by Mark J. Osiel in "Popular Culture in Latin America", Dissent [Winter 1984: 110])

[26]See above note 1, especially second paragraph.

[27]Frei Betto, ¿Qué es la comunidad eclesial de base?, (Managua: CAV, no date), pp.34-5.

[28]Jean Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child (New York: New American Library, 1974); Lev Vygotsky, Thought and Language ed. and trans. Eugenia Hanfmann and Getrude Vakar

(Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1962); Noam Chomsky, Syntactic Structures (The Hague: Mouton, 1957).

[29]As quoted by Donaldo Macedo, in Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, Literacy. Reading the Word and the Worlds (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1987), p.153.

[30]Important contributions to reading theory and the whole language approach has come from authors such as, among others, Kenneth Goodman, What is Whole in Whole Language? (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986); Frank Smith, Understanding Reading: A Psycholinguistic Analysis of Reading and Learning to Read (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982); Donald Graves, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1983); A similar approach to reading has been applied to students' response to literature by Louise Rosenblatt in The Reader, the Text, the Poem (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978).

[31]According to these authors: "The common objectivations of everyday life are maintained primarily by linguistic signification. Everyday life is, above all, life with and by means of language I share with my fellow men. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life." (The Social Construction of Reality [New York: Doubleday, 1967], p.37).

[32]Basil Bernstein, Class. Code and Control: Theoretical Study Towards a Sociology of Language (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

[33]Pierre Bourdieu and J.C. Passeron, Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture (London: Serge Publication, 1977).

[34]Robert White, "'Comunicación Popular': Language of Liberation", Media Development, Vol.8 (1980): 3

[35]Freire and Macedo, "Foreword" by Ann Berthoff, Literacy. Reading the Word and the World (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1987), p.XV.

[36]Ibid., p.137.

[37]Francis Kazemek, "Functional Literacy is not Enough: Adult Literacy as a Developmental Process," Journal of Reading 4 Vol.28 (Jan.1985): 334.

[38]Ibid., p.334.

[39]Freire and Macedo, _Literacy. Reading the Word and the World_, p.35.

[40]Ira Shor, in Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, _A Pedagogy for Liberation_ (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1987), p.7; Allan Bloom, _The Closing of the American Mind_ (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

[41]Ibid., p.10-11.

[42]See references above with notes 28 and 39.

[43]As he puts it, "The dilemma with the liberationist approach, therefore, is to keep the movement separate from existing international political and economic practices while enhancing participatory opportunities which improve the marginal population's quality of life. Being fuelled by anticapitalist and anticonsumption bias forces such efforts outside of the mainstream of Latin American sociopolitical climates. This does not mean that there is not a great deal of empathy for dependency-liberation explanations and solutions. Instead, it suggest that using such approaches at the micro level to alter the entire fabric of society is likely to have little impact until concomitant changes take place at the national, if not the international, level." (La Belle, _Nonformal Education and Social Change in Latin America_, p.28).

[44]Although Freire acknowledges this danger, that temptation still remains, "Not infrequently revolutionaries themselves becomes reactionary by falling into sectarianism in the process of responding to the sectarianism of the Right... For the rightist sectarian, "today", linked to the past, is something given and immutable; for the leftist sectarian, "tomorrow" is decreed beforehand, is inexorably pre-ordained. This rightist and this leftist are both reactionary because, starting from their respectively false views of history, both develop forms of action which negate freedom...[and] end up without the people--which is another way of being against them." (_Pedagogy of the Oppressed_, p.22-3).

[45]T. La Belle, _Nonformal Education and Social Change in Latin America_, p.28.

CHAPTER 4

CONSCIENTIZATION AND REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

IN NICARAGUA

This chapter analyzes the various forms of
conscientization which both lent the driving force for the
insurrection and inspired thereafter the new policies on
literacy and adult education. The Literacy Crusade is
discussed in light of the new education by means of which
the Sandinistas attempted to consolidate the ideological and
socio-political basis of the new Nicaraguan society. The
shift in conscientization goals between pre- and
post-revolutionary periods is underlined in the analysis.

Conscientization in Pre-revolutionary Nicaragua

Socio-political Framework of the Revolution

The Nicaraguan revolution of 1979 marked one of the
most genuine forms of popular insurrection to dramatically

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influence liberationist trends in Latin America. Its
political and ideological originality as well as its strong
pedagogic and cultural dimensions have caught the interest
of social scientists, intellectuals, and educators,
especially those advocating social change as a form of
liberation. Particularly in education, the Revolution
represents one of the most dramatic manifestations of the
new pedagogical trends which have been discussed previously.

In effect, the Revolution brought with it some
important features which bear no parallel in the social and
political history of Latin America, including the similar
Cuban experience twenty years earlier. Some of these
features were: the high levels of conscientization and
grass-roots organization of the people who literally rose up
in arms against the dictatorship; the progressive confluence
between Sandinistas, Marxists, and Christian segments
identified with liberation theology;[1] the important role
played by intellectuals such as poets, writers, priests, and
university professors; the broad class alliance which
resulted from a growing opposition to a corrupt dictatorship
supported by a foreign power, specifically the United
States; and the general sympathy and support for the
insurrection shown by most Latin American countries. All of
these were elements behind the final insurrection led by the

Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) which put an end

to the 45 years of the Somoza dynasty in Nicaragua.

Although efforts were made to accommodate the broad

social coalition and the interests of the anti-Somoza

forces, the resulting predominance of the Sandinistas meant

the dispersion of the more conservative sectors. This was

the case of important sectors of the bourgeoisie and the

hierarchical Church which ended up distancing themselves

from the Revolution[2]--marking the beginning of the more

aggressive response on the part of the United States. Having

failed to save Somoza, and unable to influence the outcome

of the insurrection to its liking, the United States would

exercise all forms of pressure on Nicaragua, including the

threat of "another" direct military intervention.[3]

It appears that it was the originality of these

features, and their social and political impact in the

region, that sparked tremendous interest and enthusiasm for

the Nicaraguan experience. And, perhaps, the same

originality may account as well for the apprehension and

disproportionate response by conservative sectors, from the

Vatican to the Reagan administration. A small and extremely

poor country like Nicaragua could not really be a serious

threat to a mightier power like the U.S. Rather, it seems

that it was the "bad example" that Nicaragua represented whose development they tried to curtail.

For the Reagan administration, there were two major sources of concern: the potential success of a revolution based on a pro-socialist and Christian inspiration--in a continent where 90 percent of the people are fervent Catholics; and the initial success of this revolutionary project in bringing sweeping changes in health, education, and agrarian reform in favour of the majority--in a region where these popular demands are usually violently suppressed by right-wing dictatorships friendly to the U.S. The potential repercussions of the Nicaraguan example on the region were, indeed, perceived as a threat to U.S. interests.[4] Similarly, for the conservative Pope Jean Paul II, who was not only skeptical about liberation theology but had committed himself to curtailing its growth in Latin America, Nicaragua became a propitious focus for his crusade--five Catholic priests had already disobeyed Vatican orders to resign their appointments in the Sandinista government, and the pro-Sandinista Popular Church was becoming increasingly more defiant towards the anti-Sandinista hierarchy.[5]

However, the feature of the Nicaraguan revolutionary process which concerns us most here is the strong

grass-roots development through which people became actively and progressively engaged in the insurrection. The question raised by this situation is: how was it possible for the majority of the population--the youth, campesinos, workers, and women--to become engaged in the struggle to such a great extent in the face of one of the most brutal dictatorships in Latin America? Of course, there are always a number of causes and conditions behind any radical social change. Not all of these, however, succeed in developing such a coherent new social agenda as has Nicaragua. Our hypothesis in explaining this has to do with the important role of conscientization which taking advantage of a variety of forms of popular education and popular cultural expression, progressively helped to raise the political consciousness of the people.

These processes of conscientization in Nicaragua developed in a background marked by the deplorable and oppressive conditions which the people endured under Somoza. The deplorable legacy of the Somoza dynasty is shown by a number of indices which give a telling account of these conditions:

- 83 percent of children suffered from some degree of
  malnutrition; only 17 percent were of normal height and
  weight for their age;

- Preventable diseases such as diarrhoea, intestinal
  parasites and measles accounted for the majority of
  deaths;

- 47 percent of Nicaraguan homes had no sanitation
  whatsoever;

- 80 percent of homes in Managua had no running water

- 61 percent of homes had earth floors;

- 55 percent of homes had no electricity.[6]

Perhaps more than in any other aspect, these
impoverished conditions are clearly reflected in the
inadequacies found in the field of education such as:

- Pre-school education was almost non-existent: the little
  that was available was private, expensive, and reached no
  more than 5 percent of the eligible population;

- Primary education covered only 68 percent of the eligible
  population: only 22 percent completed all levels, dropping
  to 6 percent in rural areas. A high number of teachers (30
  percent) had not received teacher training or
  certification;

- Secondary education was accessible only to 18 percent of the eligible population;

- Only 0.3 percent of the population completed higher education;

- The illiteracy rate reached 50.3 percent of the population over the age of 10;

- Although approximately one-half of the population was from a rural background, 67 percent of all students were from urban areas.[7]

Few educational opportunities, high drop-out levels, and the lack of comprehensive programs for literacy and adult education are some of the factors which explain the low levels of schooling and high rates of illiteracy that existed in the country. This picture is no different from that of other poor, dependent capitalist societies of the region in which education is mainly directed at serving the needs of the urban elite and reproducing patterns of economic and cultural domination. Thus, for the Nicaraguan economic system, based largely on plantations for agricultural export, literacy and technical training were not required—only the brute force of an unskilled population—and much less so when more education was seen as contributing to raising people's awareness and expectations.

Moreover, scarce pedagogical resources and materials were poorly compensated for by the importation of texts from the U.S., a country which not only had a powerful influence on Nicaragua's economy and trade, but also upon its political and cultural affairs. These textbooks, made available through U.S. aid programs, reflected values and experiences which "bore no relation to the everyday reality of the Nicaraguan workers."[8] The existing curriculum was similarly inadequate. For example, while there were 10 accounting or business schools in 1979, there was only one agricultural school (incomprehensible in a country whose foreign exchange depended heavily on agricultural exports).[9]

Considering the type of economy and the educational situation, one can see that participation or minimum levels of social improvement for the majority were policies completely at odds with the Somoza dictatorship. Even some U.S. advisers were disappointed:

> Although U.S money and U.S. advisers, of whom this author was one, provided some of the impetus for building schools, for writing textbooks, and for revising curricula, it was obvious to even the most reluctant observer that genuine educational change and reform could only be made upon a change of government...[I realized] the futility of my advocacy of agricultural education in the absence of a meaningful land reform.[10]

On the cultural level the picture was not much different. Thus, U.S. domination was also present in this level as the values, tastes and way of life of the North American middle-class were considered the highest expression of distinction and refinement by the Somoza family and the ruling class. As noted by Ernesto Cardenal "In Nicaragua the bourgeoisie dress from the shops of Miami. The wedding trousseau was bought in Miami."[11]

The poetry of Rubén Darío (1867-1916), one of the greatest poets of the Spanish language, was arbitrarily presented, censuring any of his poems containing social criticism or anti-imperialist protest. Similarly, Augusto César Sandino, if mentioned in history textbooks, was portrayed as a bandit and no mention was made of the important historical struggle for which he became known throughout Latin America. On the other hand, U.S. cultural artifacts such as Western movies, T.V. shows and magazines were easily available. The United States, explains Sergio Ramírez, "wanted to give us the gift of tons of Reader's Digest magazines to make us thoroughly anti-Communist. But, worse than that, they wanted to turn us into mediocre thinkers."[12]

In short, whether on economic, educational or cultural levels, a similar ideological pattern can be observed--that

of a society whose ruling class was more inclined to accept
foreign influence and interests than build the basis for a
national and cultural development suited to the needs of
their own people. As pointed out by Lizabeth Dore:

> The official policy was one of neglect of the
> country's varied cultural traditions. Because
> Nicaragua's popular cultures were not considered
> by the ruling class to be "cultured", there was no
> encouragement of performances nor efforts to
> record, study, or to preserve the country's
> artistic heritage.[13]

This was the socio-political framework in which the
various processes of conscientization began to develop in
Somoza's Nicaragua. Conscientization during this period
evolved through a variety of means and settings and under
the constant threat of repression. With severe restrictions
on workers' and peasants' organizations, strict control of
the media and publishing, and the abolition of political
rights, the process could only take place in a subtle,
clandestine or semi-clandestine manner. It is for this
reason that the initial conscientization work started to
develop mainly within the political and military networks
controlled by the FSLN, and under the umbrella of the Church
(especially its more radicalized sector identified with
liberation theology).

In all of these instances, conscientization was undertaken in ways which aimed toward the development of a form of learning that could lead people to reinforce their links of solidarity and organization. This process was greatly helped by the emergence of a liberating language whose expression became, in turn, an important tool within the practice of popular education and popular cultural expression. By means of conscientization, people became more aware of their oppression and of the concrete possibility of liberation by struggling for a more just society. As the following discussion will show, by means of popular education and popular cultural expression, the FSLN and the Church became the major agents of conscientization.

Conscientization and the FSLN

Conscientization as a form of popular education within the FSLN goes far back to the inspirator of the Front himself, Augusto César Sandino, who during the 1930s undertook literacy work among his troops as a tool for liberation. He also founded, during the same time, the first peasant cooperatives in the zones under his control.The words of Carlos Fonseca--one of the founders of the Front who was killed in the early stages of the insurrection-- referring to his fellow-fighters while training the peasants

to use machine-guns, "and also teach them to read" are well known. This phrase would later become the inspiring slogan of the National Literacy Crusade. Although these can be considered little more than symbolic gestures, they show, nonetheless, how initial popular education efforts went hand-in-hand with the early stages of the struggle for liberation.

After the 1960s, the FSLN began increasingly to develop its influence within the students' and teachers' organizations, especially at the UNAM (National Autonomous University) which, for the same reason, became the object of frequent harassment by the dictatorship. An important conscientization work related to the university was carried out through various forms of research and community work undertaken by the students in the poorer "barrios". Through these contacts, important links started to develop between students, workers and community organizations. As B. Barndt notes:

> University students played a special role in building a popular base of support for the FSLN; founders of FSLN, in fact, first organized as students. Members of the Revolutionary Students Federation (FER) did political educational work in barrios and work places; FER was also a recruiting ground for the FSLN.[14]

By the time the FSLN attacked the National Guard in
several towns (1977) and seized the National Palace (1978),
an act which was followed by a number of spontaneous
insurrections, the defeat of the dictatorship--which was
once considered an impossible task--started to take shape as
a real possibility in peoples' imaginations. As noted by
Altilia, there was one factor which helped Nicaraguans to
believe in the impossible: the awakening of the memory of
Sandino and his peasant army who had once successfully
confronted the U.S. intervention. Thus, by taking the name
of Sandino and the hope he inspired, "the FSLN was able to
capitalize on the respect that people had for him....This
was their starting point, and was the element that inspired
the popular education program that led to the eventual
success of the Revolution".[15]

If the initial conscientization efforts undertaken by
the FSLN began in the cities, they were extended thereafter
to the peasant population, especially when the Front started
to set up camps for military training in the remote areas of
the countryside. An interesting testimony as to the working
of this popular education program among the peasants is
provided by Omar Cabezas, a Commander of the Front, in his
memoirs of the insurrection:

> We would take hold of the hands of a peasant,
> their hands were big, strong, rough...and we would
> ask them: "and these callouses, where do they come
> from?" And they would respond that the callouses
> were from the machete, from working the land. And
> we would ask them that if they got callouses from
> working the land, why wasn't the land theirs,
> rather than the bosses? We tried to slowly awaken
> the peasants to the dream that they had....[16]

As this elemental kind of dialogue would expand,
addressing other concerns as well as questions and problems
faced by the community, the peasants were encouraged to
organize themselves in order to seek solutions to the
perceived problems. When conditions allowed, literacy
training was provided by members of the Front or by those
who more quickly succeeded in acquiring these skills. By
gaining access to printing, the political and educative
process gained in speed and broadened its effect by
incorporating flyers and pamphlets which were circulated
among the members of the community.

However, since the acquisition of literacy could not
reach the large majority, other kinds of pedagogical
techniques and material were used. These included
dramatizations and drawing as well as a variety of forms of
popular culture and expression--tales, poetry, music,
songs--which were embedded in the rich oral tradition of the
peasants. In this way, through conscientization, the FSLN

was able to achieve the double objective of promoting

elemental forms of popular education and popular cultural

expression while, at the same time, raising the political

consciousness of the people within the revolutionary and

ideological perspective advocated by the Front. As Black

notes:

> The songs of the Pancasán group and of the
> brothers, Luis Enrique Mejía and Carlos Mejía
> Godoy were outstanding examples of the blending of
> traditional popular culture and revolutionary
> ideas, music which contributed directly to the
> struggle. The last record made by the Mejía
> brothers in 1979 was a collection of songs
> broadcast by Radio Sandino, giving instruction on
> the handling of weapons and the fabrication of
> home-made bombs.... Music like this is not simply
> listened to for pleasure: its content is discussed
> and analyzed. Two years before the revolution,
> Carlos Mejía Godoy's famous "Misa Campesina"
> (Peasant Mass) was an important part of the
> conscientization of peasant groups and the
> convergence between Catholics and Sandinistas.[17]

In this way, popular education seems to have played an

important role, especially in its dimension of political

conscientization, in furthering the ties between the FSLN

and the people. This close identification between the FSLN

and the population is clearly exemplified by the following

testimony of a peasant mother, regarding her integration

into the Front:

> By that time we already knew that the Sandinista
> Front was in the area and we were expecting them

to come in columns or something like that. It was
not until later that we realized that we,
ourselves, were the Front; they would lead us, but
we were the ones who, along with them, would have
to fight.[18]

Conscientization and the Church

Dodson and Montgomery point out that, "when Fidel

Castro entered La Havana on January 1, 1959, the Roman

Catholic Church and Evangelical Churches were unseen and

unheard." Not only were they indifferent to social change,

but, when Cuba moved towards socialism and Soviet influence,

the Churches readily embraced the opposition or exile,

gradually becoming powerless and isolated in the new Cuban

society. Conversely, "when the Sandinistas entered Managua

on July 19, 1979, one of the first public events to

celebrate victory was a Mass presided over by Archbishop

Miguel Obando y Bravo and attended by thousands."[19] Similar

celebrations took place in numerous parishes and communities

throughout the country.

More than just simple symbolism, this sharp contrast

between the Cuban and Nicaraguan experiences reflects two

radically different realities. Mainly, it shows the general

evolution of the Latin American Church during the two

decades spanning these revolutions and the more committed

role played by Christians in social and political affairs as seen in Nicaragua. Perhaps more than in any other area of influence, this role was particularly important in contributing to the conscientization of the people. As referred to in Chapter 3, increasingly since the 1960s, especially with Medellín, the Church shifted its focus from personal sins and the administration of sacraments to the notion that sin was embedded in unjust social structures, and therefore, Christians were called upon to take an active role in removing such structures.

In the pursuit of this, Medellín had called for a greater and more active participation of the laity both within the internal affairs of the Church and in society at large. Within the Church, this call responded also to the alarming shortage of the clergy in Latin America, especially in the rural areas where more than half of the population lives. Not surprisingly, in regard to social participation, Medellín also advocated the need for agrarian reforms to promote peasants' access to the land and better living conditions. In this sense, Medellín implemented a variety of educational programs directed toward the training of peasant leaders who would become involved in both pastoral work and community development among the peasants.

In this way, having proclaimed its "special option for the poor," of "becoming the voice of the voiceless," and having legitimized the right of the oppressed people to struggle for their liberation, the Church found in the Nicaragua of Somoza a challenging situation in which to fulfill its commitment. Some ways in which the pursuit of this commitment played an important conscientization and educative role in Nicaragua can be seen through the Christian Base Communities, the Educational Centre for Agrarian Promotion, and the Delegates of the Word.

One of the first Christian Base Communities in Nicaragua was that organized as a pilot project by the priest José de la Barra (1966) in San Pablo Apóstol parish of Colonia Nicarao, a poor barrio on the outskirts of Managua. At the beginning, the Community centred its activities on biblical readings followed by group discussions. As the Community started to grow, various committees were formed in order to undertake a variety of tasks and objectives proposed by the Community itself, such as visiting the sick, building recreational areas, instruction in literacy, health, and family counselling. Not less important was the formation of a special missionary

team which, taking advantage of their own experience, would help to organize other communities in other localities.[20]

Although at the beginning most of the communities were composed mainly of adults, they were soon extended to the youth and the students' movement. Perhaps the best known of these was the University Christian Community of El Riguero formed by Father Uriel Molina in his parish Santa María de los Angeles. According to Molina, who also taught at the University of Central America (UCA), this community came into being for the purpose of bringing Christian university students, belonging to well-to-do families, closer to the hardships of their Christian brothers who lived in the poorer barrio of El Riguero where his parish was located. At the beginning, the Community functioned mainly under the form of study groups in which a variety of social and political issues were discussed in light of the new teachings of the Church. After becoming more sensitive to the problems of the local people, the students, perhaps with a dose of naivety, tried to find a solution for these problems:

> We started going to "barrios" on weekends, doing
> social work, living a little with the people,
> getting to know their problems, and so on. Of
> course, this was with a paternalistic mentality
> that reflected our level of political development.
> We would help build latrines on weekends and at

the same time give talks about health and
hygiene.[21]

It seems that the dynamics of the Community itself
helped the members to overcome that "paternalistic
mentality." The community marked an important step in
developing a deeper insight into the poor and their problems
while at the same time, providing opportunities to develop
leadership skills: "The community was the step we took just
before becoming revoluticnaries. It offered some
possibilities, more freedom to become politicized--and we
did very quickly."[22] Another participant emphasized the
Christian foundation for their conscientization work as well
as the interchange of knowledge and experiences resulting
from contact with the people:

> Once the community was established in El Riguero
> we all worked in different areas.... Our mission
> was to try to raise people's consciousness, that
> is, to present a new, revolutionary vision of
> Christianity, for social change. At the same time
> we realized we too would be educated, that we
> would learn from the work and contact with
> people.[23]

The growth and increasing politicization of the
Community put Father Molina in a difficult position both
with the upper class families from which most of the
students came and with the hierarchy itself. The Community

became increasingly subjected to criticism when it was

revealed that many of the participants were also engaged in

the clandestine work of the FSLN. It turned out later that

the Community and the people from El Riguero were an

important logistical base for the organization of the

resistance. In addition, out of the approximately 40 youth

members of the Community, at least five would subsequently

become important leaders of the FSLN and still later be

appointed to the highest ministerial posts of the Sandinista

government.[24] Thus, there was no mistake in criticizing the

political aim of the Community. According to Father Molina:

> We lived in continual reflection, but this was
> never separated from our political activities on
> issues that concerned the community. Right from
> the beginning there was opposition. I quickly
> became the enemy of the upper class in Nicaragua
> because no other priest at that time was engaged
> in such experience. The hierarchy also
> disapproved.... And slowly, connections were made
> with popular community organizations.[25]

Although perhaps an exception, of all these

communities, the one which became more internationally well-

known was the Community of Solentiname, formed by the poet

and priest Ernesto Cardenal (currently head of the Ministry

of Culture). Located on a remote island in which a communal

kind of life was shared with the peasants and fishermen, the

Community encouraged a liberating interpretation of the

Bible and the development of people's potential for learning and creativity as a means of conscientization.

Important to the Community was the notion that the Kingdom of God starts to be built on earth and that the first task of a Christian is to be engaged in struggles which are conducive to this end. This notion, influenced by liberation theology--and at odds with the traditional teaching for which, the Kingdom being beyond this world, the poor should resign themselves to their fate, especially as they would be greatly compensated after death--had indeed an important conscientization effect among the participants. This was especially true among the poor who saw in their new sense of dignity found in the Community a concrete result of their social and political engagement as well as an anticipation of a better life for which to strive. Zimmerman describes Cardenal's work in Solantiname in these terms:

> There he taught a new interpretation of the
> Gospel, calling for an active struggle against
> worldly evil and the establishment of the "Kingdom
> of Heaven" on the earth. Peasants' families from
> the various islands of Grenada Lake participated
> in Cardenal's religious masses, and in the
> cultural and educational programs establishǝd in
> Solentiname as a kind of a model for a future
> Nicaragua based on communalism, justice and love.
> Gradually, crafts and poetry workshops developed
> in the community, as more and more people sought
> to express their new found sense of life in all
> forms possible.[26]

After the Community became increasingly involved in the
political struggle--to the point that many of its members
participated in the assault on the San Carlos barracks in
1977--it was violently attacked by the National Guard and
most of its members escaped into exile or joined the
clandestine work of the FSLN. Although much of the work was
destroyed by the Guard, important pieces of the poetry,
paintings, and theological reflections were saved and made
public later as clear testimony of the people's potential
for learning and cultural expression and of Christian
involvement in the struggle for liberation.[27]

It should be noted that many of the communities in
which the prophetic and liberating orientation of Medellín
was more seriously undertaken were situated in small
localities, far from the supervision of the Church
hierarchy. It is also important to note that not all
communities were so easily and uniformly politicized. In
many cases conflicts arose between, on the one hand, those
who followed Medellín, and on the other, those of the
charismatic tendency who adhered to the more spiritualistic
and traditional role of the Church.

The Educational Centre for Agrarian Promotion (CEPA)
also played an important conscientization role in the rural

areas. CEPA was founded by the Jesuits in 1969 with the aim of providing agro-technical training for the peasants along with a variety of other programs including literacy, biblical reflection and techniques of popular communication. An important work resulting from this was the publication of the popular bulletin Cristo Campesino (Peasant Christ) in which, through caricatures and in a simple language, Christ was depicted as one more peasant who suffered and struggled for the same causes as they.

As these programs were extended to most of the regions of the country, and their orientation became more politically radicalized, CEPA was accused of permitting communist infiltration and increasingly harassed by the National Guard. The hierarchy reacted by putting some restrictions on the politically oriented programs of the institution. As these were resisted, frictions developed to the point where CEPA disassociated itself from the hierarchy and became an independent Christian institution. From there on, CEPA strengthened its links with the FSLN and many of its members started to cooperate openly with the political work of the Front.

Finally, the program of the Delegates of the Word (Delegados de la Palabra), initiated by the Capuchin

missionaries, also became an important instance of

conscientization in the rural areas. This program was

concerned with the selection and training of peasant leaders

who were to act as delegates in pastoral and community tasks

in those places where priests were scarce. Gregorio Smutko,

one of the missionaries who participated in the program,

explains the conscientization work in these terms:

> Since 1971 we increased conscientization work
> with the formation of the Delegates of the Word
> which included health leaders, literacy workers,
> and agricultural and other rural leaders. The
> objective of these conscientization programs was
> to help the peasants value their own dignity as
> sons of God, to become aware of their rights...to
> discover their capacity to forge their own destiny
> especially as they worked together. We, the
> missionaries of Zelaya, started with the
> decodification of pictures, the method of the
> famous Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. But we
> did not end there. Between 1972 and 1977 more and
> more programs were presented to the rural leaders
> in order to initiate a second and third stage of
> conscientization, stressing critical thinking and
> political commitment. We used socio-dramas,
> picture decodification, pantomime and other
> techniques in order to stimulate dialogue and
> reflection about people's own reality.[28]

Religious services themselves consisted of dialogues based

on biblical texts and focused on pressing needs in the life

of the community. The acceptance of the program among the

peasants was so wide-spread that "by 1975 there were

approximately 900 Delegates active in Zelaya."[29]

As in the case of CEPA, these programs came to be regarded with increasing suspicion by the dictatorship and, when frictions increased, many delegates "disappeared" or were assassinated by the National Guard. Also, as with CEPA, many of the delegates who did not see much difference between the political proposals of the FSLN and those of Medellín, became more and more sympathetic to the Front and many of them joined the clandestine work of this group.

Although many Christians had rejected the FSLN due to its lack of religious orientation, these arguments became less important and "these Christians came to sympathize with, and often collaborated with, the FSLN. The Sandinistas, in turn, had become more open to the Christian bases for political action."[30] A dramatic example of this increasing rapprochement between Christians and the FSLN was the case of the priest and poet Gaspar García Laviana. In fact, he not only joined the insurrection but also became a commander of the FSLN until he was killed in 1978 while fighting in the mountains.[31]

The case of Laviana was widely publicized by the government as another piece of evidence of Christian subversion, and was followed by a massive repression of peasants and social workers related to Christian organizations. Faced with a mounting national and

international outrage sparked by Somoza's brutal repression which included the murder of peasants and bombardment of the civilian population on a massive scale in several Nicaraguan cities, the hierarchy was forced to react in the strongest terms to the point of conceding the people's right to rebellion.

After the triumph, and despite the persistence of some sort of mutual distrust, neither the Sandinistas nor the hierarchy were able to exclude the other. Amid the overwhelming enthusiasm sparked by the Revolution throughout Latin America, including important Catholic sectors, the hierarchy had no choice but to show, albeit cautiously, a qualified support for the revolutionary process. The government, for its part, not only made public its recognition of Christian participation in the insurrection and reassured religious freedom, but also called upon various churches to take part in the process in which a number of religious leaders, including some Catholic priests, had already been named to important posts.

Nevertheless, as much of the distrust between the hierarchy and the FSLN remained, it did not take long before frictions arose. This gave way to one of the most serious divisions within the Church, particularly between a hierarchy which lost no opportunity to criticize the

government and an emerging grass-roots Church which was taking an active role in the revolutionary process.

However, despite these internal divisions in the Church, it is clear that both the Church and the FSLN became equally the two most important social agents regarding the conscientization of the people. As conscientization in the pre-revolutionary period was related to a variety of literacy and popular education attempts which were undertaken under very difficult conditions, one of the first objectives of the new revolutionary government was to legitimize these attempts by giving top priority to literacy and the promotion of the new education.

The Literacy Crusade and the New Education

The incoming Sandinista Government of National Reconstruction was faced with a country literally in ruins. To the already deplorable 45 years of the Somoza legacy must be added the 1972 earthquake from which the country had not yet recuperated, and the destruction caused by the final war of insurrection. It is against this background that the government set up an agenda with two main objectives: infrastructural reconstruction of the country, and the creation of the basis for the new society. While declaring

its respect for the principles of political pluralism and freedom of speech and assembly, the government also made clear its commitment to diffusing power among the subordinated sectors, especially among workers and peasants.

The basic principles of popular democracy, nationalism, and anti-imperialism would inform its domestic and foreign policies. By declaring a policy of non-alignment and opening relations with the socialist block while strengthening those with Western Europe and Latin America, a gradual reduction of monolithic dependence on the U.S. was sought. At the local level, an initial program of four main goals was set up:

1. **A Socio-Economic policy** -- based on a mixed economy with state and private sectors, full employment, universal literacy, land reform and self-sufficiency in food production.

2. **Mass or Popular Participation** -- through a wide range of citizens' and workers' associations, many of which had arisen during the Revolution.

3. **The New Nicaraguan Citizen** -- would develop into a critical and conscious person, rooted in national culture and interest, cooperative, respectful of the value of productive work along with other desired traits.

4. Austerity -- a necessity, given the massive debt and

reconstruction needs of the bankrupt country.[32]

Moving away from dependent capitalism and imperial

domination, the country would start building the basis for a

more humane society whose far-reaching goal was the creation

of "the New Person." This society would be built upon the

creation of a participatory democracy which is defined in

terms of people's full participation in the political,

economic, social and cultural matters of the country.[33]

Since such a democracy was completely foreign to the

Nicaraguan people, it was felt that its development did not

only imply transforming material conditions, but also the

transformation of people themselves. With the aim of

fostering the development of people's abilities and

knowledge and the inculcation of new values, massive efforts

in literacy and educational development were proposed. After

only one month of the Sandinistas' coming to power, the

Minister of Education, Carlos Tünnermann, clearly stated the

need for a new education:

> If the Sandinista Popular Revolution pleads for
> a structural transformation in order to make of
> Nicaragua a more humane and egalitarian society,
> it is natural that the objectives of education and
> its philosophy must respond in accordance with
> those long-term goals so that education can also
> contribute--as an important factor in that
> transformation--to forging the students'

consciousness towards such a society. Therefore,
education must contribute effectively towards the
re-definition of the values of Nicaraguan society;
we must overcome those former values, some of
which leaned towards an elitist and aristocratic
conception of education....

Education must become critical and liberating,
contributing to the liberation of each individual
and to society as a whole; an education which
makes the students conscious of what is taking
place in our country. And the best way of
conscienticizing our students is to put them in
direct contact with reality...so that students can
share with the people who produce, in the
factories, workshops and in the countryside; so
that they become permeated by what our peasants
and workers think, by the needs of these classes
which up to now have been marginalized from the
process of development....

In short, strengthening the contact between
education and national reality and the link
between education and work, will result in new
forms reflecting that new educational philosophy
which will lead us to our main goal; the forging
of the new man [sic] in Nicaragua.[34]

A later document entitled "The Goals, Objectives and
Principles of the New Education" provided a more detailed
explanation concerning the definition of that "New Person"
whose personality the new education was supposed to help
forge. This document was the result of a National
Consultation in which the Nicaraguan people were called upon
to discuss the kind of education that they wished to have
implemented in the country. As a result of this process, the
new education has as its goals:

The full and integral formation of the personality
of the New Man [sic], constantly growing, able to

promote and contribute to the process of
transformation which daily builds the New Society.
This New Man of Nicaragua, who has been developing
since the beginning of the process of liberation
of our people, is formed out of our reality, our
creative work and the historical circumstances in
which we live. Education must develop the
intellectual, physical, moral, aesthetic and
spiritual capabilities of this New Man [sic].[35]

In this context of seeking a major educational change,
the National Literacy Crusade was undertaken as a first
step. It should be recognized, however, that a massive
literacy project had already been contemplated in the
political platform of the FSLN. In keeping with the high
regard for the education of the people felt by the founding
members of the Front, the elimination of illiteracy, along
with new policies on culture and education, was already an
important objective of the "Historic Program" that the FSLN
had clandestinely presented to the Nicaraguan people in 1969
and reaffirmed after the Revolution.[36] As there have been a
number of reports and studies dealing with the Crusade,[37]
this will be described only briefly in order to illustrate
some of the ideological principles underlying the new
education. This description will also provide a frame of
reference for the subsequent post-literacy and adult
education programs which followed the Crusade--programs
which will be seen in the next chapter.

The National Literacy Crusade

The political orientation of the Crusade was made clear from the outset as its director, the Jesuit priest Fernando Cardenal, acknowledging Freire's suggestion, declared that "this type of National Literacy Crusade is not a pedagogical program with political implications, but rather, it is a political project with pedagogical implications."[38] This orientation was also seen in the somewhat militaristic terminology and organization of the Crusade. Indeed the very name "crusade" (which was also referred to as "the cultural insurrection" or "the second war of liberation") shows the government's leanings. Moreover, the literacy volunteers (or "brigadistas") formed "battle fronts" which were subdivided into "brigades," "columns," and "squadrons."

As it was perceived that Somoza's deplorable educational legacy was not accidental, but rather a conscious way of exercising political control by keeping people ignorant and marginalized from social participation, the new politics of education would now reinforce those attempts on literacy and educational development which had previously been denied. On the other hand, although the FSLN had gained the political support of the majority, the enthusiasm sparked by the fall of Somoza would face a

forseeably difficult reality. Anticipating this, the
Crusade, complementing pre-revolutionary conscientization,
would be directed at assuring that people understood the
goals and eventual difficulties of the revolutionary
process. Thus, as revealed by the planning commission, from
its inception, there was little ambiguity about the
political militancy of the Crusade:

> To eliminate the social phenomenon of illiteracy
> is only a first step within the process of
> educating the masses and this should not only be
> limited to the technical mechanics of learning how
> to read and write. The teaching means are not only
> designed to teach literacy but to elevate the
> political consciousness of the people. We are
> fully conscious that all forms of educational work
> within a revolutionary process must be imbued with
> revolutionary contents.... Those who are unable to
> speak of Agrarian Reform, of collective work, of
> power for peasants and workers, of the struggle of
> the oppressed will never be able to carry out
> literacy work, because the illiterate are
> precisely the oppressed and those demands
> represent their interests, basic needs and right
> to live.[39]

Thus, along with teaching reading and writing, a
variety of political and social gains were expected from the
Crusade. It would stimulate social awareness by provoking
discussion concerning various aspects of the revolutionary
project. It would strengthen the formation of social
organizations through which people would take an active role
in carrying out the new political and economic tasks. By

means of massive contact throughout the country between the

literate and illiterate, the Crusade would help to r. duce

the gap between city and countryside, between manual and

intellectual work. It would reinforce national unity by

bringing together the various sectors of society, especially

by integrating the Pacific and Atlantic regions whose

historical, ethnic and linguistic differences had kept them

apart. Finally, it would provide the basis for mounting a

comprehensive system of adult education.[40]

The first step of the Crusade was to take a census in

order to determine the number of illiterate and their

location, as well as to register the volunteers who were

able and willing to teach. The result., indicated 722,431

illiterates over 10 years of age, a national rate of 50.3,

but as high as 85 percent in some rural areas. After the

intensive five month duration of the Crusade (from March to

July of 1980), all participants converged on Managua for a

giant celebration of the work accomplished. According to the

final results, 406,056 persons had learned how to read and

write reducing the illiteracy rate from 50.3 to 12.9

percent.[41]

The preparation and undertaking of the Crusade included

massive participation of popular organizations and volunteer

groups. The Sandinista Youth Organization (JS-19 de Julio)

helped to recruit brigadistas from high schools while the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (ANDEN) provided teaching and supervising personnel. The Sandinista Workers' Union (CST) helped to identify illiterates and organized classes in the work-place. The Rural Workers' Association (ATC) in the countryside carried out a similar task providing as well logistical support for the brigadistas in remote areas. In the cities, housewives, civil servants, students and professionals became involved through the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDSs), the Nicaraguan Women's Association (AMNLAE), the Sandinista Cultural Workers Association (ASTC), and other organizations.

During the preparation phase of the Crusade, all these groups had met throughout the country in order to discuss the various aspects of the Crusade as well as its political and social implications vis-à-vis the goals of the revolutionary project. A more specific training on literacy and teaching methods had been provided through a multiplier approach: a select group of teachers, who had undertaken an intense literacy training, transferred these skills to a number of other volunteers who, in turn, trained others reaching the more than 100,000 brigadistas who participated in the Crusade.

With the purpose of covering the whole country, the brigadistas were grouped into two major divisions: El Ejército Popular de Alfabetización (Popular Literacy Army) which was composed mainly of students and teachers and worked on a full-time basis in the countryside and in the mountains; and Los Alfabetizadores Populares (Popular Literacy Teachers), composed of workers, civil servants and housewives who were assigned to urban areas and taught in their free time after work. The academic year was suspended for the five months of the Crusade in order to allow teachers and students to become fully engaged in their literacy work. At the same time, the government made available all its resources at hand such as transportation, pedagogical materials, and media publicity, thereby stimulating massive popular participation.

The Crusade was largely inspired in the method of Paulo Freire who personally participated in the preparation phase. Also important in this phase was the analysis and critical adoption of the experience of other countries which had conducted literacy campaigns as a form of social transformation. Within the context of Latin America, of special interest was the case of Cuba, a country which not only cooperated with technical assistance for he Crusade but also made available a number of teachers who helped out

in various aspects of educational development. In addition,
a number of countries responded to a call from UNESCO, and
international organizations cooperated with financial
assistance or by sending teachers and volunteers.

Regarding teaching materials and methodology, three
texts accompanied each brigadista: the literacy primer, an
arithmetic textbook, and the brigadista's orientation
manual. The most important was the literacy primer, El
Amanecer del Pueblo (The Dawn of the People), consisting of
23 lessons. The lessons were organized in themes referring
to the various aspects and phases of the revolutionary
process (e.g., the heroes Sandino and Carlos Fonseca; the
dictatorship; the FSLN and the insurrection of the people;
the new program in relation to health, agrarian reform,
education, women's issues, defense, etc.).

Every lesson was introduced by a picture which served
as the basis for the initial dialogue between the teacher
and the learners. The theme of every lesson was introduced
by a key phrase (usually a revolutionary slogan) containing
an underlined generative word which introduced the letters
and syllables to be learned and applied in the formation of
new words. For instance, in the first lesson, showing the
picture of Sandino for dialogue-discussion, the five vowels
are introduced through the phrase "Sandino: guía de la

Revolución." This introductory part constituted by the
photograph and the theme for dialogue was foll wed by 10
didactic steps with corresponding exercises.

In general, the literacy method evolves through these
steps under the formula: phrase-word-<syllable>-word-phrase.
Thus, starting with a phrase (visual recognition), a word is
picked up and broken down into syllables. The syllables are
combined with the vowels (reading and pronunciation) and
then graphically reproduced. The learners make up new words
by combining the syllables already learned and, from these
words, build simple phrases. Finally, in the last step, a
short phrase or a revolutionary slogan, containing some of
the syllables or words already learned, is provided and
reproduced by the learner (writing).

In this way, the method stresses the four main
abilities associated with literacy skills: listening, oral
pronunciation, visual recognition, and written reproduction.
The picture-dialogue has an important role in stimulating
oral practice and expression, allowing learners to express
their ideas, experiences and opinions, while it also helps
to build up their motivation for the subsequent steps of the
lesson. The dialogue, which is also the most important part
of political conscientization, is complemented by the key

phrase or slogan containing the generative word to be

studied:

>The key sentence of each lesson, in synthesising
>the political message of the photograph, is
>tremendously important from a teaching point of
>view. If the illiterate learner recognises the
>letters and words and associates them clearly with
>the discussion themes the words will cease to be
>meaningless arrangements of shapes and take on
>instead a direct association with concepts which
>the learner feels strongly committed to.[42]

With respect to written expression, the primer also

provides the learner with sufficient space for practice and

exploration. In fact, this aspect was one of the few

features with which Freire disagreed when he first reviewed

the draft version of the primer. He found that it did not

have enough blank spaces for writing practice, and strongly

recommended taking into consideration the learners'

potential for creativity in both oral and written

expression. This criticism was accepted and the original

draft was modified accordingly. In fact, the development of

creative and expressive language became an important feature

of the Crusade, as can be seen in the published collection

of creative writing (letters, poems, compositions, etc.)

composed by the newly literate.[43]

The Nicaraguan method also varied from the Freirean in

some respects. For instance, whereas Freire started with a

word (the generative word), the Nicaraguan primer started

with a phrase which contained within it the generative word.

Another variation concerned the fact that Freire's material

is usually designed in relation to specific communities or

regions, whereas in Nicaragua the same material was used

throughout the country (excepting the non-Spanish ethnic

minorities). There are a number of reasons behind these

differences of which the financial-technical (a lack of

resources and qualified personnel for designing various

programs) and the political (the need to integrate the

population under the same revolutionary program) seem to be

the most important. These were the basic differences in what

was essentially a similar methodology. Freire himself

commended some of the innovations presented by the

Nicaraguan material.[44]

As mentioned above, along with the primer the

brigadista was provided with an arithmetic textbook. This

introduced the four arithmetic operations (addition,

subtraction, multiplication and division) as well as some

notion of fractions, weight and measures. These operations

were meant to be taught in relation to themes dealing with

the economy, agrarian reform, and other matters. Finally,

the Cuaderno de Orientación para el Brigadista (the

Brigadista's Orientation Manual), was provided as a

complementary resource telling the brigadistas how best to accomplish their work. It reminded the brigadista how to approach the illiterates and their communities, how to apply the primer methodology, and also clarified the political content of the lessons for the dialogue discussions. As a back-up for the political aspects of each lesson, a section with 23 short readings and questions, along with a glossary of political terms, was included. It should be remembered that the brigadistas, most of whom were secondary students, were not necessarily familiar with political analysis or detailed aspects of the Sandinista program.

Another interesting section of this orientation manual dealt with "militant research" which the brigadistas were supposed to conduct along with their literacy work in the communities. A guide explains the principles and purposes of this kind of research in order that "the observations carry a correct revolutionary perception."[45] The guide includes a wide variety of aspects which were to be observed and recorded such as the geography, economy, health and history of the community; the various forms of popular culture, legends, religious festivities and traditions; the community's oral history, especially the one dealing with the community's involvement in the insurrection; local martyrs, heroes, and leaders of popular organizations.

Another section included a Field Diary in which the brigadistas were supposed to record their most relevant experiences--whether in pedagogical, political or community involvement--during their journey.

Finally, beyond the remarkable statistical results of the Crusade and its influence on various by-products associated with it,[46] perhaps the most important pedagogical returns were that it served as a catalyst for the whole educational system, and provided a foundation for the development of a massive sub-system of adult education. The successful undertaking of the Crusade--which was internationally recognized by UNESCO's literacy prize for efforts in the field--reinforced the initial enthusiasm of the revolutionary experience. In a euphoric speech addressing the thousands of brigadistas who converged on Managua on August 23 after the intense five months of the Crusade, Carlos Tünnermann referred to them as "the Children of Sandino" and, to their accomplished work: "Here we have the second moment of revolutionary transcendence, for if July 19, 1979, is the beginning of our political freedom, August 23 will be the end of our cultural oppression. Today we can declare that we are fully free."[47] However, the hard times of subsequent years would prove that freedom had a much higher price.

P E R S P E C T I V E

This chapter has examined the relationship between conscientization and revolutionary change in Nicaragua, particularly in terms of those educative actions which were consciously directed at stimulating people's engagement in the struggle for liberation. The role of popular education and popular cultural expression in the undertaking of this process has been underlined. While during the pre-revolutionary period the FSLN and the Church became the major agents of conscientization, after the triumph this process was readily channelled into attempts to secure the ideological consolidation of the new social project sought by the government. The proposal for a new education and the National Literacy Crusade were undertaken as integral parts of revolutionary change in Nicaraguan society.

While conscientization and the recruitment of opposition to the dictatorship rapidly developed, the revolutionary predominance of the new government, hegemonized by the Sandinistas, gradually alienated the more moderate and conservative sectors. This was especially true in the case of the hierarchical Church and important sectors

of the national bourgeoisie, and also marked the start of a

more belligerent response on the part of the United States.

Despite these initial obstacles and the shaky economy, the

high level of morale and broad national and international

support enjoyed by the Revolution at this early stage were

not diminished. The high morale of this initial momentum

greatly facilitated the undertaking of the Literacy Crusade.

Launched only months after the Revolution, an important

objective of the Crusade was to provide political leadership

for the mobilization of the people. It would help to foster

the creation of new social structures and popular

organizations by means of which the government sought to

secure the institutionalization of its revolutionary

project. It is in this sense that the Crusade was seen

primarily as a "political project with educational

implications." These socio-political goals associated with

the Crusade also explain the fact that the same objectives,

methodology, and literacy manuals were applied throughout

the country, despite the specific characteristics of each

community or region. It also explains why not only the

organization of the Crusade but also the creation of its

pedagogical materials were undertaken by special and

centralized commissions instead of resulting from the

participants themselves, as proposed by the principles of popular education.

A more serious criticism can be made, however, of the relationship between conscientization and revolutionary change in Nicaragua. Both during the pre- and post-revolutionary process there was gap between the high level of expectations raised as a result of conscientization and the limited possibilities of fulfilling these. There was a clear tendency toward the idealization or simplification of more complex social issues, while minor achievements were often disproportionately magnified. This tendency, although perhaps inherent to political warfare, nonetheless had the dangerous potential of confusing reality with aspirations or wishful thinking.

This tendency can be seen, for instance, in many of the idealistic objectives proposed by the new education, not to mention the ambitious goal of creating the New Person. Along the same line is the overriding ideological and politically oriented role assigned to education as illustrated by the overall undertaking of the Crusade and by the goals and objectives of the new education itself. The emphasis on the conscientization aspects of literacy and on the ambitious changes expected from the newly literate, oversimplified the more technical and complex aspects of learning to read and

write. It also demonstrated a simplistic view of the multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory elements shaping the formation of people's consciousness.

A close analysis of the objectives of the Crusade, the statements and speeches of the officials in charge, the content of the lessons and the directions provided in the accompanying manuals, reveals a high level of rhetoric and a degree of pretentiousness is noticeable in the interpretation of more complex realities. For instance, the guide on "militant research" was given to the brigadistas so that "the observations carried a correct revolutionary perception," as if there were but one, already determined, "correct revolutionary perception" that the brigadistas ought to transmit to the people. A similar example of rhetoric is the above-mentioned statement of Tünnermann on the concluding day of the Crusade (August 23, 1980): "...for if July 19, 1979, is the beginning of our political freedom, August 23 will be the end of our cultural oppression. Today we can declare that we are fully free."

Another aspect in which images did not fully correspond to field observations concerned the rather modest role played by the grass-roots Church (at least this was the impression this writer acquired when he visited the country in 1986).[48] It should be noted, however, that this was

already a time of decreasing enthusiasm, and that the role

of Christians--as discussed earlier in this chapter--seems

to have been more prominent during the pre-revolutionary

period.[49] On the other hand, it seems that for the

hierarchical Church it was much easier to be prophetic

before the poor than to face the difficulties which resulted

from the concrete attempts to solve the problem of

poverty--especially when this meant taking a stand in a

world of conflicting interests in which even the Church

itself was caught up.

However, notwithstanding these difficulties, there are

still many Christians deeply committed to the revolutionary

process, many of whom hold positions of responsibility

within or related to the government. There are still some

active Christian-inspired centres supporting popular

education activities and publications. Similarly, in some

Christian Communities, one can observe a remarkably high

level of consciousness and expression among humble peasants,

workers, and housewives who have indeed become very

articulate in a variety of subjects, from religious to

socio-political matters.[50]

Finally, despite some of the shortcomings surrounding

the relationship between conscientization and revolutionary

change in Nicaragua, the general success of the Literacy

Crusade stands as one of the most important achievements of the Sandinista government. Although it is difficult to measure the overall impact of the Sandinistas' policies on literacy and educational development, there can be no doubt that they were crucial for the implementation of the subsequent post-literacy programs and the development of various forms of popular education directed to the adult population, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 4

[1]The convergence of Sandinistas, Marxists and Christians
in Nicaragua as well as the potential of this rapprochement
throughout Latin America has been at the centre of the debate.
See Giulio Girardi, Sandinismo, marxismo, cristianismo en la
nueva Nicaragua (México: Ediciones Nuevomar, 1986); Margaret
Randall, Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution (Vancouver:
New Star Books, 1983).

[2]In the initial political arrangement which led to the
formation of the Government of National Reconstruction (GNR)
the Sandinistas shared power with more traditional political
elites. Out of the six members of the initial junta
constituted in July 1979, at least two, Violeta Chamorro and
Alfonso Rabelo, were clearly in opposition to the radical
changes proposed by the Sandinistas. The initial cabinet also
included members with opposing political views which
complicated the process of revolutionary change and diluted
the power of the state. Tensions within the government became
more and more divisive and by the end of the year, with the
withdrawal of the conservative sectors, the Sandinistas became
the hegemonic force. This split, however, did not endanger the
Sandinistas' commitment to political pluralism and freedom of
speech, as the dissenting groups rapidly moved to the
opposition and lost no time in using these liberties against
the government. (Rose Spalding, "Political and Socio-Economic
Development under the GNR" in Nicaragua in Reconstruction and
at War: The People Speak, ed. Marc Zimmerman [Minneapolis, Mn:
MEP Publications, 1985] p.121).

[3]There has been a long history of U.S. intervention in
Nicaragua. The first occurred as early as 1855, when the
adventurer William Walker declared himself president of
Nicaragua, decreed the country a slave state and declared
English the official language. Subsequent U.S. interventions
took place in 1902, 1912, and the most massive one in 1926.
It was against this intervention that Augusto Sandino led an
anti-imperialist guerrilla war which fought the Marines'
presence for seven years. Unable to defeat Sandino, U.S.
troops withdrew in 1933, but not before organizing the
National Guard under the command of a reliable Nicaraguan
ally, Anastasio Somoza García. Deceived by a truce propitiated
by Somoza, Sandino was ambushed and assassinated by the
National Guard in 1934. Counting on U.S. support, Somoza
thereafter accumulated all forms of power (nominating himself
President in 1936) which were then transmitted to his son,

close family and cronies. What has been called "the Somoza Dynasty" was installed in Nicaragua, a dynasty which after 45 years was finally dethroned in 1979 when the last Somoza escaped to the U.S. (Bernard Diederich, Somoza and the Legacy of U.S. Involvement in Central America [London: Junction Books, 1982]).

[4]"When Reagan triumphed [1980] and assumed office, his State Department immediately published its "White Paper," which claimed to prove that Nicaragua was serving as an arms conduit to Salvadorean guerrillas. Within a few days, Reagan suspended the remaining $15 million from the $75 million Carter administration grant; and in March, Reagan suspended credit for the sale of $9.6 million of U.S. wheat to Nicaragua. Secr tary of State Alexander Haig and UN ambassador J..ane Kirkpatrick joined Reagan in making creasingly hostile attacks on the GNR. But these hostile acts were just the surface manifestations of a more pervasive strategy aimed at fomenting economic and political crisis leading to the destabilization and possible overthrow of the government." (R. Spalding, "Political and Economic," p.129). It should be noted that this intervention was in line with a long tradition of U.S. foreign policy as reflected by the "Monroe Doctrine," "Manifest Destiny" and "Domino Theory." On the other hand, the Teheran hostage crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan under President Carter only facilitated the revival of these policies under Reagan. Thus Nicaragua and the whole political turmoil in Central America came to be viewed as a threat to U.S. dominance in the region and as part of the East-West confrontation.

[5]For a detailed description of the Vatican position against liberation theology and John Paul II's controversial 1983 visit to Nicaragua see John Kirk, "John Paul II and the Exorcism of Liberation Theology: A Retrospective Look at the Pope in Nicaragua," in Bulletin of Latin American Research, Vol.4, No.1 (1985): 33-47.

[6]George Black and John Bevan, The Loss of Fear: Education in Nicaragua Before and After the Revolution (London: Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign-World University Service, 1980), p.17.

[7]Sources: MED, Cinco años de educación en la Revolución 1979-1984 (Managua: MED, 1984); and MED, "Situación del sistema educativo después de 45 años de dictadura militar somocista y perspectivas que plantea la revolución sandinista," Managua, 1979. (Mimeograph.).

[8]George Black and J. Bevan, The Loss of Fear, p.16.

[9]As suggested by Black, "The figures reveal the aspirations of the Nicaraguan elite to continue to work in (and control) the professions, and their disregard for the productive sector from which their wealth derived." Ibid., p.20.

[10]Richard Kraft, "Nicaragua: Educational Opportunities Under Pre and Post Revolutionary Conditions," in Politics and Education. Cases from Eleven Nations, ed. Thomas Murray (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1983), p.86.

[11]Ernesto Cardenal, "Towards a New Democracy in Culture," in The Nicaraguan Reader, ed. P. Rosset and J. Vandermeer (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p.354.

[12]Interview in Steven White, Culture and Politics in Nicaragua: Testimonies of Poets and Writers (New York: Lumen Books, 1986), p.6.

[13]Lizabeth Dore, "Culture", in Nicaragua: The First Five Years, ed. Thomas Walker, p.415.

[14]Deborah Barndt, "Popular Education," in Nicaragua: The First Five Years, ed. Thomas Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985), p.321.

[15]Leonard Altilia, Education in the New Nicaragua (Toronto: CAPA [Canada-Caribbean-Central America Policy Alternatives], 1985), p.20.

[16]Omar Cabezas, La montaña no es algo más que una inmensa estepa verde (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1982), p. 240. (Quotation taken from, and translated by, D. Barndt, in "Popular Education," p.317).

[17]George Black and J. Bevan, The Loss of Fear, pp.39-40

[18]Los Muchachos, 9 February, 1983, 6:8

[19]Michael Dodson and T.S.Montgomery "The Churches in the Nicaraguan Revolution," in Nicaragua in Revolution, ed. Thomas Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1981). p.161. "Church" is used in this chapter in a general sense. Although it refers mainly to the Catholic Church it also includes Protestant congregations. In fact, all the churches experienced a similar process of radicalization.

[20]For a detailed history of this Community see Félix Jiménez Sánchez,"Historia de la Parroquia San Pablo Apóstol de Managua (1966-1988)," Managua, 1986 (Mimeograph.).

[21]Margaret Randall, <u>Christians in the Nicaraguan Revolution</u>, p.139.

[22]Ibid., p.137.

[23]Ibid., p.147.

[24]Ibid., p.124, for names and posts of these leaders.

[25]Ibid., p.136-37.

[26]Marc Zimmerman, <u>Nicaragua in Reconstruction and at War: The People Speak</u> (Minneapolis: MEP Publications, 1985), p.67.

[27]For theological discussions and socio-political interpretations of the Bible by the people see Ernesto Cardenal, <u>The Gospel in Solentiname</u>, 4 Vols.(Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1982). For the peasants' poetry see Mayra Jiménez, <u>Poesía Campesina de Solentiname</u> (Managua: Ministerio de Cultura, 1981). Perhaps the Community's most well-known pieces of popular art are the primitivist paintings which, as reproduced in colourful posters, have been widely distributed. For an example of these paintings and the primitivist style see Julio Valle Castillo, <u>El Inventario del Paraíso</u> (Managua: Ministerio de Cultura, nd.).

[28]Gregorio Smutko, "Cristianos de la Costa Atlántica en la Revolución," in <u>Nicaráuac</u>, No.5 (April-June 1981): 52.

[29]Michael Dodson and T.S. Montgomery, "The Churches in," p.171.

[30]Ibid., p.171.

[31]For a detailed biography of García Laviana see, Manuel Rodríguez García, <u>Gaspar Vive</u> (San José, Costa Rica: Artes Gráficas de Centro América, 1981).

[32]Richard Kraft, "Nicaragua: Educational," p.99.

[33]"For the Sandinista Front, democracy is not measured solely within the political field and is not reduced merely to participation of the people in elections...rather it means people's participation in political, economic, social and cultural matters. The more the people take part in these matters, the more democratic it will be.... Democracy means participation of the workers in managing the factories, farms, cooperatives and cultural centres. In synthesis, democracy is the intervention of the masses in all aspects of national life." (MED-DEI, <u>Nicaragua triunfa</u>, p.183). An insightful analysis of popular participation through mass organizations

in Nicaragua can be found in Gary Ruchwarger--a North American who was conducting research among these organizations at the time the writer visited the country and who assisted the writer in   ing contacts with some of these organizations. People in .   :r: Forging A Grass-roots Democracy in Nicaragua (South Hadl_y, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1987).

[34]"La Nueva Política Educativa" (Conference, Universidad Centroamericana, Managua, August, 1979); in Carlos Türnermann, Hacia una nueva educación en Nicaragua (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Texto, 1983). Quotation selecting the main features of the new education as found on pp.15-19.

[35]MED, Fines, Objetivos y Principios de la Nueva Educación (Managua: MED, 1983), p.2   (See "Appendix II" for a full version of the document "The Goals, Objectives and Principles of the New Education").

[36]Excerpts From the "FSLN Historic Program" (1969):
- The Sandinista people's revolution will establish the bases for development of the national culture, the people's education and university reform
- It will push forward a massive campaign to immediately wipe out illiteracy
- It will give attention to the development and progress of education at various levels (primary, secondary, technical, university, etc), and education will be free at all levels and obligatory at some
- It will grant scholarships (for housing, food, clothing, books, and transportation) to students who have limited economic resources
- It will train more and better qualified teachers, providing them with the scientific knowledge that the present era requires, in order to satisfy the needs of the entire student population
- It will adapt teaching programs and methods to the needs of the country. P. Rosset and J. Vandermeer eds. The Nicaraguan Reader (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p.37.

[37]See especially Fernando Cardenal and Valerie Miller, "Nicaragua 1980: The Battle of the ABCs", Harvard Educational Review, Vol.51,No.1, February 1981, pp. 1-25; Sheryl Hinshon and Judy Butter, And Also Teach Them to Read (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill Publishers, 1983); Valerie Miller, Between Struggle and Hope: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1985); MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa en la alfabetización (San José, Costa Rica: MED-DEI, 1981); Carlos Alemán Ocampo, Y también enséñenles a leer (Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua, 1984).

[38]Fernando Cardenal, in MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, p.27.

[39]MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, pp.63-4.

[40]For the objectives and organization of the Crusade see MED (Ministry of Education), Cuaderno de Educación Sandinista: Orientaciones para el alfabetizador (Managua: MED, 1980); and MED, Manual del Brigadista (Managua: MED, 1980). Both included in MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa.

[41]MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, p.171.

[42]George Black and J. Bevan, p.65.

[43]See "Testimonios Vivos de la Gran Cruzada Nacional de Alfabetización", in MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa; Section VII, pp.317-348.

[44]Ibid., pp.63-4.

[45]Orientaciones para el alfabetizador, in MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, p.639.

[46]Some of these by-products are: collection of samples of flora and fauna from different regions of the country; compilation of Nicaraguan popular culture--legends, popular songs, etc.; research of possible archaeological remains, mineral deposits, etc.; recovery of the oral history of the War of National Liberation through two thousand tape-recorded interviews, eye witness reports, etc.; health education programs, preventive medicine and environmental health; census to provide information on employment patterns, internal trade, agricultural resources and other data. See MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, p.75.

[47]Tünnermann, in MED-DEI, Nicaragua triunfa, p.161.

[48]For information on fieldwork related to the Popular Church, see Appendix 2, "Christian Participation."

[49]At least three factors help to explain this decline at that time: (1) the impact of the "contra war" had cast a pall of gloom on everything; (2) the split between the hierarchical and the Popular Church had increased significantly, and funding for many projects had been cut; (3) Christians now had a wealth of open fora and opportunities for political discourse and activities, now that Somoza had gone.

[50]Just to illustrate this point the writer can refer to a meeting held in the community of San Pablo Apóstol (Colonia Nicarao) at which he was present. A biblical passage from Exodus was read for group discussion and reflection. The passage referred to the difficulties endured by the Hebrews

in their journey through the desert after their liberation from the Egyptians and following Moses' to the promised land. After the passage was read, the groups began to discuss the meaning of the passage and what God was telling them there. Among the many keen observations of the participants the writer was especially impressed by the comments of Mrs. Chepita, an elderly housewife who commented in part:

> To me the passage is clearly telling us about the difficulties that the people have to endure in order to gain their liberation. Their hunger and thirst made them fall into despair just as the shortages and difficulties we face today make some lose their faith, becoming shortsighted about the struggle. Faced with their enormous problems in the desert, they idealize the past and tend to forget their sufferings in captivity, just as some of our people tend to forget our oppression under Somoza and feel tempted to follow the enemies of the people. I think that just as God put his people to the test we are also being tested: whether or not we are capable of keeping our faith in our Revolution or if we can be fooled into following false prophets who did nothing for us and never cared for us when we were in captivity.

CHAPTER 5

POST-LITERACY AND POPULAR EDUCATION

IN THE "NEW NICARAGUA"

This chapter focuses on the post-literacy and popular
education programs which developed after the Literacy
Crusade as a means of consolidating the new Nicaraguan
society. The role of popular education in strengthening
people's power through mass organizations, in shaping a new
cultural formation and a new pedagogy aimed at channelling
grass-roots participation is further discussed. As an
illustration of these programs and initiatives a closer
analysis is pursued in relation to the Collectives of
Popular Education (CEPs) which developed as the basic unit
of the new Program of Popular Basic Education. The final aim
of the chapter is to assess the extent to which popular
education has contributed to the process of democratization
in Nicaragua, and whether the new programs and the CEPs
themselves became vehicles of pedagogical and social
participation for the adult population.

Framework of Popular Education in the New Nicaragua

For a full comprehension of post-literacy follow-up and popular education programs in the new Nicaragua one has to take into consideration the changing socio-historical conditions against which such programs developed. To this effect a clear distinction should be made between two major stages marking the evolution of the revolutionary process. An early period (1979-1983) of enthusiasm and high morale, of broad national support and international cooperation, and in which the economy, although shaky, was still manageable. A second period (1984-1989) was characterized by growing internal opposition, a U.S. economic blockade, sabotage, and "contra war"; of an economy of despair when survival became the fundamental goal of all. As will be snown, educational development, whether within the formal or non-formal sector, clearly reflects the highs and lows of these stages.

Educational Expansion

The initial period of revolutionary fervour--reinforced by the success of the Literacy Crusade of 1980--was accompanied by a dramatic growth in all levels cf educational development. During the first five years of the Revolution the budget allocated to education in 1978 under

Somoza, 1.41 percent of the GNP, rose to 4.84 by 1984.[1] This increase of more than 400 percent in educational expenditure can be appreciated in the following statistics which clearly indicate the rapid expansion of educational services in Nicaragua during the first years of the Sandinistas.

Table 1: Number of Teachers (in thousands)

LEVEL	1978	79-80	80-81	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
PRE-SCHOOL	--	--	0,9	1,2	1,4	1,6	1,9	2,2
PRIMARY	9,9	12,5	14,1	14,7	16,3	16,9	17,1	17,3
SECONDARY	2,7	3,5	4,2	4,1	5,0	5,4	4,7	5,3
UNIVERSITY	--	--	1,4	1,5	1,7	2,0	2,0	1,9
SPECIAL ED.	N/A	N/A	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2
ADULT ED.	--	--	18,4	21,6	21,9	20,3	15,9	15,4
T O T A L	12,7	16,0	39,3	43,3	46,7	46,6	41,6	42,5

Table 2: Initial Student Enrolment (in thousands)

LEVEL	1978	79-80	80-81	81-82	82-83	83-84	84-85	85-86
PRE-SCHOOL	9,0	18,2	30,5	38,5	50,1	60,5	62,7	72,5
PRIMARY	369,6	431,1	503,4	534,9	564,5	553,9	576,5	563,9
SECONDARY	80,2	95,6	120,5	114,8	126,7	117,3	99,9	119,0
UNIVERSITY	20,9	28,7	34,7	33,8	35,5	34,5	29,0	26,7
SPECIAL ED.	N/A	N/A	1,4	1,5	1,6	1,4	2,1	2,5
ADULT ED.	--	--	143,8	148,3	166,2	129,2	104,1	120,8
SCHOOL OF ED.	2,0	1,9	2,5	3,7	6,1	8,0	9,5	10,6
AGRICULTURAL	0,1	0,4	0,9	1,1	2,5	2,1	1,6	1,5
INDUSTRIAL	2,3	2,1	2,3	2,9	3,9	3,1	3,5	3,0
COMMERCIAL	13,9	10,4	13,0	17,1	18,8	31,1	36,6	32,8
T O T A L	498,3	588,9	853,4	897,7	976,3	941,1	924,4	953,2

-- Figures not available
Sources: Office of the President of the Republic, The Political-Educational Plan of the Sandinista Popular Revolution (Managua, 1987) Appendix, p.A-6 for Table 1 and p.A-1 for Table 2.

(Figures for adult education in both tables include the newly literate who, after the Crusade, pursued post-literacy programs either as students or "popular teachers." These teachers, as will be discussed below, are not professionals but volunteer workers or peasants).

Apart from this quantitative growth, efforts were also made to improve the quality of education and to transform it in light of the principles and goals of the New Education. Thus, consequent to the goals of valuing manual labour and production, of relating theory to practice, curricular changes and new activities were implemented. An example of this was the creation of the "work-study program." Under this program didactic units on natural sciences were related to practical activities dealing with gardening, farming, agricultural subjects and skills. Mathematical and geometrical knowledge was applied to carpentry--fixing school furniture, helping to improve school building construction and so forth. In addition, links between school and community were developed, allowing students to undertake voluntary work and projects of community development in cooperation with local mass organizations. Similarly, provisions were made for students to visit work places and centres of production.[2] In the area of social sciences,

social and historical aspects of the Nicaraguan reality were incorporated.

If attempts to reduce the gap between school and productive work encouraged the growth of technical education, an even greater emphasis was placed on developing rural education. Since out of Nicaragua's population of 3 million, two-thirds is composed of rural inhabitants, educational and social policies in this sector were obviously needed.[3] Not only the "work-study program" but also many curricular innovations were oriented toward increasing awareness about the need to develop the rural sectors. Another measure undertaken in this regard was the project of "educational nuclearization" (nuclearización educativa) by means of which various schools in the same region were grouped together in order to share services and coordinate educational activities within the region. This project also attempted to coordinate efforts with mass organizations and the community regarding local and regional projects of development.[4]

Non-formal Education and Mass Organizations.

Since the statistics given above are mainly concerned with formal education, they do not reflect the rich out-of-school learning experiences and initiatives made

available through non-formal and informal education during the same period.[5] These include various types of learning which developed through popular education, mass organizations, mass media, and activities related to the revival of popular culture and expression. While formal education was directed toward influencing the younger generation, non-formal education was seen as the best means to reach the adult population and to enhance its support towards the revolutionary process:

> The main thrust of education today is not towards the formal sector. This is the hour of non-formal education in Nicaragua.... The possibilities are endless, and it is up to us to define the state apparatus, the ideological apparatus. The educational system is a gigantic upsurge, like a tidal wave, which shows itself in the mass media, the newspapers, in the CDS [Sandinista Defense Committee] meetings, in every facet of the class struggle. The participation of the masses in the whole range of economic and other activities, through non-formal education outside the classroom, is building up revolutionary ideology in all sectors of the population. The school system as such is only one element of this. The school itself, the role which the school will play as an institution, is to back up the wider concept of non-formal education.... We have blown apart the myth that education is something which only takes place in the schools.[6]

Although non-formal education was especially directed toward enhancing mass organizations, its influence was nevertheless felt in society at large. As many of these organizations had

participated in the Crusade they acquired a rich experience in popular education techniques and methodology--in fact, as discussed in the previous chapter, many of these organizations had already been associated with popular education and conscientization work during the Somoza period. Popular education was later used by these organizations in order to achieve objectives of their own, such as encouraging the acquisition of analytical and practical skills by their members and to increase the productive capacity of different groups and sectors.

The Rural Workers' Association (ATC) and the National Farmers and Ranchers Organization (UNAG), with the support of the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA), organized periodic workshops to help peasants set up and run the cooperatives, deal with the banks, learn how and which fertilizer should be used and so forth. UNAG published periodic bulletins for its members and also delved deeply into popular education techniques and methodology related to peasants' training and rural development.[7] Many of these rural education programs were backed-up by CEPA personnel who either lent in-service assistance in designated areas and institutions or provided training for teams who came to CEPA's own premises.[8] Similar popular education programs were developed in relation to

women's issues and women's participation by the Nicaraguan
Women's Association (AMNLAE). In addition, national
campaigns dealing with health, coffee- and cotton-picking,
community development and lately, defense have also taken
advantage of popular education techniques.

On the cultural side, the creation of the National
Ministry of Culture, headed by the internationally-known
priest and poet Ernesto Cardenal, became the centre for a
number of activities which developed within the general
framework of Nicaragua's cultural revival. The mandate of
the new Ministry covered a wide range of objectives:

> It looks for ways to preserve and promote the
> historical and cultural values of Nicaragua. It
> promotes the arts and makes technical assistance
> and methodology available. It organizes and
> publicizes conferences on health, culture,
> technique, politics, education; symposiums,
> forums, cinema-forums, art exhibitions. It
> researches folklore, the new testimonial
> expression, and other traditional and existing
> artistic forms and customs, opens museums,
> collects songs and music to record, poetry and
> literature to print, recovers legend, myth and
> popular culture.[9]

Many of these activities were co-sponsored by the Sandinista
Cultural Workers Association (ASTC), an organization which
is composed of intellectuals, professional and amateur
artists and workers associated with the arts.

The Popular Cultural Centre (CPC) was another organization whose aim was directly concerned with channelling Nicaragua's new-found drive for cultural expression and creativity. The CPC promoted popular artistic expression at the level of grass-roots organizations and lent assistance to those cultural committees organized in the work place. While the CPC concentrated its work in urban settings, the Peasant Movement of Artistic and Theatrical Expression (MECATE) organized similar activities in the rural areas. MECATE's philosophy was to address peasants' issues and problems through popular theatre especially by generating discussions among the peasants after each representation. Their goal was not only concerned with getting the public involved in discussions and learning from them but also with the training of peasants to form their own local groups for theatrical and artistic expression. Moreover, on the outskirts of Matagalpa, a branch of MECATE established a centre whose work combined activities on popular theatre with research and promotion of alternative forms of rural technology.[10]

Another indication of Nicaragua's cultural revitalization was the impressive increase in the publishing and the diffusion of numerous books, bulletins, popular literature and pedagogic material which flourished

throughout the country. (In fact, the Nicaraguan Revolution itself became an important Latin American subject to which a great deal of writing and discussion from abroad was dedicated). Just as important was the use of popular communication through which mass organizations promoted their educative and organizational tasks. Other forms of mass media such as national newspapers, television, and radio, also incorporated popular communication approaches as an educative tool to facilitate contact with the people. The program "De Cara al Pueblo" (Facing the People) is a good example of this. These are public meetings in which a national leader openly discusses specific issues of concern with the people. The aim of these meetings--which are organized throughout the country--is to listen to people's problems and complaints so that government officials keep in touch with the reality of popular sectors. These meetings are broadcast on television and radio, and thus promote a deeper understanding of the political reality within the country.

In all of these examples of popular education and cultural activity various principles and objectives of the New Education were put into practice, although none of these examples was undertaken within the formal system of education. Indeed, the experiences in terms of

self-learning, organizational skills, the deepening of cultural roots and identity, were all components of a rich practice of learning and popular participation. The most dramatic and massive effort to develop popular education, however, took place within the Collectives of Popular Education which were formed during the post-literacy follow-up and constituted the basic units of the national program of basic popular education.

Post-literacy and the Collectives of Popular Education

The successful completion of the Literacy Crusade opened up a new and very demanding challenge: how to sustain the recently acquired literacy skills of the thousands of newly literate and to provide them with further educational opportunities beyond that initial stage—not to mention the need to continue working on the 13 percent illiteracy rate which still remained after the Crusade. This was a very difficult challenge considering the extremely limited material and human resources available and the fact that Nicaragua, apart from some scattered efforts in the field, did not have a comprehensive sub-system of adult education which could respond to the new needs of the adult

population.[11] As Nicaraguan Vice-President Sergio Ramírez
put it:

> We would have done nothing, the efforts and
> sacrifices invested in the Crusade would have
> vanished, if we did not attempt to create a system
> of popular education in order to incorporate the
> newly literate into the world of learning and
> culture. We need that Nicaragua convert itself
> into one huge school for the people, a permanent
> school to which the Brigadistas can always come
> back as teachers whenever and wherever they may be
> asked to do so; a school that never loses its
> impulse, enthusiasm and fervour.[12]

In response to this need, immediately after the
Crusade, an intense program of post-literacy and follow-up
activities was launched throughout the country under the
name of "Plan de Sostenimiento," the basic goal of which was
to "sustain" the Crusade's impressive achievements. This
post-literacy period or Sostenimiento was considered to be a
bridge between the Crusade and the future implementation of
a national program of adult education. The period of
Sostenimiento ran from October 1980 to March 1981 when the
Program of Basic Popular Education started.

Apart from sustaining literacy development among the
newly literate and assisting those who had not reached a
desirable level by the end of the Crusade, the Sostenimiento
also had the important objective of consolidating the CEPs.
The CEPs, in fact, began to be organized in the last stages

of the Crusade, when brigadistas and literacy instructors
were encouraged to form small study-groups which would
continue to function after the Crusade. This was done in
order to avoid the possible dispersion of the groups once
the brigadistas and instructors returned, at the end of the
Crusade, to their normal activities and localities. Since
the Crusade had counted upon a great number of brigadistas
and literacy assistants and therefore, the teaching had
often been undertaken on a person to person basis, at home
or at the family level, the withdrawal of the brigadistas
created a very difficult situation. This amounted to a lack
of qualified personnel available to continue the
Sostenimiento, a lack which was especially felt in the rural
areas where literacy work had relied greatly upon outside
intervention.

A temporary solution to this problem was to resort to
the newly literate themselves, especially the more advanced,
who would become monitors or teaching assistants within
their own groups. This solution forced the re-structuring of
the groups in accordance with students' literacy levels,
travel distances, and the availability of newly literate or
local personnel to supervise post-literacy activities. The
assignment of teaching functions to some of the newly
literate was considered a temporary solution because it was

assumed that by the end of the Sostenimiento period new and more qualified teachers would come to take charge of the CEPs.

The immediate objective of the Sostenimiento, then, was to complete the organization of the groups or CEPs and the nomination of the coordinator and the promoter who would be in charge of supervising the post-literacy activities until the new program started and more qualified personnel became available. In the meantime, the coordinator, who would become the actual "teacher" of the group or CEP, was to be chosen from among those newly literate workers or peasants or any other local individual possessing some schooling or just the basic ability to read and write. The promoter--the eventual "teacher" of the coordinator, of whom a higher level of instruction and schooling was demanded--would be in charge of several coordinators and CEPs and would act as the main liaison between these CEPs and the administrative zonal level of the Sostenimiento plan. Both coordinators and promoters, or "popular teachers" as they were called, were to be individuals of proven capacity who were also strongly committed to the Revolution; ideally, these people should belong to some of the popular mass organizations.[13]

In addition, a number of other administrative measures were taken during the period of Sostenimiento. The most

important of these was the creation of the Sub-Ministry of

Adult Education whose mandate concerned the planning and

coordination of all activities dealing with literacy and

adult education, starting with the supervision of the

Sostenimiento itself.[14] Also, for reasons of administrative

and technical supervision, the Sostenimiento plan was

divided into national, regional and zonal levels, forming a

chain which went from the national headquarters in Managua,

passing through regional and zonal levels, down to the CEP.

Thus, the zonal level was in closest contact to the CEPs and

provided them with administrative and pedagogical

supervision. This supervision was especially conducted

through the Saturday Sandinista Workshops (Talleres

Sandinistas Sabatinos) in which coordinators and promoters

received teacher training.

The Sostenimiento also took advantage of the

continuation of some of the back-up pedagogical means

created during the Crusade, such as the radio program "Puño

en Alto," the special sections "Nuestra Nueva Trinchera"

published in the national newspapers, and the television

program "De la A hasta la Z." In addition, specific new

pedagogical material for the Sostenimiento was

created--Revista 19 de Julio with reading material for the

newly literate and the Manual del Coordinador de Educación

<u>Popular</u> containing instructions and methodological

orientations for coordinators and promoters. After these

five months of post-literacy activities the educational

authorities devised the final program of popular basic

education whose first semester started in March of 1981.

The Program of Basic Popular Education

The new Program was largely mounted on the same

administrative and pedagogical infrastructure created during

the period of Sostenimiento. The CEPs, with an average of

eight students each and functioning either in a classroom, a

neighbourhood, union or cooperative locale, were kept as the

basic unit of the Program.[15] When the Program started there

were 143,816 students participating in about 15,000 CEPs

with 15,187 coordinators and 3,282 promoters (A more

comprehensive table and references are provided below). The

majority of the participants belonged to the rural areas (75

percent); 37 percent were peasants or farmers, 27 percent

housewives, and 10 percent workers; they were predominantly

young (61 percent between 10 to 24 years of age); and 60

percent were women.[16]

After the first semester of March 1981, a new level was

added each semester, so that in 1984 the seven levels of

which the Program currently consists were completed.[17] One

introductory level (for permanent literacy training) and six

levels of general basic education which combined the

teaching of language and mathematics (especially from the

first to fourth levels), natural sciences and social

sciences (introduced during the fifth and sixth levels).

After completing Level VII, it was expected that the

students would have acquired a fair mastery of language

(reading and writing), mathematical operations, and

elementary concepts of basic education which would allow

them to pursue further specific technical training.

The orientation of the Program was aimed at increasing

productivity and participation in the revolutionary process.

Study within the CEPs was directed at strengthening links

between the CEPs and the mass organizations. Approximately

70 percent of the promoters, 50 percent of the coordinators

and 42 percent of the students belonged to a popular

organization.[18] Texts and curriculum content were bound to

reflect this general orientation of the Program. Thus, for

instance, strong emphasis on language at the initial levels

was seen as a means of enabling a more comprehensive study

of social and natural sciences which were to be approached

in accordance with rising revolutionary consciousness and

productivity.[19] For every subject there were textbooks which

were issued by the Ministry of Education and distributed free to the students.

Similar to the methodological principles governing the Crusade, the Program attempted a participatory methodology based on dialogue and discussions. This methodology was to be implemented by following three interrelated steps to be applied to each lesson: 1) Let's observe and analyze reality; 2) Let's interpret reality; and 3) Let's transform reality.

> In relation to methodology, the intent at all times has been to maintain and enrich the experience of the CNA [National Literacy Crusade], through which, starting with observation, analysis and interpretation of a particular reality--local or national--it sought to instill the development of the patriotic revolutionary consciousness.[20]

In other words, as a methodology of conscientization it sought to move on from observation of reality to its analysis and critical understanding then to the more complex step of attempting to transform such a reality.

The total number of students enrolled (143,816) seems quite low if compared with the more than 400,000 newly literate resulting from the Crusade, a large proportion of whom was expected to get involved in the Program. One reason for this decline--which was already felt during the Sostenimiento--could be related to the number of older

people who may have regarded the basic skills obtained during the Crusade as a terminal objective. There was also the difficulty of keeping alive the same mobilization devoted to the Crusade—during which the school year was cancelled and the efforts of many popular organizations and governmental agencies were almost exclusively directed towards this national objective—when much of these efforts had to be diverted to other more urgent demands of the revolutionary process.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that apart from the low enrolment as compared to the Crusade, the running of the Program itself encountered a great many difficulties. From national statistics measuring the dynamic of the CEPs during the first years of the Program (see table below), it is possible to deduce that of each 10 students who registered in the CEPs, only 6 completed the semester and 4 passed to the next level. Approximately 25 percent of the coordinators and 14 percent of the promoters abandoned the CEPs before the end of the semester. About 25 percent of the CEPs disintegrated without reaching the end of the semester.

Initial and Final Number of Students, Coordinators,
Promoter, and CEPs (in thousands)

Year	Semest	STUDENTS			COORDINATORS		PROMOTERS		CEPs	
		Init.	Final	Pass	Init.	Final	Init.	Final	Init.	Final
1981	1	143,8	--	--	15,1	--	3,2	--	15,1	--
	2	167,8	--	--	20,2	--	3,8	--	20,5	--
1982	1	148,3	99,4	65,5	18,2	15,1	3,3	3,1	18,4	15,3
1983	1	166,2	97,9	62,3	18,8	14,9	3,1	2,7	19,0	14,9
	2	121,8	73,1	47,1	16,6	12,5	2,9	2,5	16,8	12,6
1984	1	129,2	69,6	48,5	17,2	11,7	3,1	2,5	17,4	11,9

-- figures not available

Sources: MED, Adult Education Program, Boletines
Estadísticos, Nos.1-12, Managua, 1982-1985.

Some of the difficulties faced by the CEPs derived

from obstacles found in assuring a smooth transition from

the Crusade to the Sostenimiento as well as the short

duration assigned to the latter. In many cases the

brigadistas had left the groups by the end of the Crusade

without having organized the CEPs or nominating substitutes.

This resulted in administrative and organizational problems

which took precious time for learning away from the already

brief period assigned to the Sostenimiento. In effect, the

remarkable heterogeneity in terms of readiness and rhythms

of learning shown by the first promotions of the Program

seemed to have been a clear reflection of those difficulties

experienced during the Sostenimiento. A heterogeneity which

was further complicated by the huge diversity in student ages, geographic location and socio-economic occupation found among the participants of the CEPs.

As new levels opened, this problem of heterogeneity, added to the constant drop-out of teachers and students, led to the formation of the mixed CEP in which the inexperienced coordinator was confronted not only with the supervision of the group but also with more than one level of the Program within the same CEP. The high number of mixed CEPs (45 percent average but higher in rural areas) became one of the most serious problems of the Program. Having more than one level functioning within the same group—with more than one set of pedagogical materials and curricular graduation—made the application of a methodology which was based on dialogue and active participation extremely difficult.[21] As during the Sostenimiento, this heterogeneity within the CEPs undermined also the effectiveness of the pedagogical and reading material which, being designed at the national level and targeted at an ideal standard of learning, could not adequately respond to such a heterogenous population. This was especially true in the rural areas. In these areas, not only was the rhythm of learning much slower but also participants could not take full advantage of back-up

material via television, radio or newspapers, all of which were mainly inaccessible to this population.

Another problem which became apparent with the initiation of the Program was the fact that the supply of new and qualified teachers who were supposed to take charge of the CEPs did not turn out to be anywhere near the number expected.[22] As a result of this, the popular teachers, who were thought of originally as a transitory solution or as assistants for qualified teachers, had to become themselves the permanent supervisors of the Program. Although the incorporation of the popular teachers resulted in a very innovative and well-intentioned form of popular education, it also implied a number of constraints.

On the one hand, there were many sacrifices involved in accepting a position as a popular teacher. Apart from being voluntary work--only in those exceptional cases when these teachers were unemployed or part-time workers was a minimum economic incentive provided--it was also an intensely time-consuming activity (at least two sessions weekly of two hours each in the CEP, in addition to the Saturday Workshops). Moreover, especially in the rural areas, long hours of walking were normally required to reach the CEP. In addition to these problems, as the war situation began to intensify, the popular teacher and the CEPs themselves faced

constant danger as they became the preferred targets of
military attacks by the Contras.[23]

The CEPs as a Means of Democratization

It is clear that the final goal of the Program and the
CEPs was tied to the Sandinistas' socio-historical project
of building a participatory democracy in Nicaragua. In
achieving this goal a great emphasis was placed on the
democratization of education through both formal and
non-formal education. There are at least two levels upon
which educational democratization can be analyzed. At one
level democratization can be seen in terms of quantitative
development of educational opportunities made available to a
greater proportion of the population. At a second level,
educational democratization can be seen in terms of
democratic education, of qualitative changes within the
educative process itself as it moves, for instance, from a
banking practice to a model of liberating or popular
education such as that proclaimed by the CEPs. These two
perspectives are taken into consideration when analyzing the
CEPs as a means of democratization.

In quantitative terms, the most obvious indication of
educational democratization is that related to the massive
increase of educational opportunities which the CEPs made

available to a large number of people who previously had little, if any, access to education. In fact, for many of the popular teachers and students the Crusade and their continuation in the CEPs constituted their first experience with organized education. However, notwithstanding the remarkable gains in literacy and basic education, the quantitative achievements were not matched by similar levels in terms of the quality and continuity of the new educational opportunities being offered. Moreover, after an enthusiastic and massive start, both the quantity and quality of education experienced a serious deterioration which started to gradually intensify in 1983. There is no doubt that the major reason for this deterioration was due to U.S. aggression and the disastrous impact of the war on the economy and the whole social fabric of Nicaragua.[24]

Initially the most direct effects of the war upon the CEPs were felt in those rural areas bordering Honduras and Costa Rica which came under increasing attack by the Contras, with the acceleration of the war the disruption of the CEPs took a dramatic toll throughout the country. Many of the participants were mobilized for reasons of defense either joining the army or protecting strategic points such as centres of production, bridges and roads. During 1985 and 1986 it is estimated that student enrolment and the number

of CEPs decreased 40 percent as compared to average figures

for the period 1981-1984, a decrease which was never

overcome but worsened in subsequent years.[25] This dramatic

disruption of the CEPs was soon followed by the

deterioration of all levels of education as the country

started to live an economy of survival:

> All capital investments in education were frozen
> in order to redirect economic resources towards
> defense. By 1984, over 800 schools had been
> destroyed by the war and 180 teachers and students
> killed. Over 45,000 students stopped studying due
> to the consequent suspension of educational
> services. And, increasingly, in many areas of the
> country, teachers had 'to work with a gun in the
> right hand and chalk in the left' as contra forces
> targeted schools and CEPs as representatives of
> the revolution.[26]

Not only capital investments in education--as in other

social services and programs--were frozen but the

educational budget itself was increasingly reduced as nearly

half of the national budget had to be diverted to defense.

This deterioration caused by the state of war and budget

reductions are clearly illustrated by some of the indices

reported by a Nicaraguan commission in 1987:

- Whereas by 1983 primary education covered 80 percent of

  the eligible population this percentage decreased to 76

  percent. This means that 24 percent of children between 7

and 12 years (about 150,000) are left without schooling; therefore, every year there will be about 20.000 new illiterates over 10 years of age.

- Last year there were no textbooks for the 6th grade; this year there are none for the 7th grade; next year there will be none for the 8th grade. Obviously this causes serious pedagogical and educational problems.

- The increase in the national level of illiteracy reached 20 percent by 1987 as compared to 12.9 when the National Literacy Crusade ended.

- The alarming mobility of qualified teaching personnel for reasons of migration or shift to other better paid occupations forced their replacement with untrained personnel, raising the level of uncertified teachers at a national average as high as 50 percent.

- The political-ideological work directed at teachers and students has not cultivated, to the desired degree, love and responsibility towards the tasks of teaching and learning. This disarticulation of revolutionary values is expressed by not fulfilling daily academic assignments, absences, disinterest in teaching and studying, and destruction and poor maintenance of the centres of study. Academic excellence and high aspirations have lost

prestige among many teachers. Lack of order, discipline,

and respect for institutional authorities is rampant.

- There was a marked debilitation of the adult education

  program characterized by low enrolment, amount of

  territory covered, and deteriorating quality, not all of

  which was caused by the war.[27]

However, beyond the damaging effect of the war, there

were also internal limitations to maintaining a sustainable

massive educational reform, such as the country's very

limited resources even before the war and constraints due

to the shortcomings inherent in the Program and policies

undertaken. The director of the Program, Eduardo Baez, made

this point clear in 1986 while evaluating the deterioration

of the CEPs:

> We can't fall into blaming the war for all our
> problems in education; that's a cop-out. The
> crisis is also in our methods, work and
> conceptions. The war is a fundamental element we
> need to take into account, but it is not the only
> cause of our problems.[28]

Baez mentioned that one of the problems had to do with the

central bureaucracy which, feeling more at ease with a

formal conception of education, started to gradually

undermine the popular orientation of the Program. For the

same reason, he acknowledged, the method and curriculum fell

short of. responding to the needs of the adult population which is why "it has become harder and harder to recruit both teachers and learners to a program that is often irrelevant to their lives." To him, this centralization and bureaucratization meant a change from "a program which at first was based on people's reality, but hᴛ in large part shifted to the reality of the national staff."[29] Criticizing attempts at nationally standardizing the Program along the lines of formal education, Baez proposed to reaffirm the initial non-formal, popular education character of the Program, further adapting it to local needs, and the geographic and socio-economic conditions of each region and community.

A statistical survey undertaken by the Ministry of Education in 1986 also found that the links between the Program and the people had become weaker, especially those links with mass organizations. It reported that of all participants in the rural areas only 6.67 percent corresponded to the economically active population. Only 10 percent of them belonged to the ATC or UNAG which are the two major trade unions in the countryside. Participation of members of mass organizations in the urban sectors was even lower. Out of the total number registered in the Program in 1986 only 42.5 percent belonged to a productive sector while

57.4 percent were from non-productive sectors.[30] The massive

incorporation of women and youth, as previously noted, may

account for the predominance of participants identified as

belonging to non-productive sectors.[31]

There is, however, another important reason which also

conspired against a more sustainable educational

development. This has to do with the ambitious and highly

politically oriented educational policies undertaken by the

government, and with the few resources available to sustain

their implementation. As these policies were heavily tied to

the Sandinistas' political project they tended to lose

acceptance as support for that project became less

enthusiastically embraced, or when economic hardships

diverted people's attention from political-ideological

concerns to securing their more immediate needs.[32] In

addition, as the educational reform was mainly oriented to

serve the ideological needs of the socio-political project

of the Sandinistas, the quality of education became

increasingly subordinated to the ideological and

organizational needs of such a project. Further, the lack of

the technical and logistical capability to properly respond

to the demands of a massive reform led to improvisation, and

resorting to solutions which often even contradicted the

stated goals of the reform. This may explain why, as Baez

complained, the Program became more and more concentrated in
the hands of central authorities and solutions were
increasingly imposed in a "top-to-bottom" fashion.

In the long run, it seems that it was the emergence of
the popular teachers, despite the initial difficulties and
even though they had been considered to be a transitory
solution, that became one of the most concrete and original
expressions of educational democratization. The fact that
humble peasants, workers, housewives and young people had
seen themselves involved in teaching and leadership
activities was a clear application of the popular education
principle of reliance upon people themselves to undertake
their own education. Moreover, the emergence of these
teachers not only constituted an original alternative to the
lack of qualified teaching personnel, it also reflected the
trust that the Revolution placed upon the people.

This new popular education modality, represented by
these teachers and the CEPs, brought with it at least two
important implications. Firstly, on pedagogical terms it
meant an attempt at demystifying the professionalism and
highly regarded status of the teaching function, placing the
relationship between "teacher and student," "learning and
teaching" on more symmetric grounds. This new type of
relationship within the educative process ultimately meant a

serious attempt at breaking the banking approach and the verticality between teaching and learning. In this, the previously unilateral and pre-established authority of the teachers became one which had to be gained in the process itself by means of reciprocal and cooperative interaction.

Secondly, this modality also had a socio-personal implication, starting with the sense of self-worth of these teachers and the new values of cooperation, solidarity, service, sacrifice, and responsibility which moved them to get involved in their difficult task. However, this sense of self-worth and the new type of relationships and values being promoted within the CEPs did not only affect the participants on personal grounds. It was also the self-worth of a particular social class, of its potential for acquiring new knowledge and experiences as well as valuing their own, that was being revindicated. Moreover, inasmuch as the effects of the new values and forms of democratization went beyond the CEPs, influencing the participants' behaviour in their immediate personal and social context, society at large also felt the effects of further democratization. Participants in the CEPs were not only students/teachers but also parents, union leaders, workers, and members of the various social organizations in which they participated and

as such the potential influence of the CEPs was quite considerable.

The CEPs also played an important role as a means of cultural democratization in affecting people's expression and means of communication. In effect, perhaps as a result of the intense literacy and post-literacy work one of the most clear educational gains within the CEPs was that related to the domain of language. However, this form of cultural democratization as reflected by a new-found capacity for expression and communication--stressed by most of the participants of the CEPs[33]--cannot be seen in isolation from the whole revolutionary process which was, ultimately, the main source for the new practice in language and culture. As discussed above, the Nicaraguan cultural revival was seen as one more means to promote more participatory, creative and dialogical relations in society at large. We have also seen that an important objective of popular education deals with enhancing people's means of expression and communication.

Although these achievements can be considered a natural result of literacy and a basic education program which placed strong emphasis on language, there is, nonetheless, something to be said for the dynamics and methodology of the Program itself. Firstly, there is the fact that since the

CEP was small, it provided opportunities for close interaction and participation; moreover, the participants already knew each other and interacted on a face to face basis even before entering the CEP. In addition, since many CEPs were organized in the work place, the participants came to interact as fellow-workers and fellow-students at the same time.

On the other hand, there is also the nature of the method which, in spite of the serious difficulties in applying it fully, has, nonetheless, instilled more dynamic and participatory kinds of relations. The three steps of the method which are applied to each lesson offer a wide range of activities to be performed by students, such as reading aloud, taking dictation, summarizing a passage, engaging in dramatization, and asking and responding to questions. It should be noted, however, that although many of the these activities were done, quite often they were performed in a mechanical fashion and without taking full advantage of all the specifics expected for each step. Obviously the most difficult step of all is the last one in which students are supposed to relate and apply the new knowledge to the eventual transformation of reality. While it was easier to conduct the first two steps by "observing reality" through a picture or drawing and "interpreting it" through discussion,

the last step of eventually "transforming reality" cannot be pursued or evaluated with the same ease in a classroom situation, at least not in anything beyond a figurative sense.[34]

In view of this gap between what is expected and what is eventually accomplished in each step one can see that the ideal popular education features of the method, of dialogical, active, critical, and creative participation, are still far from becoming the normal routine of the class.[35] Particularly critical have been the difficulties of making dialogue the desired central feature of the method. R.M. Torres notes that the intended "dialogue" seldom leads to reciprocal and reflective forms of communication and debate since it is often conducted as a kind of oral questionnaire in which the animator's role is limited to asking questions (and determining the validity of the answers) while that of the students is simply to respond to the questions asked.[36] It is true that the CEP provided opportunities for participation; however, it seems that the quality of such participation is at a very elemental stage. Even at higher levels of the Program, one can see that the normal routine of the class evolved in ways which were still quite distant from the ideal popular education features that the method and the Program were supposed to instill.

No doubt some of the failure in taking a greater
advantage of the method can be partially attributed to the
lack of expertise of the coordinators, but it is also due to
the ambitious and unrealistic features of the method itself.
There is a big gap between the degree of complexity and
abstraction which are implied in the method and the lack of
readiness of the participants to respond to them. This gap
reflects a tendency towards overlooking the deep distortion
that the prolonged state of deprivation has imprinted upon
the psychological traits and learning styles of the social
strata to which the participants of the CEPs belong. These
are students who, instead of readily assimilating to those
higher levels of abstraction implied in the method, find
themselves primarily struggling with their very basic
problems of inhibition, passivity, and limited levels of
self-expression--basic problems which clearly illustrate the
well-established social devaluation of their
socio-linguistic codes and patterns of socialization.
Although some changes are taking place, especially in the
field of expression and communication, it takes a much
longer time--at least longer than the Program seems to
assume--to achieve the desired substantial breakthrough in
cultural transformation.

In a way, it can be said that the potential role of the CEPs in fostering cultural democratization by enhancing popular expression and communication is related to the problem of finding the best strategy--the least culturally alienating--to move from the "restricted" sociolinguistic code to the "elaborated" one. Even though efforts are made to simplify the language, it seems that the expected achievement of higher levels of abstraction and expression are intrinsically connected to gradually developing a linguistic-cognitive synthesis between the students' concrete symbolic universe and the abilities required by their new learning situation. In addition, it should also be clear that these achievements do not rest on pedagogical intervention alone. In the same way as the students' sociolinguistic and psychological patterns were shaped by a prolonged state of deprivation, these patterns can only be gradually changed in a wider context in which pedagogical interventions is also accompanied by greater efforts in enhancing social, political and economic democratization of society at large.

P E R S P E C T I V E

To do justice to post-literacy work and the various initiatives on popular education, these efforts should be placed in the context of the growing difficulties facing post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Confronted with the country's inherited state of underdevelopment, the lack of elemental resources and qualified personnel,[37] the deterioration of the economy and the all-embracing sense of emergency caused by the war, one cannot fail to recognize the tremendous constraints placed on the massive educational reform which was attempted. Seeking to reverse the backwardness of 45 years of dictatorship during which the populace had little access to education and social participation, the New Education attempted to foster the new skills and values for radically transforming Nicaraguan society. The dramatic development of formal education, the initiatives on cultural transformation, and the role of popular education in strengthening grass-roots organizations, were all integral elements directed at securing the practical and ideological skills needed for that participatory society which was sought.

In these conditions of social deterioration, the mere possibility of a sustainable educational reform seemed to border on the impossible. But in spite of this, the Sandinistas chose to undertake radical and massive change instead of attempting a more moderate intervention. It appears that the overriding voluntarism, or romanticism, fed by the early revolutionary fervour, made it impossible to conceive of a more selective and less intensive reform effort which, perhaps, would have been easier to control and administer. Political motivation and the urgency to consolidate the Revolution seemed to have been more important concerns than implementing a more gradual educational change in which quality was as much important as the quantitative dimension of that change.

It may be argued that the constraints faced by popular education and the CEPs can be seen as a clear reflection of the constraints placed on the whole revolutionary process, a process whose challenging attempt at democratizing from poverty was not only further undermined by U.S. external aggression but also by the inherited values and structures of the former society while the new one was far from being attained. Although popular education in general and the CEPs in particular may have helped to nourish democratic values and structures, their work alone could not surmount the

multiple economic, political, and cultural barriers
confronting the process of social change. Insofar as the
CEPs were born of the Revolution they, and the revolutionary
process as a whole, faced the same challenges, difficulties,
and contradictions.

Those who were building a more participatory society
and forging a new consciousness and new values seem to have
overestimated the role of education in achieving these
objectives--as exemplified by the experience of the CEPs.
While the CEPs, despite all the difficulties and
contradictions previously discussed, indeed constituted a
worthy start in terms of inculcating the value of
participation and enhancing peoples' means of communication
and expression, it would be utopian to expect that the new
participatory democracy would develop solely from their work
and other forms of educational and cultural intervention.
The building of such a democracy involves many social
interventions, plus a variety of lengthy individual and
collective forms of learning and experience, of which
education as a whole is, though important, just one factor
among many.

On the other hand, the whole process of literacy and
post-literacy, from the Crusade to the various forms of
popular education, was carried out under so many constraints

and difficulties that if not for that voluntarism and
enthusiasm springing from the Revolution, perhaps it would
never even have been attempted. From the perspective of a
poor and dependent country, torn apart by economic and
military warfare, the mere decision to implement these
programs and keep them running to the extent that we have
discussed here appears in itself to be an important
accomplishment of the revolutionary process.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

[1]MED, Cinco años de educación, p.318.

[2]It is stated that the kind of tasks assigned through the "work-study program" are graduated to the students' physical capacity and theoretical studies and "in no way undermine classroom studies." These assurances, however, did not satisfy opposition groups which saw in these curricular changes political indoctrination and a way of using students as part of the labour force (similar complaints had been made in relation to the Literacy Crusade). MED, Cinco años de educación, pp.XIV-XV.

[3]Just to give some idea about the rural conditions of Nicaragua it should be noted that the population of Managua, the biggest city, only reaches 552,900 inhabitants (1979). The other major cities are: León (81,647), Matagalpa (61,383), Granada (56,232). Apart from this, all other larger towns such as Masaya (34,127) and Estelí (26,764), and practically all the smaller villages are rural centres, heavily dependent on farming and agricultural activities. Encyclopedia of the Third World (New York: Facts and File, 1987 ed.), p.1433 (Vol.2).

[4]For more information on educational nuclearization see MED, Cinco años de educación, pp.213-222.

[5]The distinction made here between informal, non-formal and formal education (or informal, non-formal and formal types of learning) is that made by Coombs and Ahmed as quoted by Thomas La Belle. "Informal education is 'the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment'; nonformal education is 'any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adult as well children.' The major difference between these two processes rests with the deliberate instructional and programmatic emphasis present in nonformal education but absent in informal education. The third or formal mode of learning is defined by the authors as the 'institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured educational system, spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university.'" (La Belle Nonformal Education and Social Change in Latin America, p.21.)

[6]Miguel de Castilla, high Nicaraguan official of educational planning, as quoted by Black and Bevan in The Loss of Fear. p.36.

[7]A revealing example of popular education methodology and techniques used for peasants' training can be found in UNAG, Capacitación campesina. Un programa de educación popular para dirigentes de base de la UNAG (Managua, Nicaragua: UNAG, 1985). This work reports a massive program of popular education undertaken during two years (1983-1985) in which 2,800 peasants leaders participated.

[8]In CEPA, the writer had the opportunity to hold a long conversation with the director of the institution, Ricardo Zúñiga, regarding the activities and organization of the institution. María Loreto, assistant secretary, took the time to show the various kinds of pedagogical material used for popular education and allowed the writer to observe a full day session of a training workshop being held at the institution.

[9]Imuris, "Nicaragua's Cultural Renewal: Voices from the Cultural Workers," in Nicaraguan Perspective, No.5 (Winter 1983): 13 (published by Nicaraguan Information Centre, Berkeley, CA)

[10]Through contact with a Canadian group from Saskatoon visiting Nicaragua at that time, this author was invited to join the group in order to attend a theatrical representation at the centre in Matagalpa. The representation was followed by a long conversation with the members and director of the group, Allan Bolt, who explained their efforts to use theatre as a form of popular education to promote alternative rural technology for self-reliance. After this conversation we were invited to observe some of these alternative forms being developed at the centre. These included housing construction using cheaper vegetal material for roofing, constructing chicken and rabbit pens for meat consumption, and learning gardening techniques for improving the cultivation of vegetables.

[11]Although adult education in Nicaragua did not start with the Revolution, efforts prior to 1979 were scattered and mainly directed by private institutions. The State provided some vocational and technical programs as well as a program of adult education (an accelerated primary for adults), but the State did not count on a comprehensive sub-system of adult education as such. There were also the more radicalized experiences—as discussed in the previous chapter—working on literacy, conscientization and popular education. See Cinco años de educación , pp.43-47.

[12]Sergio Ramírez Mercado, (Speech celebrating the conclusion of the National Literacy Crusade, August 23, 1980), in MED-DEI, _Nicaragua triunfa_, p.174-5.

[13]For a more detailed description of the desired characteristics and functions of the coordinators and promoters see MED-DEI, _Nicaragua triunfa_, p.283

[14]Under Somoza the department of adult education was subordinated to the National Office of Primary Education. The creation of the Vice-Ministry of Adult Education (August 23, 1980) also reflected the recognition of the special socio-psychological and curricular needs of the adult population. The main responsibility of the Vice-Ministry was to address these needs and to channel the massive educational demand for adult education resulting from the Literacy Crusade. See MED, _Cinco años de educación_, p.52.

[15]The Program of Popular Basic Education was developed in conjunction with the Centres of Adult Education (CEDA) which was the traditional program of adult education existing before the Revolution. There are many differences between the two, starting with the more massive character and non-formal, rural orientation of the CEPs in which classes are taught by volunteers or popular teachers. On the other hand, CEDA follows more closely the curriculum of primary education, classes always take place in a school setting, teachers are usually professionals, the average class is 25 students and the methodology is more oriented to the traditional one used in the formal system of education.

[16]MED, _Cinco años de educación_, p.63.

[17]In March 1981 the Program started with two levels. The first level of basic education for those who had already become literate and the Introductory level for literacy training for semi-literate and new illiterate recently incorporated to the Program—It should be remembered that after the Crusade there was still a 13 percent illiteracy rate. The seven levels were completed only by 1984 because the second semester of 1982 was dedicated to evaluation and discussions concerning administrative and organizational aspects of the Program.

[18]Ibid., p.64.

[19]It is stated that "the social sciences analyze the most outstanding aspects of the Revolution in its historic, geographic, economic, political, cultural, and social context. They seek to provide a scientific knowledge about our national reality under imperialistic aggression, and to stimulate

participation by the members of the CEPs in the tasks of the Revolution (Production, Defense, Health, etc.). In this way, it sought to strengthen the revolutionary consciousness of Sandino's people." Whereas natural sciences "provide a scientific knowledge which allows us to interpret the phenomena and laws of nature, improving the productive practice of our working classes and establishing the basis for a scientific attitude and way of thinking." Ibid., p.58.

[20]It is also pointed out that the three steps of the method respond to three educational principles underlying the CEPs. These are:
1. Knowledge originates from practice and reflection and it is oriented towards the transformation of reality.
2. The process of teaching-learning is collective. Everybody reciprocally teaches and learns from each other.
3. Education, as a form of shaping revolutionary consciousness, neither originates nor ends in the CEP; its unique space is the social practice and the popular organizations with which the CEPs interact closely.
Ibid., p. 59.

[21]Ibid., p.56

[22]Although many documents point to the low number of qualified teachers attending the CEPs no exact figures are provided. However, officials consulted in the National office of the Program (Managua) and those representing for the provinces of Matagalpa, Jinotega and Estelí concurred that as an average 95 percent of the coordinators and 90 percent of the promoters were volunteer, nonprofessional teachers. These figures seem to be a fair sample of the national average if we consider that in the formal system itself there was a high percentage of non-certified or untrained teachers. Although popular teachers participate in periodic training workshops, the low number of qualified teachers who came to take charge of the CEPs is an example of the optimistic projections which the country's meagre human and material resources could not afford.

[23]For instance, according to the Ministry of Education, from April 1983 to February 1984, 89 popular teachers were assassinated and 133 were kidnapped; Cinco años de educación, p.63.

[24]The economic cost due to U.S. military, financial and commercial aggression during 1980-1985 is calculated in US$ 900 million, a figure which represents 3 times the annual income the country receives from exports. During the same period, indices of per-family consumption decreased by 5.8 percent but without the aggression it would have grown by 7.0

percent; per-capita income decreased 10.4 where it should have increased by 2.6 percent. Up to 1986, 18,200 families (112,000 persons) were removed from war zones and relocated in safer areas. Contra raids caused the destruction of 2,100 houses, 192 cooperatives, 51 coffee fields, 40 refineries, 185 production installations and 556 buildings. Up to 1988 there were about 20,000 victims. To bring home the point--if the same percentage of U.S. society had been victims of someone else's aggression, the U.S. would have lost over 500,000 lives. See Rodolfo Salgado, "Los costos económicos de la agresión," in Nicaragua: cambios structurales y políticas económicas 1979-1988, ed. INIES [Nicaraguan Institute of Economic and Social Investigations] (Managua, Nicaragua: INIES, 1988), pp.173-185. Also "Sowing Dragon's Teeth: The U.S. War Against Nicaragua," in NACLA, Report on the Americas (special issue) Vol.XX, No.4 (July-August 1986).

[25]See MED, Caminos, Boletín Informativo de la Educación de Adultos, (1986-1988). Marlo González, director of the Program in Jinotega, in conversation with the writer, reported that initial enrolment for 1985 decreased 30 percent from that of 1984 and the first semester of 1986 showed a decrease of 15 percent as compared to 1985, but in both periods there was a 50 percent drop out rate. In his view, the fact that the most capable and conscious popular teachers were often transferred--either mobilized for reasons of defense or assigned greater responsibilities at the zonal level of the Program--had a very demoralizing effect upon other participants. Similar levels of decrease were reported by Flora López for Matagalpa, Juan Pineda for El Tuma y la Dalia, and Armando Blandón for San Ramón. All these locations belong to the 6th region (provinces of Jinotega and Matagalpa) which had often suffered "contra" attacks. CEP activities observed in this region had been greatly disrupted: classes were often cancelled or showed low attendance. In more isolated areas of the region the Program had been completely discontinued by August 1986, when the writer was in this region.

[26]Heather Chetwynd, An Enormous School Without Walls. Nicaraguans Educating for a New Society (Toronto: The Participatory Research Group, 1989), p.18.

[27]See Office of the President of the Republic, "The Political-Educational Plan of the Sandinista Popular Revolution," Inaugural Report to the Fourth National Congress of the National Association of Nicaraguan Educators (Managua, Nicaragua, April 22, 1987) pp-18-20.

[28]Quotation taken from taped-recorded speech delivered at "Taller de Evaluación del Program de Educación Popular Básica," Managua, Nicaragua, February 1986.

[29]Ibid.

[30]MED, "Informe del Subsistema de Educación de Adultos: Balance Cualitativo y Prioridades de Acción para 1987" (Managua, October 7, 1987), p.17 (Mimeograph.).

[31]In many rural areas in which there was a lack of schools, the CEPs became the only form of education available to the young. In some instances, even if schools were available, parents preferred to have their children helping in the field during the day and send them to evening classes at the CEPs after their work day. The same phenomenon often occurred in the urban areas in which the young either worked outside the home or were kept busy at home with chores during the day and attended evening classes. This latter situation was true of the Salinas family with whom the writer lived in Managua. As Mrs. Salinas was a widow and worked during the day, her two daughters took care of the house and their younger brother during the day and attended adult education classes in the evenings.

[32]This problem also manifests itself in relation to participation in grass-roots organizations. A clear example of this was reported to the writer by Mrs. Salinas as she recounted her experience as a member of the CDS (Sandinistas Defense Committee) in her neighbourhood. As she recounted, originally the CDS was concerned mainly with keeping vigilance in the neighbourhood but, as shortages of essential goods increased and black market activity became rampant, the CDS also started to keep control over local stores and to distribute supplies made available to them. This gave rise to heated accusations concerning discriminatory distribution (that supplies were denied to non-Sandinista neighbours, that there was favouritism among members, that heads of the Committee retained undue proportions of supplies to re-sell them on the black-market). Although this was distressing enough, Mrs. Salinas withdrew from the CDS when suspicions arose about her because her children wore some pieces of U.S. clothing. As she recounted, she had to justify in front of the Committee that her only U.S. contact was through family members who, long before the Revolution, immigrated to that country and regularly sent her small presents. Although she was by then still sympathetic to the Sandinistas she said that the problem of shortages and control imposed by the CDS had caused disillusion and soured relationships in the neighbourhood. Because of her experience, she especially resented having neighbours controlling her private life.

[33]In conversations held with participants regarding their most important gains within the CEPs, the field of language--improvements in personal expression and means of

communication--was repeatedly mentioned. "Now I have lost the fear of speaking in public," "I can read the materials received as well as the newspapers," "I can keep better discussions at work or home," "I started to keep records of management on the farm," "Now I help my children with their homework," "Now I pay attention to how others speak and I compare it with my own speech," "I have learned a lot of words that before did not exist for me or I did not understand their meaning," "Now I try to think and prepare my answers before I say them," were common responses exemplifying the perceived gains in this field.

[34]As the final goal of "transforming reality" is an ongoing process to be realized in real life, classroom evaluation of this goal becomes a figurative exercise as it is measured through a written composition wherein students summarize their comprehension, and possible application, of the theme and the reading discussed in the previous steps. There are also problems in taking full advantage of the first step (let's observe reality) as the decodification of the picture often degenerates into discussions little related to the particular subject matter of the lesson. A similar criticism can be made with respect to the second step (let's interpret reality). This introduces a short reading related to the theme and a reading questionnaire which is orally answered, then, follows a number of written exercises upon which the students work individually for the greater part of the step.

[35]In a conversation with Ambrosio Retel, promoter in charge of CEPs located in "Ciudad Sandino" (Managua) where this author was invited to observe, Retel was quite receptive and agreed with the writer's view that little participation had taken place during the class. Moreover, he further acknowledged that the students themselves give more credit to traditional teaching methods such as having the contents orally dictated or copying them from the blackboard. Critically discussing, evaluating or relating the contents to the students' own experiences, according to Retel, were objectives much more difficult to obtain and generally considered less relevant than traditional teacher/student roles and methodology. This low degree of active participation was a dominant impression of the writer in most of the places observed.

[36]R.M. Torres, who worked with the CEPs and was very supportive of the Program when she talked to the writer in Managua, was nonetheless particularly critical of this aspect of the Program. She illustrates her observations on this matter in a transcript included in her work on education in Nicaragua:

In a training workshop for popular teachers a simulated dialogue is taking place based on a picture which show·· a giant octopus (imperialism) embracing a soldier (th army) and a family fleeing repression. Seven popular teachers play the role of students and a professional teacher-trainer plays the role of literacy monitor:

Monitor:	What do we see on the left?
Student No.1:	(followed by two others): An octopus.
Monitor:	And what does the octopus represent?
Student No.1:	Imperialism.
Monitor:	Aha, imperialism, which is like a giant octopus, and who is the octopus protecting?
(Silence)	
Monitor:	Who is in front of the octopus?
Student No.2:	A soldier.
Monitor:	A soldier, aha! And what does the soldier represent?
Student No.2:	The army.
Monitor:	The army, very good. And this soldier is very skinny, right? (Laughter): No, he's fat.
Monitor:	Aha, he's fat, well-fed. And the people are fat too, right?
Student No.1:	No, they're skinny.

Torres wonders how this kind of dialogue could lead to creative expression, critical reflection or to the formation of autonomous thought. See Rosa M. Torres, Nicaragua: Revolución popular, educación popular (Editorial Línea, México, 1985), pp.119-20.

[37]Heather Chetwynd--a Canadian teacher working through CUSO with the Sub-Ministry of Adult Education talked to the writer in Managua about the many difficulties she found implementing her work on curriculum due to the lack of resources and qualified personnel. In a later work, she reported: "Developing new curriculum is a much greater task. Many regions have started producing their own texts, but it is a long, slow process and few people have the adequate technical and pedagogical experience. Resources are extremely limited--some regions have no photocopy facilities and others have no printing press; in regional offices, supplies such as paper, ink and mimeograph stencils are often unavailable; even the national office, which has more access to resources, does not have enough typewriters or desks, people take their notes on the back side of used paper, there are often no photographic materials, no typewriter ribbons--the list is endless." (The First Steps: Adult Popular Education in Nicaragua [Toronto: The Participatory Research Group, 1988], p.14).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: NICARAGUA IN THE LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

As we have seen, the search for a liberating pedagogy based on literacy and popular education has become a major source of influence within adult education throughout Latin America. The Nicaraguan experience represents indeed one of the latest and most dramatic efforts to apply this pedagogy in the field of literacy and adult education. Having dealt with the general Latin American framework of this pedagogy and some relevant aspects of its applicability in Nicaragua, this final chapter presents a summary discussion regarding some of the key issues facing liberation pedagogy. The theoretical and practical implications of this assessment are presented in the following conclusions.

1. There is a need to re-assess the ideological and socio-political assumptions underlying radical approaches to liberation pedagogy, as well as the constraints these assumptions impose on the goal of transforming society.

Perhaps the most important conclusion is that a serious reassessment needs to be carried out of the extent to which liberation pedagogy contributes to social transformation, even within the favourable conditions of a revolutionary context. Without denying Latin America's conditions of dependency and oppression and the fact that liberation has indeed become a powerful motivation for social change, the undertaking of such change seems to be much more complex than that envisioned by liberation pedagogy and Freirean theory. The revolutionary process of Nicaragua, with its achievements and shortcomings, is a clear illustration of this.

This conclusion, however, should not obscure the singularity of the Nicaraguan Revolution in its genuine effort towards social and educational democratization while maintaining a wide degree of political and ideological flexibility--as compared with other similar revolutionary experiences such as, for example, that of Cuba.[1] However, in assessing the Nicaraguan revolution, including its impact on education, it should be kept in mind that the revolutionary process there also coincided with, and was affected by, the rising conservatism of the 1980s.

On the political side, the most devastating effect of this conservatism came from the U.S. which led the Reagan

administration to consider even the most vicious means to abort at any cost the Nicaraguan experiment. This conservatism was also felt within the religious arena as illustrated by the revival of fundamentalism and by the actions of a Pope who attempted to reverse liberation theology and the more progressive stands of the Latin American Church. Like Reagan on the political side, the Pope waged his own religious crusade against the Sandinistas as he personally intervened in the religious and political affairs of Nicaragua.

However, beyond the timing of the Revolution, there have been other recent and dramatic world developments which also provide reasons for reassessing the political radicalism underlying liberation pedagogy. The startling events taking place in Eastern Europe, the eventual rapprochement between the "Superpowers," and the tragic handling of the student movement in China, undoubtedly will imply a more critical revision of future pro-socialist political projects in the region. In the same way, the questionable tactics employed by some revolutionary movements such as "Sendero Luminoso" (Shining Path) in Peru and "Movimiento 19" in Colombia cast serious doubt upon various groups which also call for the liberation of their societies in Latin America.

The re-assessment of political radicalism underlying liberation pedagogy must be understood as well in the context of the meagre resources with which dependent and poorer countries are often left when radical revolutionary experiences result in the devastation of their fragile economies. The political radicalism of this pedagogy seems to overlook the inevitable aftermath of any radical change. If one of the goals of liberation is the democratization of society then political realism, or the art of the possible, should become the leading principle. Liberation movements must seek to add forces behind national socio-political projects in order to interpret properly the aspirations of different social sectors.

The reassessment of a radicalized approach to literacy and popular education does not, however, mean the dismissal of liberation pedagogy's potential, rather it implies reconsidering its most ambitious goal of transforming the macro-level of society. In fact, literacy and popular education seem to work better at the grass-roots level, where their objectives, being more modest and attainable, can be realized in concrete benefits for the people. Similarly, popular culture seems to find expression and is better developed when it is perceived as a spontaneous

manifestation of the community rather than when orchestrated as an official policy from above.

The fact that these pedagogical experiences seem to work better, and are more meaningfully perceived, at the grass-roots level of society is corroborated by the steady support for these experiences found at this level of Nicaraguan society. In effect, although it is difficult to quantify, a valid assumption seems to be that literacy and popular education have played an important role in assuring grass-roots support for a revolution which, in many cases, has demanded a great many sacrifices. However, even though literacy and popular education are greatly enhanced when openly supported by a committed government, such as that of Nicaragua, they are not necessarily precluded from playing an important role in non-revolutionary contexts. On the contrary, in many cases, liberation pedagogy seems to work better in situations of political defiance, becoming a rallying channel for popular action when other democratic means are suppressed by authoritarian regimes. This happened in Brazil and Chile during the period of dictatorships in these countries,[2] as well as during the conscientization period of Somoza's Nicaragua.

It is this partial success of liberation pedagogy as a form of contestation against authoritarian regimes that

seems to give rise to the inflated projections of how much
this pedagogy could achieve under more popular or
revolutionary governments. These are projections which often
end up being disproved by a much more complex reality as
illustrated by Nicaragua itself. A fair inference from all
of this seems to be that liberation pedagogy could only
benefit if, along with maintaining its important role at the
grass-roots level, it possessed a greater awareness of the
limits of its influence. This would undoubtedly result in
more realistic and attainable objectives.

Thus, although literacy and popular education can
benefit when supported by favourable governments, their
major contribution does not need to wait for, neither should
it be based on, future expectations in a revolutionary
context. The difficulties found in Nicaragua in undertaking
a radical process of educational and social change only
prove the complexity and long-term nature of such a
process--particularly when internal constraints were further
undermined by the external U.S. intervention. For the same
reason, if the process of preparing people for meaningful
educational and social participation takes a great deal of
time and effort, then realistic educational work at the
grass-roots level should only anticipate and facilitate such

a process, be it in revolutionary or non-revolutionary
contexts.

> 2. An alternative practice of literacy and popular
> education cannot count on the hegemony of a
> revolutionary people's movement alone. An ample
> alliance with other social sectors and a progressive
> synthesis between society's dominant and subordinated
> knowledge and culture should be sought.

Regarding the opposing views between advocates of
autonomy of the people in assuming their own education,
knowledge and culture and those who completely deny such
autonomy, Nicaragua seemed to have opted for an intermediate
solution. This option was congruent with the degree of
ideological flexibility of the Revolution itself, whose
popular character did not preclude the participation of
other social sectors. In fact, for some sectors of the petit
bourgeoisie and intellectuals it was possible to overcome
the problem of class origin as they came to identify
themselves with a social project which was ultimately
oriented towards the class interest of the popular sectors
rather than their own.

A clear manifestation of this pedagogical strategy followed by the Nicaraguan revolution can be seen in the massive character of the Crusade, in which participation was not determined so much in terms of class as of knowledge and the willingness to share that knowledge with the social sector which lacked it. Thus an ample range of professionals, teachers, secondary and university students, church workers, and national and international volunteers took an active part in this process. In this sense the Crusade can be seen as an effort in class cooperation and mutual interchange of knowledge. This was especially so in the case of the urban middle-class youth who, while teaching in remote areas, also learned about many aspects of peasant life.

Although the Crusade required an arduous effort in teaching reading and writing, this was only an initial stage of a process of learning and motivation which, with so many difficulties, was further channelled through the CEPs. All these efforts and difficulties posed a real challenge to the idealistic notion which so easily proclaimed the autonomy of the people in assuming their own education. The same difficulties help us to understand why the illiterate or semi-literate population have not yet fully participated in designing their own educational programs, methods and

pedagogical materials. It took time for a more active

participation to start to take shape within the CEPs,

especially through the popular teachers, but even this

participation needs much improvement.

These difficulties point to a crucial question facing

liberation pedagogy: to what extent is it possible to expect

a more committed participation from subordinated groups when

such participation is clearly related to the skills and

knowledge associated with the literate world of instruction,

technology and power--all of which have historically been

denied to these groups? This question does not deny the

existence of people's own forms of culture and knowledge,

but rather challenges the simplistic view that the existence

of these forms per se, independent of society's dominant

knowledge, can enable people to assume their own education.

Moreover, is it not precisely that lack of dominant

knowledge which, to a large extent, makes these groups the

subordinated sectors of society? Thus the point here is not

only that access to this knowledge is crucial, but more

importantly, that society must be changed to ban all forms

of discrimination, including the monopolization of knowledge

to serve the interests of only one social class.

The lack of readiness of the people, however, does not

justify the permanent centralization of power and

decision-making in the hands of the state, or with the specialists who make decisions "for" the people, though it seems inevitable that this should occur at the initial stages. To be sure, a realistic conception of the autonomy of a popular social project necessarily requires both the cooperation from a committed government and other social sectors which, despite their class origin, are willing to step out of their own class to help the people in view of such a project. On the other hand, as Latin American governments often change quickly, the autonomy of a popular social project should go beyond a particular government so that the project can survive the eventual termination of such a government.

Similarly, to promote people's autonomy in assuming their own education--a people's pedagogy--does not imply a unilateral option for either dominant or subordinated knowledge and culture. It rather implies a dialectical synthesis, a new cultural formation, resulting from an interactive accommodation between dominant and subordinated kinds of knowledge and culture. By means of this accommodation people can gain greater access to knowledge which is responsive to their needs and cultural stage of development. In helping this process to occur, literacy and popular education have indeed an important role to play,

even if the steps undertaken imply an arduous and lengthy effort as seen in Nicaragua.

3. Although conscientization has become an important feature of liberation pedagogy, literacy work continues to be a technical and pedagogical undertaking which cannot be reduced to political purposes alone.

Perhaps because of the insistence upon the political nature of education, greatly stimulated by Freire, one feels the need to state the obvious: that literacy means primarily learning to read and write and as such it implies technical and pedagogical intervention. Unfortunately, this basic principle often becomes obscured when conscientization and the political effects associated with literacy are disproportionately emphasized. This one-sided approach not only hampers a sustained development of literacy but also has resulted in the trivialization of conscientization itself. Although in the case of Nicaragua the political emphasis on literacy was a natural consequence of the revolutionary process, this emphasis is sometimes indiscriminately applied to other contexts in which, in the absence of such a process, it offers little help either to literacy efforts or political gain. Rosa M. Torres

illustrates this point while discussing the influence of Nicaragua's literacy manuals in Latin America. She notes that an Ecuadorian manual--used by a group working with an indigenous population--was not only inspired by the Nicaraguan one but their initial "generative sentences" were even more revolutionary and politically motivated.[3] As Torres notes, the subordination of literacy to political ends often results in programs or manuals which can be seen as good treatises on political or revolutionary theories but offer little help to literacy work. This subordination, especially when taken out of context, causes frustration and the loss of motivation as participants, instead of finding themselves learning about those skills which led them to join a program, are rather exposed to theoretical issues for which they are not prepared--and were not looking for in the first place. Also, this political overtone often raises suspicions on the part of authorities who, by invoking the fear of communist infiltration, harass and force the termination of programs which otherwise might have survived and done a similar job but in more subtle ways.

The subordination of literacy and popular education to political ends reveals a still prevalent simplistic view of the relationship between the super and infra structure of society. As in this view education and culture are seen as

superstructural components of society, which are supposed to
change as society's economic infrastructure changes, then it
follows that literacy work and popular education become no
more than useful means of political activation, helping to
provoke political-economic change. One problem with this
view is that, even when political-economic control is
achieved, its effect on cultural and educational change
results from a more lengthy and complex process. As
discussed in Chapter 2, this simplistic view of the
relationship between super- and infra-structure of society
has repeatedly been proven inadequate. Nicaragua is just one
more example in which radical economic and political change
were not necessarily followed by an equal degree of
educational and cultural transformation.

The political emphasis on educational change in
Nicaragua must be understood as a natural result of a major
political event, the Revolution, which made possible the
initiation of such a change. It was the revolutionary
ideology and its political commitment towards the oppressed
majority that inspired the massive programs on literacy and
popular education. The convergence between political and
educational objectives was not a mere coincidence but
reflected the need to unite efforts behind that major
political and social change initiated with the Revolution.

It was in this sense that Freire suggested that the Literacy Crusade should be seen primarily as "a political project with pedagogical implications." Literacy work was regarded as one more factor in the larger goal of consolidating the Revolution. Thus the criteria for establishing literacy objectives, methods, pedagogical materials, lessons, and literacy training, clearly reflected this political orientation. In fact, this orientation became the leading goal permeating all levels and instances of the new education in Nicaragua.

In revolutionary contexts, like that of Nicaragua, the convergent relationship between political and educational goals is not only justified but also a necessary platform upon which society sets its general policies and philosophy of education—as every society does. This writer contends, however, that in Nicaragua this general political component was often taken to an extreme, undermining the principles of a more dialogical and critical education as proposed by liberation pedagogy. Thus, whether during the Crusade or within the CEPs, long discussions related to the introductory dialogue and decodification of pictures usually took the greater part of the lessons, leaving little time for more structured practice dedicated to literacy itself. The content of these discussions, whether during classes or

teachers' workshops, often related more to political and ideological issues than to content or pedagogical aspects. It should be pointed out, however, that this criticism is tempered with a recognition of the tense political climate imposed by a state of war and aggression. Earlier achievements in all levels of education reached during the first years of the Revolution were greatly undermined by the war. In this war context, political survival, and not educational excellence, became the major issue of concern and, obviously, this was reflected not only in the increased politicization of education but of all spheres of society.

Although the subordination of literacy to political or conscientization ends may have been justified in Nicaragua, it also reveals nonetheless a false assumption which is often found in literacy programs throughout Latin America: that the acquisition of literacy skills can be quickly achieved, as if it were just a matter of going through the primer. For the same reason, quite often insufficient stress is placed on post-literacy activities, as those responsible for the programs assume that those skills have been already achieved during the initial stages of the process--even to the point of risking what has been achieved with so much effort. This criticism does not mean that the important conscientization aspect of literacy should be discarded but

rather points to the need for a more balanced relationship between educational and political ends. There seems to be a fine line between recognizing the political dimension of education and the instrumentalization of education merely to satisfy political ends.

This criticism also calls for the need to direct more attention to the various psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic and pedagogical factors which are implied in the complex and lengthy process of literacy acquisition. If these factors are not considered more important than changing consciousness, at least they should be given equal attention. On the other hand, contrary to a manipulative banking education, liberation pedagogy should show a more respectful attitude toward literacy program participants. If what moves an illiterate person to join a program is the desire to learn how to read and write, that objective should be respected. Needless to say if the process leads to other objectives, these can also be developed as long as the original objective of the participant (and of the program) does not become obscured. This awareness regarding program objectives could also help to avoid the paradox by means of which the application of a particular method of literacy learning--conscientization--becomes in itself the final aim of the intended learning.

4. Emphasis on conscientization and the individual's psycho-cultural change should be equally balanced with the promotion of more concrete community development alternatives directed to alleviate the more immediate needs of the poorer sectors of the population.

As conscientization is mainly focused on political and cultural intervention, it often fails to address on a more concrete level the more immediate material needs of the population. As discussed in Chapter 2, the increasing levels of poverty in the region have given rise to a tendency to propose that adult education should become a form of "education for survival." This does not mean the abdication of conscientization and political intervention, but rather stresses the need for micro-intervention in which education is intrinsically related to small income-generation programs, job-oriented training and teaching of survival skills. Both views are aimed at the subordinated sectors, but whereas conscientization calls for structural social change, education for survival stresses more immediate and pragmatic solutions.[4] In the latter view the needs of the poor are considered to be such that they cannot wait for macro-solutions, especially when the satisfaction of those needs is not necessarily guaranteed by such solutions.

On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter 3, underlying conscientization there is an overstated reliance on rationality and therefore on educational and cultural intervention. This reliance, which pervades the whole Freirean educational philosophy, derives from the assumption that rationality and humanization are the basic principles governing human behaviour--as though every individual or group longs for cognitive development, and that increasing it (e.g., becoming more conscious or knowledgeable) necessarily leads to rationalistic and humanistic thought and actions. This concept of rationality, rooted in Western enlightenment--which informs both the individual-idealistic and the social-materialistic views underlying the liberal and Marxist traditions--cannot always be easily extended to other groups which have developed different patterns of thinking or socialization. Although Freire's epistemology clearly attempts to overcome the monolithic nature of both idealism and materialism by relating knowledge to praxis--a continued interaction between subject, action and reflection--the rational humanistic assumption still remains.

Although this issue could be developed further and may have important implications, suffice it to say that recipients of literacy programs in Latin America often

belong to native populations or to other groups whose

deplorable living conditions leave them with little

opportunity for abstract literate thinking. Worse still,

such programs may be perceived as a manifestation of a

white, European rationality which has been responsible for

the gradual extermination of their indigenous culture,

language and material well-being.[5] Thus, emphasis on

consciousness-raising and macro-intervention while

overlooking the basic needs of the poor (in terms of health,

housing, job-training, or small-scale income or production

programs) reveals a weak side of liberation pedagogy. This

may explain why, as noted above, conscientization seems to

be more successful in situations of political contestation

and where other democratic avenues are cut off by

authoritarian regimes. Since subordinated groups are mainly

motivated by their immediate demands it is the denial of

these demands that prompts them to challenge unpopular

regimes and to embrace more radical solutions which promise

to satisfy their most immediate needs. However, even in the

event of macro or revolutionary change, if those demands

cannot be rapidly addressed, there is little chance that the

participants will remain in a program solely for abstract

reasons having to do with consciousness-raising, political

rationality or cultural animation.

In contrast to the developed world where unused leisure time is often the motive for joining an adult education program, the Latin American poor join primarily for reasons of survival. Their motivations may not even be due to an interest in literacy or politics as such, but rather to a belief that joining a program may lead to improvements in the conditions of their lives. Thus, quite often, it is not the program itself but its failure to fulfil those expectations which ultimately proves to be its undoing. Nicaragua is a case in point in which the worsening of people's conditions of life did indeed seriously affect the development of adult education programs. In a way, is it not the realization of this same principle--that people tend to respond primarily to their more immediate needs--that led the U.S. administration to destroy Nicaragua's economy in order to destroy the Revolution itself?

In fact, the educational measures undertaken in Nicaragua can be singled out as a decisive attempt to address the more immediate material and educational needs of its population. The startling growth in all indices during the early period of 1979-1982 is a clear testimony of the fact that the more urgent needs of the population were indeed addressed. To a large extent it was precisely the realization that the Nicaraguan approach was working that

prompted the U.S. to try to stomp out this dangerous example. It should be remembered that popular teachers and peasants' cooperatives and schools became the preferred targets of "contra" attacks.

To summarize, radical approaches to conscientization should be equally concerned with the more immediate material needs of the population. Liberation or radical change is an all-embracing process of educational and cultural emancipation but also one that must lead to socio-economic and material improvement for the population. Thus, although not sufficiently stressed by liberation pedagogy, liberation also means more productivity and economic development for which technical and job-oriented skills are inescapably needed, be it in a revolutionary or non-revolutionary society. Thus, even though a macro social change is required, and liberation pedagogy rightly seeks to foster that macro change, it should not be forgotten that people's daily concerns are at the micro level of society. At this level, people are primarily concerned with their more immediate needs and struggles for survival. If literacy or any other popular education program is not seen as a useful means to help people cope with their daily struggles, the most likely outcome is that it will be condemned to failure. Finally, are not educational and cultural intervention, and

liberation pedagogy for that matter, only means to achieve

the final goal, namely the improvement of the quality of

life of the people?

5. More research and studies testing liberation

pedagogy's theoretical assumptions and principles

vis-à-vis their applicability to real contexts and

practice are needed.

Although there are many principles and assumptions

underlying liberation pedagogy, all of them--to a greater or

lesser degree--seem to share a common idealism which does

not always match the complexity of reality. Since this

pedagogy advocates a close relationship between theory and

practice, testing the feasibility of principles becomes an

inescapable point of inquiry. If such an inquiry reveals

that some assumptions do not stand the test of field

experience, then a healthy and critical revision should be

undertaken. Even if this revision means that some idealistic

features must be dismissed, a more accountable theory would

develop as gaps between ideas and their concrete application

were gradually reduced.

As indicated previously, there are various aspects of

this pedagogy which seem to need a further revision: among

these can be cited the need to reassess liberation
pedagogy's contribution to social transformation, the
autonomy of the popular sectors in undertaking their own
social and educational projects, the interdependence between
subordinated and dominant types of knowledge and culture,
the over-emphasis on consciousness and political
intervention and the insufficient concern for the more
material needs of the poor. However, there is another
important area also requiring closer evaluation--the
idealistic conceptualization of the educative process
itself.

It has been repeatedly said that, as opposed to banking
education, liberation pedagogy conceives of education as a
process of collective production of knowledge in which there
is neither teacher nor student but "facilitators" and
"learners" who reciprocally teach and learn. Similarly, it
is held that a truly popular education is one which aims for
the development of a conscious, critical and autonomous
people, capable of assuming the transformation of its own
reality. However, in reality, there are serious
difficulties, if not frank contradictions, in applying these
principles even within a revolutionary context such as that
of Nicaragua.

It seems that this gap between theory and practice derives to a large extent from the altruistic humanism of this pedagogy which leads to normative principles (what ought to be) instead of a more critical understanding and evaluation of reality. Thus, for instance, the negation of banking education tends to hide the fact that the educative process implies in itself an unequal kind of relationship in terms of knowledge: the teacher possesses it and the student does not--one "teaches something" while the other "learns it." Regardless of whether or not this inter-relationship is less or more flexible, vertical or horizontal, this unequal kind of relationship still persists. Similarly, the formation of a conscious, critical and autonomous people is often contradicted by authoritarian attitudes or even blunt paternalism.

Together with a progressive testing of principles and assumptions, a process of conceptual clarification is also needed. For instance, a clearer demarcation should be made between principles belonging to philosophical foundations and those methodological procedures which inform the concrete practice of popular education. There is also a great deal of confusion regarding the setting up of objectives. Sometimes programs fail to differentiate between operational objectives, which can be measured and

evaluated, and general objectives which, while expressing either long-term goals or foundational principles, cannot be evaluated in the same way. This evaluation difficulty often leaves the impression of failure when, in fact, an objective as such was incompatible with measurable evaluation procedures right from the outset.

The lack of evaluation and systematization of literacy and popular education programs and experiences is in fact another area which needs much improvement. The remarkable increase of programs and activities in the region has not been followed by equal development in terms of diffusion and communication of these experiences. Regional conferences and organizations tend to describe programs and objectives but little attention is devoted to systematization and evaluation of these programs and experiences.[6] Efforts at improving the systematization and diffusion of these experiences within and between countries, would undoubtedly result in an increase of new knowledge to be applied to new programs and would provide a means to avoid repeating mistakes.

A critical revision of the relationship between theory and practice could lead to more realistic and operational objectives, which in turn could help to keep participants motivated. The relationship between objectives and practice

could be greatly helped by including, along with programs,
concrete evaluation procedures which could make it possible
to assess and communicate results regarding the
implementation of these programs. In this respect, Nicaragua
provides a good point of reference in terms of avoiding
ambitious or vague objectives which cannot be attained or
tested by real practice. Perhaps for the same reason--though
this is more understandable given the Nicaraguan lack of
resources and circumstances--little evidence was found
regarding evaluation or final results of many programs
described. A permanent process of critical revision and
evaluation of principles and assumptions of liberation
pedagogy could only help to develop further the potential as
well as the current contribution of this pedagogy throughout
Latin America.

> 6. The development of literacy and popular expression
> requires a social context which is supportive of the
> new skills and makes them socially and culturally
> useful for the recipients.

It is undeniable that the revolutionary context of
Nicaragua not only encouraged the development of literacy
and popular communication but a more literate and conscious

population was also seen as a key factor in the process of social change. As a matter of fact, the Revolution itself produced an immense cultural explosion which resulted in new channels and forms of communication in publishing, media, radio and television. These were all forms which clearly reflected the new patterns of communication affecting the family, the community, and social organizations. The Revolution itself was news, the subject which not only shook Nicaraguan society but also caught the world's attention for some time.

It was also the Revolution, with its dramatic effect on social activation, that provided energy and enthusiasm for undertaking the Literacy Crusade. However, for the very reason that the Crusade was born of the Revolution, it also shared the same difficulties that arose from the revolutionary process. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapters, the initial success of the revolutionary process, followed by a subsequent period of decline due mainly to the state of war, was largely paralleled by educational development--from the earlier success of the Crusade to the progressive decline experienced during the Sostenimiento, the CEPs, and the Program of Basic Popular Education. As this decline was intrinsically related t the deterioration of the economy, it also called into question the usefulness

of literacy efforts as people, becoming increasingly caught up in a climate of uncertainty, shortages, and violence, were obliged to concentrate more and more on their more immediate needs. For the same reason, many popular culture activities such as projects on popular creativity and expression, popular communication, and theatre and study groups, were gradually paralysed as scarce government resources were allocated to more urgent needs. (It should be remembered that as the war intensified, nearly 50 percent of Nicaragua's already meagre budget had to be allocated to defense).

However, in spite of these difficulties, a great effort was made to relate literacy and popular expression to the cultural and symbolic domain of the participants. For instance, during the first years much creative writing and popular poetry produced by the newly literate was collected and published. Similarly, various means of communication such as the radio program "Puño en Alto," television reports, popular bulletins and other forms of popular communication, allowed adult learners to air their concerns and have their letters or creative expressions read or printed in these media. These activities not only constituted a genuine effort to respect the popular education principle of developing popular expression and

culture but also became very pragmatic sources of motivation.

Although these attempts to provide a context for people's expression may not have reached the ideal model of complete dialogical communication, they marked nonetheless an innovative characteristic of the Nicaraguan experience. In the same way, as has also been mentioned, similar efforts to establish dialogical relationships within the CEPs could not completely achieve a smooth adjustment between the restricted linguistic code of the participants and the more elaborated one underlying the method and the more abstract and ambitious expectations of the Program. Unreadiness for a more meaningful dialogue and participation often led participants to respond to questions and problems with answers already established in the teaching guides or unilaterally decided by the coordinator. Thus, it was not unusual that attempted dialogical and true participatory relationships reverted to vertical and monological relationships associated with banking education. However, beyond all the pedagogical difficulties and the shortcomings of the revolutionary process, the fact remains that a tremendous effort to develop literacy and popular education was made as a result of the Revolution. This fact accounts for the difference between literacy efforts in Nicaragua and

those in other, non-revolutionary contexts in Latin America.
Whereas in the latter, literacy work is conducted in
isolation or without questioning those same social
structures which allow the existence of the illiteracy
problem, by contrast, in Nicaragua literacy efforts were
intrinsically related to the larger effort of transforming
social structures which had caused the dramatic educational
and social deficit inherited by the Revolution.

7. Although liberation pedagogy has greatly activated
literacy development, the elimination of illiteracy in
Latin America would also require a combination of
various other strategies and instances of educational,
social and political intervention.

Although liberation pedagogy has greatly stimulated
literacy development, the ambitious goal of the region's
Major Project of Education--of eliminating illiteracy by the
year 2000--will not be achieved without several strategies
at various national and international levels. The
realization by the targeted date of the other two main
objectives of the Major Project--of providing primary
education for all school age children and improving the
overall quality of existing education--is also essential for

the reduction of illiteracy. It is important to mention the Major Project because it is an official policy--supported by UNESCO and other major regional organizations--and operates with the approval of all Latin American Ministries of Education. More importantly, the Project has already resulted in a number of initiatives being undertaken in the region.

If, despite the political differences among various countries of the region it was possible to reach such an agreement, then greater efforts towards achievement of the same objectives should and could be made by the various educational and social institutions within each country. The growing trend toward democratization in the region, which most likely will result in more sensitive social policies, could also influence greater efforts towards literacy and educational development. After the authoritarian trend of the 1970s, it seems that ideological differences have been greatly superseded by political realism as the region faces more concrete and urgent challenges, such as the common problem of the foreign debt and the financing of social and educational policies which were seriously undermined during the period of dictatorships.

The move toward democratization, political realism, and the common problem of the debt, are all factors which have

strengthened the links of solidarity and common identity among Latin American countries—an identi y which has also led them to take more independent stands toward a previously overwhelming U.S. domination.[7] The Major Project in the field of education or the common stand on the debt—on which the present democratization trend clearly hinges—are just two examples of this rapprochement and its influence in fostering joint strategies to face common problems within the region.

On the other hand, the brutal repression during the authoritarian period of the 1970s brought with it, painfully, at least two important developments. First, a greater appreciation for democratic forms (especially in cases like Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina where such forms had existed) which showed that dictatorial solutions as a cure for imperfect democracies end up being worse than the imperfections they try to cure. Radical groups which so readily despised the existing democratic forms, suddenly found themselves struggling during the 1970s, not for their idealistic popular democracies, but for the mere recuperation of those forms which were previously despised. Secondly, as a result of the closing down of political and democratic institutions, a number of new alternatives and organizations, such as centres of research and popular

communication, human rights groups, centres of non-formal or popular education, and various projects of grass-roots development, began to flourish under the umbrella of churches, NGOs and international agencies of cooperation.

The joint effort of all these groups and initiatives played an important role in attending to the needs of those sectors of the population which were most affected by the authoritarian regimes and their neo-liberal socio-economic policies. In effect, as these policies implied a market economy and the withdrawal of the welfare state, these groups had to deal with the impact of such policies on the less privileged sectors which could not compete let alone pay for their health, educational, and other public services--all of which became either increasingly privatized or deteriorated. Since most of the work of these groups was undertaken by means of popular education under the hardships of repressive regimes, one can expect that the current process of democratization and its impact on more sensible socio-economic policies will enable these initiatives to be progressively channelled towards greater efforts in the field of literacy and educational development. These more positive prospects for the region will also require a sensitive solution to the debt problem as well as continued

support from the various national and international agencies of cooperation.

To summarize, beyond the role of liberation pedagogy in the development of literacy and popular education, the elimination of illiteracy will also require major social and political interventions involving governments, NGOs, and private organizations. Similarly, the development of non-formal and popular education should also be matched by similar efforts in the area of formal education, especially to assure access to primary and basic education for all children. However, even within formal education, literacy development can be reinforced by bettering teaching standards and expanding language arts to emphasize literacy skills across the curriculum and through all levels of the educational system. Also, a special policy on publishing and library services should make books and reading materials more easily available to the general population.

The need for an integral approach in addressing the problem of illiteracy has been underscored by the Nicaraguan experience. Although radical social and educational change are needed, they are not necessarily sufficient to solve the problem. Nicaragua is, in fact, a case in which most of the desirable conditions for literacy, according to Freire and current UNESCO orientations, were met--most importantly,

emphasis on social change and participation and on respecting the language and culture of the adult population. Moreover, if there was skepticism about the real extent of the educational changes attempted under reformist governments throughout Latin America, as discussed in Chapter 2, in Nicaragua there was little doubt about the genuine commitment of the Sandinistas in promoting educational and social change in favour of the majority. All these factors were present and yet the proposed changes met with insurmountable difficulties--the war being the most fundamental of these--and could not materialize fully as expected. The case of Nicaragua is a painful illustration of the extent to which external factors can interfere with the national projects of weaker, dependent countries; but it is also a lesson in the need to re-assess both the much deeper complexity of social and educational change and critically evaluate the best strategies to achieve it.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

[1]The singularity of some features of the Nicaraguan revolution as compared to the Cuban or any other Marxist-inspired one--allowing Christian participation, freedom of speech, political pluralism, a mixed economy, amnesty for its enemies or former Somoza guards (who later became "the contras")--raise nonetheless some important questions: to what extent did these features themselves become the weakest point in consolidating the revolution? Consolidation of the revolutionary process in Cuba was achieved more quickly than in Nicaragua. On the other hand, would Nicaragua have survived if it had taken a more radical approach like Cuba did when even the comparative moderation of the Nicaraguan stance was already too much for the United States--and taking into account the USSR's more restrained commitment for the region?

[2]As was noted in Chapter 2, the popular movement in Brazil and its influence on popular culture and popular education as well as the influence of radical Catholic sectors largely superseded the dictatorial regime initiated in 1964 in that country. Similarly, the widespread development of popular education and popular culture in Chile under the post-1973 dictatorship has reached levels which were, to some extent, unknown during the Allende period.

[3]Torres wonders how helpful experiences taken from a revolutionary context could be for an indigenous learner from the Ecuadorian mountains. Some of the sentences for the lessons were: "El comité de defensa popular defiende los intereses del pueblo" ("The Popular Defense Committee defends the interests of the people"), "Las organizaciones revolucionarias de trabajadores promueven la unidad y vigilan el proceso de la lucha revolucionaria" ("The Revolutionary Workers' Organizations promote unity and guard the revolutionary struggle"), "Peleaban sin balas ni bombas" ("They fought without bullets or bombs"), "Venceremos con la vanguardia" ("We will win with the revolutionary vanguard"), "Las masas alaban la gesta de Cuba" (The masses applaud Cuba's heroic deed"), "Desde Washington se planea la intervención" ("Intervention is planned in Washington"). Torres, _Nicaragua_, p.191.

[4]In general, these two tendencies can be correlated with La Belle's "polar views" of social change in Latin America: whereas conscientization relates to the "dependency-liberation" view, education for survival is closer to the

"deprivation-development" one. Since the assumptions and proposed solutions of dependency-liberation have been discussed at length in this thesis, a brief characterization of the deprivation-development view, as proposed by La Belle, follows: "Although these individuals [advocates of this view] may not find fault with the consciousness-raising programs of the liberationists, the developmentalists are likely to point to the need for more attention to improving the quality of life of the participants in terms of health, income, and decision making within a capitalist framework. Whereas dialogue and reality awareness may form part of the process leading to such goals, the development advocates would likely envision the constraint as being much more complex than those expressed by many liberationists. The developmentalists see these constraints manifested in terms of the marginal dweller's lack of opportunity within the wider social structure, his lack of technology, ad his lack of information and motivation. It is this assumption of scarcity or lack of material and nonmaterial objects and characteristics in the marginal dweller's environment which leads the developmentalists to intervene with technology, capital, organization, education, and so on." (T. La Belle, <u>Nonformal Education and Social Change in Latin America</u>, pp.28-9).

[5]This complaint is persuasively presented in the "Aymará Manifesto" issued by a group of native educators: "When the Agrarian Reform came to Bolivia it was Western education that came with it. That is why letters and numbers do not get into the Indian's memory, not unless we renounce our blood and cave in to our domestication, exploitation and racial humiliation.... By then many governmental and private institutions came to help eradicate illiteracy among the Aymará and Quechuas. But, we wonder, how do they intend to enter our homes through a false door?; how do they expect to talk to us in a language which is not ours'?.... How many false technicians have come to our community?, how many gringos come around here to investigate us, converting us into mere field-work for their anthropological studies. They receive money in the name of our poverty, and then, they try to involve us in their literacy and conscientization programs. If they are illiterate in our language and culture, how is it be possible that they can help us?".... It is true that the Indian people need to develop communication and a humane conscientization but not a false education like the current one. The Indians need responses to their questions but without being accused of being illiterate or being submitted to enslavement." (Quoted by M.I. Infante, <u>Educación, comunicación y lenguaje</u>, pp.61-2).

[6]For example, a publication containing one hundred experiences of popular education in Chile identifies the organizations responsible for the programs, the objectives, recipients, and pedagogical materials used, but little is mentioned regarding evaluation of these programs or previous ones undertaken by these institutions. See CIDE-FLACSO (Centre for Research and Development in Education – Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences), Educación popular en Chile: 100 experiencias (CIDE-FLACSO, Santiago, Chile, 1984). It would be helpful for people working on popular education programs to count with similar publications assessing the results of these experiences--what worked and what did not, under which conditions, and so forth.

[7]This stand has resulted from the wave which followed U.S. politics during the Falklands/Malvinas war, Washington's attempts to de-stabilize the Contadora peace initiative in Central America and to impose military solutions to the conflict, and later, sweeping protest over the Panama invasion, despite the unpopularity of the Noriega regime. It should be remembered that, particularly as a result of the intervention in Nicaragua, U.S. credibility was also internationally undermined as it was repeatedly condemned by organizations such as the OAS, the UN, the International Court of Justice, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade--and the "Iran-Contra Affair" adversely affected internal credibility. See Peter Korbluh, Nicaragua: The Price of Intervention. Reagan's War Against the Sandinistas (Washington D.C.: Institute for Policy Studies, 1987).

APPENDIX I

FIELD-WORK IN NICARAGUA

Field-work was undertaken during a five week long visit to Nicaragua--from July 17 to August 22 of 1986. The short period of time in the country and the very limited facilities available for research did not permit the in-depth study that would be required to achieve a full and comprehensive picture of educational change in Nicaragua--a great deal more time and resources would have been required, neither of which the writer had at his disposition. From the outset, the purpose was to obtain a general overview of the new policies and programs on literacy and popular education in Nicaragua as well as a first-hand sense of how such programs and policies were being put into practice. Field observation and conversation with people involved in the collection of further documentation for the Nicaraguan part of the study was also an important purpose of the trip.

About half of the time in Nicaragua was spent in Managua (the capital, and nearby places located in the central region of the country) and the other half in the province of Matagalpa from which visits were arranged to the provinces of Jinotega and Estelí. A brief visit was also made to San Juan del Sur in the southern province of Rivas (see map attached to this appendix). The choice of these places had to do primarily with the writer's having contacts in these locations and hence, a place to stay for the duration of the visit. Thus, observation and data obtained in these places are not intended to reflect geographic or national tendencies as the choice of these locations was determined by facilities available to the writer rather than by sampling design. However, despite these constraints, the general picture the writer was able to obtain concurs with national reports and assessments coming from officials consulted and people who either worked on or wrote about these activities and programs--all of which are duly acknowledged in chapters dealing with Nicaragua.

An aspect which facilitated the field-work was contact with some Nicaraguans and Canadians working in the country at that time. This was the case with three popular teachers (Adela Pérez, Elba Ponce and Juan Emilio) whom the writer met in Halifax during their tour of Canada in 1985. Especially helpful was Elba Ponce who, in her capacity as administrator of the CEPs in Estelí, provided the writer with valuable assistance. Similarly helpful were contacts established with CUSO volunteers such as Heather Chetwynd, a Canadian teacher working at the Sub-Ministry of Adult Education in Managua, who put the writer in contact with people in that institution and facilitated access to documents. Similarly, Richard Donald, who worked in the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform in Matagalpa, was kind enough to allow the writer to stay in his home in Matagalpa and helped immensely in establishing cc tact with people and places he knew well in the area. In addition, during the International Conference on Liberation Theology (Vancouver, February 1986) the writer was able to contact some Nicaraguan participants, among them Father Uriel Molina, who, having returned to Nicaragua, was of great help in establishing contact with Christian Base Communities and Christian-related centres working on popular education.

Throughout the duration of the visit to Nicaragua, the writer lived in the modest home of a Nicaraguan family (the Salinas family who lived in barrio Colonia Máximo Jerez). The contact with this family provided a first-hand experience regarding the hardships of living conditions as well as a sense of the impressions of average Nicaraguans about the revolutionary process and their experiences in grass-roots organizations functioning at the neighbourhood level--Mrs. Salinas had participated in the local CDS (Sandinista Defense Committee) and her two daughters in the Sandinista Youth Organization.

Visit to the CEPs

In total, five CEPs were visited in Managua: One located in barrio Colonia Máximo Jerez. As both of Mrs. Salinas' daughters attended this CEP, access to observe and talk to participants in this CEP (two visits were made to this CEP) was facilitated. Another CEP visited was that located in the Market "Israel Lewites" (one visit). Three CEPs were visited in "Cuidad Sandino," a town located in the

surrounding areas of Managua. In this case access was possible through contact witn the promoter, Ambrosio Retel, whom the writer met in the Sub-Ministry of Adult Education. Retel, a French primary teacher working as a volunteer in Nicaragua, was one of the most cooperative and knowledgeable promoters that the writer met (one visit to each of these CEPs was made).

In Matagalpa, the writer visited the CEP located in MIDINRA (Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform) which was composed mainly of lower rank personnel of the institution. In the rural areas of the province of Matagalpa a visit was made to the CEPs of El Tuma and La Dalia in which the writer met with Juan Emilio, the popular teacher mentioned above whom the writer had met previously in Halifax. A visit was made to the CEP of San Ramón in a rural area of the same province. In the province of Jinotega, one CEP was visited in the provincial capital (Jinotega). In the province of Estelí, a visit was made to a CEP located in the cooperative Rubén Díaz, in Pueblo Nuevo. Finally, in a brief visit to the southern town of San Juan del Sur, the writer was unable to reach a CEP. Instead, a visit was made to the local CEDA (Adult Education Centre).

In all of these visits the writer was able to observe class activities and talk to participants. However, it was usually after the class that more relaxed and informal conversations were held with participants either individually or in small groups. During these conversations, the topics explored varied according to replies received to leading questions posed, such as: Why and how did you get involved in the CEP?, why didn't you know how to read and write, and how have the new skills affected your life?, what do you see as the major problems, advantages and disadvantages of the CEP and the Program? Similar questions were posed to the popular teachers, especially in relation to their teaching routine; Did you find problems in the pedagogical material, the method, class management, the training provided, other activities in the community and so forth.

Along with observation of class activities and conversation with CEP participants, further information about the functioning of the Program was obtained at the provincial offices of the Ministry of Education. At these offices, and at zonal levels, the writer was able to talk to various persons related to the Program such as: Flora López, provincial representative for Matagalpa, and zonal

represe..tatives Juan Pineda (for El Tuma and La Dalia) and Armando Blandón (for San Ramón) in the same province: Mario González, provincial representative for Jinotega; and Elba Ponce, provincial representative for Estelí. In Matagalpa, a conversation was also held with Sheril Hinshon, a North American teacher working with the CEPs in that region. Hinshon had also participated in the Literacy Crusade and later published her experiences in the work And Also Teach Them to Read which she co-authored with Judy Butler--The writer also talked to Butler who at that time worked in the Historical Institute of Central America (Managua).

Christian Participation

Field-work within Christian grass-roots organization and activities related to popular education included: Attendance to routine meetings of the Christian Base Community in Managua's parishes of San Pablo Apóstol (Colonia Nicarao) and Santa María de los Angeles (El Riguero). Also, in the latter, attendance at Sunday masses celebrated by Father Uriel Molina--in a Church whose walls were covered with popular-art paintings evoking Christian-revolutionary symbolisms, and the mass and rites were accompanied by popular music and songs of the same nature.

The writer also participated in a weekend workshop organized by CAV (Antonio Valdivieso Ecumenical Centre) on the subject "The Reading of the Bible during the Insurrection." In the same Centre, attendance at the launching of Giulio Girardi's book Sandinismo, Marxismo, Cristianismo en la Nueva Nicaragua--an act in which Father Ernesto Cardenal (Ministry of Culture) and Tomás Borge (Interior Ministry) spoke about their Christian-revolutionary experience. In Matagalpa and San Juan del Sur, conversations were held with local priests and Christian leaders. Visits were made to CEPA and to the publisher's office of Tayacán--a Christian weekly popular education bulletin--among others.

As stated in the introduction of the thesis, the writer also visited a number of other institutions and grass-roots organizations, as well as attending various other activities related to popular culture and popular education. It would be tiresome, however, to detail all aspects of field-work and how they affected the writer's perception; especially

when, pressured by limitations of time and the lack of research facilities, the writer took advantage of many non-conventional sources of data and information such us informal street conversations which necessarily went unrecorded. As much as possible the writer has attempted to acknowledge and quote sources supporting or explaining circumstances which led to a given conclusion or impression. However, many impressions formed whether through the reading of documents and texts or through observation and contact with people may have inadvertently become woven into the fabric of the chapters without acknowledgement.
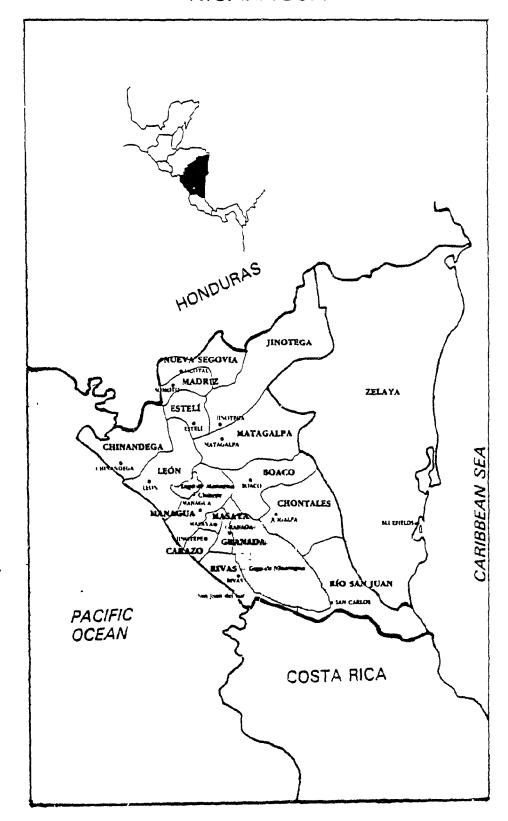
A final Comment

The writer feels the need to add some brief comments about the difficulties encountered in conducting field-work in Nicaragua and his dominant impressions of the country at that moment.

Although the writer had been advised about the problems and limitations in Nicaragua, and was familiar with the context of a developing country, the kinds and level of difficulties encountered were clearly beyond expectations. The common limitations of a poor country, worsened by a situation of war and compounded with a lack of basic facilities resulted in an uneasy stay and ran contrary to more favourable conditions for research. It was difficult, for instance, to have access to people and officials in charge; to find suitable sources for information, data, and publications; public library services where one could work, and typewriters and photocopy machines were virtually unavailable. Facilities for urban and rural transportation were also extremely scarce.

Access to the CEPs was also difficult, especially to those located in the rural areas. Visits to some of these areas were only possible thanks to the above-mentioned contact with a CUSO volunteer in Matagalpa who, having his own means of transportation and knowing the area well, was able to accompany the writer to these places. However, even with transportation provided, often after long trips through barely accessible roads we ended up finding out that the class was either attended by only half of the students or had been cancelled, or the coordinator was the only person to arrive.

Finally, after getting to know conditions in the country, the writer feels compelled to deplore that the Nicaraguan experience became such a symbolic focus of larger ideological confrontations and interests which distorted a more balanced image of such an experience. In fact, one can never be sufficiently prepared to reconcile the pre-conceived images set forth by both detractors and apologists for the Revolution, even when faced with the real situation. What was incontrovertibly shocking, however, was the sense of emergency and hardship found at all levels of Nicaraguan society. In view of this situation, the writer cannot refrain from expressing his admiration for the courage and abnegation of many people who, despite all the difficulties and hard socio-economic conditions, enthusiastically devoted their efforts to learning and the improvement of their conditions of life. Friendly joy and a deep sense of hope against all odds were contagious characteristics of the Nicaraguan people which one does not easily forget.

NICARAGUA

APPENDIX II

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The document, "Ends and Objectives of the New Education in
Nicaragua", which today is being published in its final
form, was based on the great "National Consultation", which
the Ministry of Education formulated at the beginning of
1981.

This work, original and unique in Latin American educational
activity, involved some 50,000 people, through multiple
answers which thirty organizations, representing all sectors
of the country, gave to the ample package of 55 questions
posed by the Ministry of Education.

First, the document was discussed, analyzed and amplified in
fifteen work sessions convoked by the National Advisory
Council of Education, involving the Ministry of Education
(MED), The National Association of Nicaraguan Teachers
(ANDEN), The Sandinista Youth of July 19 (J.S. 19 de J.),
The Nicaraguan Federation of Catholic Teachers (FENEC), The
Conference of Religious (CONFER), The Farmworkers Union
(ATC), The National Parent's Association (ANPAF), The
Ministry of Planning (MIPLAN), The Sandinista Worker's
Central (CST), etc.

Later it was approved by our Government Junta of National
Reconstruction and is supported by the National Direction of
the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

In this way, the version which is published today--which we
will send in pamphlet form to every educator in the country
--is the result of the Political will of the Sandinista
Popular Revolution, with the full participation of all
sectors of Nicaraguan society committed to the important
task of defining the philosophy of the new education in the
New Nicaragua, which must be, above all, critical and
liberational.

Now, in the light of this document, our teacher will be better able to focus their efforts to direct the plans, programs and course contents along lines that have as their ultimate goal the building up of the Nation and its sovereign interests: its geography, its history, its economy, its culture and its national values, which because of their quality and probity are universal.

Our Government of National Reconstruction wanted to begin the 1983 School Year by publishing this important documrnt, which from now on will be the indispensable guide in our revolutionary, educational task of forming the New Man in the New Nicaragua.

> Carlos Tünnermann Bernheim
> Minister of Education
> Managua, May 1, 1983
>
> The Year of the Fight for Peace and Sovereignty

I. GOALS:

The New Education in Nicaragua has as its GOALS:

The full and integral formation of the personality of the New Man, constantly growing, able to promote and contribute to the process of transformation which daily builds the New Society. This New Man of Nicaragua, who has been developing since the beginning of the process of liberation of our people, is formed out of our reality, our creative work and the historical circumstances in which we live. Education must develop the intellectual, physical, moral, aesthetic and spiritual capabilities of this New Man. According to the results of the National Consultation on the Goals and Objectives of Education, the qualities and values that are consonant with the New Man of Nicaragua are the following:

a) In the Political Sphere:

> Patriotic, revolutionary, solidary, and committed to the interests of the workers and campesinos, in particular, to those of the large working class which constitutes the majority of our population; anti-imperialist, internationalist, against all form of exploitation by interior or exterior elements, against racism, discrimination and oppression; promoting national unity of our working classes, the campesino workers, on behalf of national sovereignty, social progress, justice, liberty, growth, peace in the region and in the world.

b) In the Social and Moral Sphere:

> Responsible, disciplined, creative, cooperative, hard-working and efficient; of high moral, civic and spiritual principles; able to be critical and self-critical; with a scientific view of the world and of society; capable of aesthetic appreciation and artistic expression; recognizing and appreciating the dignity of manual labour by intellectuals; convinced of the importance of conserving, defending and improving the environment and the quality of life; respectful, modest, dedicated, objective, understanding that individual interests should coincide with social and national interests, developing a spirit of sacrifice

and abnegation in order to defend the Nation and the
Revolution.

II. GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

Education has as its GENERAL OBJECTIVES the following:

1. To offer ⸱ students an education that acknowledges and
   encourages them to be important agents in their own
   formation and permits them to achieve the highest
   levels in the sciences, technology, the humanities and
   the arts. Consonant with this, the teaching/learning
   process will emphasize the importance of scientific and
   auto-instructional methods.

2. To form students in and for creative work and to develop
   in them the awareness of the economic, social, and
   cultural value of productive labour, of the fundamental
   role of workers in the building of the new society, and
   of the formative worth of productive labour, which will
   enable them to overcome the dichotomy between theory
   and practice, between intellectual work and manual
   work. This awareness must produce a new attitude in
   students towards labour and the work-oriented mentality
   in the new situation of the Sandinista Popular
   Revolution.

3. To form the new generations in the values and principles
   of the Sandinista Popular Revolution, developing their
   convictions concerning the organized participation of
   the people in social management and in the work of the
   Revolution as an expression of popular democracy; in
   the rejection of all forms of imperialist domination
   and in militant solidarity with all peoples of the
   world.

4. To form the New Man in the thinking and example of the
   Heroes and Martyrs, an all those figures who throughout
   the long history of our fights for liberation have been
   building, defending and inspiring the personality and
   essence of our Nation and our Sandinista Popular
   Revolution.

5. To develop the commitment to participation in the never-
   ending defense of the Nation and the Revolution in

order to fortify national independence, self-determination, sovereignty and identity.

6. To promote attitudes of friendship and cooperation with the peoples and governments of the world, on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

7. To inculcate and promote the deepest respect for human rights.

8. To deepen the roots of our culture, whose promotion and diffusion will be strictly tied to the educational programs; to make use of the scientific and cultural contributions of humanity, rejecting all culturally alienating elements.

9. To stimulate in students and teachers the capacity for analysis that is critical, self-critical, scientific, participatory and creative, and that makes education a liberating practice.

10. To provide a humanistic, scientific, technological, political, ideological, moral and physical formation that is creatively applied to the process of transforming our own reality.

11. To form and prepare technically and politically the human resources necessary for the advancement and consolidation of the revolutionary process, consistent with the overall plans for economic and social development.

12. To contribute to the development and improvement of the physical and psychic health of the students.

III. GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

In order to accomplish these GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, the New Education will be governed by the following GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

1. Education is a fundamental and undeniable right of every Nicaraguan. Education will be obligatory at the levels of Pre-School Education and general basic education, to be applied in a gradual manner according to the amplification of the educational services of the State.

2. Education in Nicaragua will be directed towards a
   solution to the great economic and social problems,
   establishing a direct link with the life and history of
   our people.

3. Education is a primordial and irreducible function of the
   State. The education imparted by the State will be
   free, public and mixed. It is the responsibility of the
   State to plan, evaluate, direct, supervise, and promote
   the educational process at all levels and in all
   modalities. The State guarantees and promotes the
   participation of the family, the community and the
   organizations of the people in the educational process.

4. Productive and creative labour will be a formative
   element and integral part of the study programs,
   mediating the joining of theory with practice and the
   combining of manual with intellectual work.

5. Education is unique, continuing, recurrent and permanent
   process of formation and development of personality.

6. The New Education is conceived as a system made up of
   several sub-systems. The new plans which are being
   prepared for its development will introduce the focus
   of education as a system, that is to say, as a coherent
   whole, as a conjunct or complex of related elements,
   which pursue common objectives, which articulate all
   the levels and modalities of teaching and all the forms
   of informal education. We must anticipate the necessary
   horizontal and vertical relationships between the
   different levels and modalities in order to facilitate
   transfer and movement between the world of work and the
   educational system.

7. The media of collective communication are considered an
   important part of the educational process, for which
   the State must organize its use as a vehicle of
   national educational development.

8. The New Education will emphasize and systematize the
   tasks of Vocational Formation and Occupational
   Orientation, in order to join the needs of the work
   force with the possibilities of the educational system.
   These tasks will be the responsibility of the whole
   society, and in particular of the revolutionary State,

the educational community, and the centres of
production.

9. Special importance must be given to the investigative
functions of the educational institutions, since the
educational system must not limit itself to the
teaching of science and technology, but also must
contribute to solving the scientific and social
problems that development presents to us.

10. Modelling will be part of the New Education, as a form
of acknowledgement and stimulation of the commitment of
the members of the educational community and the
popular organizations in the work of the Revolution, in
the improvement of academic levels, and in all those
efforts which lead to the betterment of the educational
process.

11. We shall respect the freedom of parents to choose for
their children the schools or colleges which they deem
most suitable for their formation.

12. The funds set aside for the financing of the educational
system will be considered a social investment.
Therefore, the State and society together will give
priority to financing the instruments, including
juridical, in order to assure the effective
participation of business in the financing and
development of the continuing education of the working
population.

Government Junta of National
Reconstruction

Managua, May 1, 1983

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