STATES, PARTIES AND SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONS

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Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

A.W. Greig
May 1989
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Abstract

The structure/agency dilemma remains one of the most contentious issues in modern sociology. This thesis examines the relationship between these concepts in the light of theories of revolutions. The types of revolution analysed are socialist revolutions, defined as Marxist-inspired regime transformations accompanied by widespread revolt from below.

The argument advanced is that the origins and development of socialist movements to the position of state power is more complex than the dominant structuralist paradigm assumes. No model of socialist revolutions can be adequate without combining long-term structuralist considerations of social process with short-to-medium purposive factors such as political mobilisation, organisation and ideology.

This thesis adopts a comparative historical analysis to support this claim. Using two apparently dissimilar cases, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, it is argued that despite spatial and temporal differences a generalisable set of factors can be advanced which explain the occurrence of socialist revolutions.
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Chapter 1
THEORIES OF REVOLUTIONS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Between January 1978 and July 1979 the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua encountered an unprecedented challenge to its authority. Despite concerted efforts from domestic and international groups to retain the underlying structure of the social system which had been maintained for over forty years, all social indicators pointed towards an acute and heightening revolutionary crisis of the regime. These indicators included an increase in levels of political violence, in organised opposition to the dictatorship, growing adherence to an alternative structure of authority demanding the armed overthrow of the dictatorship, the inability of the regime to suppress organised discontent and massive disruption to the normalcy of everyday life. The qualitative transformation of this situation was achieved on July 19, 1979 when the Sandinista National Liberation Front entered the capital city proclaiming victory over the forces of the dictatorship. Recognising the inevitable, Somoza had fled to Miami two days before, leaving his coercive instrument, the National Guard, in disarray.

The Sandinista victory signalled a sharp break from the nations' past. Latin America had not witnessed such a rapid and fundamental socio-political transformation since the Cuban Revolution twenty years beforehand. The extent of this socio-political break, combined with the high level of mass mobilisation, clearly distinguished the Nicaraguan event from most forms of regime transformation.

This thesis examines the phenomenon of modern social revolutions. Instances of this phenomenon (such as that described above in Nicaragua during 1978 and 1979) are relatively rare social occurrences. The fact that the term 'revolution' is so widespread in political and everyday vocabulary demonstrates the emotional charge the issue generates. Depending upon one's perspective, or social situation, revolution is either abhorred and feared, or exalted and celebrated. The task of the sociologist, however, is to understand how and why revolutions come about. ¹ This thesis will explore the social and political conditions which give rise to modern revolutionary situations, and will attempt to understand the conditions under which particular challengers succeed in radically transforming states and social structures. The types of regime transformation which will be examined are those which have been inspired by

Marxist movements, and accompanied by widespread mobilisation of classes previously alienated from the established polity. These will be labelled socialist revolutions. Using a historical comparative perspective, this thesis argues that despite temporal and spatial differences a generalisable set of factors can be advanced which explain the occurrence of modern socialist revolutions. In addressing contemporary approaches to the study of revolutions the thesis argues that no model can be complete unless it combines ‘long-range’ structuralist considerations of social process with ‘short-range’ purposive considerations of political mobilisation and organisation.

The Nicaraguan revolution provides social scientists with an opportunity to test the validity of the models of revolution which have flourished within the discipline over the previous twenty years. In an influential article published in 1965 Harry Eckstein had lamented the underdevelopment of definitions and models of ‘internal war’ (of which revolutions were but a species).¹ Fifteen years later the same author could reflect that; "Early on, the problem was a lack of considered definitions. Now we suffer from overabundance and too much diversity."³

Any attempt to achieve consensus upon the definition of ‘revolution’ is hindered by the variety, scope and purposes of the models and theories which have been constructed. However, T.H. Greene believes that:

> It is the almost unanimous opinion of the writers on the subject that ‘revolution’...means an alteration in the personnel, structure, supporting myths, and functions of government by methods which are not sanctioned by prevailing constitutional means. These methods almost invariably involve violence or the threat of violence against political elites, citizens, or both. And it is the opinion of a majority of scholars that ‘revolution’ means a relatively abrupt and significant change in the distribution of wealth and social status.⁴

This definition has the merit of contrasting revolution with other, less fundamental, forms of regime and social transformations. Samuel Huntington, who clearly operates within the framework outlined above, notes that revolutions are "to be distinguished from insurrections, rebellions, revolts, coups and wars of independence."⁵ While one of the latter, or a combination of them, may be present in a revolution, they are clearly not sufficient to attach the label ‘revolution’ to a given situation. If the term is to retain any usefulness at all, then its usage must be restricted to the fundamental changes outlined in Greene’s definition.

Theda Skocpol has further refined the term through incorporating Marx’s stress on the role of

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⁴S.P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale, New Haven, 1968, p. 264.
class conflict. Mass participation 'from below' becomes an essential characteristic of what Skocpol labels 'social revolutions'. While political revolutions involve a transformation in the mechanisms and channels of political participation, they do not involve basic social structural changes. In contrast, social revolutions;

are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below. Social revolutions are set apart from other sorts of conflicts and transformative processes above all by the combination of two coincidences: the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation.

As Skocpol concedes, this limits the term to "relatively few historical instances". However, the advantage resulting from this rigour is that such instances can be analysed in their historical complexity; a feature which is lost if revolutions are subsumed under more 'general' categories (such as 'political conflict', 'internal war' or 'collective violence') which tend to abstract events from their preconditions in order to increase the frequency of a phenomenon.

One further amendment to the definition of revolution is necessary in order to clarify the focus of this thesis. The definitions presented above all tend to stress the outcomes of revolutions, rather than the processes which lead to these outcomes. While it is generally correct to regard revolutions as processes, there is a danger that such a sweeping generalisation can lapse into the realm of meaninglessness. Much depends upon how rigorously one defines the rapid and fundamental social change involved in the revolutionary process. There are convincing grounds for arguing that the changes which distinguish modern revolutionary societies from their pre-revolutionary predecessors were only implemented after revolutionaries assumed control over the central administration. In other words, the seizure of power was only a precondition for the transformation of society. If this is the case, then the definition faces the problem of periodising revolutions. When does a revolution begin? And when does it end? The dilemma is illustrated in Trotsky's concept of 'permanent revolution' and Mao's 'uninterrupted revolution'. The understanding of post-revolutionary development derived from Marx (from the German Ideology to The Critique of the Gotha Programme) is unequivocal in presenting this development as a continual transcendence of existing social relations. While the study of the dynamics of post-revolutionary social change and development remains an exciting and controversial field of study in its own right, the focus of this thesis will concentrate upon the process and events leading to the assumption of power by the revolutionary movement. This helps delineate the universe of discourse. A revolutionary situation emerges when an alternative centre of authority challenges the established governmental centre of authority, and when this alternative structure possesses sufficient resources and respect from


7T. Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China, Cambridge, 1979, p. 4. (My emphasis)

8Ibid., p. 5.

significant sections of the population to threaten the existence of the old regime. A revolutionary situation ends once the existing polity successfully undermines this threat, or when the alternative challenger succeeds in overthrowing the old regime and establishes a new administrative monopoly over the state and means of coercion.

The principle objective of this thesis is to explain why socialist revolutions occur. In other words, the object of analysis here is the causes rather than the consequences of social revolutions. Taxonomically speaking then, this thesis deals with a species of social revolution as defined above; namely socialist revolutions. Morphologically speaking, it deals with the period which culminates in the overthrow of old regimes. Etiologically defined, the thesis will analyse the contribution of structural and purposive factors to the overthrow of regimes. The discussion will now concentrate upon this etiology.

1.2. THEORIES AND MODELS OF REVOLUTIONS

The overabundance of theories and models of revolution which have inundated the discipline over the previous quarter of a century require classification in order to trace their epistemological underpinnings. Chronologically, it is possible to chart the development of theories of revolutions by highlighting the dominant trends within the field of study over time. In Kuhnian terms, the field has witnessed a succession of paradigms, each replacing a previously dominant conceptual model, and each, in time, failing to deal with awkward new data, conflicting observations and ‘anomalies’.

1.2.1. Natural, General and Structural Approaches

Jack Goldstone has argued that the development of theories of revolutions has progressed through three ‘generations’: the natural, the general and the structural. Natural theories have also been labelled ‘stage’ theories of revolutions, due to their attempt to construct a morphology of revolution based upon a common sequential pattern through which all cases proceed. The most representative work of the natural approach is Crane Brinton’s *The Anatomy of Revolution*. Drawing from evidence from the English, American, French and Russian revolutions, Brinton identified four stages each case underwent; the rule of the moderates, the accession of the extremists, the reign of terror and finally, Thermidor. As the analogy of a fever infecting an organism suggests, the theory presents a cyclical progression of stages culminating in the re-establishment of normalcy or order. Analysis of case studies focuses upon

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13Ibid., pp. 16-8.
identifying the stages of the revolutionary process and fitting events into the typology. As Greene has observed, this often results "in an unnecessarily artificial arrangement of the data."14 Particular revolutions have rarely approximated closely to the ideal type. Furthermore, attention is unevenly focused upon post-revolutionary developments, leaving the approach open to the attack that "stage theories...have failed to explain why revolutions occur."15 Thus, natural theories are ill-suited to the purpose of this work, which explores the causes, rather than the consequences, of revolution.16

The second generation of theories identified by Goldstone are labelled general approaches. Their origins can be traced to the rather broad framework of 'modernisation' and 'diffusionist' theories which dominated U.S. social science during the 1950's and 1960's, and to the empirical observation that the process of modernisation in the 'developing' world was often accompanied by acute social conflict. General theories attempted to explain this phenomenon. The approaches which are collapsed under this category occupy a wide spectrum of sociological perspectives, including socio-psychological approaches of 'relative deprivation', structural approaches of 'systems disequilibrium', and political approaches of 'resource mobilisation'.

Relative deprivation (RD) theories begin with the observation that throughout history misery and poverty have been an endemic condition for at least some sectors of society. As revolution and violence are only episodic features of most societies explanation must transcend the common-sense generalisation that 'misery breeds revolt'. Proponents of RD, such as Ted Gurr and James Davies, argue that frustration and aggression are likely to be activated under conditions of changing expectations.17

For example, contact with other cultures and social systems, or rapid economic change, tend to raise peoples expectations. If these expectations remain unfulfilled, for whatever reason, then the gap between expectation and fulfilment will increase the propensity of frustration and aggression, leading to a potentially violent conflict between elites and non-elites, or authorities and their subjects.

According to Davies, the crucial determining factor in explaining revolutions are expectations, rather than "the actual state of socio-economic development".18 Yet, as Kramnick observes, most attempts to operationalise RD must infer this psychological state from objective, economic

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14Greene, op. cit., p. 11.
18Davies, op. cit., p. 6. As Charles Tilly notes, "...Gurr concentrates upon experiences which happen to individuals, and then culminate into mass action" rather than analysing the social processes that activate RD. C. Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1978, p. 22.
and political, indicators due to the fact that the approach can rarely produce the empirical
evidence to validate the existence and significance of individual or widespread feelings of
deprivation.\textsuperscript{19} This is admitted by J.A. Booth in his employment of the theory to the
Nicaraguan Revolution.\textsuperscript{20} Booth can merely infer or imply RD from the effect which social,
economic and political changes \textit{must} have had upon sections of the community. It is Booth's
detailed long-range narrative which marks his text as one of the best histories thus far produced
on the Nicaraguan Revolution, rather than its application of RD theory. Furthermore, as
Greene argues, RD theory tends towards tautology and non-falsifiability.\textsuperscript{21} Relative
deprivation (whether political or economic) does seem to be characteristic of revolutionary
situations. Yet this simply describes that which needs explanation. Why, for instance, is relative
deprivation mobilised into revolutionary channels? As Greene notes, aggression against
authorities is only one possible form RD could assume. Alternative channels of expression or
'outlets' can include "religious zeal, artistic creation, athletic competition, criminal activity, drug
or alcohol addiction, and even psychological withdrawal and passivity."\textsuperscript{22}

Goldstone identifies the 'systems disequilibrium' approach as another sub-species of general
theories of revolution. This approach is characterised by the work of Chalmers Johnson, who
adapts the Parsonian, structural-functionalist framework to revolution.\textsuperscript{23} Johnson argues that a
social system maintains its stability, or equilibrium, when its matrix of roles, norms and values
function in a mutually supporting and interactive manner. For the systems (dis)equilibrium
approach the 'point of departure in analysing social change is the model of a functionally
integrated social system - a system whose members co-operate with each other by 'playing' various 'roles' that, taken together, permit the whole system to 'function'.\textsuperscript{24} Revolutions are a
response to value disorientation and institutional imbalance between components of the social
system. In other words, revolutions occur under conditions where various parts of a social
system are in a state of disequilibrium, or are dysfunctional to the maintenance of order.

Dysfunctional conditions are caused by pressures...that compel the members of a substructure
to do their work, or view their roles, or imagine their potentialities differently from the way that
they did under equilibrium conditions.\textsuperscript{25} For example, periods of rapid economic growth, expanding educational opportunities or
cultural diffusion, may alter components of a social system. Unless corresponding change
occurs within the other sub-systems, value-disorientation and institutional disequilibrium will
generate pressure, raising the potential for conflict between competing value-orientations, or

\textsuperscript{19}See Kramnick, op. cit., p. 43.
\textsuperscript{20}Booth, op. cit., p. 218.
\textsuperscript{21}Greene, op. cit., pp. 148-52.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., p. 149. See also Kramnick, op. cit., p. 56.
\textsuperscript{23}C. Johnson, Revolution and the Social System, The Hoover Institution,\textsuperscript{512p.64}, 1964.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 4.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 5.
the delegitimation of ‘intransient elites’. Revolutions are a resynchronisation of institutions and values through violent change. Thus, in contrast to the RD model, the focus of Johnson’s work is macro-cosmic rather than micro-cosmic, although much attention is devoted to the governing elites who ‘operate’ the ‘social machine’. While he argues that equilibrium is not a "real condition” but an “ideal-type construct” used as a reference for measuring change, the underlying Durkheimian emphasis upon consensus leads to a radical dichotomy between routine and non-routine forms of action and stresses social homeostatic equilibrium. While sharing many similarities with the Marxian emphasis upon structure, the Johnsonian model assumes conflict to be an abnormal, or pathological, condition. Following Jaroslav Krejd, the explanation of revolution in this thesis will acknowledge as a point of departure "the fact of social change", rather than any mentally constructed "societal equilibrium" and its disturbance.

Rod Aya has pointed to the neo-Durkheimian influence behind both RD theory and systems disequilibrium theory, and has criticised both on three other counts. Firstly, the ‘state’ is insufficiently distinguished from ‘society’, leaving the political processes of revolutionary mobilisation in obscurity. Power relations, control over state institutions and political mobilisation are conspicuously absent in these ‘volcanic’ theories of revolutionary eruptions. Secondly, and relatedly, there is a tendency to reify society, leading to "the strange case of the absconded actor”. Relatively little importance is attached to the investigation or identification of the specific groups and classes which are frustrated by change, and which mobilise to defend or represent their collective interests. Both approaches tend to ignore the social composition of the revolutionary mass. Thirdly, there is a "two-fold leap of faith" underlying both approaches; "from social change to mass anger, and from mass anger to collective violence". Unless these

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26The equation reads "Multiple dysfunction plus elite intransigence plus X equals revolution", where X equals ‘accelerators’. Ibid., p. 12. "Social violence is the appropriate response to intransigent resistance; it occurs because known methods of non-violent change are blocked by the ruling elite....Of course, if the elite is not intransigent, simple change will occur, dysfunction will be relieved, and no revolution will take place." Ibid., p. 6.

27On this point Bill Brugger and Kate Hannan make the following observation. "Stripped of its bare essentials, Johnson’s account is not a theory of revolution at all. It is an elaborate, and at times highly sophisticated, taxonomy of factors one needs to take into account if one is to explain revolution, assuming of course that the basic axiom about social function holds. Such a taxonomy could only become a theory if one was told what determines the successful or unsuccessful response of the governing elite. Alas, all we have is a blueprint for the social machine and the hope that the engineer will be intelligent enough to know how to operate it. Presumably the modernisation which engenders multiple dysfunctions also improves the ability of an elite to overcome them. The trouble arises when one considers that the engineer is, in fact, part of the blueprint.” B. Brugger & K. Hannan, Modernisation and Revolution, Croom Helm, London, 1983, p.34. (My emphasis).

28Ibid, p. 92. Both RD theory and systems disequilibrium theory reflect Merton’s influential argument in “Social Structure and Anomie”. The stability of a social structure requires a conformity to both cultural goals and institutional means. An imbalance in this relationship will lead to a variety of deviant behaviour, the most acute being “rejection and substitution of new goals and standards”, or “rebellion”. Although Merton’s paper was not primarily concerned with this form of adjustment, its application can be discerned in both the theories examined above. See R. Merton, “Social Structure and Anomie”, American Sociological Review, Vol. 3, 1938. For Durkheim’s influence on RD theory, see K. Thomson, Emile Dürkheim, Tavistock, London, 1982, p. 85. (My emphasis).


30Krejd, op. cit., p. 3.
leaps can be made intelligible, the approaches are reduced to tautology.\textsuperscript{31}

An attempt to overcome these problems is provided by the third sub-species of general theory identified by Goldstone. A representative example of the approach is Charles Tilly's work 	extit{From Mobilization to Revolution}. This approach focuses attention upon political factors, primarily the balance of power between an established 'polity' and one or more 'contenders'. In opposition to the systems disequilibrium approach, Tilly's epistemological underpinnings borrow heavily from Marx rather than Durkheim.\textsuperscript{32} Conflict is viewed as an integral and logical feature of a social system. However, a revolutionary situation can only arise under conditions where challengers are able to mobilise a significant section of the population under a competing claim for control over the state, and where the existing polity is unwilling or unable to suppress this claim effectively. Tilly refers to this condition of 'multiple sovereignty' as the "identifying feature of revolutionary situations."\textsuperscript{33} This begins when "...a government previously under the control of a single, sovereign polity becomes the object of effective, competing, mutually exclusive claims on the part of two or more distinct polities. It ends when a single sovereign polity regains control over the government."\textsuperscript{34} Tilly's concentration upon political mobilisation and organisation distinguishes his approach from theories of relative deprivation and systems disequilibrium alike. He claims that:

Despite the many recent attempts to psychologize the study of revolutions by introducing ideas of anxiety, alienation, raising expectations, and the like, and to sociologize it by emphasizing notions of disequilibrium, role conflict, structural strain, and so on, the factors which hold up under close scrutiny are, on the whole political ones. The structure of power, alternative conceptions of justice, the organization of coercion, the conduct of war, the formation of coalitions, the legitimacy of the state - these traditional concerns of political thought provide the main guides to the explanation of revolutions.\textsuperscript{35}

Consequently, Tilly succeeds in transcending the problems of RD theory through introducing political mobilisation and organisation, yet still tends to abstract the process of revolution from Johnson's emphasis upon social structure.

While Tilly's approach may seem at odds with those of Gurr and Johnson, all three share a set of commonalities when viewed through the theoretical lens of the third generation of theories of revolutions identified by Goldstone; the structuralist approach. For example, Theda Skocpol, in 	extit{States and Social Revolutions}, has criticised all the above three approaches for overemphasizing

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{32}As Tilly states, his approach is "doggedly anti-Durkheimian, resolutely pro-Marxist, but sometimes indulgent to Weber and sometimes reliant on Mill." Tilly, op. cit., p. 48. However, Lynn Hunt has argued that Tilly's long-standing battle with 'the ghost of Durkheim' is more complex, and that his agenda is 'fundamentally similar' to Durkheim's. L. Hunt, "Charles Tilly's Collective Action," in T. Skocpol (ed), \textit{Vision and Method in Historical Sociology}, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 249-30.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., p. 191. Similarly, Peter Amann defines revolution in terms of 'competing power blocs'. Revolutions "may be said to be a breakdown, momentarily or prolonged, of the state's monopoly of power, usually accompanied by a lessening of the habit of obedience." P. Amann, "Revolution: A Redefinition", \textit{Political Science Quarterly}, 77, 1962. p. 38. Rod Aya's works cited above also fall within the 'political mobilisation' framework.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 191.

\end{footnotesize}
'purposive' factors in their explanations of revolution. Revolutions, she argues, cannot be accounted for in terms of values, motivations, and the mobilisation of actors conscious of their collective self-interest. Revolutions are not made by revolutionary agents; they emerge. Adopting an "impersonal and non-subjective viewpoint" she attempts to locate the causes of social revolutions in certain patterned relationships between structurally related classes and the state. De-emphasising value disorientation, relative deprivation and resource mobilisation as over-voluntaristic, Skocpol's level of analysis stresses deeper social processes involving the international structure of nation-states, and internal rural relationships between peasants, landed propertied elites and the state. Skocpol thus questions Marxist and non-Marxist approaches alike, although her analysis retains Marx's concern with class conflict. She presents two important challenges to Marxist theories of revolution. Firstly, she rejects the notion that revolutions are the result of the self-conscious activity of rising social classes. Secondly, she argues that state structures are potentially autonomous from class interests. This goes beyond structural Marxist positions, such as that of Poulantzas, which argue that the state is relatively autonomous, mediating among social classes in order to ensure the reproduction of a given set of social relations.

A comprehensive critique of Skocpol will be undertaken below. The fundamental question which must be asked is whether or not a non-purposive, structuralist approach is sufficient to provide an understanding of the causes and nature of socialist revolutions. To begin with, this thesis questions the notion that third generation theories of revolution are necessarily incompatible with some of the second generation theories. In particular, it argues that Skocpol's and Tilly's approaches are not mutually exclusive. Their apparent differences can be understood, to a large extent, through the different research problems which inform their analysis. As Daniel Bell observed, "One's purpose dictates one's perspective". While Skocpol is concerned with the question "Why do old orders break down?", Tilly is primarily concerned with asking "How do challengers mobilise, and why are they able to succeed?" Both questions are legitimate problems for theorists of revolution.

Despite this difference, a similar methodological thread runs through both Skocpol's and Tilly's analysis, distinguishing them from RD and systems disequilibrium theories. This is the central role assigned to class conflict and the role of the state as a centre for mobilising resources. Relating to Goldstone's chronological analysis of theories of revolution, this thesis will suggest that by taking one generational step backwards, it is possible to take two steps forward.

36Skocpol, op. cit., p. 18.
1.2.2. Inherency and Contingency

Before engaging in a critique of the structuralist perspective, one reservation must be registered concerning attempts to chart the development of theories of revolutions. This form of classification tends to obscure a range of fundamental differences which exist within generations. For instance, general theories only appear as a single species when viewed through the lens of the structuralist perspective. The range of concepts operationalised in the literature suggests that, depending upon the approach adopted, the theoretical debate could revolve around any number of sets of conflicting key variables. According to the purpose, this "fateful choice" will determine the framework of the debate. Thus, following Weber, an acknowledgement must be made that according to the value-reference adopted, the fundamental problem in the study of revolutions will proceed along only one of a number of possible courses.

For instance, while there appears to be a contradiction between Skocpol's structuralism and Tilly's more purposive approach of collective action, both share similarities when examined against Gurr's or Johnson's approach. This latter theoretical dichotomy can be illustrated by employing Harry Eckstein's concept of 'problemation'. He defines problemation as "the discovery of the most fundamental problem requiring solution if a progressive development of theory about a subject is to occur." According to Eckstein, the "branch point", or problemation, in theorising revolutions lies in the choice between contingency and inherency in political life. According to Eckstein:

> Something is contingent if its occurrence depends upon the presence of unusual (we might say aberrant) conditions that occur accidently - conditions that involve a large component of chance...
> Contingency implies 'non-routine', something out of the ordinary, something not understood without special explanation.

On the other hand:

> ... something is inherent either if it will always happen (e.g., entropy) or if the potentiality for it always exists and actuality can only be obstructed.

An example of the contingency/inherency problemation within the social sciences is the debate between Paul Sweezy and Maurice Dobb over the transition from feudalism to capitalism. While Dobb places primary emphasis upon internal contradictions between direct producers and their overlords in order to explain the breakdown of feudalism, Paul Sweezy argues that Dobb "mistakes for immanent trends certain historical developments which in fact can only be explained as arising from causes external to the (feudal) system." The contingent factor which Sweezy points to is the growth of trade and markets, a feature which was not inherent within the system. In other words, does social change originate within 'the womb of the old'...
(inherency), or is it a consequence of factors imposed from outside the logic of the system (contingency)?

This tension between inherency and contingency can be found within the framework of general theories of revolutions. Thus Eckstein identifies Gurr's approach as a contingency perspective and Tilly's as an inherency approach. Most theories which operate with the concept of modernisation or cultural and economic diffusion can also be classified as contingency approaches. In these cases the emphasis is placed upon contact with exogenous forces, which are viewed as principal factors promoting disequilibrium, value disorientation and relative deprivation. In other words, revolution is not viewed primarily as part of the logic of the social system.

While these 'sociological' theories examine revolution as a particular response arising from the problems of rapid social change generated by modernisation, there are more simplistic contingency approaches which stress the role of external political actors. For example, 'domino' theories, by their very analogy, suggest that a society will remain homeostatic unless an impetus is provided from external sources. A contemporary version of the thesis (described by a critic, Allan Naim, as the 'umbilical cord' theory of revolutions) has been applied to revolutionary developments in Central America and the Caribbean. According to this approach, revolutions are the result of external ('extra-hemispheric') influences centred on Moscow. The theory views the Cuban Revolution as the dependent child of the Soviet Union, which, in time, nurtures the Nicaraguan Revolution, and so on. The foreign policy implications of the theory are clear. If the spread of revolution is to be halted, then the umbilical cord of arms supply, sanctuary and external subversion must be cut before Nicaragua gives birth to a totalitarian El Salvador. Thus while some sociological theories of revolution stress abstract, impersonal, contingent processes and forces, more simplistic political contingency theorists stress external actors. For Jeanne Kirkpatrick, the deeper historical forces emphasised by modernisation theorists such as Samuel Huntington in reality "look a lot like Russians and Cubans."

The contingency/inherency framework is also implicit in A.S. Cohan's attempt to categorise theories of revolution. Cohan devotes his attention to four approaches; the Marxist, the Functionalist, Mass Society and Psychological. However, Cohan observes that the latter three all share one fundamental similarity in relation to the Marxist approach. While Marxism analyses revolutions as normal developments of societal transformation ("because they resolve the basic contradictions that are inbuilt into social arrangements"), the remaining perspectives reject the notion of the inevitability of revolution and that inbuilt contradictions are contained

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within social systems. The contingency/inherency framework can also be understood as a manifestation of the consensus/conflict controversy within social philosophy. The sociological origins of the former can be traced to Durkheim, while the latter can be traced to Marx. In terms of the theories of revolution examined above, Gurr’s approach can be viewed as a contingency theory, derived from Durkheim, while Skocpol and Tilly’s approaches are inherency theories, derived from Marx. Theorists can either stress the inherent stability of a social system, or its inherent instability. This in turn will influence whether or not revolutionary causation appears inherent or contingent.

However, while Eckstein’s problemation demonstrates that certain theoretical positions cross-cut Goldstone’s chronological account of theories of revolution, there are difficulties in employing inherency and contingency as the fundamental antithetical variables. Firstly, even within paradigms, it is possible to discover differences over the relative merits of inherent and contingent factors (even through the debates are not framed in these terms). For example, while Marxism has been classified above as an inherency perspective, controversy has been generated within the paradigm periodically over the role of contingent forces. For instance, during the Russian Civil War, the Bolshevik Tukhachevsky constructed the theory of ‘revolution from without’. However, the disastrous end to the Bolsheviks’ Polish campaign in 1920 robbed his thesis of any appeal. The debate which emerged within the Fourth International after the Second World War over the status of the Soviet ‘buffer’ states can also be traced to the question of ‘revolution from without’. Furthermore, the controversy which Che Guevara’s foco strategy aroused during the 1960’s also revolved around the contingency/inherency problemation.

Chalmers Johnson’s approach is also difficult to categorise using Eckstein’s problemation. He records four factors contributing to revolution, two which are inherent and two contingent. These are exogenous and endogenous value-changing sources, and exogenous and endogenous environment-changing sources. In addition, he also includes ‘accelerators’, events which provide added impetus to underlying causes of revolution.

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48 Ibid., pp. 1-3.
49 Colin Leys has phrased the debate in the following way. ‘For historical materialism, the question of whether a revolution can or will occur in a given society at a given moment, and what its significance or historical ‘content’ may be, is always a problem of analysing the development of the contradictions to which the existing mode of production gives rise, and their expression in class struggles; whereas for Huntington, revolutions are merely pathological modes of restoring order.” C. Leys, “Samuel Huntington and the End of Classical Modernization Theory”, in H. Alavi & T. Shamin (eds), Introduction to the Sociology of ‘Developing Societies’, Macmillan, London, 1982, p. 346.
52 This debate will be dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 5.
53 See C. Johnson, Revolutionary Change, Little Brown, Boston, 1966, p. 27.
54 “The metaphor which best describes our present understanding of accelerators is the heart patient who unexpectedly contracts pneumonia - a disease that a healthy man can normally survive - and who then succumbs from the combined effects of the two.” Johnson, Revolution and the Social System, p. 13.
Another problem which arises from employing Eckstein's problemation concerns the parameters of the social system under investigation. Different approaches adopt varying systemic units of analysis. For example, while modernisation approaches focus upon the nation-state, Skocpol speaks of an 'international states' system. Certain events originating outside the nation-state can still be inherent, according to Skocpol's approach. Thus inherency becomes a very 'flexible' concept, conditioned by the approach adopted. In this sense, Skocpol is closer to World Systems Analysis than modernisation theory. World Systems Analysis, which emerged as a response to the modernisation approach, criticizes the atomistic use of the nation-state as a unit of analysis for development, replacing it with the broader, world-holistic concept of the world capitalist system. Given this focal theoretical shift, many international factors which would be considered contingent by modernisation theorists, become inherent from the perspective of Skocpol and World Systems Analysis due to their broader systemic unit of analysis.

To conclude, while Eckstein's problemation helps explain a range of theoretical differences, its utility is restricted by the 'flexibility' of the concept of inherency. In the next section, an alternative problemation for theories of revolutions will be advanced, namely structure versus agency. Skocpol's work can be seen as representative of the structural approach and Tilly's the purposive. For this reason, the following discussion will focus upon their work.

1.2.3. Structure and Agency

Throughout all areas of social science the structure/agency problemation has generated theoretical controversy. As Eckstein noted in an early article this controversy can be found within approaches to revolutionary causation. However, as noted above, it was the structuralist paradigm which elevated the structure/agency problemation to the fundamental issue, through its conscious rejection of purposive factors in its model of revolution. Charles Tilly (accused by Skocpol of representing a purposive approach) also identifies the structure/agency problemation as fundamental to theories of revolution in his book From Mobilisation to Revolution.

Tilly posed the problem in the following terms:

In the realm of collective action, it is hard to build causal models which give serious attention to the interests, grievances and aspirations of actors. It is also hard to build purposive models which specify the constraints limiting the pursuit of interests, grievances and aspirations.

So why not try a synthesis? Why not combine causal models of constraints with purposive models of choices among competing courses of action? The synthesis is surprisingly difficult.

56Skocpol, op. cit., p. 23.
57Eckstein, "Etiology...", p. 181.
58Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, p. 6.
Tilly attempts this synthesis in his book, but only partially succeeds. However, this is due, not to any fundamental flaw in his approach, but in the 'short-to-medium' time-span he adopts. Skocpol, on the other hand, attempts to purge purposive factors in an endeavour to build a structural model of revolution. This can only be accomplished through adopting a 'longer' time-scale than Tilly.\(^{59}\)

The strength of the structuralist framework lies in its emphasis upon the 'long-term' processes which generate a revolutionary crisis. However, Skocpol has little to say concerning 'short-term' processes and events which lead from the crises of regimes to their overthrow by a particular challenger. To employ an incendiary analogy (which, along with disease and obstetrics, dominates the literature on revolution) Booth has located the moment at which a structuralist perspective must give way to purposive considerations.

A warehouse full of cardboard does not become a four-alarm fire until flame touches paper. Indeed, many warehouses full of cardboard or even more flammable items never burn at all because nothing sets them off. Likewise, many societies have experienced intensely the preconditions or basic stresses that create great revolutionary potential, but they have not undergone a revolution or even an attempted revolt.\(^{60}\)

Poking through the ashes, the 'purposive investigator' is suspicious of spontaneous combustion, while the 'structuralist investigator' dismisses arson.

Tilly is conscious of this tension, yet concentrates his analysis upon the short-to-medium time-span. As the title of his book suggests, he begins with the process of challenger mobilisation, for, as he explicitly states, "we are assuming interests and dealing with the political processes which lead from organized and conflicting interests to revolution."\(^{61}\)

Skocpol, on the other hand, is able to illuminate the longer-term objective conditions upon which these interests are based.

Tilly's discussion of time-span is informative, and deserves to be quoted in full, due to the opportunity it provides to synthesize structural and purposive factors into a rounded understanding of modern revolutions.

In general, how does the displacement of one set of power holders by another happen? The answer depends in part on the time perspective we adopt. In the short run, the answer concerns tactics and balance of forces... In the medium run, we arrive at the considerations which have dominated this book: the presence of mobilized contenders in effective coalitions... It is in the medium run that the creation or emergence of a revolutionary situation contributes to - and may be essential to - a revolutionary outcome. Without the appearance of multiple sovereignty a significant transfer of power is either impossible or highly unlikely.

In the long run, interests and organization begin to tell. In this book, we have faced the challenge of long-run analysis only intermittently, through quick glimpses of proletarianization,
the development of capitalism, state-making, urbanization, and industrialization. The quick glimpses have, however, been graphic enough to communicate the fundamental importance of threatened class interests. Over the long run, the reorganization of production creates the chief historical actors, the main constellation of interests, the basic threat to those interests, and the principal conditions for transfers of power.62

Tilly clearly does not ignore the role of structural factors in generating revolutionary situations. However, his value-orientation concerns how forms of collective action are manifested, and this necessarily abstracts "away from structural transformation", as Skocpol observes.63 This thesis argues that these concerns highlighted by Tilly and Skocpol are not mutually exclusive. In order to grasp the dynamics and nature of modern revolutions it is essential that the structure, constraint and the internal contradictions of polities and international relations be complemented with agency, choice and the mobilisation and organisation of contenders for power.64

Through the sociology of comparative historical analysis, it is possible to grasp the dynamics of particular revolutionary processes in all their unfolding complexity while constructing a more abstract model of the factors which contribute to socialist revolutions. This involves a perspective which recognises the mutual interaction of preconditions and precipitants, insurgents and incumbents, and inherent social process with contingent circumstances. These, it will be argued, can best be rendered intelligible, through constantly retaining an awareness of the dialectical relationship between structure and agency. In this manner, it is possible to fulfil Skocpol's intention of "developing explanations of revolutions that are at once historically grounded and generalizable beyond unique cases."65

1.3. A CRITIQUE OF SKOCPOL'S STRUCTURALISM

This review of the theoretical literature on revolutions highlights the underlying tensions between the range of theories. Furthermore, in terms of the value-reference of this thesis, it has been argued that the structural/purposive dilemma (which has been emphasized by Goldstone's third generation of theories) can be understood in terms of the questions which are posed and the time-frames utilised in the approaches. Tilly and Skocpol, who both operate within an inherency perspective, represent the tension which can be found within Marx's famous statement in the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by

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63Skocpol, op. cit., p. 13. See also p. 5 (fn6). See also, Tilly, op. cit., p. 229.

64Aya makes a similar point after acknowledging the valuable contribution Skocpol's structuralism makes to the understanding of the collapse of the old regime. He argues that her structuralism requires two 'supplements'; namely "...a careful trace of the various pathways to multiple sovereignty - in particular, the intricate rivalries, maneuvers, and realignments of governing groups whose failed consensus opened the door the revolutionaries ran through; and systematic analysis of the power struggles that intercede between the crackup of the old and the establishment of a new regime." He concludes, "Doubtless enlightened by sociological scrutiny, these political processes do not submit to sociological reduction." Aya, op. cit., p. 78. See also Aya, 'Popular Intervention...', pp. 332-3.

65Skocpol, op. cit., p. 6.
themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past." The development of a model of modern social revolutions must remain sensitive to the questions posed, and the time-frames adopted, by both Tilly and Skocpol.

If this is accepted, then theoretical progress can be accomplished through modifying the models developed by structuralists such as Skocpol and Ellen Trimberger. Modification will involve stepping back a generation in order to incorporate purposive variables into a historical comparative analysis of modern revolutions. This will inject meaning into the structuralists' process. Apart from the introduction of agency into the model, addition problems will be raised in examining Skocpol's model, including the 'weighting' she attaches to specific variables, such as the autonomous role of the state, rural class relations and the international scenario.

1.3.1. The Structuralist Framework

Skocpol's structuralism places primacy upon the emergence of a revolutionary crisis, rather than its making. Consequently, focus is directed towards the inherent processes of social change which contribute to the disintegration of old regimes. A healthy scepticism is clearly demonstrated towards voluntaristic and free will accounts of revolution.

Skocpol identifies three main weaknesses in purposive explanations. These, she argues, can be discovered within the 'general' theories of Gurr, Johnson and Tilly. Furthermore, she observes that purposive tendencies are apparent in the various forms of modern Marxism. The first weakness concerns the underlying assumption that a societal order rests upon the maintenance of consensus by a majority of the population, and that a sufficient condition for revolution is the withdrawal of this consensual support. This assumption, argues Skocpol, is naive if one considers the proliferation throughout history of regimes which rest their basis of domination upon coercion and repression. A second weakness with purposive explanations involves their focus upon the activity of revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. However, the reality of historical revolutions has involved the participation of multiple classes, rather than a single class. Skocpol argues that analysis should be focused upon conflict between elites as well as between elites and non-elites. Revolutions are far more complex than a single, determinant conflict between a contradictory set of 'fundamental' classes.

Thirdly, vanguards and revolutionary movements have never created the crises which they have eventually exploited. These situations have developed due to the emergence of politico-military crises of state and class domination. And only because of the possibilities thus created

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67While the first chapter of *States and Social Revolutions* is a cogent presentation of the structuralist position, attention should also be drawn to the shorter description in T. Skocpol & E.K. Trimberger, "Revolutions: A Structuralist Analysis", in J.A. Goldstone (ed), *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

68Skocpol, op. cit., p. 18.

69Ibid., pp. 14-8.
have revolutionary leaderships and rebellious masses contributed to the accomplishment of revolutionary transformations." Skocpol goes one step further, arguing that "rebellious masses have quite often acted on their own, without being directly organized or ideologically inspired by avowedly revolutionary leaders or goals." This contentious issue in theories of modern socialist revolutions will be examined below.

However, the outlines of Skocpol's approach are clearly structural and anti-purposive. She refers to Hobsbawm's statement that "the evident importance of the actors in the drama does not mean that they are also dramatist, producer and stage-designer." It is the stage-design that Skocpol's structuralism highlights. In fact, the elaborate stage-design tends to obscure the actors on the stage. As Hobsbawm concludes, "theories which overstress voluntaristic or subjective elements in revolution, are to be treated with caution." The operative word here is overstress. Skocpol deals with the structural/agency controversy within the social sciences through minimising or rejecting agency as a crucial factor in her account of social revolution.

This thesis will demonstrate that purposive factors are essential components of any adequate understanding of the causes of socialist revolutions. A dialectic between structure and agency must be reintroduced into a theoretical model of revolution. While purposive factors cannot be reduced to structural factors, structure is implicated in the purposive. In other words, voluntarism and free will should not be substituted for Skocpol's structuralism. As Michael Taylor has pointed out in his critique of Skocpol, to deny all explanatory power to the structuralist position does not automatically involve embracing methodological individualism. However, the cognition, perception and praxis of social actors must be constantly interrelated with the structural constraints and openings found within a social system at any given time. These purposive factors are never as unproblematic as Skocpol would like them to appear. As Skocpol observes, revolutionary outcomes have usually been at odds with the intentions of successful revolutionary parties. However, to stress unintended consequences is to miss the point in explaining revolutions. This phenomenon should not obscure the

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70 Ibid., p. 17.
71 Ibid., p 17.
72 Ibid., p. 18.
74 Andrew Metcalfe has recently provided a useful analogy to describe the relationship between structure and agency. "Considered historically, social structures are more like the banks and sandbars of a river than a buildings foundations or a body's skeleton. Built up and cut out by the rivers daily flow, they nonetheless shape and divert the flow. At any moment the river must contend with the fixed obstacles (though it is not necessarily forced by them into one channel), but the structures are simultaneously altered by the rivers flow. At any time the flow and the structure have certain characteristics which can be described and analysed, but the river can only be understood if the flow and structure are considered historically and dialectically." A. Metcalfe, For Freedom and Dignity, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 13.
problem of explaining what moves people to act in the first place.\textsuperscript{75}

An adequate understanding of the causes and nature of socialist revolutions can best be advanced through recognising that social forces operate on a number of different levels. A degree of synchronicity between structural and purposive factors is required for the success of any revolution. Structural factors have contributed to each profound social revolution. However, in order to render intelligible the success of socialist movements from these revolutionary crises it is imperative to explore social forces on the purposive level. As James Petras notes, socialist revolutions "in the twentieth century have unfolded as complex processes decisively dependent upon the emergence and growth of a revolutionary political organisation."\textsuperscript{76} As Skocpol argues, the demise of old regimes is not an automatic response to the withdrawal of legitimacy or hegemony (if such ever existed). While this may be an important contributing factor, the emergence and growth of a contender is crucial. As Przeworski points out:

> What matters for the stability of any regime is not the legitimacy of this particular system of domination but the presence or absence of preferable alternatives. A regime does not collapse until some alternative is organised in such a way as to present a real choice for isolated individuals.\textsuperscript{77}

Given this, greater attention must be placed upon the conditions promoting the emergence of the contending partner in a situation of 'multiple sovereignty', or what Peter Amann has called competing 'power blocs'.\textsuperscript{78} The revolutionary party or movement must discover and exploit space within a given series of political relationships before harnessing and accumulating social forces within social classes in accordance with an understanding of the dynamics of, and contradictions within, a social system.

The 'purposive' social movement or party must operate upon two interrelated levels. These will be labelled throughout this thesis as the ideological and the organisational. Ideologically, the movement must develop an understanding of the peculiarities of the dynamics of social development within the social structure and delineate between the forces with an interest in maintaining the existing system, and those with an interest in transcending the system. Social actors are not merely 'bearers' or 'carriers' of structural change. Nor should structure be viewed


\textsuperscript{77}Quoted in H-W. Krumwiede, "Regimes and Revolution in Central America", in W. Grabendorff et. al. (eds), \textit{Political Change in Central America: Internal and External Dimensions}, Westview, Boulder, 1984, p. 17.

\textsuperscript{78}See Amann, op. cit. As Charles Tilly comments, "In order to produce multiple sovereignty, and thus become revolutionary, commitments to some alternative claimant must be activated in the face of prohibitions or contrary directives from the government...The presence of a coherent revolutionary organization makes a great difference at exactly this point. An organization facilitates the initial seizure of control, spreads the news, activates the commitments already made by specific men." Tilly, op. cit., p. 208.
simply as a factor of constraint determining the limits or parameters of action.\(^7\) The success of a revolution is premised upon the ability of a social movement or party to organise and channel the activity of structurally located groups and classes towards its social 'vision'.\(^8\) This must be achieved in conjunction with the ability to exploit any structural contradictions within a hegemonistic bloc.\(^6\) Structural revolutionary crises do not always, in fact rarely, result in profound revolutionary outcomes. In order to explain the success of modern socialist movements it is necessary to view revolution not only as a social process generated by inherent structural contradictions, but also as an \textit{art}, derived from an understanding drawn by revolutionary organisations of the balances of political and military power.\(^2\) This feature of revolutionary situations was stressed by both Lenin and Trotsky.\(^3\) As Carlos Vilas points out; "It is the articulation of the masses into a revolutionary political organisation that opens up the possibility of effective struggle, and provides a transformational potential to popular rebellions and protests."\(^4\) Himmelstein and Kimmel have pointed to Skocpol’s minimisation of these factors, and its consequence for her model of revolution:

...even if Skocpol is correct about the relationship between structural conditions and revolutionary outcomes, her analysis is incomplete. She ignores the mediating factors - human consciousness and action - that are always part of the story and sometimes crucial to it. Or more precisely, she simply assumes that the appropriate actors are always there, waiting to perform the role required by structural conditions - peasants ever ready to make massive uprisings and marginal elites ever ready to consolidate power. She rarely regards their response to structural conditions as problematic, and thus she systematically undervalues the role of ideology, political

\(^7\) This corresponds with Giddens rejection of "the identification of structure with constraint." "...(S)tructure is both enabling and constraining, and it is one of the specific tasks of social theory to study the conditions in the organisation of social systems that govern the interconnections between the two... Structure is thus not to be conceptualised as a barrier to action, but as essentially involved in its production..." A. Giddens, \textit{Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis}, MacMillan, London, 1979, pp. 69-70.

\(^8\) As Kramnick notes: "In the great historical revolutions...one finds a sustained and self-conscious effort to reconstruct society along theoretical principles provided by some vision of an ideal order, an ideology." Kramnick, op. cit., p. 31.

\(^6\) In his explanation for the success and failure of revolutionary movements in Latin America Robert H. Dix stresses this factor of anti-government, or negative, coalition-building. "The most plausible explanation, one that best accords with the facts, is that revolutions are only likely to succeed where sufficient regime narrowing takes place to push otherwise non-radical elements of society into a loose negative coalition with a core or revolutionary militants." R. H. Dix, "Why Revolutions Succeed and Fail", \textit{Polity}, 16, 1984.

\(^2\) As Eckstein argues; "Internal wars do not always have a clear aim, a tight organization, a distinct shape and tendency from the outset. Many seem to be characterized in the early stages by nothing so much as amorphousness. They are formless matter waiting to be shaped, and if there is an art of revolution, it involves, largely at least, not making or subduing it, but capitalizing on the unallocated political resources it provides." Eckstein, "Etiology...", pp. 174-5.

\(^6\) In September 1917 Lenin, chastising his hesitant fellow Bolsheviks, argued that "at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to marxism, to remain loyal to the revolution unless unless insurrection is treated as an art." V.I. Lenin, \textit{Collected Works}: 26, Progress, Moscow, 1977, p. 27. See also L. Trotsky, "The Art of Insurrection", in \textit{The Russian Revolution}, Anchor, N.Y., 1959. Attention should also be drawn towards Trotsky's \textit{Lessons of October}. While this essay is afforded historical importance as Trotsky's opening volley in his struggle against the emerging triumvarite of Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, it remains a brilliant exposition of the importance of the 'purposive' role of the revolutionary organisation in revolutionary situations. L. Trotsky, \textit{Lessons of October}, New Park, London, 1973.

Clemenceau once stated that "Everything that lives resists; that which does not resist allows itself to be cut up piecemeal." The forms of resistance employed by classes and movements must form a crucial component of any model attempting to understand the causes and the nature of social revolutions. Such forms cannot be reduced to structural forces. As this thesis will demonstrate, the adoption of particular forms of resistance is always problematic, and fraught with ideological and organisational tension. If it were not, then a higher correlation would exist between revolutionary situations and revolutionary outcomes.

1.3.2. The Role of the State

A second feature of Skocpol's model which must be addressed is her discussion of the state. The strength of her conceptualisation of the state lies in the avoidance of any reductionism, whereby the state appears as a mere instrument of a dominant class or an epiphenomenon of a given set of social relationships. The state is a powerful independent variable in Skocpol's analysis, on both the domestic and international plane. However, in analysing and explaining socialist revolution on the periphery or semi-periphery of the world capitalist system, the role of the pre-revolutionary state in promoting capitalist relations must be afforded primary attention. While the relationship between the state and capitalist development has been the object of sociological attention for some time, it requires reiteration due to Skocpol's emphasis upon the international prestige and military aspects of the state in accounting for revolution. Regardless of the degree of autonomy which a state possesses in relation to the dominant classes, and regardless of the reasons why a state may choose to pursue a policy of modernisation, industrialisation and capitalist expansion, the consequences of adopting this path will invariably produce a given series of objective conditions, or 'structural imperatives', regardless of intentions. State-sponsored programmes of capitalist development in the age of imperialism have had one essential consequence crucial for the understanding of class conflict and socialist revolution on the periphery and semi-periphery of the international economic order. They create the potential for an alliance of 'popular classes' which have borne the cost of programmes of capitalist development. The central role of the state in promoting this development has precluded the possibility that the state be perceived by these classes as an...
arbiter above social and economic conflict. The consequence has been that class struggle has often assumed a more overtly political form far more rapidly than it has under liberal regimes in the core nations of the world economic order. It is this aspect of the political economy of the state which must be stressed in explaining modern socialist revolutions.

1.3.3. The Rural-Urban Controversy

A third, related, feature of Skocpol's analysis is her concentration upon rural social relations and land ownership. As Zimmermann notes, on the internal side of the revolutionary equation, the important question for Skocpol is "what makes for peasant mobilization". In this respect, Skocpol follows the tradition of Barrington Moore and Eric Wolf. In her discussion of the causes of the Russian Revolution she devotes barely half a page to urban class relations and urban-based political movements, despite her assertion that:

...the most important domestic change during the last decades of the Old Regime was the rapid formation of the industrial proletariat... And the conditions they faced...certainly provided reasons enough for the industrial workers to become, as they did after 1890, increasingly prone to strike and receptive to the anti-autocratic and anti-capitalist ideas of radical political parties. Rapid industrialisation thus created a formidable popular force capable of opposing both the imperial state and the capitalist captains of industry whose activities the state so fervently encouraged.

Given the strength of this statement it would not be unreasonable to expect Skocpol to devote more attention to "the most important domestic change" in her account of the causes of the revolution.

Despite the proportional weakness of the popular urban classes, the dominant role of capitalist development placed them in an operative position out of proportion to their numerical weight. Being in the vortex of the articulation of the various forms of production operating in Russia, the industrial proletariat were in a more advantageous position than any other class to harness the discontent which resulted from the nation's crises during 1905 and 1917. Notwithstanding the importance of peasant revolt, the manner in which the urban classes channelled their praxis must remain central to the understanding of the nature of the Russian revolution.

This thesis will present a more urban-centred model of modern revolutions. While rural social conflict may contribute enormously to the generation of revolutionary situations, the urban arena and urban-based movements have invariably succeeded in providing the organisational focus for, and shaping the nature of, the revolutionary outcome. In a recent evaluation of modern revolutions Josef Gugler has also argued for a more urban-centred

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92Skocpol, op. cit., p. 92.

approach, rebutting Skocpol and Trimberger's claim that the successful occurrence of social revolutions "has not been determined by the struggle of proletarians against capitalists, but rather by the class struggles of peasants against dominant landed classes and/or colonial or neo-colonial states". Gugler concludes his examination of three modern revolutions by stating that "the largely urban character of contemporary revolutions merits consideration, not only because it contradicts widely held views but because it suggests a new perspective on revolutionary movements and their adversaries."

In his study of the Petrograd working class, David Mandel has also reversed Skocpol's rural emphasis, placing the urban working class at the centre of his analysis of the Russian Revolution.

Soldiers, peasants, national groups all played their role, but it was in the last analysis a basically negative or passive one in relation to the major antagonists. Their principle contribution to the revolution and the victory in civil war lay in their failure to support the old regime, the Provisional Government, and later the Whites. It remained for the workers to give the revolution direction, organization and the major part of its active forces. This also supports Lenin's analysis of the 'social geography' of modern revolutions.

More generally, the argument presented in this thesis is that modern socialist revolutions are primarily urban, in base, organisation, orientation and ideology.

1.3.4. The Role of External Forces

Another distinguishing aspect of Skocpol's structuralist model is the emphasis placed upon the international and world-holistic dimension in social revolutions. Skocpol argues that social revolutions have been the direct result of states' participation in external adventures and wars. In other words, social, economic and political crises of old regimes have been generated by the problems encountered in promoting and undertaking external conflicts. These international
pressures "have been more effective", Skocpol and Trimberger argue, "in determining the outcome of revolutions than internal pressures for equality, participation and decentralization."99

The problem with this emphasis is related to the general critique of stucturalism outlined earlier. While international factors may contribute to the demise of old regimes, this does not render intelligible the material and ideological content of the conflict between competing domestic classes and the state. International events may precipitate or accelerate a revolutionary crisis, but the underlying dynamics of the crisis must be located primarily in terms of the relations between classes and states within the social formation. If this focus is not retained, then the danger exists that revolutions lose their meaning for those who actively participate in them. Thus Skocpol's attempt to replace Tilly's short-range variables with international factors is unable to overcome the difficulty in locating the social project at the base of the revolution. No matter how effective international variables are in crippling old regimes, this cannot be abstracted from the internal relational aspect of economic and political domination which orients and mobilises classes, and determines the interests promoted by conflicting power blocs in a revolutionary crisis.

In order to retain the emphasis upon the interests represented by competing power blocs under the condition of multiple sovereignty, the approach adopted in this thesis deals with international variables as precipitants or accelerators, rather than the underlying generators of revolutionary crises. In other words, while external factors may heighten or promote the onset of a revolutionary crisis, by themselves they cannot render the nature of the crisis intelligible. The underlying generator of such a crisis (and the potential socialist form resulting from it) must be located within the social formation itself, and manifested in the competing class interests represented through competing power blocs. The emphasis will be placed upon the conflict between social classes, organised groups and their relation to the state. This conflict is ultimately determined by the specific form taken by local capitalist development, and the matrix of social relations this development promotes and shapes. To return to Eckstein's problemation, external wars and international crises will be viewed primarily as contingent factors, which heighten the inherent contradictions within specific social formations.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, one reservation must be made. As Dependency and World Systems Analysis has forcefully argued, the genesis of capitalist development in the periphery, and the retarded form it assumes, is part of the logic of core capitalist development. Peripheral capitalism assumes core capitalism, and thus, peripheral development must be analysed in terms of its articulation within the world capitalist system. However, if revolutions are to be explained in terms of class conflict, then the only realistic assumption from which to proceed is the recognition that organised class confrontation has had as its focal objective the seizure of the state.

99Skocpol & Trimberger, op. cit., p. 64.
On the other hand, certain World Systems Analysts studying socialist transitions, such as Christopher Chase-Dunn, have argued that the unintended consequence of the seizure of the (semi)peripheral state by socialist movements is that the logic of the revolution inevitably becomes subverted by the requirements of competing economically and militarily with the stronger, hostile world capitalist system, leading to the eventual reemergence of the 'socialist' state as a functional component of the system it initially rebelled against. Whether this argument is accepted or not the point remains that this concentration upon unintended consequences ignores "the peculiarities of the class project at the base of the socialist revolutions and transitions and the fact that these conflicts are not over the distribution of world surplus but over the conditions under which this surplus is produced and for whom." Once more, attention to the consequences of revolutions should not eclipse the understanding of their causes. While the movement of units of capital throughout the world capitalist system provides the 'setting' within which modern socialist revolutions have emerged, they cannot be made intelligible unless the effect of the specific form of capitalist penetration is analysed, and the effect this has upon the dynamics of the social formation and corresponding relationship between classes and the state. These internal relations, rather than the external relations between states within the world capitalist system, is the determining factor in explaining the nature of a revolutionary process.

The disjunction between the reality of imperialism as an interconnected world system and the seizure of the nation-state by socialist movements must realistically be appraised as a given constraint of any socialist transformation and cannot be wished away through rhetoric of simultaneous world revolution. However limited socialist revolutions may appear, or no matter how much they may disappoint idealists, or provide comfort to the cynics, an understanding of revolutionary praxis must remain as important in understanding revolutionary process as structural constraints and unintended consequences. This historical comparative analysis will not attempt to assign priority to either 'structural constraint' or 'purposive choice', but rather, it will attempt to understand the complex interrelations between the two.

This brief digression from Skocpol was necessary in order to clarify the position which will be adopted in this thesis. Skocpol herself rejects the economic reductionism inherent within Wallersteinian World Systems Analysis, arguing that the transnational context involves both a

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102 Michael Lowy has noted this problem in the works of Marx, and later Trotsky. "Although this type of formulation had the unquestionable merit of posing the problem of the international dimension of the revolutionary process, it also underestimated...the unequal character of this process, and, thus, the actual autonomy of the crisis and the mass movement in each country." M. Lowy, The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development, New Left Books, London, p. 21. See also pp. 104-5.
world-holistic economic system and an 'international states' system'. This is consistent with her position that the state is an important independent variable in explaining social revolutions. However, as pointed out in the beginning of this section, she retains the emphasis upon international pressures as more effective than the interests of contending power blocs in determining revolutionary outcomes. If this is the case, then Skocpol merely modifies the Wallersteinian approach, with its tendency to reify the world structure(s), where the 'grand logic' of the 'system' mechanically dictates purpose and meaning. The actors turn around, and the stage-design has changed!

The purpose of this critique of Skocpol (and structuralist approaches to revolution in general) has been to highlight the anomalies within the paradigm, and thus to direct attention to the limits of structuralist explanations. The thread which runs through this critique corresponds most closely with the 'political' or 'resource mobilisation' argument, characterised by Charles Tilly. Skocpol's analysis fails to account for certain aspects of the politics of revolution, especially the context of multiple sovereignty or competing power blocs. Insufficient attention is paid to the mobilisation and organisation of contenders. As the above critique suggests, this thesis will attempt to correct this deficiency, through greater sensitivity to the politics of mass mobilisation and the struggle between the polity and contenders.

The above argument can be summarised in four points. Firstly, Skocpol's insightful structural account of the demise of old regimes needs to be integrated with an analysis of the emergence and development of the revolutionary alternative. This development is not unproblematic. It is not an automatic response to (although it is conditioned by) structural relations. A more sensitive approach to the organisation and ideology of revolutionary movements is required. The purposive component of revolutionary explanation needs to be made explicit. Secondly, Skocpol's rejection of the state as an epiphenomenon of social relations is a useful antidote to economic reductionism. However, the state must be viewed within the context of its role in promoting capitalist development. This circumscribes the role of the state in class conflict, both in terms of its relations to the interests of domestic capital and the direct producers. Thirdly, while agrarian revolts usually accompany (and heighten) the demise of old regimes, a more urban-centred approach to revolution is required in order to determine the conflict characteristic of multiple sovereignty in modern revolutions. Finally, the key to understanding the interests and meaning of a revolutionary crisis must be sought at the level of control over the state by conflicting classes and groups within the social formation, rather than the position of the nation-state within the international order. While this order may provide an 'accelerating' influence upon a revolutionary crisis, its underlying dynamics must be located within the social formation itself.

1.4. A COMPARATIVE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONS

This critique of the Skocpolian structuralist model points towards the need to pay greater attention to purposive factors in theoretical explanations of revolution. This thesis will examine and compare two instances of socialist revolution with the objective of demonstrating that an adequate explanation requires analysing variables on both the structural and purposive level. This concentration upon socialist revolutions necessarily restricts the universe of discourse to a greater extent than Skocpol, who analyses not only the (Bolshevik) Russian Revolution and the (Communist) Chinese Revolution, but also the French Revolution of 1789. The latter, while clearly falling under the rubric of a social revolution, can by no stretch of the imagination be classified as a socialist revolution. As the analysis below will demonstrate, there are specific features characteristic of socialist revolutions which demarcate than as a specific form of social revolution.

Marxian analysis (from which both Skocpol and Tilly claim to derive) proceeds from the assumption that revolutions must be understood in terms of the contradictions inherent within a given mode of production. The key feature in identifying the nature of a revolution is contained in the antagonisms generated between the owners of the means of production and the direct producers. The nature of the revolution is thus dependent upon the dominant relations of production "which correspond to a definite stage of development of (the) material productive forces." Skocpol and Trimberger point out that this distinguishes Marxism from other theories which attempt to construct a model of revolution applicable to all historical cases.

In her analysis of the French, Russian and Chinese Revolutions, Skocpol concentrates upon three structural variables leading to the demise of the old regimes; agrarian social relations, the state, and the international system of nation-states. Through overlooking the purposive components and underemphasising other structural variables, she is able to highlight certain similarities between these revolutions. However, if the conditions for the development of capitalism are compared with conditions for the development of socialism, it becomes apparent that there are crucial structural and purposive differences between the overthrow of feudalistic relations compared with capitalistic relations.

The principal ground for such a claim lies in the genesis of capitalist property relations and capitalist culture, compared with socialistic relations. As Kovel notes, capitalism in Western Europe was able to develop spontaneously within the framework of feudal relations as private

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104K. Marx and F. Engels, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", in Pre-Capitalist Socio-Economic Formations, Progress, Moscow, 1979, p. 137.

105"Marx did not try to create a general theory of revolutions relevant to all kinds of societies at all times. Instead, he regarded revolutions as specific to certain historical circumstances and to certain types of societies." Skocpol and Trimberger, op. cit., p. 59.
property formed the foundation of both capitalism and feudalism. In this manner, primitive capital accumulation advanced while the bourgeoisie accumulated social power within the framework of the old mode of production. In contrast, socialist relations and socialist 'human nature' cannot emerge spontaneously within capitalism. Only the organisation of the direct producers for the task of overthrowing the capitalist order can create the preconditions for transforming the world 'after their own image'. The overthrow of the feudal order and the bourgeois revolution was the culminating moment in the establishment of capitalist society. The socialist revolution only marks the beginning of the transformation of social and productive relations along socialist lines.

The practice of socialist politics in the twentieth century has tempered the somewhat optimistic statements in the writings of Marx and Engels on the spontaneous development of socialist class consciousness. The emergence and growth of a purposive organisational focus has been a crucial determinant in the success of socialist revolutions to date. It was this distinction between spontaneity and organisation which Nikolai Bukharin stressed in his contrast of the two periods of transition:

When the bourgeoisie was overthrowing the feudal lords and the capitalist mode of production - based in its early days on the private economic cell - was blazing itself a trail, the economic process took place almost completely spontaneously; for there was no organised collective, no class subject at work, only scattered, through highly active, 'individuals'. It is small wonder that the slogan of the time was that of \textit{laissez-faire, laissez passer}. They did not build capitalism, but it was built. The proletariat, as an organised collective subject, is building socialism as an organised system. If the creation of capitalism was spontaneous, the building of communism is to a marked degree, a conscious, ie., organized, process.

Bukharin's statement applies not only to the dynamics of post-revolutionary development, but to the overthrow of the capitalist state. Skocpol is only able to obscure this fundamental distinction between the French and the Russian and Chinese Revolutions through de-emphasizing the importance of the organisation of the revolutionary subjects. The transformational project characteristic of socialist revolutions requires a form of class activity and organisation which departs radically from that of the bourgeoisie during its corresponding period of ascendancy.

The choice of comparative analysis is therefore necessarily circumscribed by theoretical presuppositions. To deny this is to perform an act of 'theoretical ventriloquism'. The assumptions adopted in analysis, and the questions posed, inevitably restrict the range of appropriate comparative cases. In this case, the position adopted suggests that general models of social revolution should be replaced with a specific model of socialist revolutions.

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\textsuperscript{109}Aya, "Theories...", p. 42.
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The emergence of socialist states from revolutionary situations has occurred only infrequently throughout the twentieth century. Furthermore, where these have occurred, they have been restricted to nations outside the core industrialised states. While socialist-oriented parties have succeeded in forming governments within Western parliamentary democracies, rarely, if ever, have they attempted to dismantle the underlying structure of capitalist relations. The frame of reference for this thesis is therefore restricted by the lack of success of social-democratic and communist parties in implementing their projected vision of 'the good society' in the West.

However, a number of nations outside the core industrialised nations have fundamentally restructured their state and economy under the direction of Marxist-oriented parties. While this has only rarely and periodically happened, their impact upon the history of the twentieth century can hardly be overstated. Each of these revolutions must be analysed in terms of the balance of social forces existing within the nation and the ability of particular groups to impose their response upon a historically grounded crisis, whether military, political, economic or nationalistic. At the same time this must be placed within the world context of the nation's role in the international economic and state system. Within this historically grounded approach, a more abstract set of structural and purposive factors can be located which account for the success of these socialist movements.

In order to provide support for the theoretical argument outlined in this chapter an analysis will be undertaken of two cases where successful Marxist-oriented parties succeeded in assuming power during a revolutionary situation. The cases drawn from the total population of valid instances should be as apparently dissimilar as possible in order to maximise the scope for generalisation. The conditions of comparative analysis are determined by the objectives of the theoretical argument. The cases adopted in this instance are the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the 1979 Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua.

Temporally, both revolutions are clearly dissimilar. The Bolshevik Revolution is generally

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112M. Freeman describes the relationship between comparison and theory by claiming that "comparison presupposes theory. Theory defines the subject, provides the criteria for the selection of cases, supplies concepts and hypotheses. These must come from 'the macro-sociological imagination', informed by contemporary theoretical debates and historical evidence". M. Freeman, 'Revolution as a Subject of Science', in N.K. O'Sullivan (ed), *Revolutionary Theory and Political Reality*, Wheatsheaf, Brighton, 1983, p. 36.

113The method which has been chosen resembles that used by Robert Michels in his study *Political Parties*. In this classic study Michels attempted to demonstrate the 'iron law of oligarchy', that is, the tendency within all complex modern organisations for power to become concentrated in the hands of a limited number of strategically placed individuals. This, he argued, resulted in the inevitable malfunctioning of ideal democratic procedures for decision-making. In order to provide evidence of the existence of this law, Michels limited his study to a single organisation, the German Social Democratic Party, which claimed to express the greatest commitment to the democratisation of society. As Seymour Martin Lipset explains, the logic of the argument was that if "such parties were themselves undemocratic in their internal structure, presumably the effort to completely democratize society must fail." See R. Michels, *Political Parties*, Collier, N.Y., 1962, (with an introduction by S.M. Lipset), p. 16.
acknowledged to be the first Marxist-inspired revolution 'from below', while the Sandinista Revolution is one of the latest. The intervening sixty-two years between the two revolutions witnessed profound political, economic and military transformations on the international scene. The Bolsheviks came to power towards the end of the First World War, at a time when the European forum was still considered the axis around which world events turned. Within three decades the world had witnessed the rise of the United States as the most powerful capitalist state, the rise and fall of fascism, a second world war and the onset of the Cold War. The Cold War and the spectacular development of the Soviet Union would directly or indirectly influence any future attempts by movements to alter their nation's position within the world capitalist order. During the 1950's, the Chinese Revolution drew upon the experience and assistance of the Soviets, while the Cuban Revolution demonstrated the lengths to which the United States would go to subvert any perceived challenge to its hegemony. Schisms within the international socialist movement, which had begun to appear during the First World War, were in an advanced stage by the 1960's, due to the reassessment of Stalinism, the open antagonism between the Soviet Union and China, and the alternative Cuban path.

It must be stressed within this temporal framework that the success of one socialist revolution inevitably alters the conditions for future revolutions. These changes can assume positive or negative forms. A predecessor may be in a position to supply arms, propaganda facilities or sanctuary to a fraternal movement, and a counterbalancing threat to any future foreign intervention or counter-revolution. On the other hand, the 'revolutionary arrogance' of a successful movement may be influential in altering the tactics and strategy adopted by fraternal organisations. On the side of the threatened polity, the 'lessons of history' can be used to prevent its repetition through adopting appropriate measures of reform within the confines of the order, or more effectively targetted repression. On this point E.H. Carr once noted that: "One reason why history so rarely repeats itself is that the dramatis personae of the second performance have prior knowledge of the denouement." More recently Edelberto Torres Rivas observed the effect the Nicaraguan Revolution has had upon other movements in the region:

A successful revolution which undermines the bourgeois order and its system of values in one country is 'contagious' only in the sense that it provokes a strong reaction to the ruling class of neighbouring countries. That is precisely what we are observing today in the case of Nicaragua, and the general lesson to be learned is that revolutionary victory in one country will strengthen rather than weaken the forces of reaction in other countries.

On the other hand, as Michael Lowy points out, revolutionary movements also learn from the successes and failures of their predecessors.

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114 Soviet interference in China and Spain between the wars may be cited as classic examples. Fidel Castro recently admitted this tendency within the Cuban Communist Party in its relations with fraternal organisations during the 1960's. See F. Castro, Nothing Can Stop the Course of History: An Interview With J.M. Elliot & M.M. Dymally, Pathfinder, N.Y., 1986, pp. 27-8.


117 See Lowy, op. cit., p. 105.
Temporally then, the world-historical backdrop and the lessons of history make the Bolshevik and Sandinista revolutions intriguing cases for analysis. If a set of underlying structural and purposive factors can be discovered despite these apparent dissimilarities, then the argument will be strengthened.

Geographically and geo-politically both cases represent the extremes of the revolutionary socialist spectrum of the twentieth century. The vast Russian land-mass, the dispersal of its large population and extremes of climate contrast with small, sub-tropical Nicaragua. Geopolitically, at the turn of the twentieth century Russia was still considered an important military force on the international scene, despite its defeat by Japan in 1904-5 and its more primitive economic system relative to Western Europe. On the other hand, Nicaragua was always a peripheral nation subject to more direct foreign interference, first from Spain, then increasingly from the United States. Although both nations were independent entities at the time of the demise of the old regimes, the yoke of foreign domination was borne more heavily by Nicaragua than Russia.

This point is important to the comparative study of the causes of socialist revolutions. There is less disagreement over applying the term 'socialist' to the October Revolution in Russia than to the Sandinista Revolution. However, while nationalistic terminology and symbolism formed an important element of the Sandinista mobilisation, this thesis argues that 'nationalism' is too amorphous a concept to attach to a revolutionary incumbent. In the limited sense, a 'nationalist' revolution is a term which can be applied to the defeat or withdrawal of foreign economic, military or political dominance from a geographic area whose inhabitants consider themselves an independent political, religious or cultural entity. However, within this broad framework, the term cannot distinguish between the diverse class interests such revolutions can assume. In order to define the nature of a revolution it is essential to examine the interests the incumbents serve, the social groups and classes it represents and its ideology. It is clearly insufficient to collapse struggles as diverse as Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Anglo-Irish War, the Vietnamese Revolution, the Islamic Revolution against the Shah in Iran and the Nicaraguan Revolution all under the single banner of struggles for national liberation. The definition of national liberation, and the direction of post-liberation social development, differs according to the perceptions and interests of the hegemonic groups within the liberation struggle. The usefulness of the concept of class lies in its ability to clarify these distinctions.

While this thesis explores the relationship between structural and purposive variables in the causes of socialist revolutions, underlying the comparison is the initial assumption that the Sandinista Revolution should be defined as socialist. The historical evidence drawn from the Nicaraguan case, and the comparison with Russia, can also be viewed as a contribution to the ongoing debate over the nature of the Sandinista Revolution.

Thus, in order to ensure that what is being measured is 'socialism' rather than 'nationalism', the comparison with Nicaragua must include a revolution without the characteristics of a war of national liberation. Of the total population of cases the Russian Revolution was the most
international in outlook. Its leaders conceived of the Russian insurrection as a moment in the international proletarian uprising. In addition, throughout its formative period, they premised its continued existence upon the spread of the revolution throughout Europe.\(^\text{118}\)

Related to the geographical and geo-political contexts of socialist revolutions is the question of their cultural setting. Once more, if the aim of the comparative analysis is to make generalisations about socialist (as opposed to nationalist) revolutions, then it is important to draw upon a sample with as much cultural diversity as possible. Therefore, the obvious comparison between Nicaragua and the Cuban Revolution must be excluded due to their shared Latin American context and their incorporation into the United States sphere of political and economic influence. For this reason, Peter Calvert's use of Latin America as a "laboratory of revolution", and the use of the region by Robert Dix as a "convenient analytical laboratory"\(^\text{119}\) are inadequate. Once the cultural context is also controlled for, the more abstract structural and purposive causes of socialist revolutions can be determined with greater validity.

The temporal, spatial and cultural dissimilarities between Russia and Nicaragua offer an excellent opportunity to abstract these structural and purposive factors which contributed to the specific form of regime transformation which occurred in both nations.

There have been previous notable studies which have examined the cross-national context of modern socialist revolutions. For example, Michael Lowy has compared the Russian, Chinese, Yugoslav, Vietnamese and Cuban Revolutions in order to test the validity of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.\(^\text{120}\) Also, James Petras has examined the role of the revolutionary organisation in the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban examples.\(^\text{121}\) While both these works have been important in shaping the direction of the argument presented in this thesis, the aims and objectives of their arguments are different. This work is primarily concerned with the ongoing debate over the role of structure and agency in modern theories of revolutions, through the analysis of socialist revolutions.

In addition, neither Lowy nor Petras was able to examine the Nicaraguan case in their comparative analyses. Petras's article was published as the Nicaraguan revolutionary situation was at its height, while Lowy only discussed the Nicaraguan case briefly as a possible extension of his argument. Furthermore, although numerous studies have attempted to analyse the Nicaraguan Revolution comparatively within its regional context,\(^\text{122}\) there has been a notable lack of attention to the comparative analysis of the causes and nature of the Nicaraguan


\(^{119}\) P. Calvert, "Latin America: Laboratory of Revolution", in N. O'Sullivan (ed), *op. cit.*, pp. 139-57; Dix, *op. cit.*

\(^{120}\) Lowy, *op. cit.*

\(^{121}\) Petras, *op. cit.*

revolution in a broader world-historical context.\textsuperscript{123} This thesis redresses this imbalance.

A historical comparative analysis of revolutions must also "study those revolutionary movements that have failed to capture power."\textsuperscript{124} Although this thesis focuses exclusively on Russia and Nicaragua, it deals with the problem of 'failure' through utilising a longer-range historical analysis and an examination of alternative movements. Both nations were rich in rebellious tradition. This allows questions to be raised such as: why did previous movements fail? Why did the revolutions occur when they did? and why in particular were the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas successful during the revolutionary situations of 1917 and 1979?

The chapters to follow will be structured in accordance with the critique of the existing research literature presented in this chapter. Chapters 2 and 3 will analyse the structural dynamics of pre-revolutionary Russian and Nicaraguan society. Keeping in mind Eckstein's problemation, these two chapters will examine whether the revolutionary situations were caused primarily by inherent or contingent factors. Particular attention will be paid to the incorporation of both nations into the world capitalist system, the role of the state in promoting capitalist development, the consequent matrix of social relations which evolved, and the conflict generated by the unequal distribution of resources. Chapters 4 and 5 will concentrate upon the purposive components of socialist revolutions. In particular, these chapters will analyse the development of the Bolshevik Party and the Sandinista National Liberation Front. Attention will be drawn towards the origin of the revolutionary parties within their respective political cultures, their accumulation of social forces, the development of their ideology, and its relationship to revolutionary praxis. Both chapters culminate in examining the role of the hegemonistic party within the revolutionary movement, and the relationship between contender and polity during the revolutionary situation. The object of these chapters is to explain why particular contenders succeed in taking power. This cannot be achieved by reducing purposive factors to structural factors.

Chapter 6 draws together the conclusions from the two historical case studies in the light of the existing research literature, and examines the similarities and differences between the two cases. On this basis, hypotheses can be generated concerning the relationship between states, parties and classes in socialist revolutions.

\textsuperscript{123} On the other hand, a great deal of attention has been devoted to the Sandinista's relations with the Soviet bloc, especially by unsympathetic commentators. See J. Valenta & V. Valenta, "The FSLN in Power", in J. Valenta & E. Duran (eds), \textit{Conflict in Nicaragua: A Multi-Dimensional Perspective}, Allen & Unwin, 1987.

\textsuperscript{124} Greene, op. cit. See also Dix, op. cit.; Krumwiede, op. cit.
Chapter 2
STRUCTURAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE
BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the structural dynamics of Russia’s pre-revolutionary development. The argument advanced is that a combination of structural factors contributed to an unstable socio-political environment by the beginning of the First World War. Returning to Eckstein’s problemation of revolution, this chapter supports the position that the revolutionary situation of 1917 was a result of ‘inherent’ factors generated within the structure of late-Tsarist development, rather than ‘contingent’ factors external to the logic of this development. Throughout the chapter the assumptions and evidence of contingency theories of late-Tsarist society will be examined and critiqued, along with other models constructed by certain inherency theorists.

Alexander Gerschenkron’s study of the problems of late development is an example of a contingency explanation of the Russian Revolution.¹ According to Gerschenkron’s analysis of the preconditions for economic development under conditions of backwardness, the problem is one of finding ‘substitutions’ for those factors which facilitated development in the more advanced nations but which are lacking in less developed nations.² These substitutions function as factors overcoming original backwardness, and eventually become obsolete once the ‘normal’ path has been reached. In the case of Tsarist Russia, the state substituted itself for private capital due to the scarcity of this factor in the mid-1800’s. According to Gerschenkron, during the boom of 1909-13 this scarcity was diminishing and the function of the state-as-accumulator correspondingly ‘withered’. The tendency was towards “the Russian government (leaving) the economic scene”,³ and being replaced more and more by large syndicates and banking corporations (i.e. the ‘Western’ path had been found). If this this tendency had been extrapolated into the future then the following scenario would have emerged:

Diminishing scarcity of capital, further improvements in the quality of entrepreneurship, and the sheer growth of industrial enterprises, in all probability would have in due time enhanced the

²Ibid, p. 46.
³Ibid, p. 58.
position of industrial firms to the point where they no longer needed the banks' guidance. Gerschenkron's analysis resembles the economic 'stage' theory of growth developed by W.W. Rostow. According to Gerschenkron, Russia had successfully proceeded down the runway of 'economic take-off', powered by the fuel of state substitutionism, and was now beginning to embark upon the 'drive to maturity', along the lines of earlier Western European capitalist nations. Thus, he claims that "...it seems possible to say that Russia on the eve of the war was well on the way toward a westernisation or, perhaps more precisely, a Germanisation of its industrial growth. The 'old' in the Russian economic system was definitely giving way to the 'new'." Through employing a modified version of modernisation theory, Gerschenkron argues that on the eve of the First World War Russian society was progressively moving onto the Western European path of development and that, consequently, class tensions were becoming less acute. According to Gerschenkron, the revolutionary situation of 1917 was due principally to the destabilising effects of the First World War, rather than inherent tension within the process of development.

This chapter will question both Gerschenkron's assumptions and evidence. While agreeing with Gerschenkron's emphasis upon the role of the state in promoting Russian capitalist development, an alternative position will be advanced, arguing that on the eve of the war the process of development continued to generate acute class conflict, and that revolution remained an inherent feature of late-Tsarist society.

The variables which will be stressed in the inherency approach adopted below also differ from other inherency approaches such as Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Analysis and Skocpol's approach. This chapter will place urban, industrial conflict at the centre of the inherent tension within Russian society. As noted in the introductory chapter, rural class relations dominate Skocpol's internal side of her revolutionary equation.

With regard to Wallersteinian analysis, this chapter argues that while the World Systems approach is useful for 'situating' Russia, placing its form of capitalist development within the wider totality of the world capitalist system, this is insufficient to explain why the revolution possessed a socialist potential. There is a tendency within World Systems Analysis to 'reify' the 'world system' and explain all events in terms of the external constraints imposed by this system. For example, according to Wallerstein:

...the Russian Revolution was essentially that of a semi-peripheral country whose internal balance of forces had been such that as of the late-nineteenth century it began on a decline toward a peripheral status. This was the result of a marked penetration of foreign capital into the industrial sector which was on its way to eliminating all indigenous capitalist forces, the resistance to the mechanisation of the agricultural sector, the decline in relative military power...The revolution brought to power a group of state managers who reversed each one of these trends by using the classic technique of semi-mercantilist withdrawal from the world economy.

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4Ibid. p. 58.


Thus, the revolution "emerged as a reaction to the threatened further decline of Russia's structural position in the world economy." This level of analysis provides no understanding of the particular form which class conflict assumed in the revolutionary situation. It is this inherent conflict which explains the class alliances which emerged, and the interests promoted by the polity and its challengers. A more concrete analysis of the historical formation of the Russian class structure and its inherent antagonisms reveals more about the nature of the revolution than concentrating upon the nation's position within the international system of state stratification. In Wallerstein's model the revolutionary subject is lost and replaced with the reified notion of national development within the world capitalist system.

This chapter begins with a description of the origins of capitalist development in Russia, and points to the important role performed by the state in this development. After this, the relationship between the state and urban and rural class relations will be examined. Firstly, it will be argued that the urban proletariat emerged as the most formidable challenger to the Tsarist model of development. Secondly, the structural conditions which explain the weakness of the bourgeoisie will be examined. Lastly, rural relations will be explored in order to explain how the structure of late-Tsarist development contained the inherent possibility of a coincidence between a proletarian revolution 'flanked' by a peasant war.

2.2. STATE-SPONSORED INDUSTRIALISATION

Russia's 'downward mobility' within the European state-system was demonstrated during the disastrous Crimean campaign between 1854 and 1856. In the prosecution of its war aims the backwardness of the nation manifested itself technologically and organisationally. Alexander II understood that social reform was required in order to reverse the decline of Russia's international status. As Gerschenkron notes:

The Crimean War imparted a severe blow to the serene image of Russia's strength. It revealed Russian inferiority in many crucial respects... In the minds of the emperor and the higher bureaucracy, the course of the war and its outcome left the feeling that once more the country had been allowed to lag too far behind the advanced nations of the West. Some degree of modernisation...was indispensable for regaining a strong military position.8

The form of modernisation adopted was the result of a compromise between the state and the gentry.9 Undoubtedly, the most significant reform was the emancipation of the serfs, which freed the peasantry from state and gentry bondage. Alexander overrode the opposition generated by this measure from the gentry, declaring that it was "better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait until the serfs began to liberate themselves from below."10

8A. Gerschenkron, quoted in T. Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions, Cambridge, Mass., 1979, p. 84.
10Quoted in ibid, p. 2.
While, as Emmons observes, the ultimate aim of the emancipation was to "fortify social and economic stability", its more profound long-term consequence was upon the transformation of fiscal and financial responsibilities. The state now possessed an effective mechanism for intervening in the economy through varying supply and demand from its various sectors. In particular, it could manipulate the level of exploitation of the agrarian sector through controlling agricultural surplus more directly. The stage was set for the Tsarist state to play the role of accumulator and planner of the nation's economic destiny.

However, this post-Emancipation fiscal transformation was not immediately translated into a conscious governmental policy of industrialisation. From the 1860's until the 1880's the government encouraged a *laissez-faire* approach to development, while most government resources continued to be swallowed up in 'non-productive' activities. While progress was observable in the non-agricultural sector, especially light industry, the Emancipation did not transform the gentry into a class of agrarian capitalist entrepreneurs. The results of the Emancipation had left many features of the pre-existing agrarian class relations intact. In particular, the extraction of peasant surplus remained substantially pre-capitalist in character. As Skocpol notes:

...the peasants were left with insufficient lands subject to crushing redemption payments, which had to be paid to the government over many decades. And the nobles were hardly spurred to invest in the modernisation of agriculture, because they were left with legal possession of about 40% of the land and with access to cheap labour, whereas most of their financial-redemption windfall (paid to the nobles by the state) went to pay off previously accumulated indebtedness (mostly to the state itself).

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12As Skocpol argues; "What the Emancipation unquestionably did accomplish was to give the imperial state a more direct and exclusive role in controlling the peasantry and appropriating revenues from agriculture." Skocpol, op. cit., p. 89.

13However, as mentioned above, it should be kept in mind that the state had traditionally played an important, if not overbearing, role in the economy, especially in industry and commerce. See R. Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, Peregrine, 1982, pp. 193-218.

14As Emmons notes: "The reform produced no immediate, dramatic changes in the social and economic order." Emmons, op. cit., p. 420.

15According to Vernadsky: "During the reign of Alexander II the government apparently desired to refrain from interference in economic matters and to allow the fullest degree of private initiative. These principles were expressed in the policy stimulating the construction of railroads by private companies on the concession basis. A number of government-owned factories in the Urals were sold to private individuals, and the salt mines in the southeast were leased to private capital. At the same time a policy of free trade was instituted." G. Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, Yale, New Haven, 1963, p. 246.

16See Skocpol, op. cit., p. 90.


18Skocpol, op. cit., p. 89. This latter point is elaborated by Emmons. "The glowing promise of the liberal abolitionists about the future of the gentry as commercial farmers was never realized for most of them. The economic plight in which the gentry found themselves immediately after the emancipation - mainly their lack of capital to adapt to the 'new order of things' - was not solved by the wholesale turn to redemption. Most *pomeshchiki* had been living on credit since long before the emancipation, maintained by loans from the state and the availability of 'free' labor. The emancipation brought them to a reckoning with their debts - preliminarily deducted from the redemption payments made to them - which left few of them with enough capital to set up farming on a hired-labor basis." Emmons, op. cit. p. 421.
Evidence concerning the durability of the peasant mode of production, combined with the lack of incentive on the part of the gentry to modernise and the low (though admittedly accelerating) level of industrial development, all suggest that Russia's rate of economic development would have remained relatively low had not an additional factor intervened in the socio-economic matrix as a catalyst for rapid growth. This factor was the conscious adoption of a policy of heavy industrialisation by the state. Under the guidance of a series of Finance Ministers, such as Vishnegradski and Witte, the Tsarist state not only encouraged private capital industrial expansion, but also became the single largest direct investor and entrepreneur. Most importantly, state sponsorship of railway construction sank government resources into productive concerns which provided a vital boost to the development of heavy industry. Furthermore, state subsidies and high tariffs for indigenous private enterprises encouraged investment in heavy industry. Foreign investment was also significant in this sector, and foreign loans were energetically sought by the state.

These policies were aided by numerous fortuitous conditions, both internal and external. Agricultural demand upon the Western European market provided an incentive for the state to export primary products. State accumulation from these primary exports was further stimulated by the onerous burdens of direct and indirect taxation applied to the peasant sector. Dilemmas concerning the lack of internal demand produced by these measures were short-circuited by the governments concern to encourage heavy industry. Furthermore, Asiatic expansion and Russia's size and potential wealth offered seemingly inexhaustible opportunities for internal colonisation and afforded bright prospects for foreign investors.

The belated timing of Russia's industrial revolution also provided the administration with the advantage of employing the most modern techniques of production without traversing the long path of technological innovation which had occurred over the previous centuries in Western Europe. As Gerschenkron notes:

One of the few advantages that Russia, as many other backward countries in similar conditions, possessed was the possibility of borrowing technology from more advanced and more experienced industrial countries. In this field alone, Russia could equal, if not excel, them. It could concentrate on modern technology so that its factory equipment, though much smaller in aggregate, could be much more up-to-date in its average composition.

This opportunity helps to explain the apparent anomaly that 'backward' Russia led the world in the contemporary trend towards increasing size of industrial plant and concentration of

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20 As Shanin notes: "The Russian state was a massive economy in two distinct senses. It was a gigantic enterprise sensu strictu and at the same time a powerful system of political and administrative intervention, penetrating every aspect of Russian society and economy." T. Shanin, Russia as a 'Developing Society': The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of the Century: Volume 1, Macmillan, London, 1985, p. 130.
22 See Falkus, op. cit., pp. 61-74.
23 A. Gerschenkron, op. cit., p. 49.
labour. Other significant trends observable in pre-revolutionary Russia were monopolisation, the importance of finance capital and the concentration of industrial activity in a few geographical centres (most importantly around St Petersburg, but also Russian Poland, the Ukraine, and more traditional light industries around Moscow).

Thus, Russia's industrialisation was stimulated by a chain of articulation which connected the agrarian economy with Western Europe. This articulation not only resulted in the quantitative expansion of the nation's industrial stock. It also began transforming the dynamics of the Russian economy as a whole. Leon Trotsky, recognising the importance of these sectoral interlinkages, argued they represented a historical tendency which he described as 'the law of uneven and combined development'.

Unevenness, the most general law of the historical process, reveals itself most sharply and complexly in the destiny of the backward countries. Under the whip of external necessity their backward culture is compelled to make leaps. From the universal law of unevenness derives another law which, for the lack of a better name, we may call the law of combined development - by which we mean a drawing together of the different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms. Without this law...it is impossible to understand the history of Russia, and indeed of any country of the second, third or tenth cultural class.

This technological diffusion, financed through heavy direct and indirect taxation upon the agrarian economy and an energetic search for foreign loans, resulted in a tighter integration of the Russian economy within the world capitalist system. Furthermore, a crucial factor in the success of governmental policy was a positive balance of payments.

According to Lyashchenko's figures, the 28% of capital which was foreign owned in 1900 had risen by 1913 to 33%. During this period foreign investment had increased 85% compared to a 60% increase in domestic capital investment. Foreign ownership was most conspicuous in the most dynamic sectors of the economy (oil, metals, chemicals, electrical engineering). Other manifestations of the 'combined' nature of Russia's development were the close links which Russian finance formed with its European counterpart, and the fact that by 1912 57% of industrial equipment and capital stock was still purchased from abroad. The large foreign loans, contracted mainly with France and Britain after the formation of the Triple Entente, demanded increasingly regressive taxation against the agricultural sector in order to meet repayments. The two decades prior to the World War witnessed "a tendency for agriculture to be increasingly geared to the export market...." By 1913 Russia was the largest servicer of debt in the world.

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27 As Dobb remarked, not only with respect to foreign ownership "but with regard to her trade relations, Russia represented an economic system that was pendent on the West." Dobb, Soviet Economic Development Since 1917, R.K.P., London, 1951, pp. 36-7.
29 Dobb, op. cit., p. 38.
Despite Russia's semi-peripheral status within the world capitalist system, Skocpol is correct to dismiss the notion that Russia was a semi-colony of Western Europe.\(^{30}\) While the Tsarist state was certainly constrained by the 'structural imperatives' of integration within the world capitalist system it still possessed sufficient leverage to determine the role which foreign capital would perform in the development of Russian industrialisation. As Smith observes in his examination of Petrograd on the eve of 1917: "The industry of Petrograd was distinguished not so much by its dependence on foreign capital as by its dependence on the state."\(^{31}\)

The negative aspects of this economic linkage to the world economy and world financial market were most acutely felt in 1899-1900 with the contraction of the European money market. The Russian economy plummetted into a recession which lasted until 1907 (far longer than the Western European countries). The severity of the recession and its prolongation was intensified by the lack of internal demand resulting from the mode of industrialisation followed by the Tsarist state. It was during this period that Russia experienced the revolutionary 'dress rehearsal' of 1905, an event aggravated by the Russo-Japanese War and the slump. The insertion of the external market into the process of expanded reproduction would create further internal dislocation during the World War through starving the nation of capital replacement. By 1917 Russia's foreign debt had doubled, relative to 1914.\(^{32}\)

To conclude, the impressive industrial growth registered by Tsarist Russia in the decades prior to the revolution was the result of the rearrangement of sectoral responsibilities, profoundly affecting the dynamics of the Russian economy. The Russian economic formation on the eve of the World War can be described as an **articulated duality** between diverse modes of production. The state-sponsored 'economic miracle' (or 'induced growth stream')\(^{33}\) was funded through deepening fiscal exploitation of a peasant economy which had failed to substantially increase its productivity.\(^{34}\) Agrarian surplus, extracted through direct and indirect taxation, combined with foreign loans, were converted into the capital stock of the heavy industrial sector, which was heavily protected behind high tariff barriers, subsidies and state orders. The break which neo-classical economists would observe in the economic circuit (the lack of peasant demand) lost its significance once this demand was reduced through heavy taxation upon the peasantry, and heavy industry took state priority over consumer industry. As Gerschenkron argues:

The strategic factor in the great industrial upsurge of the 1890's must be seen in the changed policy of the government. The fear of industrialisation, so much in evidence in the 1860's, was gone. Industrial development became an accepted and in fact central goal. Once this happened, the problem of the peasant demand lost its previous significance, and its relation to

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\(^{30}\)Skocpol, op. cit., p. 93.

\(^{31}\)Smith, op. cit., p. 7

\(^{32}\)Shanin, *Awkward Class*, p. 17.

\(^{33}\)Crisp, op. cit., p. 52.

\(^{34}\)As Paul Gregory points out, this rate of agricultural growth slowed down the overall productivity growth rate of the Tsarist economy. See P. Gregory, "Economic Growth and Structural Change in Tsarist Russia: A Case of Economic Growth?", *Soviet Studies*, No. 3, 1972, p. 432.
industrialisation was thoroughly reversed. It was as though a rotating stage had moved revealing an entirely new scenery. The growth of peasant demand for industrial goods no longer was a pre-requisite of successful industrialisation. On the contrary, its curtailment became the objective. To reduce peasant consumption meant increasing the share of national output available for investment. It meant increased exports, stability of the currency, chances for larger and cheaper loans from abroad, and the availability of foreign exchange needed to service foreign loans.\(^{35}\)

While this state policy of industrial sponsorship, combined with numerous advantageous internal and external conditions, had provided Russia with one of the highest industrial growth rates in the world in the two decades prior to the World War, the maintenance of this growth was dependent on the continuance of a given set of factors. These included continued access to foreign loans, maintenance of relatively high agricultural prices relative to industrial prices on the world market and continued access to the European market. As observed above, a break in this economic circuit acutely affected the mode of rapid industrialisation pursued by the Tsarist state.

This structural description of the peculiarities of Russia's pre-revolutionary capitalist accumulation also points to the potential strains which the developmental path engendered. These social tensions will be analysed in the following sections. The structural foundations of Tsarist industrialisation were vulnerable to sudden changes affecting its sectoral articulation. These 'accelerators' or precipitants such as war and changing terms of trade revealed the social tensions inherent within the developmental strategy. As the revolutionary events of 1905 demonstrated, prosperity also demanded internal social peace. However, the very success of the state's industrialisation process had created new exploited social groups parallel to the intensification of the exploitation of the more traditional classes. The mobilisation of these forces against the autocracy and its method of industrialisation represented an ever-existent threat to the stability of the old regime. The outcome of any crisis of the Tsarist regime would be conditioned by the ability of various social groups to mobilise their resources against the state.\(^{36}\) In itself, the rate and direction of development cannot account for the alignment of social forces. As a precondition for understanding the political alignments within the nation on the eve of the revolution it is necessary to explore the particular conditions which facilitated or hindered the mobilisation of Russia's spectrum of social classes, and to explore their relationship to the state.

### 2.3. INDUSTRIAL CLASS CONFLICT

The restructuring process described above can be understood at a deeper level of abstraction by employing Charles Bettelheim's model of economic formations. According to this model:

> When...we set about studying an actual economy - independently of the very idea of transition - we have to think of this economy as a complex structure which is 'structured in dominance'. We mentally grasp a structure like this as a specific combination of several modes of production of which one is dominant. It is this dominant mode of production that permeates the entire system and modifies the conditions in which the subordinate modes of production function and

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\(^{35}\)Gerschenkron, op.cit., pp. 47-8.

\(^{36}\)As Shanin observes: "In the long run, the results of the strategies of economic intervention were to be determined by a confrontation in the political sphere." Shanin, *Developing Society*, p. 133.
Applied to the description presented in the last section, Russia appears as a complex economic formation with numerous modes of production co-existing in interaction. However, the logic of the various modes had been substantially modified by the dominant mode, namely capitalism. While each mode was infected with impurities from co-existing modes, the Tsarist economic formation was structured-in-dominance by capitalism. The development strategy pursued by the state involved an 'articulation of modes of production' with capitalist industrialisation as its motive force.

This section argues that this articulation placed the social forces within the industrial sector in a fundamental position out of proportion to their numerical strength. The most important force within this sector was the industrial proletariat, which became the most effective challenger against the polity.

By the beginning of the World War the population under Tsarist dominion had reached 164.3 million, of which 17 million lived in urban areas. Of this total, three million were permanent industrial workers, with the highest concentration being in St Petersburg (one of the few areas where a substantial proportion of the proletariat had completely severed its roots from the village). Despite the large size and concentration of industrial production small-scale industry still accounted for 67% of those engaged in industry (although productivity in this sector was approximately one-quarter of that of large-scale industry).

Between 1900 and 1913 an extra four million peasants (mainly young men) had settled in the towns, while each year a further nine million peasants took out passports to work outside

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39It is this force which Skocpol alludes to when she notes: "Rapid industrialisation thus created a formidable popular force capable of opposing the imperial state and the capitalist captains of industry whose activities the state fervently encouraged." Skocpol, op. cit., p. 92. However, as noted in the introductory chapter, Skocpol's rural emphasis does not lead to further examination of this formidable force. Mention must be made of an alternative position developed by Umberto Melotti, who argues that on the eve of the revolution Russia was still fundamentally 'semi-asiatic'. Accordingly, Melotti claims that this accounts for the rapid degeneration of the October Revolution into a form of 'bureaucratic collectivism'. U. Melotti, *Marx and the Third World*, Macmillan, London, 1981, Chapters 14 & 20. However, Melotti fails to explain the nature of the 1917 revolution or the leading role of the proletariat. His observations on the legacy of Russia's 'asiatic' features upon the post-revolutionary state, and his discussion of Lenin's views, could have been enhanced had he accepted the complexity of the pre-revolutionary economic formation and *lack of coincidence* between the state and the economy. Perry Anderson adopts this position, arguing that: "The Autocracy was a feudal State, although Russia was by the 20th century a composite social formation dominated by the capitalist mode of production: a dominance whose remote effects are legible in the structures of Tsarism." P. Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, New Left Books, London, 1974, p. 358.

40See Shanin, *Awkward Class*, p. 11. Historical trends place these statistics in perspective. In 1850, 5% of the total population lived in towns; in 1897, 13%; and in 1914, 15%. See Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 242.

41Nove, op. cit., p. 17.

42Shanin, op. cit., p. 12.
agriculture. The articulated duality of the Russian socio-economic formation is thrown into relief by statistics showing that half of all peasant households in European Russia had a family member who had left the village for employment. This demographic feature was as much a manifestation of the mode of Tsarist industrialisation as it was a necessary response to the heightening crisis of Russian agricultural overpopulation, land shortage and peasant debt. As Dobb notes:

"...in addition to the industrial proletariat proper, there existed a large rural proletariat drawn from families who were unable to support themselves from their holdings of land, since they lacked the animal-power and equipment with which to work it, and were burdened or dispossessed by taxation or usury. For rising industry and a kulak class to feed upon, this rural semi-proletariat represented a rich potential reserve."

These demographic and social statistics on Russian proletarianisation are subject to a variety of interpretations. The argument presented below will consider the trends of class conflict through the peculiarities observed in the previous section concerning the form capitalist development assumed in the immediate pre-revolutionary period.

Firstly, it is useful to return to Gerschenkron in order to explain how his contingency analysis perceives the development of industrial relations in late-Tsarist Russia. Gerschenkron argues that this 'post-substitutionist' epoch, which was gradually transferring Russia onto the Western path of development, was also characterised by a gradual institutionalisation of class conflict. According to Gerschenkron, the intensity of class conflict was a universal phenomenon of early industrialisation, "as shown by the history of European countries (such as Austria or Belgium)", and Russia's post-take-off era would reveal similar tendencies in the field of industrial relations. He claims that by the 1909-13 boom, "the economic position of labour was clearly improving. In the resurgence of the strike movement economic problems seemed to predominate....There is little doubt that the Russian labour movement of those years was slowly turning toward revisionist and trade-unionist lines". Using these comparative trends, Gerschenkron is able to conclude that "revolution, or the threat of, may reasonably be seen as an extraneous phenomenon." If we relate this to Eckstein's classification of theories of revolution, Gerschenkron's analysis can be described as a 'contingency' theory. According to his reasoning, by the beginning of the First World War revolutionary class conflict had ceased to be an 'inherent' feature of the Tsarist social structure. Thus, the events of 1917 must be regarded as emanating from accidental causes external to the logic of Tsarist capitalist development.

However, there are a number of theoretical and empirical grounds for questioning the validity of Gerschenkron's analysis of the Russian working class movement immediately prior to the

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45Dobb, op. cit., p. 45.
46Gerschenkron op. cit., p. 60.
war. Firstly, even if one accepts his extrapolation of Russia's future, through reference to the historical trends of the Western European workers' movement, this would not be sufficient to dismiss the reality of the contemporary conflicts the working class movement was engaged in. Such extrapolations have little bearing upon the motivations for action or the form of action adopted by historical actors under concrete circumstances. John Keep, who has provided arguably the best social history of the revolutionary process from a modernisation perspective, has adopted a more realistic position on this question. Noting that by 1914 "all but a thin segment of Russian labour was alienated from the existing political and social order", he adds: "Few would have been impressed by the argument, even if it had been brought to their attention, that their tribulations were an inevitable but temporary concomitant of the process of modernising a backward country, and that in time they could look forward to a growing share of the material rewards bound to flow from an advanced market economy."48 While comparative historical hindsight provides the sociologist and historian with the opportunity for understanding social processes, it cannot be used to alter the perceptions and motivations of historically-located actors.

Secondly, Gerschenkron provides no empirical evidence in support of his claim that "there is little doubt" that the Russian labour movement was adopting reformist tactics in pursuit of its interests. All that is provided by way of evidence is the statement that, as was "true of the West, the struggles for general and equal franchise to the Duma, which probably would have occurred sooner or later, may well have accentuated this development" towards reformism.49 Once more, extrapolation takes precedence over actuality, with the added proviso of the 'probability' of Tsarist political reform.

While there is evidence to support the claim that "the economic position of labour was improving" during the period, such bland economistic statements can furnish few insights into the political mood of the working class. As James Petras has pointed out, statistics must be placed in the context of the structural, psychological and organisational peculiarities of the class under discussion.

...the broader socio-political context of class society and the exploitative relationships embodied in it have often proved to be more fundamental determinants of class consciousness than wage levels. Moreover, the degree to which certain segments of the working class are paid higher wages may precisely be a function of their greater militancy, and may reinforce their political allegiance to a revolutionary party. Hence the notion that workers, or even better-paid workers, are in some essence privileged strata, incapable of participating in revolutionary struggles, is both historically and logically incorrect.50 Without denying the necessity of constructing more general models, Petras is aware that the

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49Gerschenkron, op. cit., p. 60.

revolutionary potential of classes must be related to the historical peculiarities of the social structure under consideration.\textsuperscript{51}

Apart from these theoretical and logical objections to Gerschenkron's claim, it should also be emphasized that 'improving' is a relative term and, in the case of Russia, it must be viewed from the perspective of the appalling austerity, low wages and sub-standard living conditions experienced by the working class in the 1890's.\textsuperscript{52}

On an empirical level, the nature of the strikes during the period appear to have been more political than Gerschenkron suggests. The activities of the St Petersburg Soviet during the 1905 Revolution certainly transcended 'economism' or 'trade-unionism'.\textsuperscript{53} During that year over 1.1 million workers participated in political strikes. After progressively declining to 3,800 participants by 1910 (during the Stolypin Reaction) the number of participants in political strikes rose dramatically to almost one million in the first half of 1914 alone.\textsuperscript{54} One can concur with Fitzpatrick that "the empirical evidence of the period from the 1890's to 1914 suggests that in fact Russia's working class...was exceptionally militant and revolutionary. Large-scale strikes were frequent, the workers showing considerable solidarity against management and state authority, and their demands were usually political as well as economic..."\textsuperscript{55}

The frequency of political strikes in pre-revolutionary Russia must also be related to the peculiarities of the developmental model pursued by the state. Until 1905 trade-unions remained illegal (apart from the Interior Ministry-sponsored unions organised by Zubatov between 1901 and 1903).\textsuperscript{56} This inevitably and immediately heightened any 'economic' protest by workers to improve their conditions into demands which included freedom of organisation. It is difficult to separate economic strikes from political strikes when the effectiveness of economic actions depend upon a transformation of the political milieu.\textsuperscript{57}

The difficulty of differentiating economic from political struggles is compounded when the role of the Tsarist state in the economy is considered. A fundamental flaw in Gerschenkron's


\textsuperscript{52}See Dobb, op. cit., p. 58-60.


\textsuperscript{54}L. Haimson, "The Problem of Social Stability in Urban Russia, 1905-1917", in M. Chemiavsky (ed), The Structure of Russian History, N.Y., 1970, p. 377. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 32, provides slightly higher figures. Workers who participated in numerous strikes are accredited with the number of strikes in which they participated, therefore inflating the number of strikers. However, this does not alter the trends.

\textsuperscript{55}Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 15.

\textsuperscript{56}See Pipes, op. cit., pp. 312-3.

\textsuperscript{57}A similar point is argued by Smith, op. cit., pp. 2-3; and Bonnell, op. cit., pp. 450-2.
extrapolation of socio-economic trends (and his comparison with the West) is his failure to examine the effect the state's role in industrialisation had upon class conflict. In order to assure the success of its mode of industrialisation the state was forced to directly confront workers' demands. The consequence was that the Tsarist state, unlike its Western counterpart during the same epoch, was unable to act, or rather appear to be acting, as an arbiter in the conflict between capital and labour. The substitutionist links of foreign capital and the state for local capital required an interventionist stance on the part of the state toward industrial relations.

The state in capitalist society promotes the maintenance and reproduction of capitalist relations of production, and its development under 'classical' conditions provided grounds for the hegemonic liberal notion that the state exists above civil conflict. The perception is one of the role of the state as an arbiter of conflicting interests in the general interest of society as a whole, rather than serving any particular interest. The Russian mode of state-sponsored industrialisation precluded any such mythology of the state. Its stake in promoting state and private industry meant that 'state authorities were quick to provide troops when strikes against private enterprise showed signs of getting out of hand.' This was amply demonstrated time after time, notable examples being the 1905 Revolution and the Lena Goldfield massacre of 1912 (the latter triggering a nationwide response from labour). This mobilisation of labour will be discussed more concretely in Chapter 4.

There are other reasons why the liberal concept of the state was inapplicable to Russian reality. Another, non-economic, version of the 'dual society' thesis has been employed by Robert Tucker in order to clarify the relationship between state and class in Russia. Tucker notes that the image of dual Russia had deep roots in Russian intellectual tradition. On the one hand there was the image of the 'state' or 'official Russia' (gosudarstvo, vlast'), and on the other hand 'popular Russia' or 'the people' (narod, obshchestvo). The 'state-for-itself' was perceived as a manipulative instrument of change, acting upon the population at large ('the tool and victim of the state's designs'). Rather than reflecting any particular civil interest, the state was viewed as functioning in its own interest, above all particular classes and against all classes. At the end of the nineteenth century Sir Donald MacKenzie Wallace wrote that: "It was in the nature of things that the Government, aiming at the realization of designs which its subjects neither sympathized with nor understood, should have become separated from the nation....The state has thus come to be regarded as an abstract entity." The state was not perceived as bourgeois, yet neither was it viewed as the arbiter of civil conflict. It was popularly viewed as an instrument of naked exploitation and oppression.

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59 Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 15.


61 Ibid, p. 122.

62 Quoted in ibid, p. 125. On the same issue, Trotsky provided the hypothesis that: "The more centralized a state is, and the more independent from the ruling classes, the more rapidly it is transformed into a self-contained organization placed above society." L. Trotsky, 1905, Penguin, 1977, p. 28.
Gerschenkron's expectations that Russia was entering a Western phase of development neglects this peculiarity in the nature of Russian industrial conflict. He assumes a more disinterested role of the Russian state in the process of capital accumulation. Labour tended to confront the state far sooner and far more threateningly than in the West. In other words, conflict between labour and capital tended to become more acute due to the absence of any acceptable mechanism of arbitration. Political impetus tended to be generated out of any economic demands which the existing institutional structure failed to satisfy. Trotsky explained this popularity and necessity of the political strike through arguing that the Russian proletariat:

...learned its first steps in the political circumstances created by a despotic state. Strikes forbidden by law, illegal proclamations, street demonstrations, encounters with the police and with troops - such was the school created by the combination of a swiftly developing capitalism with an absolutism slowly surrendering its positions. The concentration of workers in colossal enterprises, the intense character of government persecution, and finally the impulsiveness of a young and fresh proletariat, brought it about that the political strike, so rare in Western Europe, became in Russia the fundamental method of struggle.63

Structurally, a polarised choice between economic and political action made little sense under prevailing social conditions.

The evidence presented above contradicts Gerschenkron's claim that industrial class conflict was abating on the eve of the war, and that revolution was extraneous to the process of social development. As Leopold Haimson has demonstrated in his analysis of the mobilisation of the St Petersburg proletariat on the eve of the First World War, there are sufficient empirical and theoretical grounds for arguing the contrary.64 The form which capitalist development assumed, and the role performed by the state in this process, ensured that urban class conflict remained an inherently volatile feature of Russian social relations. Furthermore, the importance of industrialisation (the vortex of the state's development strategy) ensured that the proletariat would assume a central role in any explosion of the social tensions inherent within this process.

Another question which must be addressed is the extent of social differentiation among the urban working class. Intra-class differentiation has often been used as an explanatory concept for the inability of classes to mobilise or act in their own interests. E.H. Carr has observed that a 'labour aristocracy' (a feature characteristic of the Western, especially English, working class at the time) failed to emerge within the Russian working class movement.65 While status differentiation existed within the production process (especially between skilled craftsmen, masterovye, and unskilled labourers, chernorabochii) Smith argues that it would have been misleading to view, for example, a skilled metal-worker as a 'labour aristocrat' because of the lack of 'social closure' to even the most prestigious industrial trades.66 A further distinction can

63Trotsky, History..., p. 31.
64Haimson, op. cit.
66He concludes that "the skilled metal workers of St Petersburg were thus distant from British 'labour aristocrats', but neither were they yet the 'mass-production' workers of the modern assembly plant." Smith, op. cit., pp. 23-9.
be made between 'cadre' workers and 'peasant' workers, the former category representing
workers with substantial experience in industry and insignificant ties to the village, and the
latter category describing recent migrants from the village still steeped in rural custom and
work habits. Although there is controversy over the precision of the definitions and their
significance, it is generally accepted that on the eve of the war only St Petersburg possessed a
(slight) majority of cadre workers. However, contradictory evidence exists concerning the
revolutionary potential of both categories. While many writers have stressed the proportion of
cadre workers as a constituting factor to the development of revolutionary consciousness,
other writers have stressed the size of the peasant worker contingent in explaining the
propensity to rebel against authority and towards revolutionary action. However, on either
grounds, the differences between the composition and trends of the Western working class and
the Russian working class are sufficient and significant enough to bring into question
Gerschenkron's claims concerning the reformist, economistic tendencies of the Russian urban
proletariat.

Before concluding, it should be mentioned that Gerschenkron's argument implicitly bears all
the hallmarks of the functionalist paradigm in sociology. Employing the jargon characteristic of
the approach, his interpretation of the period under consideration can be translated as follows:
The 'drive towards maturity' (Rostow) within the economy resulted in an 'institutionalisation
of class conflict' (Dahrendorf) which manifested itself in working class depoliticisation, or an
'end of ideology' (Bell). The psychological condition of 'relative deprivation' (Davies) was
diminishing, and therefore the revolutionary outbursts of 1917 must be explained in terms of
'contingent' forces which were only tangentially related to the existing stage of
'modernisation'.

A different argument has been developed in this section. The spectacular and rapid growth
promoted by the Tsarist state had been achieved at the cost of straining class tension. Even
assuming that Russia was catching up with the West (a notion contested by R.W. Goldsmith)
and further assuming that the advantageous external economic conditions had been maintained

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68See the discussion in ibid, pp. 14-23. Koenker, op. cit., pp. 356-67, argues that it was the 'skilled urban cadres' rather
than the 'unskilled peasant mass' who were the leading political actors during the revolutionary situation of 1917.

69Cf., Carr, op. cit., p. 21; also Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 15, and Wolf, Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century, Faber,

70Johnson concludes his study of the Moscow proletariat by arguing that the "villages influence over factory life was
subtle and complex, and does not easily match the stereotypes that historians, East and West, have often accepted". R.E.
Johnson, Peasant and Proletarian: The Working Class of Moscow in the Late Nineteenth Century, Rutgers University Press,

71The terminology has been borrowed from the following sources: Rostow, op. cit; R. Dahrendorf, Class and Class

Vol. 9, 1961. "Between 1860 and 1913 Russia failed to catch up economically with the Western world and even fell
further behind its leaders." p. 443.
(a possibility questioned by Shanin\textsuperscript{73}) there are sufficient grounds for arguing that industrial relations would have remained inherently unstable. The war heightened these inherent tensions, acting as an accelerator, rather than an underlying cause of the revolutionary situation. In other words, the nature of the revolution must be discovered within the dynamics of pre-revolutionary capitalist development. While this does not automatically imply the inevitability of revolution, it does suggest that revolution remained a potential built into the existing social structure.

\section*{2.4. THE WEAKNESS OF THE BOURGEOISIE}

The previous section highlighted the conflict between the urban working class and the state. As various writers have noted, and as this analysis of Tsarist development demonstrates, the state performs a crucial role in dependent capitalist development. Under such conditions, control over industry and finance is usually concentrated in a \textquote{triple alliance} of the state, foreign capital and the local bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{74} In the initial section of this chapter, the importance of the role of the state and foreign capital was discussed. It has been argued that the local bourgeoisie tends to be the junior partner in this \textquote{holy trinity} of capitalist development. However, in each instance of dependent capitalist development there are specific structural and psychological factors affecting the relative strength of each sector. In this section the factors which accounted for the position of the Russian bourgeoisie will be explored.

The substitution of the state for private capital noted by Gerschenkron had its roots deep in the history of the patrimonial Tsarist state. This contributed to the weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie. The stranglehold of the Muscovite state over trade and industry, and its distribution of monopolistic privileges to individuals strictly accountable to, and heavily taxed by, the state, inhibited the growth of a rising commercial and industrial class corresponding to the Western bourgeoisie. As Richard Pipes notes: \textquote{In practice, any product which entered into commerce became the subject of a state monopoly. It is difficult to conceive of a practice more fatal to the entrepreneurial spirit.}\textsuperscript{75} The state-employed businessmen (gosti) had good reason to support monopolisation and reject free trade. Requiring the preservation of the patrimonial state for their livelihood, they tended to \textquote{fawn} on authority. This divided them from the \textquote{mass of ordinary traders} who eked out a living \textquote{from the scraps from the table of the Tsar.}\textsuperscript{76} Liberal ideology was thus inimical to the spirit of the gosti.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{73}See Shanin, \textit{Awkward Class}, Ch. 1.


\textsuperscript{75}Pipes, op. cit., p. 195.

\textsuperscript{76}Ibid, pp. 197-8.

\textsuperscript{77}Alec Nove ironically remarks that Adam Smith\textquote{\textquotem}The Wealth of Nations \textquotem was translated into Russian on the orders of the minister of finance (typically this too was a state initiative)\textquotem. Nove, \textquote{Emergent Country}, p. 32.
Furthermore, Muscovite Russia’s earliest manufacturing enterprises had been established with Tsarist permission by foreigners (mainly Dutch, Germans and Swedes) who supplied a fixed quota of output to the state at cost price and freely traded the surplus on the market. Pipes notes that during the seventeenth century native capital "and managerial personnel were as conspicuous by their absence as they would have been in any western colonial dependency."78

Another significant difference with Western Europe which affected the rise of an independent, liberal-minded artisan and bourgeois class was the nature of the Russian city. Geographical and economic factors forced upon the Russian people a weak division of labour, which manifested itself in a comingling of agricultural and non-agricultural activities. As a result, "the centre of trade and manufacturing lay not in the city but in the countryside; the commercial and industrial classes did not constitute the bulk of the urban population..."79 The city remained essentially an administrative, bureaucratic, military outpost,80 controlling a serf-based economy which, with expansive frontiers, offered ample opportunity to defy bondage. Along with the entrepreneurial restrictions of the patrimonial state, this severely curtailed the autonomous growth of the Muscovite city along Western European lines. As both Marx and Weber noted in their accounts of the rise of capitalism, the Western European city was the incubator of the new mode of production within feudal society.81 The pervasiveness of Tsarism afforded few opportunities for the development of an independent urban culture.

Throughout the seventeenth century the state progressively relaxed trade restrictions. However, regulations on serf-ownership effectively delivered a coup-de-grace to the development of a middle class through depriving merchants and entrepreneurs from holding serfs. Trade and industry became concentrated in the hands of Russia’s traditional estates, the peasantry and the gentry. "Merchants now had to watch helplessly as some of the most profitable branches of industry were taken over by classes based in the countryside and rooted in agriculture."82 Thus, prior to the Emancipation, the prospects of a rising bourgeoisie remained bleak. The middle estate became merely "a kind of half-way house for those moving up and down the social ladder."83 Nothing provides more eloquent testimony to the predominance of pre-capitalist relations over capitalist relations than this scenario. An examination of the leading industrialists at the turn of the twentieth century revealed that a

78 Pipes, op. cit., p. 196.
79 Ibid, p. 198. According to Trotsky: "The crafts were not separated from agriculture nor were they concentrated in the towns; instead they remained in the hands of the village population, in the form of home industries scattered over the entire countryside." L. Trotsky, 1905, p. 30.
80 See Melotti, op. cit., pp. 86-7 and pp. 93-4.
82 Pipes, op. cit., p. 212.
significant number had peasant backgrounds. This situation was a direct result of post-Petrine policy towards industry and commerce.

Once the state had decided to 'modernise' in the mid-nineteenth century the absence of an independent propertied class took on a new meaning. Berch Berberoglu's description of state capitalism in the Third World provides a useful framework for understanding the post-Emancipation economic stages which Russia proceeded through.

The state gradually acquires the ownership of the major means of production and distribution because the national bourgeoisie is not in a position (economically) to develop these industries. Initially, the state is not so interested in capital accumulation (or to take on the role of entrepreneur per se) but rather serves an important function by aiding the national bourgeoisie to build and strengthen the latter's industrial base. It is only after the failure of this initial stage does the state step in to take over the production process, and, in its own right, become an agent of capital accumulation whose top bureaucratic leaders can now be seen as a state bourgeoisie.

This process can be seen in the specificity of post-Emancipation Russia. While the state-sponsored industrialisation from Count Witte until the beginning of the World War gave birth to a radical, egalitarian-oriented proletariat, its industrial antithesis (the bourgeoisie) failed to successfully replicate the role played by its Western counterpart as a liberal challenger to the absolutist state. Legally, Emancipation abolished labour-hiring restrictions upon the industrialists. However, as noted above, the peasantry remained effectively tied to the land immediately after the reforms. The two decades after the Emancipation witnessed a stimulation in the development of light industry through low tariffs, and a continuous trade deficit. The growth during this period can be attributed largely to private initiative. Furthermore, during this period of liberal, laissez-faire economic policy, the growth of heavy industry remained restricted.

Though there was an observable strengthening of sectors of the bourgeoisie immediately after the Emancipation, its relative economic weakness, historico-structural deficiencies and lack of political and cultural influence made it a highly improbable contender for the role of 'vanguard' in any forthcoming revolutionary movement against the autocracy. The nature of the pre-revolutionary bourgeoisie remains a controversial feature of Russia's social structure prior to the October Revolution. Richard Pipes speaks of "the missing bourgeoisie", while in a similar vein John Keep has argued that "terms such as 'bourgeois' and 'capitalist' belonged to the language of revolutionary mythology; they had lost their original roots in socio-economic reality", and that the word burzhuaziya, "alien to the Russian tongue", functioned merely as a pejorative term, or a "negative symbol". It is possible to accept Keep's view that "the Russian

84 Vernadsky, op. cit., p. 247. "Of the owners of Moscow's 50 largest industrial and trade concerns as of 1900, 29 were descendants of peasants; 8 of petty-merchants, and 5 of noblemen. Five were of foreign descent; the origin of 3 is uncertain."

85 Berberoglu, op. cit., p. 352.

86 Falkus, op. cit., p. 56.

87 As Falkus notes, "...before the 1880's the Russian government did not play a direct role in much of the industrial expansion that occurred." Ibid, p. 56. Goldsmith, op. cit., provides growth figures for the period. A condensed version can be found in Nove, Economic History, p. 12.

entrepreneurs differed from their eighteenth century and nineteenth century French prototypes in quantity and quality", without accepting the radical dismissal of the existence of a Russian bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie was characterised by its inability and unwillingness to promote its own class interests independently of the state.

In 1884, before state intervention in industrialisation had made its full impact, few Marxists disputed Plekhanov's argument, stated in Our Differences, that:

...the interests of the Russian bourgeoisie are now coming into irreconcilable contradiction to the interests of absolutism...Our bourgeoisie is now undergoing an important metamorphosis; it has developed lungs which require the fresh air of political self-government but at the same time its gills, with which it still breathes in the troubled waters of decaying absolutism, have not yet completely atrophied.89

The political tranquility of the bourgeoisie, compared to other social forces, did not disturb Plekhanov, for after all: "Did not the Italian bourgeoisie let the revolutionaries pick out of the fire the chestnuts of political emancipation and unification and are they not feeding on those chestnuts."90

By the time of the first congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (R.S.D.W.P.) in 1898 this optimism in a replication of the Western form of historical development and class struggle had been tempered. The manifesto of the party read: "The further east one goes in Europe, the meaner, more cowardly and politically weak the bourgeoisie becomes, and the greater are the cultural and political tasks that fall to the proletariat."91

However, descriptive terms such as 'weaker', 'meaner', and 'cowardly', tend to suggest psychological, subjective fears of the Russian bourgeoisie, rather than the structural underpinnings of their class circumstances. The barren grounds of the post-Emanicipation period conditioned the response of an independent entrepreneurial class. From the 1880's onwards, Pipes notes, "Russia had missed the chance to create a bourgeoisie at a time when that had been possible, that is on the basis of manufacture and private capitalism."92 Pipes also stresses the "unpreparedness" and "unwillingness" of the Russian middle class to meet the challenge of rapid heavy industrialisation, arguing that "native entrepreneurship showed little inclination to commit itself."93 Given the scarcity of private capital to undertake such an enormous task, Pipes is arguably unwarranted in his criticism of the bourgeoisie. The objective law of uneven and combined development provides a more satisfactory point of departure. As noted in the first section of this chapter, both Trotsky and Gerschenkron point to the peculiar advantages of backwardness. Once the state committed itself full-heartedly to heavy industrialisation in the 1880's and 1890's it was offered the privilege of being able to choose

89G. Plekhanov, Selected Philosophical Works: Volume 1, Progress, Moscow, 1977, pp. 214-5.
90Ibid, p. 216.
92Pipes, op. cit., p. 218.
93Ibid, p. 218.
between various levels of technology best suited to Russian requirements. The long path from 'bows and arrows' to 'guns' could be telescoped through a simple decision by the state. Not surprisingly given the perceived urgency of industrialisation and the size of the nation, the state opted for the introduction of the latest technology, concentration of human resources and large plant size.

One important advantage size possessed for the Tsarist state was its ability to overcome the scarcity in management and technical skill. Foreign personnel, as well as foreign technology and capital, under the guidance of the Tsarist state, helped to fulfil the role which indigenous capital had provided in Western Europe. As Pipes notes:

The great surge in Russian industrial production in the 1890's...was not so much the outgrowth of Russia's own, internal economic development, as the transplantation of western money, technology, and above all, management. Russian capitalists - rich landowners and merchants alike - were too ignorant of the techniques of modern investment to be able to initiate the kind of financial operations which were required.94

However, Pipes appears to underemphasize the problems facing the bourgeoisie. Forced industrialisation, especially with an emphasis upon heavy industry, could not be undertaken from an underdeveloped base by private capital lacking the potential resources for large-scale capital accumulation. As Olga Crisp argues, the scale of capital requirements, and the risks involved, undermined the ability of the bourgeoisie to perform a catalytic role in the process of economic development.95 Only the state possessed the financial capacity to accumulate sufficient capital and undertake heavy industrialisation during a period when the advanced nations were tending towards concentration and monopolisation of production on the basis of more sophisticated technology. An additional factor which inhibited private capital accumulation was the state's policy of financing heavy industry through regressive agricultural taxation. This adversely affected the expansion of light industry by squeezing internal demand. As noted above, it was precisely this sector which had demonstrated private capital growth during the two decades before the state embarked on its ambitious sponsorship of heavy industry. Under these conditions, it is difficult to envisage any situation other than the state acting as the accumulator and drawing upon foreign capital in order maintain industrial momentum.

In addition, the early cartelisation of industry and the prominence of finance capital in the development of state-sponsored heavy industry produced close ties between a powerful, though numerically insignificant, economic elite and the political elite of the Tsarist state (especially within the Ministry of Finance). This group saw little advantage in promoting liberalism (in its political or economic form) and supported high tariffs and regressive taxation policies which squeezed the peasantry. According to Pipes, the political impotence of the Russian bourgeoisie derived from a conviction, borne through centuries of experience, that "the path to wealth lay not in fighting the authorities but in collaborating with them, with the

94Pipes, ibid, p. 219.

95Crisp, op. cit., p. 25 & 51. This exacerbated what she terms 'the weakness of the autonomous forces'. 
corollary conviction that when contenders for political power were locked in combat it was wisest to sit tight."96

This situation was predictable, given the close ties which the state had cultivated with foreign and domestic capital. Despite this cooperation, Gerschenkron asserts that this period of "diminishing backwardness" between the 1880's and the war consisted of "two distinct yet connected parts", namely state-sponsored and private-banking initiated.97 However, this claim must be tempered by Falkus' observation that "there existed a close connection between the banking structure and the Russian Treasury, so that the distinction between state-finance on the one hand and 'private' bank finance on the other cannot be too finely drawn."98 From the class perspective of the bourgeoisie, it was rational to prefer state patronage, rather than stir the seas of revolt, when their cultural and political influence was weak, and the 'dark masses' and the intelligentsia were an unknown rebellious quantity.

To conclude, the lines of controversy over the status and nature of the Russian bourgeoisie have often been poorly drawn. Concepts such as 'the missing bourgeoisie' (or the bourgeoisie as a figment of the revolutionary imagination) are clearly exaggerations based upon the anomaly that the bourgeoisie was numerically weak in a nation with the fifth highest gross industrial production in the world. This situation had been promoted by the pervasive nature of the patrimonial state, 'late-development', the infusion of foreign capital, technology and personnel, and the scale of production. Each of these factors interacted to produce the structural 'weakness' of the bourgeoisie. These underlying objective circumstances, which upon reflection, render the behaviour of the bourgeoisie quite rational.

Promotion of heavy industry under relative backwardness in a world of comparative costs required state intervention in order to extract surplus from agriculture, raise tariff barriers and attract foreign capital and technology. The domestic bourgeoisie was unable, rather than unwilling, to supply the capital for primitive capital accumulation. Furthermore, the state's option for heavy industry restricted the internal market which had slowly but significantly widened during the two decades after Emancipation.99 However, once the state had indicated

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96Pipes, op. cit., p. 220.
97Gerschenkron, op. cit., p. 56.
98Falkus, op. cit., p. 81. Crisp also argues that "right up to 1914 there was a special relationship between banks and the State Bank and treasury." Crisp, p. 23. (see also pp. 33-4 & 51).
99Whether this expanding cycle of production and distribution prior to the 1880's could have produced a Western-style bourgeoisie is a hypothetical question. However, this problem of peasant demand was to reemerge in another guise during the 1920's in the debates over Soviet development and the New Economic Policy. It was Nikolai Bukharin who argued that a slower ('snail-paced') consumer-oriented strategy would lead to optimal economic growth. See M. Lewin, Political Undercurrents in Soviet Economic Debates, Pluto, London, 1975; and A. Erlich, The Soviet Industrialization Debate: 1924-1928, Harvard, 1960. Teodor Shanin and Alec Nove have both observed that Russian statesmen (whether Tsarist or Bolshevik) confronted numerous problems associated with modern 'developing' nations. The consequences of this situation for economic development have been noted by Alec Nove, who remarks: "Russian industry, particularly in consumer goods, depended to a considerable extent on the purchasing power of the peasants for its market. This dilemma is by no means peculiar to Russia, and raises an issue of great interest in the economics of development." Nove, op. cit., p. 19. See also Gerschenkron, op. cit., p. 45 and pp. 47-8. This issue is also central to Shanin's Developing Society.
its preference for heavy industry there was ample opportunity for private profit within this investment path, or indirect involvement through investment in Imperial government securities. The Tsarist state and private capital complemented rather than contradicted one another, and this consequently tempered any substantial anti-autocratic aspirations of the bourgeoisie.

Furthermore, as discussed in the last section, industrialisation had given birth to a political adversary of both the autocracy and capitalism; an increasingly politicised proletariat. From the perspective of the bourgeoisie, the stagnant waters of decaying absolutism at least afforded greater security than the turbulent currents of the workers' movement.100

2.5. THE ‘AGRA RIAN PROBLEM’ AND INDUSTRIALISATION

The previous two sections explored the class relations corresponding to the structural description of the Russian economy outlined in the first section. The structure of late-Tsarist socio-economic development was described as an articulated duality of distinct yet interrelated social systems. The peculiarities of Russian urban social relations were then described, and it was argued that inherent conflict between the working class and the state remained the biggest threat to the maintenance of the structure. Capital remained sufficiently integrated into the model of development to preclude it playing a leading role in any social movement against the autocracy. However, it remains to examine the social relations peculiar to the agrarian sector. The events of 1917 have been described as a "proletarian revolution flanked by a peasant war."101 The argument in this section is that this peasant war was also a reflection of the inherent conflict generated by the Tsarist state's model of capitalist development.

Reflecting upon the nature of the social forces involved in the revolutionary situation of 1917, Moshe Lewin has pointed to the distinct yet articulated nature of the urban/rural opposition to the old regime. He asks:

Did the two great currents, whose convergence had enabled the Bolsheviks to seize power, really form part of a single stream? Or was it merely that two streams, temporarily flowing the same course, had happened to converge but were destined to diverge again once their common primary objectives had been obtained.102

While this dilemma was a recurrent problem for the Bolsheviks during the 1920's, its significance for this thesis lies in the question: how was such a convergence possible in the first place? This section argues that the origins of this convergence must be sought in the structure of late-Tsarist development. Along with the working class movement, the peasant current was channelled within the banks of capitalist modernisation, and provided the coincidence of a

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100 At this point it is useful to remember E.H. Carr's warning on the repetition of history which was quoted in the introductory chapter.


102 Ibid, p. 132.
proletarian revolution and a peasant war.\textsuperscript{103}

The peasant current had always been perceived as the ‘backward’, ‘ancient’, ‘archaic’, and ‘stagnant’ element of Russian society. It was exalted by the ‘slavophiles’ and abhorred by the ‘westerners’. Despite the fact that the peasant mode of production persisted in a tenacious manner,\textsuperscript{104} it is oversimplistic to retain a strict dichotomy between ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’ in the process of Tsarist capitalist development.\textsuperscript{105} Classical ‘dual society’ and modernisation theories fail to account for the fact that the peasant economy furnished the resources for rapid industrialisation.\textsuperscript{106}

A fundamental point of departure for understanding ‘the agrarian problem’ is that the terms of the Emancipation secured a strengthening of pre-capitalist and non-economic forms of social control and land distribution. As noted above, this paved the way for state intervention in agrarian exploitation, and the subsequent financing of state-sponsored industrial development. Consequently, the traditional sector was as much a corollary of modernity as its antithesis. In addition, it should be stressed that the increased level of taxation was imposed upon an agricultural system which had barely increased its level of production, and which was experiencing a high rate of population growth. The agrarian crisis was triggered as much by the burdens imposed to finance Tsarist capitalist development as by the limitations of its pre-capitalist dynamics. The distinct peasant and proletarian currents were channelled together by the imperatives of capitalist industrialisation.

Theories of development in the contemporary Third World can be usefully applied to conceptualise the urban/rural interlinkages in late-Tsarist Russia. In the terminology of ‘dependency’ theory an urban metropolis was conducting ‘unequal exchange’ with a rural ‘periphery’.\textsuperscript{107} However, the dependency paradigm requires modification. Firstly, although the

\textsuperscript{103}Such a combination was not unique to Russia. Lenin, in his outline of the nature of the Russian revolution, had recalled Marx’s comments on the events in Prussia in 1848. See Lenin, op. cit., Vol. 33, p. 479. Furthermore, reflecting upon the Vienna insurrection of that same year, Marx had provided a general hypothesis concerning the unstable nature of such combinations: "...it is the fate of all revolutions that this union of classes, which is to some degree always the necessary condition of any revolution, cannot subsist long. No sooner is the victory gained against the common enemy than the victors become divided among themselves into different camps, and turn their weapons against each other. It is this rapid and passionate development of class antagonism which, in old and complicated social organisms, makes a revolution such a powerful instrument of social and political progress." K. Marx, Revolution and Counter-Revolution, Unwin, London, 1971, p. 31.

\textsuperscript{104}As Shanin notes: "This power of the essential features of peasant social structure to endure manifested itself time and time again, defying a variety of reforms, pieces of legislation, and even revolutions." Shanin has presented convincing evidence of the ‘cyclical’ nature of social change inherent within the Russian peasant social structure. Shanin, Awkward Class, p. 26.

\textsuperscript{105}Talcott Parsons’ five ‘pattern variables’ have been the most influential dualist expression of the different role definitions characterised by ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ social structures. See T. Parsons, The Social System, Macmillan, New York, 1951. See also Rostow, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{106}For a critique of ‘dual society’ theories applied to Russia, see Johnson, op. cit., p. 7; and Crisp, op. cit., p. 7. It is for reasons such as the above that writers such as Ernesto Laclau reject the concept of ‘duality’. See E. Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America", New Left Review, No. 67, May/June 1971, p. 31. "Dualism implies that no connections exist between the ‘modern’ or ‘progressive’ sector and the ‘closed’ or ‘traditional’ sector."

agrarian sector was an integral component of Tsarist capitalist development, the economic dynamic and logic of this sector cannot be described as capitalist. This will be discussed below. Secondly, the important role performed by foreign capital and international trade cannot in itself account for the concrete form which class antagonisms assumed in the period prior to the revolution. As argued above, this must be understood at the level of state capital accumulation, and at the level of the existing relationships between the state and internally located social classes.

There are a variety of reasons which account for the retarded structural transformation of the agricultural sector, and its failure to substantially increase production. The nobility remained attached to the land after Emancipation as rentiers rather than developing intensive, commercial estates. Moreover, as noted before, a high proportion of the nobility’s income was immediately transferred to the state in order to pay off previously accrued debts. By 1913 the nobility had sold off half the land they had retained from the Emancipation Act, while half the remainder was rented out to the peasantry. In contrast, the percentage of land held by the peasantry rose between 1877 and 1917 from 32% to 47%. By 1915 only 10% of Russia’s land was run as estates, while the nobility owned only one-twentieth of the livestock. On the other hand, ‘peasantisation’ of agricultural production did not reflect higher peasant living standards, but rather an increased taxation burden upon the rural community.

While half the national income of Russia was obtained through agriculture, it employed two-thirds of the labour force. Surplus agricultural labour exceeded demand estimated to be anywhere between one-third and two-thirds. In addition to overpopulation and high taxation (which by 1913 had reached 18% of income) other factors which contributed to peasant poverty were the pre-mechanical, pre-scientific and extensive techniques of production, the tenfold increase in the price of land in the forty years after Emancipation, the terms of agricultural trade (indirect taxation) and a decrease in the average size of farm.

An anomaly in the application of modernisation theory to Russia appears to be that industrial ‘take-off’ and the encroachment of market relations in the countryside failed to promote sustainable agricultural development. In fact a very strong case can be made for the argument that this contact with modernity adversely affected agrarian development. As Shanin notes:

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109 Shanin, op. cit., p. 21. The following statistics, unless otherwise indicated, refer to Russia as a whole. They should be viewed with the consideration that, not surprisingly in a territory as expansive as the Tsarist empire, there were significant regional variations. Discussions of the factors and consequences of these regional variations are found in Dobb, op. cit., pp. 46-55; while Keep, op. cit., follows the variations through the revolutionary process of 1917.

110 Wolf, op. cit., p. 65.

111 Shanin, op. cit., p. 21. Treadgold has remarked that "if large landholding was the chief culprit of the agrarian problem, then the revolution may have killed it, but it was already dying." Quoted in Wolf, op. cit., p. 65.

112 Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 442.

113 Shanin, op. cit., p. 22.
The peasantry carried a heavy burden of state expenditure and of forced capitalist industrialisation in the towns, while participating to a very limited extent in the benefits of the Russian ‘economic miracle’. The Russian peasantry was not only poor but also constituted the major exploited class which to a great extent, paid the bill for the spectacular development of the urban economy.114

The dialectics of development and underdevelopment were apparent in the guise of ‘internal colonisation’.

While capitalist relations failed to alter rural relations to any significant extent, the peasant economy became increasingly articulated into the Tsarist industrialisation project, and was forcing the peasantry to respond to the market.115 A reflection of this articulation was that in European Russia in the two decades before 1914 "the production of wheat (the main export crop) rose by about 75 per cent, while that of rye (the crop consumed by the peasantry and the town workers) increased only a little if at all."116 Rural demand was subordinated to the enormous price of primitive accumulation and the development of heavy industry.

The fiscal policy of the state and the exchange relations between town and country do not exhaust the forms assumed by the articulation of the peasant social system within the internal economy. Migratory labour and army service also exposed the village to the urban milieu and to modern ideologies. The distinction made by Russian statisticians concerning the relative weights of ‘peasant’ and ‘cadre’ workers assists in gauging the importance, not only of the growth of a hereditary proletariat, but also of the diffusion of values which ‘peasant’ workers carried back to their villages. Approximately half of European Russia’s peasant households had a family member who had spent time employed outside the village, and the influence of this migratory workforce would have extended beyond the immediate household.117 In his Moscow study, Johnson argues that there was a symbiotic relationship in the transfusion of values between the urban and rural milieux. "Living in two worlds, the Moscow worker was nourished by both, and from this experience developed many of the characteristic traits that set

114Ibid, p. 23.

115As Wolf notes, market relations tend to "cut through the integument of custom, severing people from their accustomed social matrix in order to transform them into economic actors, independent of prior social commitments to kin and neighbours." E. Wolf, op. cit, p. 279. For a discussion on effects of changes from traditional rights and social obligations to the development of market relations, see E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", Past and Present, 50, 1971.

116Dobb, op. cit, p. 38.

117The tradition was for entire villages to be associated with a particular urban trade or artel’, usually originating from an initial contact a village member had cultivated. See Smith, op. cit, p. 15. Such migratory workers would often return to their village in times of harvest, recession or infirmity. One of Anton Chekhov’s stories, Peasants, written in 1897, describes the return from Moscow of a waiter, Nikolay Chukiidejev, to his native village, Zhukovo. "All the lads who could read or write were packed off to Moscow and hired out as bellboys or waiters (just as the lads on the other side of the river all apprenticed to bakers), and this had been the custom from the days of serfdom, long ago, when a certain Luka Ivanych, a peasant from Zhukovo...who had been a bartender in one of Moscow’s clubs, would take none but his fellow villagers into his service, and these in turn, as they got up in the world, sent for their kinfolk and found jobs for them in taverns and restaurants..." The Portable Chekhov, (ed) A. Yarmolinsky, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1985, p. 320. Shanin argues that; "An increasing penetration of market and money relations into the villages, a growing national education system, army service, and village to town migration were producing an increasing urban impact on peasant life." Ibid, p. 24. In a 1908 study of the Printers Union in Moscow around half its members "kept their families in the villages and returned there consistently every summer to engage in farming." Shanin, Developing Society, p. 85.
him apart from the workers of other countries." In fact scholars such as Eric Wolf have reversed the tendency to view 'cadre' workers as the catalyst for revolutionary activity, arguing that: "It is probably not so much the growth of an industrial proletariat as such which produces revolutionary activity, as the development of an industrial workforce still closely geared to life in the villages." Although Wolf does not explore the relationship between the urban and the rural milieux in any depth his hypothesis suggests that the articulation of both sectors is important in explaining the channelling of peasant movements in modern revolutions. The role of urban leadership, ideology and organisation will be examined further in the discussion of the revolutionary mobilisation of the classes which bore the brunt of the exploitation created by the strategy of capitalist accumulation.

The most significant attempt by the Tsarist state to transform the structure of rural relations were the Stolypin reforms. The revolutionary events of 1905-6 led the government to reconsider its means of extracting agricultural surplus in order to promote industrialisation. Areas where the functions of the traditional mir were still operational and where periodic land redistribution was still practiced proved to be the areas recording the highest number of peasant disturbances. This alerted Stolypin, the Minister for the Interior, to the fact that rural social relations would have to be transformed if economic progress was to be maintained, and political discontent controlled. The Stolypin "wager not on the needy and drunken but on the sturdy and strong" sought as its objective the creation of a wealthy stratum of well-to-do farmers which would act as a bulwark of conservatism and rural stability. Peasant ties to the mir were loosened through abolishing redemption payments and individual landholding was encouraged. The persistence of the mir was clearly perceived by the state to be a hinderance to peasant differentiation and capitalist development.

The success of the Stolypin reforms is difficult to measure and must remain inconclusive. The process of social transformation was cut short by war and revolution. However, by 1914 around 40% of European Russian peasant households had detached their individual landholdings from the village commune. The significance of this figure may be somewhat deceptive in the light of Atkinson’s reminder that few families had established themselves as proprietary units farming their own consolidated and self-contained plots. The reasons for

118Johnson, p. 156. Fitzpatrick also notes that "many peasants were in fact living with one foot in the traditional village and the other in the quite different world of the modern industrial town." Fitzpatrick, op. cit., p. 13.

119Wolf, p. 297.


121The term ‘well-to-do’ has been preferred here to the more common term kulak, meaning ‘fist’. As Shanin notes, the term kulak was a pejorative term for those who “prospered not by the sweat and slog of peasant farming but by usury, go-between activities, shoddy deals” etc. A distinction should be made between ‘productive’ and ‘unproductive’ forms of exploitation. For example, those who hired wage-labour (which is conceptualised as exploitation in the Marxist sense) were not necessarily viewed as kulaks. It was during the 1920’s that the term took on its wider meaning of any rich farmer who hired wage labour, or who owned more land than others. Eventually, the term was used to describe anyone who questioned Stalin’s collectivisation drive. See Shanin, op. cit., pp. 156-8. As the definition broadened, its only resemblance to its past usage was its pejorative connotation.

this continued to be land-scarcity, the archaic strip-system of farming and the inadequate size of holdings.

Despite this, the operation of market relations, commercialisation and peasant differentiation appeared to be developing immediately prior to the war. Whether or not this trend would have led to a capitalist transformation of agriculture remains open to speculation.\(^{123}\) It is impossible to determine whether or not this prediction and Stolypin's objectives would have been realised. As Shanin has convincingly demonstrated, the process of socio-economic differentiation within the peasant mode of production was far more complex than most contemporary Marxists and liberals envisaged. The centrifugal tendencies promoted by commercialisation and market relations were only part of a two-sided equation. They tended to be stressed by commentators to the detriment of various centripetal tendencies peculiar to the particular socio-economic environment which reinforced the stability of the peasant social structure. Shanin argues that reality and the dynamics of the peasant mode of production proved far more stubborn than programmes, theories and the reforms of Tsarist ministers and Marxists alike.\(^{124}\) Despite this, in terms of the balanced economic development of agriculture and industry, the Stolypin reforms were a positive correction to the strategy of industrialisation pursued prior to 1905. It was a belated recognition that a sustainable cycle of production and distribution within a socio-economic formation involves increasing the productive capacity of both the industrial and the agricultural sectors, rather than financing industry at the expense of agriculture.\(^{125}\) This had assured the basis of capitalist development in the West. If there is any truth in Gerschenkron's claim that Russian economic development was entering a Western phase, it lay in this sphere, rather than a transformation from state to privately dominated capital.\(^{126}\) Prior to 1905 the 'traditional' rural sector was the primary source of financing 'modernity'. Therefore, the traditional sector cannot be viewed as closed or isolated, as suggested by many proponents of 'dual' theories of growth. Laclau's comments on Latin America are equally applicable to Russia when he argues that:

...the modernity of one sector is a function of the backwardness of the other.... It is...correct to confront the system as a whole and to show the indivisible unity which exists between the

\(^{123}\)Lenin, writing in 1908, warned of exactly such a possibility, and considered its effect upon the political climate: "The Stolypin Constitution and the Stolypin agrarian policy mark a new phase in the breakdown of the old, semi-patriarchal and semi-feudal system of Tsarism, a new movement towards its transformation into a middle-class monarchy.... If this should continue for any long periods of time....it might force us to renounce any agrarian policy at all. It would be empty and stupid democratic phrasemongering to say that the success of such a policy in Russia is 'impossible'. It is possible! If the Stolypin policy is continued...then the agrarian structure of Russia will be completely bourgeois, the stronger peasants will acquire about all the allotments of land, agriculture become capitalistic, and any 'solution' of the agrarian problem - radical or otherwise - will become impossible under capitalism." Quoted in Ladau, op. cit., p. 29.

\(^{124}\)See Shanin, op. cit. Shanin remarks that Plekhanov once claimed that the peasantry were "non-existent historically speaking". (p. 203) This can only be accepted if applied to all of us, regardless of class.

\(^{125}\)See A. Emmanuel, "Myths of Development Versus Myths of Underdevelopment", New Left Review, No. 85, May/June 1974, pp. 65-7. In a related manner, Goldsmith notes that the not inconsiderable industrial development must be seen in the context of the economy as a whole. Thus, "since the weight of agriculture was higher in Russia the rate of growth for the economy as a whole was lower." Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 443.

\(^{126}\)As Goldsmith notes: "Industry...remained dependent to a good though declining extent on foreign capital, on foreign technical aid, and even more on government initiative and assistance. Russia throughout the pre-revolutionary period retained a strong flavor of state capitalism in its economic structure." Goldsmith, ibid, p. 443.
maintenance of feudal backwardness at one extreme and the apparent progress of a bourgeois dynamism at the other.  

This system, prior to Stolypin, retarded the progress of agrarian capitalist development in order to promote urban industrialisation. However, the success of the Stolypin reform remains a matter for speculation. It is legitimate to conclude that on the eve of the war the ‘agrarian problem’ remained unsolved and that rural society remained in a state of political and economic disequilibrium.

2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter has analysed the structural preconditions of the Russian revolutionary situation of 1917. These features of late-Tsarist socio-economic development help explain the inherent social conflict within the social formation. The events of 1917 were conditioned by the underlying tensions within the Tsarist model of capitalist accumulation. The crisis of state industrialisation forged the channel through which the diverse, yet articulated, currents of working class and peasant discontent ran. Furthermore, the dominance of the ‘modern’ capitalist sector assured the working class the operative role in the mobilisation against the autocracy.

However, despite the dominance of the capitalist dynamic, the nation continued to contain "two permanently ordered social systems". The ‘old’ and the ‘new’, ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, were distinct, yet interrelated phenomena, co-existing in interaction. The pre-capitalist sector provided the resources for industrialisation, with the state acting as a conductor. However, agrarian productivity had not increased with industrialisation, as it had in the West. This mode of surplus extraction from the ‘periphery’ to the ‘metropolis’ can be defined as an internal form of colonialism. An ‘indivisible unity’ existed between social systems operating on distinct dynamics. ‘Tradition’ and ‘modernity’ can be viewed as ‘bipolar in the sense of being dialectically related, rather than moments on a unilinear continuum.

However, the inherent social conflict which can be discerned from the structure of late-Tsarist development does not automatically imply the inevitability of revolution. Any structure contains a number of possible developments. The possibility of socialist revolution was determined by the ability of social movements to channel this discontent. As Trotsky noted, the insurrection of 1917 "did not drop from heaven". In addition to the ‘organic’ structural preconditions outlined above, it is necessary to examine how the Bolsheviks, as a particular challenger, succeeded in mobilising and channelling the matrix of social groups opposed to the old regime. This will be the focus of Chapter 4, recognising that socialist revolution involves political praxis, conscious and purposive action upon the world-as-given, with the view to transcending existing reality.

127 Laclau, op. cit., p. 31.

Chapter 3

STRUCTURAL FOUNDATIONS
OF THE
SANDINISTA REVOLUTION

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter it was argued that the Russian model of capitalist development contained inherent structural contradictions which must form the basis for understanding the demise of the old regime. This chapter complements the previous one through exploring the structural dynamics of pre-revolutionary Nicaraguan society. Using the variables from the last chapter, it will be argued that similar factors underlay the breakdown of the Somoza regime in Nicaragua. Contingent factors, such as the 1972 earthquake, will be viewed as 'accelerators', heightening the inherent contradictions within the Somozaist (somocista) model of capitalist development.

Beginning with the 'cotton revolution' of the early 1950's somocismo guaranteed the reproduction and expansion of a form of capitalist relations which was pregnant with social contradictions. Economically, politically and militarily, the somocista state performed a catalytic role in post-war socio-economic development. However, the model of development contained latent tension between the state and the matrix of social classes. The manifest conflict of the late-1970's must be accounted for in terms of the contradictions inherent within the model of capitalist development.

Somocismo eventually overcame a lengthy period of disarticulation between the state and economic development. In order to substantiate this argument that the somocista state was a precondition for the capitalist transformation of Nicaraguan society it is necessary to explain why the initial incorporation of the nation within the modern world capitalist economy did not correspond to the emergence of a politically dominant propertied class. This crucial structural feature of Nicaraguan economic development requires a long-range narrative of the nation's rich and colourful political and economic history.

The chapter thus begins with an analysis of the origins of capitalist development in the late-nineteenth century. The truncation of this development corresponded with the interference of successive U.S. administrations between 1909 and 1933. The debility of the state and economic stagnation were the principal features of this period. The transcendence of this disarticulation between the state and economic development was overcome through the
mechanism of a dictatorial state. However, as the somocista state became an economic empire in its own right, latent tension evolved between the state and the domestic bourgeoisie. Avoidance of manifest conflict between these sectors required continual economic growth, diversified development and social peace. This was achieved through the exploitation and repression of the popular classes. As the structural pillars of the model of somocista development crumbled under the weight of its own contradictions during the 1970's, the dynasty entered a profound stage of crisis. However, the logic of the model of development also restricted the options available to the non-somocista sectors of the bourgeoisie. The resulting scenario thus revealed not only a crisis of the dictatorial form of the state, but, more broadly, the problem of ensuring that a post-somocista state would continue to perform the 'function' of realising the conditions of capitalist reproduction and development.

As with the Russian Revolution, the structural preconditions of the Nicaraguan Revolution were shaped by the specific form assumed by capitalist development, and its incorporation within the world economic order. In addition, the effectiveness of challengers to the polity was circumscribed by their relationship to a state structure which actively promoted a process of capitalist accumulation. Notably, both state structures achieved a large degree of independence from the matrix of social classes. In both cases, the effectiveness of the bourgeoisie was undermined by its subordinate role in an alliance with the state, thus opening the possibility of a radical revolution incorporating classes and groups previously alienated or marginalised from the model of capitalist development.

3.2. THE ORIGINS OF CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT AND THE MODERN STATE

This section examines the origins of Nicaraguan capitalist development and the incorporation of the nation within the world capitalist market. This period at the turn of the twentieth century also corresponds with the modernisation of the state structure. However, even within the dynamic sector of the economy tied to coffee exportation, production relations remained substantively pre-capitalist. Furthermore, development relied upon the fortunes and fluctuations of this single commodity on the world market. This form of development will be termed 'primitive dependent capitalism'. The correlation between state modernisation and capitalist development was terminated in 1909 through the intervention of the U.S., which perceived the Nicaraguan government as a threat to its regional hegemonistic interests. From the analysis of this period, some preliminary hypotheses can be advanced concerning the relationship between Nicaraguan economic development, the role of the state and the interests of external powers. These will later be applied to the rise and reproduction of the Somoza dictatorship.

Compared with its Central American neighbours, the incorporation of Nicaragua within the modern world capitalist market was belated. While its neighbours took advantage of the expanding European demand for coffee during the mid-nineteenth century, the Nicaraguan economy failed to diversify away from its colonial base, and remained relatively stagnant. This was the consequence of a number of factors, among the most important being political instability and foreign interest in Nicaraguan territory as a possible location for a trans-isthmian canal. The two factors were related. The conflict between Liberals and Conservatives (which initially reflected socio-economic interests inherited from the period of Iberian colonisation) was more acute in Nicaragua than neighbouring states, adversely affecting economic development. The warring parties, often little more than roaming caudillos\(^2\) and their bands, were able to secure the services of external powers interested in securing control over Nicaragua’s waterways. The result was economic stagnation and perennial social conflict during a period when the rest of the isthmus was becoming increasingly incorporated within the world capitalist market.

The Nicaraguan conflict culminated in an acute period of regional unrest during the 1850’s when the U.S. filibuster William Walker assumed the presidency of the nation. Walker, originally called upon by the Liberals to overthrow the Conservative government, was himself promptly overthrown by the combined efforts of other Central American states and British assistance. While the rest of Central America witnessed a long period of ‘liberal’ ascendancy, the Nicaraguan Liberals suffered from a lack of credibility due to their flirtation with the U.S. filibuster. This allowed the Conservatives to hold state power for an unprecedented thirty years between 1863 and 1893. A period of relative political calm descended upon the nation.

It was during this Conservative era that a series of economic measures were implemented designed to stimulate the production and exportation of coffee. These included the transformation of landed property relations (the expropriation of communal Indian\(^3\) and church land), private land grants to locals and immigrants producing coffee (cafetaleros\(^4\)), price subsidies on inputs and credit facilities to assist the cafetaleros, and the beginnings of infrastructural development, including ports, telegraphs and railways. By 1890 coffee had outstripped the traditional colonial products, such as cacao, indigo and beef, as the most dynamic export.

While internal political tranquility promoted the success of these socio-economic changes, this change itself helped further relieve past colonial political tensions. The expansion of coffee production benefited landed elites across traditional political divisions, signalling the beginning of the end of colonial ideological boundaries. The terms ‘Liberal’ and ‘Conservative’ became increasingly obsolete over the next fifty years, more and more reflecting personal and familial ambitions rather than class aspirations. The traditional party structures became vehicles used

\(^2\)Charismatic, military leaders, or chiefs.

\(^3\)This provoked resistance from the Indian community leading to civil war in 1881. See J. Wheelock, Raíces Indígenas de la Lucha Anticolonialista en Nicaragua, Siglo Vitentuño Editores, Mexico, 1980, pp. 109-118

by caudillos to expand familial power within an overall primitive dependent capitalism framework.

Another factor contributing to the political tranquility within the ruling elites was the decreased involvement of the U.S. in Nicaraguan affairs. The construction of a transcontinental railway through the U.S. diminished the importance of control over Nicaraguan territory, while the American Civil War focused U.S. attention upon internal affairs. Furthermore, the victory of the abolitionist north undermined the pro-slavery rationale of incorporating Nicaragua within the Union in order to increase the numerical strength of the pro-slavery states.5

Thus, the acceleration of domestic capitalist development (albeit within a dependent capitalist framework) coincided with a loosening of external politico-military ties. This lends only partial support to the hypothesis advanced by Frank that "the satellites experience their greatest economic development...if and when their ties to the metropolis are weakest."6 While Nicaragua's economic ties with the world market strengthened during the last decades of the nineteenth century, external political and military interference declined. Until the turn of the century U.S. relations with Nicaragua were primarily related to diplomatic and commercial agreements over canal rights.7 Feasibility studies continued to indicate that the Nicaraguan route was superior to the Panamanian route, and U.S. statesmen and entrepreneurs remained engaged in a debate over whether the canal should be primarily a public or a private initiative.8 However, this decline in U.S. intervention was not total. The 1890's witnessed a revival in the doctrine of 'manifest destiny', reaching a climax in the Spanish War of 1898.

Despite the economic changes initiated during the Conservative era, it is generally accepted that the consolidation of dependent capitalist development and the modern state occurred under the 'liberal dictatorship' of Jose Santos Zelaya between 1893 and 1909. Under a nationalist, anti-U.S. banner, Zelaya formally incorporated the Miskito Coast into the national territory, thus ending its status as a British Protectorate. The dictator accelerated the pace of economic reforms, further integrating Nicaragua into the world capitalist system of export commodity production, and diversifying the nations economic ties by encouraging English, German and Japanese investments and loans.9 U.S. capital was also granted generous gold, timber, marine and banana concessions on the Atlantic Coast. Economic infrastructure and communication networks were expanded, a free national education system was established, the

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5This was one of the rationales behind William Walker's expedition. See W. Walker, The War In Nicaragua, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1985.
secularisation of the state furthered and, importantly, an attempt was made to curb the power of caudillismo through the establishment of a national army.\textsuperscript{10}

However, while "Zelaya's 16-year rule had brought much greater economic and political integration of the Nicaraguan nation and had markedly modernized and strengthened the Nicaraguan state",\textsuperscript{11} further modifying traditional oligarchical conflict, internal and external opposition to his methods, direction and pretensions remained vocal and active. While most elites regardless of political persuasion prospered during the Zelaya dictatorship it was the zelayista liberals and the emerging cafetaleros tied to external market production who prospered more than the traditional Conservative families tied to colonial economic interests. Furthermore, national integration and the creation of a single national army were perceived with some justification by opponents as attempts by Zelaya to consolidate his personal rule. After Zelaya ruthlessly crushed signs of a Conservative coup in 1903 it became increasingly clear to his opponents that peaceful internal pressure alone would not remove Zelaya. Their resort was the time-tested method of external assistance. Externally, Zelaya's pan-centroamericanism also aroused regional suspicions concerning his expansionist pretentions.\textsuperscript{12} However, it was his anti-imperialist rhetoric directed against the U.S. which assured his demise. As 'dollar diplomacy' reached its zenith under Roosevelt and Taft, and as the canal issue resurfaced as a major U.S. foreign policy concern, relations between the U.S. and Nicaragua began to deteriorate. Despite the feasibility studies favouring the Nicaraguan rather than the Panamanian route, the U.S. secured control over the Panamanian zone and began construction of the Panama Canal in 1903. Zelaya immediately began negotiations with Japanese and German consortiums over the construction of a rival canal and secured loans from London banks.\textsuperscript{13} This was viewed by Roosevelt as a threat to the hegemonistic interests of the U.S. in the hemisphere, which required exclusive canal rights in Nicaragua in order to ensure precisely that an alternative canal would not be built through the Rio San Juan.

A Conservative uprising erupted on the Atlantic Coast in 1909 supported by British and U.S. private interests and the U.S. government. It was in this region that foreign capital had extracted most of its timber and mining concessions from the Zelaya government. The execution of two U.S. mercenaries provided U.S. Secretary of State, Philander Knox, with the opportunity to break diplomatic relations with Zelaya and land a contingent of 400 marines in order to bolster the Conservative rebels. Zelaya's resignation in favour of fellow liberal Jose Madriz failed to appease Knox, who succeeded in August 1910 in elevating his hand-picked puppet Juan Estrada to the presidency.\textsuperscript{14} Conservative rule would now be viewed by successive


\textsuperscript{11}Booth, op. cit., p.24.


\textsuperscript{13}Weber, op. cit., p. 7; see also Black, op. cit., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{14}For Knox's personal economic stake in Nicaragua, see Black, op. cit., p. 8; and I. O'Malley, "Play It Again Ron", in P. Rosset and J. Vandermeer (eds), \textit{Nicaragua: Unfinished Revolution}, Grove, N.Y., 1986, p. 156.
U.S. administrations as a guarantee that Nicaragua would abstain from further ‘chronic wrongdoing’ (to employ Theodore Roosevelt’s phrase). The US had secured a pliant regime which would promote US business opportunities, ‘restore order’, and refrain from any independent transisthmian schemes.

While all historical commentators agree that Zelaya’s departure marked the end of an era, appraisals of his contribution to Nicaraguan history vary. Many echo Philander Knox’s remark that he was “a blot on the history of his country”, and that his demise rid the nation of a brutal petty tyrant of “preposterous vanity”. However, from a structural perspective, Zelaya appears no more ‘depraved’ than many other ‘modernising’ statesmen. Once the complexity of the era is taken into consideration, it is probably more appropriate to concur with Henri Weber that Zelaya was a ‘Nicaraguan Bismark’. Zelaya’s 16-year rule was an experiment in modern state-building and state-sponsored economic development. Those who prospered most from the ‘liberal dictatorship’ were the expanding dynamic cafetaleros. During this period a domestic agro-exporting bourgeoisie tied to the world market was established. Industry, however, remained artisan-based, and tied to a restricted domestic market. On the other hand, while Zelaya encouraged foreign concessions (especially on the isolated Atlantic Coast), foreign capital was less represented in Nicaragua than neighbouring territory. The nation was not transformed (like Guatemala and Honduras) into a ‘banana enclave’. External interference and attention was focused upon Nicaragua’s strategic geographical position more than its economic potential.

Politically, Zelaya had succeeded in curbing caudillismo through attempting to centralise coercive power in the hands of the state. Although he provoked domestic opposition through elevating himself to the status of a ‘state caudillo’, his strengthening social base weakened political challengers. Most commentators agree that the Conservative uprising of 1909 would have stood little chance of success had not the military strength of the U.S. intervened.

The articulation between the zelayista state and ascending cafetaleros was an important precondition for further socio-economic development. David Close surmises that the state could have evolved into a ‘constitutional oligarchy’. Carlos Fonseca displayed even more optimism, arguing that; “Had it not encountered imperial interference, the bourgeois democratic social process would have continued its natural evolution, and the superannuated obstacles would surely have been overcome in short order.” Whether or not this degree of


19Fonseca, op. cit., p. 39.
optimism is warranted, the reality was that any possibility of such a prognosis was "effectively blocked".\textsuperscript{20} Zelaya’s experiment revealed that the equation for the capitalist development of Nicaragua contained three crucial variables; a strong state prepared to intervene in the economy, the economic hegemony of the dynamic sectors of capital and a correspondence of their interests with the state, and lastly the interests of the United States. As Black observes, the Zelaya programme neglected this third variable:

The political aspirations of a class which might have injected dynamic capitalist growth into Nicaragua - expressed by the Zelaya Liberal Government - had been shown to be by definition incompatible with American interests, and had promptly been aborted. Zelaya’s very nationalism, given U.S. intervention, only guaranteed the further anti-national development of the economy and the debility of the state.\textsuperscript{21}

The analysis of zelayismo provides indicators pointing to the future success of capitalist development under the Somoza regime. Somoza Garcia, another ‘liberal dictator’, assumed the mantle of a ‘state caudillo’, centralised state power, and formed an alliance with the dynamic sectors of the bourgeoisie. However, the dynasty avoided Zelaya’s fatal error. Anastasio Somoza Garcia recognised that a strong dictatorship of this form could only maintain stability once it acquired the confidence and support of the region’s hegemonic power, the United States.

The structural preconditions for the rise of somocismo and the future contours of Nicaraguan class conflict began to take shape during the period of U.S. intervention between 1912 and 1933. The following narrative attempts to illuminate the significant social trends which characterised this period.

3.3. ECONOMIC STAGNATION AND STATE DEBILITY

This section examines Nicaraguan socio-economic and political developments between 1910 and 1936. The two objectives of the section can be dealt with chronologically. Firstly, the adverse effects of U.S. interference and Conservative rule will be discussed, leading to the conclusion that the socio-economic stagnation which characterised the period was a direct result of the disarticulation between the state and the dynamic agro-exporting bourgeoisie. Secondly, this section explains how the military apparatus of the debilitated state structure was able to usurp power. The structural supports of the military ascendancy ensured that the new regime would overcome the obstacles Zelaya confronted.

The United States retained a direct military presence in Nicaragua for almost a quarter of a century after the downfall of Zelaya. However, until 1927 the presence of the Marines remained a symbolic reminder that the U.S. refused to tolerate any more ‘chronic wrongdoing’ from Nicaragua’s factional elites. The exception to this was the dispatch of 2,700 troops in 1912 in order to crush a popular rebellion led by the Liberal general Benjamin Zeladon. According to


\textsuperscript{21}Black, op. cit., p. 11.
Booth, Zeladon received support from the "coffee grower-export faction" of the elite.\(^22\)

The effect of U.S. intervention was most directly felt in the economy. Initially, the U.S. assumed such tight control over Nicaraguan finances that the nation was effectively reduced to the status of a US protectorate. Immediately after Conservative power had been consolidated and the 'evil zelayista tradition'\(^23\) exorcised, the U.S. Department of State sent Thomas Dawson as an envoy to Nicaragua with the purpose of 'ordering' Nicaraguan financial affairs. The Castillo-Knox Treaty, which would have formally imposed protectorate status upon Nicaragua was never ratified. Despite this, as the following discussion of diplomatic-financial maneuvers reveals, Nicaraguans virtually lost control over their nation's destiny.

Brown Brothers Bank of New York became the de-facto treasury of Nicaragua. In exchange for a loan of $1.5 million, Nicaragua ceded control over its customs operations in favour of a U.S.-appointed inspector. Furthermore, a national bank was established with Brown Brothers controlling 51% of the shares. The board of directors consisted of a majority of Brown Brothers representatives and nominees, and operated from New York. Nicaragua’s national rail and steamship lines were offered as collateral to J. & W. Seligman and U.S. Mortgage Trust in return for loans negotiated at extortionate rates. As Herring remarks, "a supposedly sovereign republic had become the virtual ward of New York bankers."\(^24\) Under the pliant Conservative governments of Diaz and Chamorro opportunities for commercial plunder abounded. U.S. banks bought up British loans contracted under Zelaya and collected at face-value. Moreover, a Mixed Claims Commission was appointed by Washington to examine claims by U.S. companies relating to damages suffered during the civil conflict. It is estimated that $1.8 million was extracted in damages, while total U.S. investments in Nicaragua in 1908 amounted to only $1 million.\(^25\)

Apart from ceding financial control, Nicaragua's territorial integrity was violated under the Chamorro-Bryan Treaty of 1914.\(^26\) For a sum of $3 million rent (which immediately went to amortise Nicaragua's debts to U.S. banks) Nicaragua granted 'in perpetuity' proprietary rights on the "construction, operation and maintenance of an inter-oceanic canal". Moreover, the second clause provided the U.S. with a 99-year lease on the Atlantic Corn Islands and a naval

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\(^22\)For this episode, see Booth, op. cit., p. 31. See also E. Crawley, *Dictators Never Die*, Hurst, London, 1979, pp. 38-9.


\(^24\)Herring, op. cit., p. 447. See also Black, op. cit., p. 9.

\(^25\)Booth, op. cit., p. 9.

\(^26\)As Black remarks, "Rarely can any government have been party to such a humiliating document..." Black, op. cit., p. 9. The treaty also violated the territorial integrity of Costa Rica, El Salvador and Honduras. Protests by Costa Rica and El Salvador were presented before the Central American Court, resulting in favour of the republics. The US simply ignored the decision, revealing the impotence of this regional arbitration system which had been initially set up with the assistance of the U.S. in the face of the perceived threat of Zelaya's expansionism.
While the Nicaraguan government regained a greater degree of financial autonomy after 1916, it continued to suffer a severe shortage of working capital as U.S. banks maintained their usurious policies. The consequences for domestic social and economic development were incalculable. Deprived of essential tax revenues, the public services and infrastructural development promoted by Zelaya continued to decline. Furthermore, starved of funds, the national army deteriorated, permitting an increase in banditry and the renewed upsurge of caudillismo. This was ironic given U.S. pretensions that its presence in Nicaragua was justified on grounds of preventing civil chaos and disorder. By 1926 a Liberal leader could lament that:

Nicaragua...the past 16 years has gone back at least half a century. Public schools...throughout the entire country have been closed wholesale.... Money formerly devoted to public instruction is used to subsidize Jesuit and parochial schools...Concessions of utterly ruinous character have been given to powerful American concerns, which have merely exploited the natural resources of the country for their own benefit without any benefit whatsoever to Nicaraguans.

In step with 'financial stability' direct U.S. investment progressively rose in Nicaragua. From $1 million in 1908, investments rose to $7.3 million in 1919 and by 1929 reached $17.3 million (although this remained the lowest in the region). Apart from coffee, U.S. investment centred upon gold mining, timber concessions, banana and rubber. Trade with Europe declined, while the U.S. share in imports and exports increased between 75% and 80%.

U.S. investment was disproportionately represented on the isolated Atlantic Coast, reducing contact with the focal economic and population centres of the nation. Thus, U.S. 'enclave capitalism' remained an isolated phenomenon which created few direct or indirect benefits for the national economy. Enclave capitalism did not bear as much fruit in Nicaragua as the rest of the region, explaining why Nicaragua never became a prototype 'banana republic'. However, the period of direct U.S. intervention witnessed the height of enclave capitalism in Nicaragua. Ramirez's comments on the operations of the United Fruit Company apply to most of the U.S. concessions operating during the period in Nicaragua: "The banana plantations became veritable states, with their own laws, police forces, shops, stores and money; and the countries

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27The treaty is reprinted in Leiken & Rubin (eds), op. cit., p. 9. The Chamorro-Bryan Treaty and the question of an inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua continued to be the subject of debate in the U.S. Senate up until the treaty was repealed in February 1971. "Since that time, according to informed Panamanian sources, the U.S. has used the canal in Nicaragua principally to improve its bargaining position with Panama." S. Jonas, "Nicaragua", *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report*, February 1976, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 19.

28See Booth, op. cit., p. 33.

29Quoted in Weber, op. cit., p. 10. Fagg presents a different picture, stating that during the period "some progress in sanitation and education occurred..." Fagg, op. cit., p. 799.

30See Pearce, op. cit., p. 18.

31Booth, op. cit., p. 34.

32The largest enclaves in Nicaragua were the Standard Fruit banana operations, Bragman’s Bluff Lumber Co. (the largest employer in Nicaragua), and gold mining concessions at Siuna, Bonanza and Rosita. All were situated on the Atlantic Coast. *Barracuda International*, Nov 5, 1987; and Jonas, op. cit., p. 20.
in which they were located received little benefit, and were on the margins of these empires."33

This disarticulation between Atlantic Coast enclave capitalism and the local economy centred on the Pacific Coast contradicts Fagg's claim that "American investment livened the national economy."34 The local economy remained artisanal-based, and coffee production techniques stagnated. Jeffrey Paige has directly related this stagnation of the coffee sector to U.S. intervention:

In Nicaragua, US intervention prevented the complete expropriation of the peasantry, as in El Salvador; the growth of state-sanctioned forced labor, as in Guatemala; or the development of a true agrarian bourgeoisie, as in Costa Rica. From the time of the 1909 US intervention until the consolidation of control by Anastasio Somoza Garcia in 1936, no stable economic environment existed in Nicaragua. Not only did the intervention block a clear liberal revolution, but it also prevented the coffee oligarchy from transforming the economy to its advantage.35 Accordingly, coffee production stagnated at a 'manorial' level, which was socially stable, yet resistant to technological innovation and advancement.

One need not doubt the sincerity of the claims by successive U.S. presidents from Wilson, Harding, Coolidge and Hoover, that they desired political tranquility and social stability in Nicaragua. The radicalisation of the Mexican Revolution under Calles had provoked U.S. fears of a ‘bolshevisation’ of the hemisphere. However, Nicaraguan tranquility had to correspond with a state power recognising the dominance of the U.S. in the region. In a State Department memorandum of 1927 Undersecretary of State Robert Olds admitted candidly that; "Until now Central America has always understood that governments which we recognise and support stay in power, while those we do not recognize and support fail."36 Thus, the U.S. consented to a string of weak, minority-supported Conservative governments which pursued retrogressive policies inimical to Nicaragua’s national interests.37

The U.S. remained suspicious of the coffee bourgeoisie after Zelaya. The tragedy of this economically dominant fraction of the bourgeoisie was that it was prevented from influencing state power or being allowed to use the state as a vehicle to secure the conditions for its own reproduction, expansion and social transformation. State power remained fragmented and vulnerable to coups-d'etat and caudillismo. Those who wielded state power recognised the strength of their northern neighbour and were susceptible to ‘selling out’ the national interests to the U.S. in order to cling to power.38

34Fagg, op. cit., p. 799.
36R. Olds, "The Nicaraguan Crisis", in Leiken & Rubin (eds), op. cit., p. 84.
37This was admitted as such by a U.S. diplomatic representative in Nicaragua during the period, Dana Munro. See Munro, op. cit., pp. 78-9.
38The word used by Nicaraguan patriots to describe such politicians was, and remains, vendepatrias (literally, those who sell the country).
The debility of the post-Zelaya state and the retardation of socio-economic development under U.S. intervention between 1910 and 1925 points to the important role which state intervention fulfils in capitalist industrialisation and modernisation. The inability of the agro-exporting bourgeoisie to secure control over the state apparatus promoted economic stagnation. In the Nicaraguan case, truncated socio-economic development and transformation was compounded not only by this disarticulation between the state and local capital, but also through U.S. fiscal interference. Responding to U.S. interests, and starved of resources for accumulation, the state was unwilling and unable to intervene in favour of the coffee exporters, or 'substitute' itself as a catalyst for development.

However, the period of truncated development and U.S. interference only provided an illusion of the social peace desired by the U.S. Below the surface of appearances social tension remained acute. The withdrawal of U.S. support would reveal the 'artificial' nature of Conservative rule. It merely highlighted the failure of the U.S. to secure a pliant and stable regime acceptable to U.S. interests and enjoying domestic support. The tensions which surfaced after the departure of the Marine contingent reflected the effect of U.S. interference more than the absence of the Marines.39

These effects would manifest themselves during the period between 1925 and 1936. This era brought to the fore the social forces, ideologies and actors which would shape the next forty-five years of Nicaraguan history, culminating in the revolutionary situation of 1978-9. In order to 'unpack' the complexity of the late-1920’s and early-1930’s a narrative of events will be provided below.

In 1925 a coalition of Liberals and discontented Conservatives assumed power under the presidency of Conservative Carlos Solorzano, with Liberal Juan Bautista Sacasa as vice-president. Perceiving conditions to be fortuitous for withdrawal the U.S. pulled out its Marine contingent in August 1925. It left behind a retired U.S. Army major, Calvin Carter, to head a national constabulary which would act as an arbiter of conflict, ideally, a "politically neutral referee in mediating future crisis."40 The U.S. had sponsored similar exercises in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Philippines. Given the fragmentation of political power and coercive force, and the disarticulation between economic, political and military power, these schemes (as future events demonstrated) were at best naive, at worst, a mechanism for maintaining indirect U.S. control through military dictatorship.41

However, before this Guardia Nacional could be effectively tested in its designated role the

39This position contradicts the often repeated argument that the Marines were the guardians of civil peace. For example Tom Buckley argues that: "Uprisings had been prevented since 1912 by the presence of the marines. In 1925, Washington, sensitive to charges of imperialism, withdrew them. Nicaraguans, prevented from murdering one another for political reasons for 14 years, immediately began making up for lost time." T. Buckley, Violent Neighbors, Time Books, N.Y., 1974, p. 189. The argument developed above suggests that it is a misinterpretation of reality to absolve the U.S. from this degree of responsibility for the resulting civil conflict.

40On the origins of the Guardia Nacional, see Crawley, op. cit., pp. 47-50.

41For the former opinion, see Dana Munro, quoted in Booth, op. cit., p. 35; for the latter, see Jonas, op. cit. p. 7.
coalition fell apart. Members of the defeated Conservative faction persuaded Solorzano to purge the Liberals from government, then finally in January 1926 Emiliano Chamorro (the "irrepressible Conservative plotter"\(^42\)) resumed the presidency. The Liberals response was to seek Mexican support and stage an armed uprising. In August 1926, after an aborted initial attempt, the Liberals (declaring themselves the Constitutional Army) began extending their control over the country. The U.S., fearing the 'mexicanisation' or 'bolshevisation' of Nicaragua returned *en masse* to assist the thoroughly discredited and beleaguered Conservative caudillos. A stalemate was reached by February 1927 with eleven U.S. cruisers and destroyers in Nicaragua's harbours and over 5,400 Marines patrolling every major urban centre. As Walter Lafeber remarks: "The U.S. Troops had returned in 1927 to protect a Nicaraguan regime that had become so addicted to North American dollars and soldiers that it could no longer function independently."\(^43\)

In April Coolidge and Kellogg discharged Henry Stimson to Nicaragua to seek a political solution. Relying upon exploiting the personal ambitions of the warring generals, an understanding was reached in May. Under the 'Espino Negro' treaty the Conservative president Díaz would be allowed to complete his term of office, after which the U.S. would supervise free elections (which all parties recognised would bring the Liberals to power).\(^44\)

Furthermore, the U.S. demanded that the new government organize a "truly non-partisan" constabulary to exercise military and police duties, which would replace the 'old' *Guardia*. Chamorro had wasted no time purging and stripping this 'mediator' of its apolitical character.\(^45\) A contingent of Marines would remain in Nicaragua to organise and supplement the new force until it reached operational standard.\(^46\)

While it is interesting to speculate whether the Liberals under Moncada and Sacasa could have introduced social tranquility, recapture the articulation of state and economy missing since Zelaya and retain control over the new non-partisan *Guardia*, events did not follow Stimson's script. Moncada's instructions to his Liberal generals to turn in their arms (as specified in the Espino Negro Pact) was heeded by all except one, Augusto Cesar Sandino. Sandino, an uncompromising anti-imperialist, refused to submit to what he saw as a treasonable, U.S.-engineered document which left intact existing power relations, and pledged to maintain resistance until the last Marine left Nicaraguan soil. Although labelled by his enemies as a bandit, a Bolshevik and a caudillo, Sandino's philosophy was eclectic, though his

\(^42\)Crawley, op. cit., p. 49.


\(^44\)It has frequently been claimed that Moncada's participation was secured through a promise from Stimson that Moncada would be guaranteed the presidency in return for Moncada's assurance that Nicaragua would not be 'mexicanised'. See Booth, op. cit. p. 40.

\(^45\)See Crawley, op. cit., p. 50.

\(^46\)See Booth, op. cit., p. 43.
experiences progressively drove him towards a radical nationalism and a populistic conception of anti-oligarchical democracy. He recognised that only the working classes and the peasantry could be relied upon to depart radically from Nicaragua’s past lamentable political history of *vendepatrismo*. Given this, it is hardly surprising that Sandino’s Army for the Defence of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua found few sympathisers among any faction of the traditional elites.47

Far from terminating the civil war, the Espino Negro Pact merely transformed the nature of the war into a form thus far unique in Nicaragua. This was based not upon rival *caudillos* and familial cliques, but rather along radical nationalist line. For the first time, the echo of social justice (*justicia social*) reverberated over the warring factions. Over the next six years the *Guardia* and the Marines received their initiation into guerrilla warfare, fighting against a mobile, invisible army, where the enemy chose the terrain and had the passive or active support of the local population. Furthermore, in the U.S. successive presidents had to contend with fighting a war which was unpopular at home and aroused international condemnation. One Marine historian has called Vietnam "a full-scale Nicaragua".48

If the peasantry initially remained indifferent to the renewed outbreak of hostility, it soon learned to distinguish Sandinista treatment from that of the *Guardia* and the Marines, who came to loath the ‘accursed country’ and inflicted cruelty and brutality upon the peasantry at the slightest suspicion of support for the rebels. On January 1, 1933, after five and a half years of frustration, the Marines departed, no closer to victory and with their reputation diminished.49

U.S. capital had preceded the Marines in the retreat from Nicaragua. Not only did civil war fail to attract foreign investment but "U.S.-owned properties became the targets of Sandino’s forces during the war with the U.S. Marines." Standard Fruit, the prototype enclave capitalist firm throughout the region, closed its Nicaraguan operations in 1931 after a Sandinista attack.50 The demise of enclave capitalism was assured by an outbreak of Panama and Sigatoka disease which destroyed Nicaragua’s banana crop.51

The withdrawal of the Marines could not guarantee social stability. The Nicaraguan state, ‘addicted’ to US support, remained faced with the problem of satisfying competing aspirations from armed forces either outside its control, or only nominally under its control. The two key forces were Sandino’s guerrilla army and Somoza’s *Guardia*.


48Quoted in Jonas, op. cit., p. 8.

49A Good account of the events between 1927 and 1933 are to be found in N. Macauley, *The Sandino Affair*, Quadrangle, Chicago, 1967.

50Jonas, op. cit., p. 20.

With his main objective accomplished, Sandino agreed to enter into negotiations with the incoming Liberal president Juan Bautista Sacasa. On Sandino's part, unfavourable internal and external conditions forced him to opt for 'national conciliation', while Sacasa recognised his own fragile hold on state power, caught between Sandino and the powerful Guardia. Despite the radically different projections of Sacasa and Sandino concerning Nicaragua's future an agreement was reached whereby Sandino's forces would retreat, partially armed, to the northern department of Nueva Segovia to resume and consolidate their co-operative agrarian experiment.

The agreement provoked outrage amongst the Guardia who had been formed and tested in the midst of the struggle against Sandino, and had come to view his eradication as a principle raison d'être. Furthermore, opposition within the Guardia was strong due to the appointment of Anastasio Somoza Garcia as Jefe Director, which was viewed by many as a political appointment of a man who had not 'earned his spurs' in the military confrontation against Sandino, but rather had charmed the American diplomatic delegation. Armed incidents between Sandino's forces and the Guardia were endemic throughout 1933 and Sandino was forced to return to Managua to demand the cessation of Guardia provocations on numerous occasions. Somoza ultimately secured the confidence of the Guardia officers by orchestrating Sandino's murder as he left a state banquet in his honour in February 1934.

Once the radical alternative had been eliminated the struggle for the state revolved around the conflict between the civilian government of Sacasa and Somoza's Guardia. The increasingly evident debility of Sacasa's government during the years between 1934 and 1936 must be explained in terms of the social and structural supports of the Guardia, rather than Somoza's machiavellian maneuvers. In particular, it is necessary to explain how Somoza succeeded where other caudillos failed. He combined a strong military apparatus with sympathy from the landed elites, encouraged a populist image of himself, and secured the passive acceptance of the United States. No previous Nicaraguan state-builder had cobbled together such a formidable array of preconditions for 'social stability'.

Sandino's murder had demonstrated once more that the government was unable to control its own armed force. The reign of terror which the Guardia inflicted upon the peasantry in the northern region and the extermination of the Sandinista followers provided a solution to the rural discontent brought on by the example of Sandino's agrarian experiment and the increased rural exploitation resulting from the slump in world coffee prices. The Guardia solution had appealed to the agro-exporting cafetaleros and landowners more than Sacasa's wavering and conciliatory gestures towards Sandino.

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53For Somoza's elevation to power, see Booth, op. cit., p. 46.

54As Booth points out: "The murder of Sandino thus became the key to the Guard and the Guard the key to everything Nicaragua had to offer." Booth, op. cit., p. 52.
Sacasa had alienated significant sectors of the political and economic elite. His appointment of Sonofonias Salvatierra (a Sandino confidant and subsequent mediator between Sandino and the government) as Minister for Agriculture and Labour merely fueled suspicions that Sacasa was unable to contain the menace of Sandino. Sandino, who recognised the pretensions of Somoza towards state power, had given Sacasa repeated assurances of Sandinista military support in the event of a Guardia-inspired coup. The offers, given in goodwill, did not help allay elite suspicions of the relative strengths of the contending forces, and the weakness of Sacasa's position.

This weakness of the civilian government, and its conciliatory gestures towards Sandino, was especially disconcerting to an agro-exporting elite trying to respond to the changing economic conditions of the early-1930's. As Nicaragua's primitive dependent capitalist economy reeled under the effects of the world crash and the decline in primary commodity prices, profit margins shrank and unemployment rose. The cafetaleros responded to the slump through the twin measures of heightening the exploitation of the labour force and expanding the volume of production through a renewed series of peasant land expropriations. Such a strategy required a strong state, unwaveringly sympathetic to the agro-exporting bourgeoisie and prepared to restrain labour. By late-1934 Somoza, rather than Sacasa, could openly claim credit for exorcising the spectre of rural discontent, Sandino. The spectre of unrest had already risen in neighbouring El Salvador, before being crushed by the dictator Martinez, leaving an estimated 30,000 workers and peasants dead after a Communist uprising led by Sandino's former comrade Farabundo Marti in February 1932.

As Somoza gradually consolidated his control over the Guardia he increasingly came into conflict with Sacasa over Guardia subordination to the government. Somoza's open proclamation of his presidential aspirations were opposed by Sacasa. Between 1934 and mid-1936 the uncle and nephew engaged in a trial of strength in which Sacasa progressively lost ground and Somoza's assertiveness increased.

Apart from the Guardia and anti-Sacasa Liberal caudillos, Somoza received support from "key Conservatives who saw him as capable of calming growing labour unrest." He also received support from a group of young Conservative intellectuals known as the camisas azules (blue shirts), founded in July 1934, who saw Somoza as a Nicaraguan Martinez, Hitler or Mussolini. Somoza used the camisas azules to intimidate opponents and provoke civil disturbances, after

55 See Crawley, op. cit., pp. 82-5.
56 See Booth, op. cit., p. 49; and Wheelock, op. cit., p. 125 & 207.
58 Somoza had married Sacasa's niece, with resulting social elevation.
59 Booth, op. cit., p. 54 and p. 62.
which the Guardia would place the town or district under Guardia control.60

Under these conditions of intimidation, the destruction of Sandinismo, and elite discontent with the weakness of the Sacasa state, Somoza encountered little resistance when he forced Sacasa to resign in June 1936, installed an interim ‘puppet’ in order to overcome a consanguineous constitutional hurdle, and engineered his ‘landslide’ election victory at the end of the year.

The role of the U.S. throughout the Somoza-Sacasa confrontation was conspicuous in its ‘non-interventionism’. The U.S. had promoted the establishment of the Guardia as a non-partisan adjudicator of internal conflict and had actively supported Somoza’s appointment as Jefe Director of the new force despite Sacasa’s reservations. The U.S. continued to maintain confidence in Somoza despite his refusals to comply with governmental requests to bring Sandino’s murderers to trial. Somoza was non-partisan only in the sense that he was contemptuous of the existing channels of nominal political authority and obtained cross-party support against Sacasa. As Booth notes: “Sacasa’s supporters continually pressed for the director-in-chief’s ouster, but they failed to obtain the support they wished from (U.S.) Ambassador Lane, who firmly adhered to his government’s instructions not to interfere on either side.”61 In April 1936 the U.S. abandoned its Latin American policy of non-recognition of illegal seizures of power, enhancing Somoza’s confidence. The ‘non-interference’ of Roosevelt’s ‘Good Neighbour’ policy could be interpreted in the Nicaraguan setting as a cynical acceptance of the growing strength and unconstitutional behaviour of the Guardia.62 As Black argues, this "left a widespread belief among Nicaraguans...that the U.S.A. had created a monster, let it loose, then washed its hands of the consequences, knowing very well what those consequences would be."63

The weakness of the Nicaraguan state over the previous quarter of a century had been a consequence of, rather than a reason for, U.S. interference and occupation. The Guardia Nacional it imposed upon this weakened state structure irresistibly gravitated towards the vacuum of state power. The dominant agro-exporting bourgeoisie also required a strong and stable state structure which had been denied since Zelaya’s removal. Whether or not, as Fonseca argued, Somoza’s success signalled ‘Mission Accomplished’ for the U.S.64 it did provide a long-sought solution of U.S. diplomatic and domestic elite requirements; namely social and political quietude. As Winson argues, "United States military intervention and occupation, beginning in 1912 had a particularly debilitating effect on the economy. Such actions truncated the

61 Booth, op. cit., p. 53.
62 See Lafeber, op. cit., p. 56.
63 Black, op. cit., p. 47.
64 See Fonseca, op. cit., p. 129.
development of the nations agro-exporting bourgeoisie and eventually led to the dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza Garcia.\footnote{A. Winson, "Nicaragua's Private Sector and the Sandinista Revolution", \textit{Studies in Political Economy}, Summer 1985, 17, p. 72.}

This section has provided substance to Winson's claim, and has pointed towards the structural preconditions necessary to overcome the debilitating effect intervention had upon the state and economic development. The prehistory of \textit{somocismo} demonstrates the necessity of a strong state structure corresponding to the developmental requirements of a dominant economic class if capitalist development and modernisation is to succeed. In Nicaragua's case this was complicated by the additional variable of a correspondence with the interests of the region's hegemonic power, the United States.

Throughout the period, Nicaraguan development stagnated at a level of 'primitive dependent capitalism'. Under the peculiarities of Nicaraguan history, this 'primitive' form manifested itself in six distinct, yet interrelated, ways. Firstly, the economy was integrated within the world economy through the fortunes of a single crop, coffee. Secondly, this incorporation failed to stimulate a transformation of the nation's industrial base, which remained primarily artisanal. Thirdly, relations within the most dynamic sector remained a hybrid of capitalist and pre-capitalist forms. Fourthly, there was a non-correspondence between the state and the agro-exporting bourgeoisie. Fifthly, the weakness of the state was compounded by its subordination to the interests of a powerful external power. Finally, the state was powerless to arbitrate between contradictory pressures, resulting in periodic manifest internal strife.

The rise of Somoza indicated a potential remedy for overcoming many of these problems which had held development at a 'primitive dependent stage. The remaining sections of this chapter will demonstrate the extent to which \textit{somocismo} transformed the Nicaraguan economy, and the inherent social conflicts contained within the model of development.

A period of relative calm was to descend upon the nation. However, "it was to be a stability enforced by the tyrant's heel"\footnote{Booth, op. cit., p. 49.}.\footnote{Booth, op. cit., p. 49.} Despite enormous costs to the popular classes, \textit{somocismo} signalled the beginning of the end of 'primitive dependent capitalism'. Both Gorman and Walker have labelled \textit{somocista} restructuring 'modern dependent capitalism'. While agreeing fundamentally with this, the description will be modified to 'diversified dependent capitalism', for reasons which will become evident as the history of \textit{somocista} restructuring unfolds.

The rise and demise of \textit{somocismo} was punctuated by periods of correspondence and conflict between the overshadowing power of the \textit{somocista} state and economic empire on one hand, and the non-\textit{somocista} bourgeoisie on the other. Its acceptance or rejection of \textit{somocismo} would depend upon the ability of the state to fulfil the conditions of diversified dependent capitalist reproduction and expansion. This was paid for by the popular classes, whose 'cooperation' the
state 'guaranteed'. Furthermore, this articulation of interests had to find equal correspondence with the hegemonic interests of the U.S. in the region.

### 3.4. CONSOLIDATING THE DICTATORIAL STATE

As Skocpol argues, and as the foregoing demonstrates, the state is more than an epiphenomenon of a given set of economic relations. In the Nicaraguan case, the somocista state was far from being a dependent variable reflecting substructural change. The relation between the state and socio-economic development was far more complex. In order to appreciate this, it is necessary to review the mechanisms forged by Anastasio Somoza Garcia in order to consolidate his dictatorial rule. Once this has been accomplished, the socio-political stability necessary for diversified dependent capitalist development can be understood. These mechanisms formed the basis of the Somoza dynasty, and were bequeathed to Somoza Garcia’s sons, Luis and Anastasio Jr. Their ability to master their father’s machiavellian techniques would be an important factor in the stability of the structure of somocismo.

While elements of continuity between zelayismo and somocismo manifested themselves in dictatorial strength and support from powerful propertied elites, somocismo also marked a transcendence in the relationship between the state and society. There were indicators that somocismo was a watershed in terms of the form of conflict which had engulfed Nicaraguan society since independence, and which had contributed to retarded economic development.

Firstly, no-one had ever assumed the presidency with such a monopoly on coercion as Somoza. The creation of the Guardia had weakened caudillismo further. Somoza’s obsession during 1933 and the beginning of 1934 over the size of Sandino’s arsenal in Nueva Segovia indicates Somoza’s astute recognition that the monopolisation of coercion was a fundamental guarantee for ‘stability’. This principle was enshrined in the constitution in 1939 which declared the Guardia “the only armed force of the Republic”. To negate the possibility of a palace coup Somoza established and cultivated paternalistic control over the Guardia. Furthermore, he socially isolated the institution from the rest of society while at the same time pervaded all aspects of social life with the eyes and ears of the Guardia. Control over a wide range of public functions provided Guardia officers with sufficient scope for graft and corruption within the overall system, helping to ensure its loyalty and subservience. These parasitic administrative and commercial opportunities were the reward for ensuring that coercion remained ultimately at the fingertips of Somoza.

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67For this episode, see Crawley, op. cit., Ch. 10.
68Booth, op. cit., p.56.
69The word ‘ears’ (orejas) became synonymous with a somocista informer.
Secondly, Somoza displayed shrewd political opportunism in his relations with the U.S. Recognising that his Guardia-imposed stability had to conform with the regional strategic requirements of the U.S., the Somozas were always quick to discern the winds of political change in Washington and act accordingly. Submissiveness to the unswerving and unambiguous dictates of the Monroe Doctrine was rewarded with generous military grants under the Lend Lease scheme and, later, the Alliance for Progress and the Military Assistance Plan. This ingratiating behaviour towards the U.S. also ensured that U.S. military hardware would not be channelled directly to Somoza’s opponents, thus tightening his coercive monopoly and avoiding the mistake of Zelaya. In effect, Somoza was free of external politico-military constraints to pursue his restructuring of Nicaraguan society. Despite the quasi-parasitic function of the Guardia and the high socio-economic costs upon the Nicaraguan masses, Somoza did succeed in achieving the prerequisites, so long missing, for stable dependent capitalist development; a strong state and space to pursue his domestic designs with the tacit or active support of the U.S. Somoza was not always free from conflict with the U.S. as the events surrounding his dismissal of the Arguello government in 1948 reveal. Moral repugnance towards Somoza was frequently heard in the U.S. Congress. However, despite the ambivalence of certain U.S. presidents towards Somoza’s methods, the final reckoning always took into consideration that (to paraphrase Roosevelt and Cordell Hull) even if Somoza was a son of a bitch, he was “our son of a bitch”. Even though relations occasionally deteriorated below cordiality the Somoza clan continually promoted the domestic image of U.S. support for internal consumption in order to ward off ‘political predators’. Millett’s assessment of the son applies equally to the father: “To most Nicaraguans the message was clear: The United States supported Anastasio Somoza Debayle and any effort to topple him would probably produce prompt intervention.”

Thirdly, the decline of caudillismo mirrored the demise of the traditional party structures. Somoza’s accession cross-cut Liberal/Conservative divisions, and it took almost a decade before the political spectrum was realigned and transformed along clearer anti-institutional and class lines. Somoza adapted his treatment of the opposition according to circumstances. As the traditional political structure became increasingly obsolete after Somoza’s coup opposition forces resorted to a variety of strategies. Anti-Somoza Liberals, recognising that the restructured somocista Liberal National Party was a mere figleaf cloaking the coercive/administrative apparatus of Somoza and the Guardia, formed the Partido Liberal Independiente (P.L.I.) in March 1944. The party suffered varying degrees of repression and harassment, the worst following the assassination of Somoza Garcia in September 1956. The Conservatives occasionally adopted ‘abstentionist’ tactics, unwilling to legitimate the Guardia-manipulated elections. However, Somoza was usually successful in co-opting a section of the party to ‘compete’ in the elections.

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71Crawley, op. cit., p. 99.
72Millett, op. cit., p. 39.
73See Booth, op. cit., p. 103.
agreeing beforehand to the allocation of seats in the Assembly. Thus, the core of the traditional political structure was co-opted into the legitimation system of somocismo, though dissent could never entirely be silenced. This democratic facade was nothing more than the cynical co-optation of dying caudillismo; the velvet glove covering the underlying essence of somocista repression, coercion and corruption in pursuit of the interests of dynastic capital accumulation. As Booth notes, "...such abuse and manipulation always abbetted by greedy insiders willing to abandon principle for personal gain, killed the Liberal and Conservative parties as ideological and programmatic organisations. Much of the Nicaraguan citizenry came to regard both as corrupt, opportunistic and unworthy of political trust."

During the mid-1940's Somoza began to encounter a new form of resistance which would manifest itself periodically throughout the dynasty's reign and ultimately contribute to its overthrow. The broad-based, through diverse, character of the opposition tested Somoza's powers of political manipulation. The process was similar in character to that which overthrew Martinez in El Salvador and Ubico in Guatemala. Patricia Flynn describes it thus:

A strong coalition arose in opposition to the exclusive role of the traditional oligarchy. It was drawn from the growing professional and middle class, a newly politicised student population, an expanding working class, young military dissidents, and a new faction of the economic elite whose wealth came from industry and new crops such as cotton and sugar. The demands of this coalition included political democracy, economic reforms, and an end to subservience to foreign interests.

Although the 'Jacobin' solution in Guatemala, and the 'Prussian' solution in El Salvador succeeded in toppling the dictatorial state structures of Ubico and Martinez, the traditional oligarchies of these states remained intact by the mid-1950's and capitalist industrialisation remained subsumed under an oligarchical project. In El Salvador, the concentration of wealth within the 'fourteen families' promoted a closer articulation between industry and agro-exports, while the closer, broad-based unity of the Guatemalan reform movement under Arbenz led to an agrarian reform which exceeded the tolerance of U.S. strategic and economic interests. The U.S. reimposed a military solution in 1954, crushing incipient national development.

It was only in Nicaragua that the dictatorial state emerged unscathed, even strengthened, from the regional reform movement of the 1940's. Student riots had shaken Somoza in the late-1930's and early-1940's, while Somoza's resolution to serve another presidential term had galvanised opposition. The same year the P.L.I. was founded, the workers movement founded the Moscow aligned Partido Socialista de Nicaragua (P.S.N.), which was tolerated by Somoza in the anti-fascist climate of the war and the U.S. alliance with the Soviet Union.

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74 Factions, such as the Chamorro faction of 1950 and the Arguero faction of 1972 were contemptuously branded zandudo (mosquito) by their abstentionist opponents.
75 Booth, op. cit., p. 43.
76 P. Flynn, "Central America: The Roots of Revolt", in Burbach & Flynn (eds), op. cit., p. 36.
Somoza co-opted the labour movement through toleration of unions and promulgating a progressive labour code. The effect was to weaken the cohesion of the anti-Somoza movement. Still, opposition was strong enough to force Somoza to withdraw his nomination for the 1947 election which was won (with Somoza's blessing) by Leonardo Arguello. Somoza retained control over the Guardia and after Arguello emitted signals that he intended to implement significant reform, the Guardia stepped in to 'restore the order'. Somoza was quick to recognise the prevailing winds of the Cold War and turned virulently anti-communist, ending his brief and troublesome flirtation with the socialists and repressing union activity. The new Labour Code was never enacted.79

Thus, unlike neighbouring El Salvador and Guatemala, the dictatorial somocista state succeeded in dividing the reform movement, before applying selective repression. As Edelberto Rivas Torres observes, in Nicaragua "it was within the State itself (under the leadership of Somoza) that attempts were made to resolve the political crisis that was spreading throughout Central America."80

These three pillars, control over the coercive monopoly of the Guardia, subservience to US interests, and fragmenting the opposition, upheld the dynasty's control over the state. However, this was merely a means to an end. Somoza-as-Machiavelli was the tool used to enhance the power of Somoza-as-capitalist. As Carlos Vilas notes:

Control of the state is in itself an economic power that permits the conversion of fractions which were originally defined by politico-ideological features - elements of the bureaucracy, professional groups, private armies - into fractions defined structurally by their control of means of production and exchange.81

It is this structural definition of Somoza-as-capitalist which must be examined in order to explain the particularities of the capitalist restructuring of Nicaragua under the dynasty. This restructuring shaped the contours of the class conflict which eventually provoked the demise of the dynasty in 1979.

3.5. THE SOMOZA-BOURGEOS ALLIANCE

Between 1950 and 1967 a series of factors activated a period of extensive capital accumulation, promoting the capitalist restructuring of Nicaraguan society and diversifying its economic base. This section will describe this restructuring and explain how it affected the relationship between the somocista state and the bourgeoisie. It will provide substance to Donald Castillo Rivas' claim that:

The long period of dynastic dictatorship that the succession in power of the Somoza family brought to Nicaragua reflects, beyond all its negative aspects, a particularly important fact: Somoza in the specific framework of pre-revolutionary Nicaragua, was a guarantee of stability and consequently of the capitalist development model, at least while that model brought

79 This period will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

80 E. Torres Rivas, op. cit., p. 44.

accelerated modernization with it.82

The first condition for understanding this development is the emergence of Somoza-as-capitalist. On assuming power Somoza's productive capital consisted of one inherited "ruined coffee plantation" (finca).83 By the time of his assassination twenty years later he was one of the richest men in Central America, reputedly worth $100 million.84 The state had served Somoza as a rewarding instrument in the enormous expansion of his capital base. The Guardia controlled postal services, customs, taxes, railways, foreign concessions and the National Bank. Somoza obtained significant advantages over his competitors through utilising public functions as if they were his private property. Intimidation of opponents included sale of land under duress to Somoza. He also used the anti-fascist sentiment during the war in order to expropriate German coffee fincas. By the end of the war Somoza owned 51 cattle ranches and 46 coffee fincas, making him the single largest landowner and cafetalero in Nicaragua. During the war Somoza also expanded his control over gold, timber and rubber in order to profit from increased trade generated by the U.S. war effort. Furthermore, he controlled prices in sectors where he had substantial interests, profited from contraband, sold permits to import and export goods and "every year pocketed $400,000 from foreign companies he had exempted from taxes and social contributions."85 The Somoza holdings came to represent one of the three largest financial/production conglomerates in Nicaragua. Less structurally definable than the other conglomerates, due to the interpenetration of Somoza's capital and state institutions, Jaime Wheelock has nevertheless labelled it 'the loaded dice group' (el grupo de los dados cargados).86

Given the accumulation of capital by the Somoza clan through manipulating state levers, relations between the various fractions of capital and the Somoza empire were fraught with tension. Social peace among the economic elites was only possible given the existence of three conditions:

a) the carving up of spheres of industrial and commercial influence between the factions;

b) continual economic growth, expansion, rationalisation and modernisation;

c) control over the aspirations of sectors of Nicaraguan society whose exploitation served as the basis for the model of capitalist development.

82Donald Castillo Rivas, "Reasons for the Success of the Nicaraguan Revolution", in Grabendorff et al. [eds], op. cit., p. 54.

83Wheelock, op. cit., p. 164.

84For speculations on the extent of his wealth, see F. Parker, The Central American Republics, Oxford, 1965, p. 245.

85The above statistics are taken from Booth, op. cit., p. 55; Weber, op. cit., pp. 16-7; Wheelock, op. cit., p. 166; Jonas, op. cit., pp. 10-11. Somoza's illegal cattle-running into Costa Rica during the 1940's (with the connivance of his friend Rafael Calderon, the Costa Rican president) was especially notorious. See J.D. Martz, Central America: The Crisis and the Challenge, University of North Carolina, 1959, pp. 181-2.

86Wheelock, op. cit., pp. 163-76.
The analysis below will concentrate upon the first two conditions. The third will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

The basis of the Somoza-bourgeois alliance was forged in 1950 through the 'pact of generals' between Somoza Garcia and Emiliano Chamorro. This pact guaranteed the Conservative opposition a minority share of control over the state, and provided commercial and political space for non-somocista interests within the overall framework of somocismo. It also guaranteed Somoza's tolerance of independent financial institutions representing the interests of non-somocista capital. The result was the co-optation of the bourgeoisie under the protective umbrella of the repressive Guardia apparatus, allied against the threat of organised labour and the spectre of communism.

Consequently, during the 1950's the non-somocista fractions of capital became more concentrated around two distinct financial centres. In July 1952 capital associated with traditional conservative interests, such as livestock and sugar, formed El Banco de America (BANAMER). Two U.S. banks, Wells Fargo and First National City, were major participants in the venture. In 1953 the more dynamic capital associated with cotton production and the fledgling Managua industrialists created El Banco de Nicaragua (BANIC). Chase Manhattan held significant interests in the venture, along with Morgan Guaranty and Multibank and Trust. These developments helped accelerate the tendency for foreign capital to be concentrated around financial and commercial, rather than productive, concerns.87

The maintenance of the alliance between the dictatorial state and the bourgeoisie required a more diversified and dynamic economy than hitherto had existed under conditions of 'primitive dependent capitalism'. The emergence of the Somoza clan as an economic force would have merely highlighted the tension between the state and the bourgeoisie under the pre-war economic structure. The short gold boom of the late-1940's failed to alter the fact that Nicaragua's established primary commodity exports could not have fetched the world prices or expanded to the degree necessary to maintain a dynamic equilibrium satisfying the needs of both the Somoza clan and other fractions of capital.88

The socio-economic marriage between the state and capital was consummated through the emergence of the cotton boom, and the consequent restructuring and diversification of Nicaragua's agro-exporting base. The introduction of cotton, stimulated by high prices on the world market in the early-1950's, injected the required dynamism into the post-war economy. Socially, it guaranteed a period of cohesion among the propertied classes, allowing both partners in the alliance sufficient space for expansion. The planting of cotton expanded 120-fold between 1949 and 1955, while the value of cotton exportation rose from $1.84 million in 1950 to

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87See Wheelock, pp. 148-63 & 199-200; also Black, op. cit., p. 38.

88Between 1938 and 1949 gold production overtook coffee as the principal source of export earnings. See Gorman, op. cit., p. 42. By 1945 coffee represented only 27% of total export revenue, compared to 62% in 1926. By 1950 coffee had again risen to 50%, before cotton cultivation expanded in importance. See Wheelock, op. cit., p. 206; Vilas, op. cit., p. 52.
The expanded cultivation of cotton required the rich, flat volcanic plains of the Pacific Coast, occupied by small peasant farmers producing cereal for domestic consumption. 180,000 peasants were forcefully evicted from 400,000 acres of land during the 1950's and transformed into agricultural labourers. Others migrated to urban centres or retreated into the northern hinterlands to continue self-sufficient or local market production. Cotton eventually occupied approximately 40% of Nicaragua's cultivated land. Correspondingly, by 1955 Nicaragua began importing major staple food crops, such as corn, rice and beans. The boom contributed to Nicaragua's high rate of GDP growth during the decade, which averaged 5.6%, the highest in Central America. Unlike coffee, cotton required a continual process of mechanisation and rationalisation. The new agro-exporting dynamism resulted in greater concentration of capital due to the high costs of imputs, such as chemicals, fertilisers and heavy machinery. In the wake of the boom, light industries (such as textiles and oils) sprang up around Managua. A further consequence of the cotton boom was the expansion of commercial capital due to the high costs of production inputs in cotton cultivation. U.S. private capital began filling this vacuum, thus participating in modern dependent capitalist Nicaragua more in the process of finance and circulation than directly in the process of production.

The socio-political peace which Somoza had purchased with the bourgeoisie through cooperation in the cotton boom had the important class consequence of tying the dynamic non-Somoza sectors tighter to the somocista coercive state apparatus. However, the "enrichment of these groups did not transform the critical material situation of the working people." Thus, the new accumulation of capital depended upon Guardia control of rural labour unrest in the wake of peasant evictions and the process of proletarianisation. As Petras argues:

The state - the Somoza clan - and foreign capital played a decisive role in implanting capitalism and capitalist social relations. The whole process of rapid growth from above was made possible by the autocratic dictatorship and its 'free market' and repressive labour policies....The very terms of success of the autocratic-development ('from above and outside') model prevented the

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89"After 1950 cotton production expanded exponentially to become the country's major export and, as the National Cotton Commission observed, the driving motor (motor impulsador) of the entire economy." Paige, op. cit., p. 91. The figures are from Black, op. cit., p. 37; and Wheelock, op. cit., p. 206.

90Black, op. cit., p. 27.


95See Vilas, op. cit., p. 51.

dominant forces from any sustained or consequential democratisation.97

As long as somocismo guaranteed social stability combined with economic growth and modernisation, the contradictions between the state and the various fractions of capital remained secondary, overshadowed by class unity forged under advantageous conditions of capital accumulation.98

The ‘cotton revolution’, therefore, effected the transformation and diversification of Nicaragua’s dependent capitalist economy during the 1950’s. It was also the guarantee of elite consensus, which coffee production could not provide. However, Jeffrey Paige has pointed out that the cotton revolution also revolutionised the relations of exploitation which formed the basis of capital accumulation. The ‘manorial’ form of coffee production had left the agrarian worker more or less tied to the land, substituting labour on the coffee finca with work on subsistence plots during the off-season. Mechanised cotton production, on the other hand required a more seasonal agrarian proletariat whose labour was required only for the three months of the cotton harvest.99 "Given the capital intensity of production and the extraordinarily high yields in the cotton zone, provision of subsistence plots to ensure a captive labor force was uneconomical and land rates were far beyond the means of even the wealthiest middle-peasant."100 During the off-season peasants, fully exposed to the forces of the capitalist market, migrated to the cities. However, the rate of urbanisation far exceeded the rate of industrialisation, forcing many into the insecurity of the expanding informal sector. Between 1950 and 1960 the population of Managua grew from 98,000 to 234,000. Thus, as Paige concludes: "To a surprising extent, Nicaragua’s agricultural proletariat was urban."101 During the 1950’s no concerted attempt was made to organise this important sector of the popular classes. The outlawed P.S.N. concentrated its meagre resources upon the ‘traditional’ urban working classes. Thus, during the 1950’s the Somoza-bourgeois alliance, built upon the foundations of repression and exploitation, was never seriously threatened by manifestations of organised popular discontent.

However, the fragility of the alliance, and the latent tension underlying collaboration, manifested itself through economic contraction during the late-1950’s. World market prices for cotton and coffee fell sharply after 1955, affecting expanded reproduction. The annual average growth rate between 1950 and 1955 of 8.3% fell in the latter half of the decade to 2.3%.102

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98Gonzalez has labelled this model “reform with repression” (see M. Gonzalez, Nicaragua: Revolution Under Siege, Bookmarks, London, 1985, p. 17); while Millett observes that: “In the words of a former US military attache, middle- and upper-class loyalties were ensured by ‘giving them a piece of the pie but not the action’. This meant that they could maintain or even improve their economic status if they accepted Somoza domination over the nation. They received prosperity but no power, stability in exchange for dignity.” (See Millett, op. cit., p. 40.)

99See Paige, op. cit., pp. 103-7; also Close, op. cit., p. 39.

100Paige, op. cit., p. 104.


102Bendana, op. cit., p. 13.
Another factor contributing to tension was the severe repression following in the wake of Somoza Garcia's assassination in 1956 by P.L.I. supporter and poet Rigoberto Lopez Perez. As Booth comments:

Rigoberto Lopez had rid Nicaragua of Somoza Garcia, but the assassination instituted a dynasty and intensified rather than ended the tyranny. Nevertheless, it catalysed a new form of opposition. The wave of repression it unleashed steeled the determination of many of its victims - among them those who would bring down the dynasty in 1979.103

In 1959 an employers strike was defeated after the government suspended the import licences of the participants.104 Elements within the Conservative party demanded substantial social and political reforms, while members of the youth wing of the party, such as Pedro Joachin Chamorro, were developing Social Christian 'tendencies'. During this upsurge a multi-party united opposition movement (U.N.O.) was formed in addition to the Popular Christian Democratic Movement.105 Aborted armed uprisings crosscut the political spectrum. The Cuban experience convinced many opponents on the left who were dissatisfied with the 'quietism' of the P.S.N. that guerrilla struggle and a grass-roots vanguard organisation was the only possible path available to those seeking the overthrow of the dynasty. The tradition of Sandino synthesised with Castroism and the Leninism of the P.S.N. formed the basis of a new guerrilla movement led by young P.S.N. dissidents. This will be analysed in Chapter 5.

While the ideologically diverse and fragmented opposition movement had subsided somewhat by 1962, the tremors of discontent shook the dynasty sufficiently for President Luis Somoza to decide to stand down in 1963 in favour of a hand-picked candidate Rene Schick. However, Guardia control remained firmly in the hands of brother Anastasio Somoza Debayle.

Under the guidance of Luis, the clan's economic empire was streamlined and rationalised. It is reputed that Luis envisaged relinquishing direct state power by the family, and favoured basing the clan's power upon its economic levers. This would have required injecting greater efficiency into their enterprises in order to compete on the 'open market'.

The years between 1960 and 1967 were the halcyon days of dynastic rule. Jose Luis Medal has labelled the epoch 'liberalismo somocismo', combining "some elements of 'reform' (more on paper than in practice) with repression pure and simple of the labour force".106 A combination of factors intervened to restore the dynamic equilibrium which had fostered the development of the early-to-mid-1950's. These factors included the establishment of the Central American Common Market (C.A.C.M.), the Alliance for Progress, stabilisation of Nicaraguan export commodities on the world market, and the dispersal of the opposition movement. These factors allowed the Somoza-bourgeois alliance to reassert itself without altering fundamentally urban

103Booth, op. cit., p. 71.
104Bendana, op. cit., p. 13.
and rural relations of exploitation. An Agrarian Reform Law of 1963 remained a paper tiger which never threatened the interests of the agro-exporting bourgeoisie, and consequently, the Somoza-bourgeois alliance. Growth through redistribution remained a chimera. As Lopez et al. remark, this alternative would have "implied a broad project of income redistribution and agrarian transformation which the dominant Nicaraguan classes did not have the capacity to implement." Development continued to proceed at the expense of the marginalised popular classes "without altering the political-economic bases of domination..."\(^\text{107}\)

However, as the analysis below will demonstrate, this epoch merely heightened the social tensions inherent within the somocista model of development and clarified the outlines of future class conflict.

The conception of a Central American Common Market originated from the experiences of the larger Latin American nations which, during the economic downturn of the 1930's, initiated programmes of import substitution in an attempt to reduce their external dependence upon world market prices for primary products, whose unstable and fluctuating demand accentuated domestic economic crises. Economic diversification was perceived as a means of cushioning the economy against these effects. E.C.L.A. economists in the 1950's believed that the five Central American republics could transcend the obstacle of limited internal demand (resulting partly from size and income distribution) through a programme of regional economic integration (increasing economies of scale) and regional planning. The authors envisaged the scheme leading towards industrialisation, balanced growth and reduction of foreign dependency. With certain reservations the scheme was also supported by industrialists of the stronger Central American countries (especially El Salvador) who required a reduction in regional tariff barriers in order to expand their restricted market.

However, the gradualist approach of E.C.L.A. plus the absence of sufficient funding to bolster the project led many to the conclusion that greater external, private financing would be required in order to ensure feasibility.\(^\text{108}\) The economic downturn of the late-1950's strengthened the rationale behind integration. Furthermore, U.S. multinational capital began taking an interest in the proposal as its external investment portfolio began to shift away from primary commodities towards manufacturing. With the incentive of substantial aid, the U.S. assisted in framing an agreement to form C.A.C.M. in late-1960. The ratified treaty of 1961 departed significantly from E.C.L.A.'s original understanding of regional integration. The emphasis on regional planning and balanced growth was reduced, while unrestricted free trade was promoted, tariff barriers dropped and non-regional foreign capital was assured

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\(^\text{107}\) Lopez et al., op. cit., p. 41. (My Translation)

unregulated movement.109

On the surface the 'development decade' of the 1960's produced impressive results in Nicaragua. Rates of growth in GDP throughout the decade averaged 9%. By 1970 manufacturing accounted for 22% of GDP. The per capita increase of GNP in Nicaragua for the decade was the highest in the region (34%) while the 11% growth in industrial production was also the region's highest.110

Foreign, especially U.S., capital performed a catalytic role in Nicaraguan industrialisation. U.S. investments in Nicaragua (which had been traditionally low) continued to be low in regional comparative terms, although these investments registered one of the highest growth rates in the region during the 1960's. By the 1970's the U.S. share in foreign investment represented 80% of the total $170 million. In 1960 direct U.S. investments had totalled only $18.9 million.111 Major areas of investment included food processing, leather, textiles, furniture, chemicals, construction materials and metal products.112 The export-oriented light industrial sector registered the most impressive growth while the service sector expanded enormously. Agricultural exports also diversified with the expansion of the U.S. beef market. Between 1960 and 1975 the amount of land dedicated to beef doubled, while the decade of the 1960's registered a tripling in the relative share of beef in exports.113

While the Somoza clan used the influx of foreign capital to diversify away from its agro-exporting base, there was sufficient room for the other banking conglomerates to register impressive growth. BANIC in particular received heavy backing from USAID. As Black argues, for a time this growth "papered over inter-bourgeois conflicts which might have been generated if agrarian reform rather than industrialisation had been the cornerstone of U.S. strategy."114

The influx of foreign capital also accelerated the monopolisation and concentration of production. By 1971 there existed 600 plants employing 5 or more workers. Of these, 136 accounted for 72% of production while a mere 23 accounted for 35%.115 In areas such as

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109 As the CEDETIM publication, Nicaragua: Du Reve...a la Realite notes: "La position des Etats Unis etait a l'oppose de celle de la CEPEL (ECLA) en ce qu'elle preconisait la liberte totale du commerce et l'absence de planification," p. 9. See also Lopez et. al., p. 41-2; and T. Barry et. al., Dollars and Dictators: A Guide to Central America, Zed, 1983, p. 33. Costa Rica, which was not party to the original agreement, joined C.A.C.M. in 1963, while Honduras ratified the treaty in 1962.


112 See Harris, op. cit., p. 39. See also the lists of foreign operations in Jonas, op. cit., pp. 36-8; and Bendana, op. cit., pp. 38-9.

113 For the diversification of export products and markets, see J. Collins, Nicaragua: What Difference Could a Revolution Make, Food First, 1985, p. 259 and p. 265; for beef, see Vilas, op. cit, p. 51; and Pearce, op. cit., p. 42.

114 Black, op. cit., p. 40.

115 Gorman, op. cit., p. 49, quoting Jaime Wheelock.
textiles, furniture, leather goods and shoes local artisan production was squeezed out of the market by the more efficient activity of monopoly capital. The 13,000 small enterprises which accounted for 5% of production received little or no benefit from Nicaraguan industrialisation 'from above and outside' and formed a willing support basis for the anti-\textit{somocista} movement when it re-emerged.

The economic diversification and development of the decade failed to alter significantly the oligarchical structure of Nicaraguan society. Pearce's conclusion with respect to the effect of C.A.C.M. on the region as a whole is especially apt for Nicaragua: "Industrialisation did not...involve any rupture in the power of the oligarchy which controlled...exports, but rather an extension of their economic interests and those of foreign capital with which they remained close allies."\textsuperscript{116} This extension of oligarchical interests provided a quick solution to the manifestation of state-bourgeois conflict during the late-1950's. Furthermore, it helped avoid placing the long neglected issue of land reform on the national agenda, which would have brought to a head the conflict between the state and the various fractions of capital.

The absence of significant agrarian reform highlighted the repressive basis of the \textit{somocista} developmental model. Rural repression intensified during the 1960's and into the 1970's as peasant land seizures intensified. The \textit{somocista} state was assisted in pacifying rural relations through the Alliance for Progress. This was the reverse side of the 'social peace' of the industrialisation programme of the 1960's.

Ostensibly, the Alliance for Progress had been formed in August 1961 with the purpose of promoting liberalisation, democratisation, socio-economic development and land redistribution. However, as Walter LeFeber points out "the actual target was Castro".\textsuperscript{117} The principles of the Monroe Doctrine could not afford another Cuba in the hemisphere, and thus a Latin American 'Marshall Plan' was devised with its "complementary elements of aid and counter-insurgency".\textsuperscript{118} The Alliance was an essential condition for the success of C.A.C.M. as U.S. business confidence had been severely shaken after the events in Cuba. The U.S. had to assure its businessmen that it wouldn't happen again. The relative importance of economic aid and redistribution compared with military assistance was starkly presented in a study which pointed out that during the early 1960's U.S. military assistance "gave every member of Somoza's National Guard an average of $930 of equipment and training in order to take violent

\textsuperscript{116}Pearce, op. cit., p. 47.

\textsuperscript{117}LaFeber, op. cit., p. 60.

\textsuperscript{118}Chinchilla & Hamilton, op. cit., p. 217. Flynn, op. cit., pp. 40-1, has characterised the programme as "counter-insurgency in disguise". See also D. Horowtiz, "The Alliance for Progress", in Rhodes (ed), op. cit., pp. 45-61.
action against a population whose average per capita income was $205."119

The halcyon years of the Somoza dictatorship between 1960 and 1967 witnessed a renewed period of economic reactivation after the slump of the late-1950's. Growth rates were impressive, industrialisation expanded, and foreign capital flooded the nation. However, the form which this development assumed hid a number of latent contradictions which would reveal themselves in the following period. This form of development supports Teodor Shanin and Burach Berberoghlu's arguments that within the controlling 'triple alliance' of the state, foreign capital and domestic capital under conditions of dependent capitalist development, it is domestic capital which acts as the 'junior' partner. While domestic capital participated in reaping the harvest of the 'development' decade, it remained the most vulnerable to changes in the economic environment, and was least able to determine the direction of change. Local industrialists would have benefitted most from agrarian reform. The model, however, was not premised upon expanding internal demand, through income redistribution or agrarian reform, but rather through repressing this demand. President Kennedy had warned in 1961 that "those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable". In Nicaragua, the peaceful industrial revolution which submerged elite conflict below the surface was bought at the price of denying significant agrarian reform and intensifying rural repression. The contours of future developments were distinguishable: violent revolution in the form of a popular coalition which had been excluded and marginalised from the fruits of Somoza's peaceful revolution.

3.6. CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN THE SOMOCISTA DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

The previous two sections have analysed the conditions which maintained and reproduced the Somoza dynasty. More importantly (for the purpose of this thesis) they have explained how a specific form of dependent capitalist development occurred in post-war Nicaragua. It has been argued that this model relied upon a number of socio-economic preconditions in order to submerge inherent social tension. The final section of this chapter will describe the particular manner in which these social contradictions manifested themselves.

By the late 1960's cracks were appearing in the edifice of Somoza's 'peaceful revolution'. These cracks revealed deeper structural defects which, within a decade, would contribute to the collapse of the entire somocista framework.

The industrialisation strategy pursued during the 1960's brought numerous negative

119Pearce, op. cit., p. 56. The situation remained unaltered during the 1970's. on in the project: "Even aspects of aid programmes which appear directed to improvements of the lot of the majority are frequently not what they seem. Projects such as the Institute of Peasant Welfare ($14 million loan) in Nicaragua are using as 'target' areas those zones of major guerrilla activities ...The AID Director for Nicaragua supervised similar projects in Vietnam from 1966-68. Many people fear that (this) operation will, at best, waste tax-payers funds... at worst, it will be used for covert counter-insurgency activities." Professor Miles Wolpin reporting to the House Sub-Committee on Human Rights in Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, June, 1976. Quoted in Ibid, p. 46.
repercussions which had become obvious by the end of the decade. The incentives offered to foreign capital and its unregulated and unplanned movement tended to increase rather than decrease external dependency. Apart from the lure of cheap labour, foreign capital received exemption from foreign exchange purchase restrictions, fiscal incentives, unlimited rights to repatriate capital and profits, absolute secrecy of operations, free importation of machinery and exportation of profits.\textsuperscript{120} As a later E.C.L.A. report reflected that "due to the lack of more vertically integrated industrial development, the changes in the compositions of imports involved in actuality a more vulnerable balance of payments due to the concentration on foreign sources of supply in raw materials, parts and components, and in equipment and machinery."\textsuperscript{121}

Between 1963 and 1968 the balance of payments deficit for the region as a whole doubled, while in Nicaragua foreign debt escalated from $41 million to $206 million. Furthermore, while the average rate of growth of GDP in Nicaragua between 1960 and 1967 was 10.7%, between 1966 and 1970 it declined to 3.8%. The comparison with the latter half of the 1950's reveals the risks this entailed for the Somoza-bourgeois alliance.

The absence of regional planning also hindered the pursuit of \textit{balanced} regional growth. By the end of the decade the stronger regional partners, El Salvador and Guatemala, had accumulated large regional trade surpluses at the expense of Honduras and Nicaragua. Between 1966 and 1968 Nicaragua accumulated an average annual trade deficit within C.A.C.M. of $20.3 million. As the limited domestic markets became saturated, pressure mounted within the weaker nations to protect local production through the raising of tariff barriers. Tension between Honduras and El Salvador led to the so-called 'soccer war' of 1969, after which Honduras withdrew from C.A.C.M. Somoza began introducing selective protectionism designed to support his own fiefdom's interests, provoking regional resentment. As foreign investment began to decline, the effective demise of C.A.C.M. drew close.

Furthermore, as foreign \textit{productive} capital investment declined, Somoza's Nicaragua and Arana's Guatemala welcomed the influx of 'sunbelt' capital. These "aggressive unscrupulous speculators" who had made their fortunes out of aerospace, defence contracts and property

\textsuperscript{120}Roberto Incer, president of the Banco Central de Nicaragua, commenting on foreign investment once commented: "We don't have the exact figures. We don't impose restrictions on foreign capital by keeping records of it." Quoted in Black, op. cit., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{121}Quoted in Harris, op. cit., p. 39.
speculation required a haven to replace Batista's Havana. Nicaragua's service sector expanded while industrial employment stagnated. Between 1960 and 1978 the percentage of industrial workers fell one percentage point from 16%, while the service sector recorded an expansion from 22% to 41%. As Black comments: "With the collapse of the Central American Common Market's planned growth Sunbelt dollars went into quick-profit service industries: hotels, casinos and tourism. The only prerequisite for their investments was the stability which military dictatorships could provide."124

However, the crisis within C.A.C.M. and the general economic downturn were only one component of an acceleration of a crisis of state or systemic legitimacy which manifested itself in ever more assertive forms after 1967. The period, which can be described as the 'crisis of late-somocismo', was also directly related to the political style and economic aggression which characterised Anastasio Somoza Debayle's rise to power in early-1967.

The period of relative reformism between 1963 and 1966, which corresponded to the halcyon years of economic growth and C.A.C.M., and the nominal presidency of Rene Schick, encouraged the opposition movement towards a programme of systemic liberalisation. Thus, when Anastasio Jr (Tachito) disappointed these aspirations with the announcement of his intention to stand for the 1967 elections the opposition united behind a resurrected U.N.O. and called for a demonstration march to the Presidential Palace in support of their electoral candidate Dr Fernando Arguero on 22 January 1967. The Guardia responded by opening fire upon the crowd leaving an estimated 300 people dead.126

A state of siege was declared and opposition figures rounded up and imprisoned. The consequences were a disaster for the 'liberalising' opposition, destroying the faith of many sectors of Nicaraguan society in the possibility of reforming somocismo 'from within', and in the traditional structures of political representation. Tachito won a 'landslide' 70% electoral victory.

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122 A detailed study of the relationship between somocista development and sunbelt capital has still to be written. Almost all accounts of this period comment upon Howard Hughes' two visits to Nicaragua in 1972. Typically, they remain shrouded in mystery. Hughes fled from Bahaman immigration authorities in February 1972, and initially spent a month in a Managuuan hotel. In appreciation of Somoza's role as host Hughes bought considerable shares in the Somoza-owned national airline, LANICA. Somoza then attempted to tempt Hughes further with interests in his plywood factory, a pharmaceutical company and local real estate. From the available correspondence, it appears that Somoza, not Hughes, was the initiator of their business deals. Hughes appeared more interested in using Nicaragua as a brief escape from his inland revenue problems elsewhere. On the eve of his departure Hughes ended a fifteen year period of isolation, meeting Somoza and US ambassador Turner Shelton on his Gulfstream jet. (Jim Davis, however, claims that Somoza never met his illustrious guest. See J. Davis, Where Is Nicaragua?, Simon & Schuster, N Y, 1987.) Hughes returned to Nicaragua later in the year after a spell in Vancouver, but left immediately after the earthquake of December 1972. Claims by NACLA's Report on the America's that Hughes visit was connected with the CIA's Glomar Explorer vessel have yet to be substantiated. See Jonas, op. cit. For Hughes correspondence see M. Drosnin, Citizen Hughes, Hutchinson, London, 1985, pp. 389-91, 443-7.

123 Petras & Morley, op. cit., p. 199.

124 Black, op. cit., p. 41. See also Booth, op. cit., p. 76; and Pearce, op. cit., p. 85-8.

125 Schick died in office in August 1966, and was replaced with an equally malleable Liberal, Lorenzo Guerrero.

126 French Nicaraguan Committees, op. cit., p. 11. Casualty and mortality figures vary between 40 and 600.
while Luis’s death in April provided Tachito with undisputed dynastic control. The brief political thaw was over.

Opposition to Tachito’s dictatorship remained vocal enough for him to have to resort to the resurrection of a zancudo faction of the Conservative Party in the February 1972 elections. The P.L.I. and the Social Christian Party refused to participate in the fraud, in which the allocation of Assembly seats were agreed in advance. A three-man National Governing Council acted as executive, including Tachito and Arguero.

By the end of the year Tachito had resumed supreme authority, using a natural disaster to proclaim himself President of the National Emergency Committee. On December 23, 1972 an earthquake ripped through Managua leaving an estimated 10,000 people dead. Anarchy reigned during the following days as the Guardia left its post, attending to family concerns and engaging in an orgy of looting.

The earthquake was more than a symbolic beginning of the end of somocismo. In itself it paved the way for the destruction of the fragile state-bourgeoisie pact and accentuated the pauperisation of the urban popular classes which had grown enormously over the past decade with industrialisation, urbanisation and the diversification of Nicaragua’s agro-exporting base. As George Black remarks: "The importance of the earthquake as a pivotal movement in the disintegration of Somocismo can hardly be overstated."

Somoza generated universal condemnation for his abuse of office to misappropriate the international aid and relief funds which flooded into the country after the disaster. Scandal after scandal revealed schemes by Tachito and his cronies to profit amidst the scene of general misery. The Guardia redirected emergency relief onto the thriving black market, while Somoza bought up land surrounding Managua and resold it to the government land purchasing agency for housing relocation schemes, reaping extortionate profits.

In the wake of the earthquake a ‘false boom’ emerged in the economy, stimulated by the construction industry. The rate of GDP growth, which had sunk to 3.1% in 1972, increased to 5.1% in 1973 and to an extraordinary 12.7% in 1974. However, while such booms had solidified Somoza-bourgeois relations in the past, those of the 1970’s heightened the tension between the partners. Somoza Garcia had built the foundations of the dynasty’s primitive capital accumulation through expropriating opponents agro-exporting concerns while providing ‘social stability’. Luis Somoza had maintained the alliance through encouraging industrialisation and rapid growth which benefited all sectors of monopoly capital. His reign

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127 The political consequences of 1967 will be elaborated in Chapter 5.
128 Black, op. cit., p. 59.
129 See Jonas, op. cit., p. 23.
130 Vilas, opcit., p. 92.
also witnessed the rationalisation and modernisation of the existing dynastic economic empire. However, Anastasio Somoza Debayle continued the reproduction and expansion of dynastic capital through encroaching upon the traditional preserves of his capitalist competitors. His predatory economic behaviour alienated the other fractions of capital through limiting their capacity for expansion, thus breaching the ‘gentlemens’ agreement’ which had underwritten the basis for modern diversified dependent capitalist development in Nicaragua. As Black argues:

Greed, theft, corruption and repression may have been the style of Somocismo. But until the 1972 earthquake the dynasty was not merely the arbitrary exercise of power by a single family. It would not have survived so long without recognition from Washington and from Somoza’s fellow Nicaraguan capitalists that the dictatorship was the most appropriate instrument for sustaining the power of private enterprise as a whole.131

As Jarquin and Barreto remark, after the earthquake the alliance deteriorated: “Overstepping the bounds of capitalist competition, Somoza took over the most dynamic areas of capital accumulation.”132

Somoza began penetrating and monopolising areas such as property speculation, finance, insurance and most importantly, construction; precisely those areas which contributed to, and benefitted from, the mid-1970’s boom. BANAMER, BANIC and other non-Somoza capital groups began to denounce Somoza’s competencia desleal (disloyal competition); in other words, the breaking of the fragile consensus upon which dictatorial monopoly capitalism had rested.

Construction workers, organised by the P.S.N., used their increased economic weight in order to wage a series of strikes throughout 1973-74. Industrial conflict on the whole increased. In July 1974, a broad-based multi-class umbrella organisation (U.D.E.L.) led by respected progressive opposition spokesmen was formed. U.D.E.L. was uncompromisingly ‘abstentionist’ and drew increasing support from liberals in the United States. This created a dual headache for somocismo, which had traditionally emasculated the opposition movement through incorporating vacilating segments into the system, and upheld U.S. support in order to make the opposition ‘see reality’. The recall of Ambassador Turner Shelton, a personal friend and apologist for the dictator, revealed the extent to which Washington’s coolness towards Somoza had grown.133

Adding to Somoza’s problems was an upsurge in guerrilla activity. The F.S.L.N., which the U.S. State Department had described as “virtually inactive” in 1972,134 engineered a daring raid upon the house of ‘Chema’ Castillo, an influential somocista, during a party in honour of Shelton on 27 December 1974. The success of the operation, and the open demonstrations of support for

131Black, op. cit., p. 62.

132E. Jarquin & P.E. Barreto, “A Dictatorship ‘Made in the USA’”, in Rosset & Vandermeer (eds), op. cit., p. 165. See also Lopez et. al., op. cit., pp. 27-30.

133The end of the Nixon era spelt disaster for Somoza’s relationship with Washington. As Jonas reported, by 1974 “many inside the State Department regarded (Shelton) as an embarrassment and no longer believed his rosy pro-Somoza reports onthe situation in Nicaragua. When another embassy officer, James Cheek, defied Shelton by filing counter-reports, he was rewarded with a special citation from Kissinger in late-1974.” Jonas, op. cit., p. 22.

the Sandinistas in the aftermath, was used by Somoza as an excuse to unleash a new wave of repression upon the opposition movement as a whole. A state of siege and martial law was declared, press censorship tightened and rural counter-insurgency stepped-up.

The 33 months of martial law merely galvanised the opposition, strengthening its resolution that Somoza's departure was an unconditional platform for negotiating the future of state power. Under these conditions somocismo entered the final phase of its legitimation crisis.

Furthermore, Somoza's international prestige fell to an all-time low, as reports filtered out of the countryside concerning the condition of human rights under martial law. Reports of political imprisonment, torture and massacres of entire villages began receiving international media attention. While these incidents were not 'news' to the long-suffering anti-Somoza movement, merely an intensification of the repression, the fact that they received such attention was a reflection of the extent to which Somoza's international prestige had declined. As Jimmy Carter assumed the presidency in the U.S., Nicaragua gradually became a 'case study' for his human rights programme. His coolness towards Somoza reflected the crisis of U.S. state legitimacy and the diminished prestige of U.S. foreign policy in the wake of Vietnam as much as it did a concern for Nicaragua's domestic environment.135

Yet, at precisely this conjuncture, the U.S. was unable to intervene effectively in Central American affairs. The 'industrial revolution' and developmentalism of the 1960's had polarised Central American society and heightened underlying contradictions. The effects of past U.S. involvement had, by the mid-1970's, weakened rather than strengthened Washington's capacity to influence these polarised forces. Radicals viewed the U.S.-sponsored Alliance for Progress as a smokescreen for counter-insurgency, and hence treated Washington with suspicion. Meanwhile, right-wing dictatorships such as Somoza felt able to act with impunity, secure in the knowledge that they represented to the U.S. a bulwark against regional 'instability'. Social polarisation merely strengthened their self-perception as 'grandsons of bitches'. Domestically, U.S. administrations found their hands tied. If the public did not want 'another Cuba' they were also uninspired by the prospect of 'another Vietnam'.136

The U.S. considered the bourgeois opposition an attractive alternative to Somoza. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, this opposition lacked a solid power base in the nation's socio-political matrix. Carter's courtship with the opposition bourgeois could only lead to a marriage of two partners whose hands were tied behind their backs. Even the blessings of the prestigious Catholic Church could not raise this union above the existing realities of Nicaragua's evolving social contradictions.137

The outcome of the approaching revolutionary situation would depend upon the relationship


137 For an appraisal of the domestic bourgeoisie in the late-1970's, see Vilas, op. cit., pp. 127-43.
between contending internal forces and contradictions. The opposition bourgeoisie could only be comfortable in divorcing itself completely from Somoza as long as it felt it had the hegemony over the classes which had been marginalised and exploited by the model of dependent capitalist development; a model which the domestic bourgeoisie had prospered from. The model had been structured along a fundamental cleavage between the state and capital on one hand, and the popular classes on the other. As the crisis of the dictatorship assumed revolutionary proportions, the possibility of bourgeois hegemony diminished due to the growing strength of the Sandinistas, who were able to portray this cleavage as a somocista-sandinista contradiction. The bourgeois option was dismissed by the Sandinistas as somocismo sin Somoza (somozaism without Somoza). This process will be described in Chapter 5.

The rise in world coffee and cotton prices during the mid-1970's provides additional evidence of the growing irreconcilibility between the state and non-Somoza fractions of capital. While in the past economic upturns had disguised latent tension, by the mid-1970's under Tachito they merely fueled antagonism. As Baumeister has observed, somocista capital was disproportionately represented in areas such as agro-industrial processing (i.e. coffee mills, rice mills, sugar mills, slaughter houses, cotton mills) and in land, commerce and banking. On the other hand "the biggest part of agricultural and livestock production was in the hands of the sectors with a weak presence in the control of agro-industrial processing, internal and external commercialisation and banking or extra-banking finances." In Nicaragua's economic structure, with its strong agro-exporting base, this lack of integration between productive and commercial capital actually resulted in a very real subordination of productive capital to finance through the tight process of articulation from the direct producer to the world market. Thus, when international prices rose, producers felt that the processor/buyers were not offering them prices which reflected the international market, and "that the price bonanza was being appropriated exclusively by the large bourgeoisie and that the Somocista state was participating actively in this unequal distribution of earnings and losses."

Thus, as far as capital-state relations were concerned, it was not so much an economic crisis which triggered of the 'crisis of late-somocismo' but rather a perception of unequal distribution of profit or 'unequal exchange'. The bourgeoisie entered the crisis of state legitimacy fragmented. While some fractions profited from the commodity boom, others opposed somocismo appropriation, demanding a return to 'fair competition', while others demanded a complete overhaul of the system.

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138 See E. Baumeister, "The Structure of Nicaraguan Agriculture and the Sandinista Agrarian Reform", in Harris & Vilas (eds), op. cit., p. 14.

139 Vilas, op. cit., p. 77.

140 Ibid, p. 79.

141 As a representative of INDE (an agrarian reform programme related to BANIC) remarked; "The problem is the man. He's taking over our market. We have no quarrel with anyone else or the system. Just get rid of him." Quoted in Black, op. cit., p. 64. See also the American diplomat, quoted in Buckley, op. cit., p. 197.
3.7. CONCLUSION

The underpinnings of the Nicaraguan Revolution were generated by deep structural factors relating to the specific model of capitalist development pursued in Nicaragua. This model had succeeded in diversifying Nicaragua's dependent capitalist economy and had guaranteed the expanded reproduction of capital. A powerful dictatorial and repressive state apparatus had forged an alliance with the non-somocista bourgeoisie, allowing state and capital to overcome Nicaragua's prior disarticulation between the state and capitalist development.

However, latent tension underlay the alliance. This was a result of the Somoza dynasty's emergence as one of the main fractions of capital. Manifestations of the tension were periodically overcome through a combination of repression and renewed cycles of economic growth and expansion. However, increasingly after 1967, this 'dictatorship of capital' became a 'dictatorship of a fraction of capital', and the deficiencies of the somocista model of development became apparent. The fragile consensus upon which the model was premised was broken, and the somocista state began to take on the appearance of an institution existing 'above society' without an independent social base, and relying more and more upon naked repression. Thus, the revolutionary situation which began to emerge at the end of the 1970's can be attributed to inherent factors within the model of somocista development. Events, such as the earthquake, can be viewed as contingent factors which 'accelerated' the onset of the revolutionary crisis of the Somoza regime.

After the earthquake of 1972, the non-somocista fractions of capital were forced into more determined opposition as it perceived that the benefits accrued from the alliance were now overshadowed by its disadvantages and contracted space. Any desire the bourgeoisie had of returning the alliance to its former status, or in maintaining the system without Somoza (somocismo sin Somoza) were fraught with contradictions, as the history of the alliance demonstrates. For, once the repressive characteristics of somocismo were dismantled the bourgeoisie removed its guarantee of 'social stability'. It had been the somocista state apparatus which had guaranteed the expansion of capitalism and modernisation at the expense of uprooting, marginalising and proletarianising the rest of society. Thus, the bourgeoisie faced the risk of being caught between the maintenance of a broken consensus with Somoza and the unknown quantity of the popular classes which had paid for the developmental model and the alliance; the working class, the marginalised urban poor, the peasantry and agricultural labour. Organised as an anti-imperialist political force, the popular classes could threaten the very basis of capital expansion through a far more radical programme of post-somocista development than the bourgeoisie envisaged. Democratisation thus held unknown dangers for the reproduction of capitalist relations. However, traditionally one of the least organised in Latin America, the labour movement required a spearhead organisation which could exploit the crisis of late-somocismo and transcend the limits at which the bourgeoisie wished to take post-somocista development.

Shirley Christian has lamented that the Sandinista Front "probably would have become a
footnote in history had a moderate regime been able to assume power in Nicaragua before the end of 1978.¹⁴² This chapter has demonstrated the structural forces which circumscribed such an assumption. Yet, while these forces illustrate the underlying causes of the demise of somocismo, its model of capitalist development, and the weaknesses of the domestic bourgeoisie, in themselves they cannot account for the success of the Sandinista movement. This requires, not a footnote, but a chapter. The structural preconditions of the revolutionary situation of 1978-9 must be complimented with an analysis of the ‘purposive’ development of the origins, organisation and ideology of the hegemonistic challenger during the revolutionary situation in order to render the Sandinista content of the revolutionary movement intelligible.

Chapter 4
PURPOSIVE PRECONDITIONS FOR THE
BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters analysed the political economy of two pre-revolutionary societies and noted the contribution structural factors made to the decline of the old regimes. These analyses reveal that the particular configurations of social forces and the modes of capitalist accumulation carried within them inherent social tensions which explain the roots of social polarisation. These chapters provide support for Skocpol’s contention that the revolutionary situations themselves are not made by the revolutionary organisations which eventually take advantage of the crisis. Yet a fundamental problem remains; why was a particular contender able to assume hegemony over the social classes and groups opposed to the existing polity, and how was this challenger able to channel the energy of these groups towards the task of taking power? While the structural factors outlined in the previous chapters provide the necessary preconditions for explaining the crises of the old regimes, they are not sufficient to explain the nature and form of the social revolution which marked the transcendence of the revolutionary situation. In order to deal satisfactorily with the problem of the causes of socialist revolutions it is necessary to also take into account the purposive movement, its development and its relationship to its particular environment.

This chapter will explore this problem concretely in the case of Russian Revolution. The point which will be emphasized throughout is that socialist revolutions are not the inevitable result of the inexorable pressure of ‘natural’ social progress. Contrary to Skocpol’s position, this chapter argues that the form the Russian Revolution assumed was to a large extent the result of the activities of revolutionary movements. It was dependent upon the conscious intervention of organised groups, their methods of organisation and planning, and their perceptions and ideology. While structural analyses reveal certain necessary preconditions for understanding a revolutionary situation, it is also necessary to analyse the development of the organised challenger to the polity which was capable of providing the “thrust” to transcend existing social arrangements.¹ In the Russian case, it is only half correct, and certainly too simplistic to argue that the Bolsheviks "did not seize power....They picked it up. Any group of determined men

could have done what the Bolsheviks did in Petrograd in 1917.\textsuperscript{2} Neil Harding uses a different analogy in his discussion of the Bolshevik Revolution, which recognises the role of active intervention, or purposive action, in shaping the revolutionary outcome.

The revolution was not like a plum falling into the hand when fully ripe without so much as a shake of the tree. It was, to characterise Lenin's account, more like a turnip. It would swell and ripen in the ground but would take a stout pull to harvest it - otherwise the action of the elements and of parasites would combine to rot it away.\textsuperscript{3}

In Russia during the first two decades of the twentieth century there were numerous organisations and parties with different perceptions of the social reality surrounding them, ranging from Monarchists to Marxists. Even within these world-views perceptions differed. To continue with Harding's analogy, the Marxists disagreed upon the 'ripeness' (even the existence!) of the 'turnip' under the surface. The question to be asked is why was it the Bolsheviks 'insight', and the Bolshevik 'arm' which provided the 'stout pull' which uprooted the existing polity. This chapter will chart the development of the Bolshevik Party, in order to explain how the organisation was able to fulfil the purposive role of mobilising the elemental forces within the revolutionary situation into socialist channels.

Parties and fronts which have assumed power with socialist intent, or a socialist vision, appear to arrive on the revolutionary stage as small, insignificant actors, which rapidly take advantage of social instability. However, this chapter argues that ultimate success is the result of a prolonged process of organisational and ideological development of the revolutionary movement. While this development is related to the structural environment in which the party operates, it is by no means reducible to them. This chapter takes as a starting point James Petras' argument that "the study of revolution as a process requires us to emphasize the continuity and relatedness of each period. Particular events mark historical moments, with particular configurations of forces. But without an understanding of the preceding sequence, the molecular processes of accumulation of forces, the end product of socialist revolution, cannot be grasped. Each differential moment in the revolutionary process contributes to the understanding of the whole. The issue is to understand the relationship between each sequence, in determining the final outcome."\textsuperscript{4} In Russia, this 'molecular' process of development was complex, and impossible to measure in simple quantitative terms. The growth of the working class (discussed in Chapter 2) was marked by periods of latent tension and manifest conflict. This chapter argues that although the Bolshevik Party took advantage of periods of heightening conflict in order to increase its influence among the popular classes, this was only one element of its molecular development. There was no mechanical determination between the growth of the working class and the growth of the Bolshevik Party. On another, ideological, level, this molecular development was characterised by transformations and shifts in Lenin's understanding of the relationship between the party and the working class, and furthermore,


\textsuperscript{4}J. Petras, "Socialist Revolutions and their Class Components", \textit{New Left Review}, 111.
changes in his understanding of the possibilities inherent within a given revolutionary situation. These latter developments informed Bolshevik praxis and provided them with the indispensable tools for channelling the elemental forces of the revolution towards its socialist October.

This molecular purposive process involved the insertion of the party into the national political culture, the establishment of a class basis, the development of an organisational framework which corresponded to its socio-cultural environment and the level at which various classes and groups entered and participated in the party and associated themselves with its vision. Each of these 'moments' were accompanied by critical reassessments of the organisation, ideology and overall strategy of the party in response to particular historical conjunctures. This chapter demonstrates how these reassessments informed changes in Bolshevik praxis. Combined, these factors determined the legitimacy of the party as a 'revolutionary vanguard'.

The ultimate test for the Bolsheviks was its ability to achieve a revolutionary osmosis between the party and the popular classes during revolutionary situations. Without this purposive fusion between reality and possibility, insight and vision, no social revolution could have occurred. In the Russian case the Bolshevik Party was the "link between the real and the possible." Through explaining the success of the Bolsheviks, and the failures of their revolutionary and reformist competitors, this chapter demonstrates that, in addition to structural factors, organisation and ideology were necessary concomitants to understanding the socialist form which the revolution assumed.

Yet, as the unfolding of events will reveal, there was no inevitability that the party would ultimately perform this function. The ideological and organisational development of the party was problematic. In other words, at each historical conjuncture, the Bolsheviks were faced with tactical and strategic alternatives. Not only had the party to respond to moves by the government and other challengers. It also had to overcome internal divisions concerning the appropriate action at each historical turn. The decisions adopted, and the paths travelled, by the party determined the nature of the revolutionary transcendence as much as the structural factors which promoted the revolutionary crisis. Without this purposive analysis, the causes of the socialist revolution remain unintelligible.

4.2. ORIGINS OF MARXISM IN RUSSIA

This section explores the origins of Russian Marxism and its insertion into the nation's political culture. The 'space' which the embryonic movement carved out for itself was a consequence of both structural factors and an ideological struggle against alternative revolutionary philosophies. The perception of Russian reality which emerged from this period would shape the basic tenets of Russian 'orthodox' Marxism up until the eve of the First World War.

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5V. Serge, Year One of the Russian Revolution, Allen Lane, London, 1972, p. 61. Serge uses this to describe the role of revolutionary leaders during insurrectionary periods. I would argue that it is just as applicable to revolutionary parties.
The Russian revolutionary scene in the nineteenth century provides a colourful and varied assortment of strategies, tactics and revolutionary visions. It was only during the last two decades of the nineteenth century that Marxism emerged within this political kaleidoscope, as the process of industrialisation (outlined in Chapter 2) slowly transformed Russia’s socio-economic environment. Even then, Marxism did not surface as a result of the political awakening of the Russian proletariat, but as a trend within the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia. In Russia, Marxist ideology preceded the structural basis which justified its existence.

Western European history had long been the yardstick by which the revolutionary intelligentsia had measured Russia’s future. ‘Westernisers’ and ‘Slavophils’ had debated the likelihood and desirability of the nation following the path of Western capitalism. The diffuse populist (or Narodnik) ideology which dominated revolutionary thought from the 1860’s until the 1880’s, argued that capitalism would fail to take root in Russian soil. The Russian path to socialism could be accomplished through the active or passive assistance of the peasantry, whose communal form of land tenure (freed from autocratic restrictions) would unleash the egalitarian spirit inherent within Russian agrarian social relations. Without rejecting industrialisation per se, most Narodniks looked upon Western capitalism with moral revulsion due to the destructive and exploitative die it cast upon human relations.

The political passivity of the peasantry, combined with the frustration of the Narodnik intelligentsia’s alienation from those they sought to emancipate, led to a variety of revolutionary strategies designed to overthrow the Tsarist order. The failure of these strategies, from the ‘to the people’ movement of 1873-4 to the terrorism of the early-1880’s, generated crisis and disillusionment within Narodism.6

It was out of this crisis that Marxism began to gain an audience among the revolutionary intelligentsia. The ‘artificial’ or ‘spontaneous’ form of Russian capitalist development became the axis around which Marxists and Narodniks debated.7 Thus, in its inception ‘the struggle for Marxism’ was waged more as a "battle of books and pamphlets"8 than on the terrain of class struggle. While, as Walicki notes, "fully-fledged Narodnik thought was shaped in reaction to the first wave of Western-based socialist ideas", it is equally true that early Russian Marxism was stamped with the birthmarks of its polemics against its Narodnik competitors.9 The early Russian Marxists, based around the emigre Emancipation of Labour group, used Marxist theory

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6T. Dan goes as far as to argue that revolutionary Narodism received a “mortal wound” after the People’s Will organisation assassinated Alexander 111 on March 1, 1881. See T. Dan, The Origins of Bolshevism, Schocken, N.Y., p. 138.

7As Lenin pointed out in 1905: “The entire history of Russian revolutionary thought during the last quarter of a century is the history of the struggle waged by Marxism against petty-bourgeois Narodnik socialism.” (9; 439). Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent quotations from Lenin are drawn from V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, (45 Vols), Progress, Moscow, 1977. Volume numbers are followed by page numbers in the reference.

8M. Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled, Harvard U.P., 1967, p. 34.

as a predictive tool for gaining an insight into the future contours of Russian economic development, rather than revolutionary praxis based upon an examination of contemporary reality. Accusing the Narodniks of adopting a static, ahistorical approach to socio-economic analysis, the Marxists argued that a dynamic understanding of historical development revealed the inevitability of the spread of capitalism throughout Russia and the irreparable disintegration of the rural commune (mir), upon which most Narodniks based their peasant-oriented socialism.

The penetration of market and wage-labour relations in the countryside and the rapid process of industrialisation provided the early Marxists with concrete evidence that Russia could not avoid following the Western path of development. Consequently, rejecting the Narodnik moral revulsion of Western capitalist development, the Marxists argued that the inevitable process of capitalist economic development should be encouraged. According to Georgi Plekhanov (the 'father of Russian Marxism') Russia was suffering "not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from the insufficiency of that development." It was this process which would accelerate the advance of socialism through incubating the social force which would ultimately signal the demise of capitalism; the industrial proletariat. Although the Marxists agreed with the Narodniks' immediate political aim of overthrowing the autocratic order, they argued that this would merely eradicate the vestiges of feudalism, rather than herald the coming of socialism. Thus, early Russian Marxism was characterised by a 'stage' conception of development in which the demise of Tsarism would be followed inevitably by an epoch of capitalist development and bourgeois hegemony. This epoch would remove from its path the relics of Russia's economic and cultural backwardness and clear the way to the unfettered development of the 'objective' conditions which would eventually promote the 'subjective' awakening of the proletariat.

Neil Harding has argued that it was precisely due to Russia's 'backwardness' that the Russian Marxists were forced to take their study and understanding of dialectics and historical development more seriously than their Western counterparts. If socialism was not on the immediate agenda, then greater effort had to be expended upon plotting the outlines of the future through analysis of present trends. Armed with this theoretical approach early Russian Marxism concentrated its efforts on analysing the trajectory of development within Russia. Yet, despite this use of theory to chart Russia's future, all the major tendencies were characterised by a mechanical form of materialism, in which revolutionary possibility was a priori determined by 'objective' economic conditions. Up until the beginning of the First World War, almost every Russian Marxist translated this into the 'self-restrictive' necessity of promoting anti-autocratic 'bourgeois democratic', rather than socialist, demands.

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11Harding, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 36.

The struggle for Marxism up until 1895 was thus conducted largely upon theoretical grounds. In 1897 Lenin would describe it as "the period of stubborn refusal by its opponents to understand it, of strenuous efforts to suppress the new trend the moment it arose, on the one hand, and of stalwart defence of the fundamentals of Social Democracy, on the other...". Struggle was conducted upon the terrain of 'propaganda', involving emigre intellectual and university study circles assimilating theory, debating with Narodniki and accumulating evidence relating to the development of Russian capitalism. Activity among the working class was confined to teaching in basic literary classes, circulating pamphlets among factory workers and recruiting the most able and willing for Marxist study circles. This work had to be undertaken in the face of severe state repression and surveillance, restricting movement and organisation. No national organisation existed and local autonomous, clandestine groups were unable to co-ordinate national activity. Literature arrived only haphazardly from the acknowledged emigre leaders of the movement, such as Plekhanov, Pavel Aksel'rod and Vera Zasulich. Furthermore, their theoretical pre-eminence often provided little assistance in dealing with the daily practicalities of activity under Russian conditions.

The initial phase of Russian Marxism (1880-1895) was characterised by the implantation of Marxist thought within the revolutionary intelligentsia. However, the period highlighted difficulties which had to be overcome. Firstly, its ideological encroachments upon Narodism were insufficient to motivate activity among the emerging urban working class. Roots had yet to be laid among the class which the theory viewed as the bearers of socialism. Secondly, the movement required greater co-ordination among its atomised, isolated components. During the next decade the striving for efficient co-ordination and organisation were increasingly perceived as imperatives if the Social Democratic movement was to transcend the limits of its formative phase. It is within this context that Lenin's writings and activities of the period (1895-1905) must be placed. Unfortunately, this is seldom recognised by unsympathetic critics of Lenin. There is a common tendency to draw the conclusion that Lenin's works of the period were a universal blueprint for dedicated revolutionary minorities regardless of time and place, and that they contain the germs of future Soviet totalitarianism. The development of Leninism (which is inseparable from the development of Bolshevism) was the product of a continual reassessment and reappraisal of revolutionary praxis in the context of Russian reality. Far more so than Marx, a 'textual' reading of Lenin must be related directly to the specific problems confronting his political praxis. During the next epoch a number of characteristic features of Leninism began to emerge through various polemics within the Marxist movement. Out of these polemics Leninism evolved a particular approach to the relationship between consciousness and spontaneity, the party and the working class, and an organisational prescription for effective praxis.

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13Quoted in Harding, op. cit., pp. 60-1.
14See ibid., pp. 74-5.
4.3. ORGANISATION OF THE PARTY

During the decade between 1895 and 1905 Russian Marxism began to shift from the terrain of 'propaganda' among the revolutionary intelligentsia to 'agitation' among the urban working class. This period also corresponded with the initial spontaneous demonstrations of self-awareness among the proletariat. A number of problems arose which had profound implications for the future of Russian Marxism. The first problem related to the organisational form appropriate to the repressive political climate of Tsarist Russia. The second problem concerned the relationship between the party and the working class. In the course of debates over these issues, Leninism began to develop as a specific tendency within Russian Marxism, leading to the origins of Bolshevism.

The deficiencies in early Russian Marxist practical activities were related to the difficulties of operating openly in the restrictive and repressive environment of the Tsarist autocracy. The problems beset by autocratic control for the accumulation and organisation of Social Democratic forces were highlighted by the claim of a veteran Bolshevik activist that "owing to police intervention, the average life of a Social Democratic group at the beginning of the century was only three months." However, in varying degrees of intensity this environment plagued the revolutionary movement up until February 1917. Another difficulty which beset Russian Marxism during the period was the fact that proletarianisation was such a recent phenomenon. Industrial conflict and class mobilisation were still in an incipient stage. As the previous section noted, theoretical development outpaced practical political involvement. The transformation of the Russian Social Democratic movement from its embryonic, intellectual culture to a mass, political working class party corresponded with the formative years of industrial conflict in Russia. This correspondence raised the importance of mobilisation, organisation and direction within the Social Democratic movement. The question of organisation figured as a prominent concern of the movement during the period 1895-1903.

The first mass strike movements emerged during the first half-decade of the 1890's, and reached their zenith in St Petersburg during 1895 and 1896. These strikes were invariably localised, poorly organised and lacking in leadership. The demands which were voiced were related to inhumane management practices and limited economic demands, such as hours of work and forms of wage payment. However, the strike movement did succeed in forcing the government to pass legislation curbing some of the more inhumane features of the Tsarist factory system, although compliance with legislation remained inconsistent.

The upsurge in working class activity forced the Social-Democrats to reconsider and re-orient their own activity. Far from emerging at the forefront of the strike movement, local Marxists often were caught completely by surprise and were unable to assert significant influence upon

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its direction. As early as 1894 Yuri Martov began calling for a reorientation in Social Democratic activity. His experiences of workers' study circles in Vilno convinced him that the Marxist intelligentsia's promotion of educational and cultural development for the proletariat was merely making it possible for the workers to "leave the very class whose collective self-consciousness they were supposed to express." He argued that a shift in tactical emphasis was required, from promoting the workers' intellectual development to active participation in the day-to-day struggles in which the workers confronted their employers. In the parlance of the period, this required a shift in activity from propaganda to economic and political agitation among the working class. The theory rather mechanically postulated that out of economic agitation (activities centred around industrial concerns, improvement of conditions and defence of gains) political awareness would emerge (a higher form of consciousness focusing upon the nature of the state and power).

Two interrelated problems faced the Social Democrats in their effort to redirect their activity towards agitation. During this phase, various differences began to emerge which would later distinguish the Bolshevik faction from the Menshevik faction. Firstly, the unco-ordinated Russian cells required unification around a central organisation, and the establishment of a party organ adhering to a definite programme and analysis of Russian reality. Secondly, the movement had to clarify theoretically the relationship between the party and the working class. Conflicting perceptions of these tasks aroused controversy which had profound repercussions for the party.

Steps were undertaken in March 1898 to overcome the first problem through convening what became known as the First Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP). While few practical results emerged from the congress in Minsk the party's existence was declared, a name designated and, importantly, a manifesto adopted. The manifesto (the congress's "most substantial legacy to posterity") declared that the Russian working class lacked the most elementary instruments in its struggle "for their ultimate emancipation - against private property, for socialism," namely freedom of expression and assembly. The promotion of these elementary rights were viewed as the immediate tasks confronting the RSDLP. The manifesto ruled out the possibility of an immediate realisation of socialism, and pointed to the bourgeois nature of post-autocratic Russia. However, the manifesto recognised that the


20Voicing the general concern of Social Democracy, Lenin, in 1895, outlined the change in orientation which the Social Democrats would have to follow: "At the present time...the most urgent question, in our opinion, is that of the practical activities of the Social Democrats. We emphasize the practical side of Social Democracy, because on the theoretical side the most critical period...is now apparently behind us. Now the main and basic features of the theoretical views of the Social Democrats have been sufficiently clarified. The same cannot be said about the practical side of Social Democracy, about its political programme, its methods, its tactics." Quoted in Harding, op. cit., pp. 60-1.

21This was partly due to the fact that most of its participants were arrested immediately afterwards.


practical realisation of this immediate task would primarily fall upon the shoulders of the working class, rather than the bourgeoisie. This implied that the inevitable intermediate epoch between the demise of the autocracy and socialism would have to be forced upon the bourgeoisie. The dilemma of forcing political rule upon a reluctant, hesitating bourgeoisie would later manifest itself during the revolutions of 1905 and 1917. As Harding has argued, it was precisely this dictum (the leading role, or the hegemony, of the proletariat in the forthcoming bourgeois revolution) which characterised 'orthodox' Russian Marxism at the turn of the century.24

Although the manifesto laid the theoretical basis upon which to develop the practical demands of the RSDLP, the party did not officially advance a programme until the Second Party Congress in 1903.25 Lenin's writings during this time repeatedly emphasised the importance of clarifying a programme around which the still disparate forces of Social Democracy could co-ordinate activity. In a draft programme of 1899 he stressed that a programme would serve the "consolidation and consistent activity of a political party", and would assist in "uniting for organization" through offering the people "the character, aims and tasks" of the movement.26 This preoccupation was a measure of Lenin's insistence that the movement transcend the "bookish" theoretical confines of its embryonic phase, towards providing practical links with the ascending mass movement. With the aim of ideological and organisational consolidation in mind, Lenin conceived of the idea of a widely-distributed weekly newspaper. In December 1900 this was realised with the first publication of *Iskra*.

The formation of the RSDLP had not prevented a wide interpretation of the practical activity arising from the movement's socio-economic analysis. The most contentious issues which emerged concerned the nature of the demands which the working class should advance under the existing political and economic conditions, the role of the organised proletariat in the forthcoming revolution, and the mode of insertion of the party into the class. Parameters were drawn around the *Iskra* group (which upheld the 'orthodox' position of the leading role of the proletariat in the Russian bourgeois-democratic revolution) and the younger practical workers, or 'Economists' (who argued that the present role of the party was to assist the proletariat in presenting its immediate economic demands). The argument centred upon the extent to which the proletariat could spontaneously realise its own objective class interests and achieve revolutionary class consciousness. Lenin's writings during this period were part of the arsenal of the Iskraite group. Implicit within his argument was a rejection of the deterministic thesis that the objective contradictions contained within social relations would, by themselves, generate the revolutionary self-consciousness of the exploited classes. In other words, to employ the terminology of this thesis, Lenin's position was that structural preconditions do not 'make history'. Purposive intervention is required to take advantage of existing possibilities.

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25 See Krupskaya, op. cit., p. 90.
26 Lenin (4; 229-31).
The role of the party was to perform this vanguard, purposive role, and act as the organisational focus and ideological mentor of the working class movement.

Lenin and the Iskraites opposed the economists on both practical and theoretical grounds. On practical grounds, the economistic tactic of concentrating upon the localised, trade-unionist demands of the class would exacerbate the atomisation of the mass movement and hinder the co-ordinated class action necessary to confront the centralised power of the state. Furthermore, if the immediate task of the movement was the "winning of political liberty", as declared in the Minsk manifesto, then the task of the RSDLP was precisely to transcend trade-unionism and mobilise the mass movement for its immediate political task of destroying the autocratic fetters which restricted the freedom of class organisation. Lenin admitted that the collapse of the autocracy would "inevitably call forth such huge changes in political conditions that they would compel the party to make essential changes in the formulation of the immediate political tasks." However, if the party concentrated upon immediate economic objectives under the repressive political climate of the autocracy, it would doom the party to impotence and Tsarist repression.

Theoretically, Lenin opposed the economists interpretation of the relationship between party and class, accusing his opponents of 'tailism'. Against this line of supporting the average state of consciousness of the class, Lenin argued that the party’s role was to represent and support the demands of the most advanced, class-conscious elements, and to mobilise the class as a whole around these demands. The economistic notion eliminated the vanguard role of the party in its relation to the class. This role was to theoretically explain the existing conjuncture of social forces, and to provide a higher level of awareness of the struggles in which the class was engaged. Only in this way could the organisation be an effective channel for practical activity. In return, the economists accused the Iskraites of perpetuating an 'intellectual dictatorship' over the class, an argument the Mensheviks would later employ against the Bolsheviks.

While this debate over the relationship between party and class was not unique to Russia, it assumed special urgency under the specific conditions of Russian social reality. If the bourgeoisie could not be relied upon to lead the democratic revolution then the task of the proletariat was to assume hegemony over the democratic movement as a whole, and to represent not only the particularistic interests of labour, but the more general democratic revolutionary movement, from the peasantry and agricultural labour to the revolutionary elements within the petty-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie. Lenin argued that under existing conditions a Social Democrat had to transcend the narrow trade-unionist viewpoint and understand the totality of class relationships within Russian society. Only through understanding the material basis of the various demands of the diverse classes in Russian society could the proletariat assume hegemony over the democratic movement, and formulate a programme compatible with the

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27 Lenin, (4; 237).

28 Tailism was understood as the restriction of party tasks to reflect the existing state of consciousness of the class as a whole.
more general interests of the anti-autocratic movement. Whereas, in the economic struggle workers came into conflict exclusively with employers (including the state), in the political struggle they came into contact with the entire matrix of social classes contend ing for influence over the state. The role of the party was to provide this holistic framework for action.29

Lenin continued his debate with economism in the pamphlet What Is To Be Done?, and elaborated his ideas on the relationship between party and class. Relying upon the authority of 'the dean of Marxism', Karl Kautsky, Lenin upheld the view that Social Democratic consciousness could not emerge spontaneously from 'trade-unionism', and this necessitated the presence of a cohesive revolutionary organisation which, under Russian conditions of illegality and harassment, would require the strictest discipline and centralism.30

While these theoretical debates between 1895 and 1903 were crucial in outlining the immediate as well as the long-term objectives of the party, the Social-Democrats remained hampered by ideological disunity and geographic dispersal. The calling of the Second Congress of the Party in London in August 1903 was regarded by all as a welcome opportunity to overcome these problems. The congress marked an important advance upon the first, in that the party structure was formally organised and for the first time a programme was adopted. However, disagreements arose over the question of the party statute and conditions for membership. Lenin’s proposals called for greater accountability and discipline over members than Martov’s. The repercussions split the party into two factions, inhibiting united coordinated action. However, the theoretical and practical differences between Lenin’s Bolsheviks and Menshevik tendencies remains insignificant up until the 1905 Revolution.31 Both factions continued to hurl personal recriminations at each other, consuming valuable energy and resources in a struggle which appeared to many local cells as pedantic, personal and largely irrelevant to the practical tasks at hand. However, if the schism appeared at first sight to be pedantic, its consequences would later reveal deep and unbridgeable differences. While Lenin’s theses in What Is To Be Done? were not the subject of controversy at the London Congress, the Mensheviks afterwards argued that his organisational prescriptions were the underlying cause of their disagreements.32 As this organisational controversy intensified, the Mensheviks progressively found themselves praising the virtues of spontaneity, the heresy which they had

29As Lenin argued; "Those who concentrate the attention, observation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly linked up, not fully with a clear theoretical understanding,.of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society, aquired through the experience of political life...." Consequently "...however much we may try to 'lend the economic struggle itself a political character' we shall never be able to develop the political consciousness of the workers (to the level of Social Democratic political consciousness) by keeping within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow." Quoted in Harding op. cit., p. 163 & p. 165. Also see A. Carlo, "Lenin and the Party", Telos, 17, 1973, p. 8.

30See Lenin, (5; 347-529).

31As Sapir notes, "it is only after the 1905 Revolution that menshevism and bolshevism developed into widely different entities." Sapir, op. cit., p. 353.

32Schapiro provides no evidence for his claim that "when the Second Congress met in Brussels on 30 July 1903 serious theoretical differences divided Lenin from his colleagues on Iskra." Schapiro, op. cit., p. 46. As Haimson notes, it was only after the Congress that the Mensheviks began searching for some doctrinal grounds upon which to base their opposition. Haimson, op. cit., p. 183.
previously accused the economists of. Originally tendencies within a single party, Bolshevism and Menshevism progressively diverged over various fundamental issues, such as the nature of the anti-autocratic movement, and the role of the party and the working class in the forthcoming revolution. The 1905 Revolution would test the political acumen of both wings in practice.

Prior to 1905, Leninism had evolved only one of what Marcel Leibman has defined as "its two major features", namely, organisational discipline. During the revolution the second feature would begin to manifest itself in practice, namely, flexibility of policy in accordance with what Lenin often described as the 'immediate tasks of the day'. It was during these periods of revolutionary foment that Lenin learned to fashion the Bolshevik organisation into the purposive instrument for realising revolutionary possibility.

4.4. THE PARTY AND THE 1905 REVOLUTION

This section examines the ideological and organisational effect of the 1905-7 Revolution upon the two main tendencies within the RSDLP. During this period Lenin attempted to forge the party into the purposive instrument of revolution. This required the utmost tactical flexibility within an overall framework of a theoretical understanding of the structural dynamics of Russian social reality. Bolshevism must ultimately be judged in relation to its performance during revolutionary situations, for, as Lukacs argued, Leninism was characterised by its focal attention upon the 'actuality' of revolution. Even during the periods of utmost class tranquillity Lenin consciously based the tactics of the party upon the predicted re-emergence of an insurrectionary revolutionary situation. In his attempt to transform the party into the purposive spearhead Lenin, more than any other Russian Marxist, immersed himself in the minutest details of revolutionary insurrection and class warfare. While the defeat of the revolution signalled a revision of immediate tactics, the experience provided Lenin with invaluable practical and theoretical ammunition for future revolutionary situations.

The introspective focus upon factional fighting immediately prior to 1905 had affected the party's agitational work. In the year and a half between the Second Congress and Bloody Sunday (January 1905) the party lost ground in its relations with the mass movement and political agitation diminished alarmingly. The party was hopelessly unprepared for the events of Bloody Sunday when the autocracy opened fire upon a peaceful demonstration of workers demanding an improvement in living standards. This demonstration (which went to

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33The Mensheviks received theoretical ammunition from the Polish Social Democrat Rosa Luxemburg, who upheld the belief in the spontaneous self-discipline which the working class would acquire in the course of its struggle. See R. Luxemburg, "Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy", in Harding (ed), op. cit. For a discussion on Luxemburg's position on the relationship between party and class, see J. Molyneux, Marxism and the Party, Pluto, London, 1980, Ch. 4.


petition the Tsar) was led by Father Gapon, a priest, workers' organiser and police agent. The savagery of the Tsarist response, combined with growing discontent over the war with Japan, resurrected the mass strike movement and galvanised all sectors of the opposition in their demand for the destruction or dismantling of the Tsarist order.

Although it is impossible to gauge accurately RSDLP membership on the eve of 1905 (due to the conditions of illegality and the rapidly changing fortunes of the party) a variety of estimates provide an idea of its size and social composition. David Lane has estimated that the "membership of the Committees of the RSDLP in Russia in 1903 could not have been more than a few thousand." A higher estimate of 10,000 has been suggested by Robert Service for 1904. In comparison with the neo-populists, Marxist allegiance appears impressive. According to Radkey, "Deeply fissured though it was...the Marxian party was much stronger than its Narodnik rival, even in point of numbers, not to speak of discipline or solidarity of organisation." For 1905, a figure of 8,400 was provided by Strumilin for the Bolshevik faction, and Lane estimates that Menshevik membership was roughly equivalent.

Concerning social composition, Lane has argued that the RSDLP was "predominantly a working class party" while the social status of approximately one-fifth of the membership could be described as petty-bourgeois. On the basis of the figure of 8,400 members for 1905, the class breakdown of Bolshevism reveals that 61% were workers, 27.4% were white collar and 4.8% were peasants. However, even if the above evidence is accepted, this should not deflect attention away from the fact that the RSDLP, or even its Bolshevik faction, was unable to exert significant influence upon the growing workers' movement. The numerical presence of a majority of workers in the party did not alter the fact, acknowledged by Lenin, that the party had yet to insert itself into the class as a dominant political force. Indeed, one Bolshevik activist of the period lamented "the remoteness of our organisation from the broad masses and its ignorance of the life and interests of these masses."

The revolutionary turmoil of 1905 and the breakdown of Tsarist authority totally altered the political conditions under which the party could operate, and thus necessitated a transformation of party organisation and tactics conducive to the new environment. Evidence that Lenin's organisational prescriptions were historically specific and subordinated to the

39Quoted in Lane, op. cit., p. 15.
40Ibid., p. 12.
41Ibid., pp. 20-1. Furthermore, the Mensheviks attracted a larger proportion of middle class members than the Bolsheviks. It is notable that Lane's empirical evidence contradicts the oft-repeated, yet unverified, claim that the Bolsheviks were primarily a small, conspiratorial sect of dissaffected middle-class intellectuals, or marginalised elites.
43Quoted in Cliff, op. cit., p. 133.
changing vicissitudes of the concrete class struggle is revealed in the activities of the Bolsheviks during the period. If this is recognised, then the fact that Lenin's pronouncements during 1905 departed radically from those outlined in *What Is To Be Done?* should not come as a surprise. As Harding points out, for Lenin the organisational form of the party "had to be appropriate to the tasks which each successive phase of development imposed upon the class..." While Lenin continued to subscribe to the view that the party had to do more than merely reflect the existing level of class consciousness, the revolutionary environment revealed to Lenin the fact that the party could be out-stripped by the broad masses in a revolutionary insurrection. The actual material conditions of life and the involvement in actual struggle released the revolutionary potential of the masses far more than any amount of propaganda and agitation could ever have achieved. Under these conditions Lenin argued that the party had to 'open up' its structure and legal fronts in order to absorb, mobilise and direct the revolutionary energy of the masses towards the realisation of the immediate task of promoting revolutionary democracy.

This possibility was enhanced by the *de facto* conditions of legality which the breakdown of Tsarist order had opened. Against the opposition of local *apparatchiks* Lenin demanded the recruitment of ever broader numbers of workers not only into the organisation, but also into positions of authority. Furthermore, in contrast with the sectarian demand of numerous leaders in Russia that the newly formed workers councils (soviets) adhere to the Bolshevik programme, Lenin demanded that the slogan 'the party or the soviets' be replaced with 'both the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Party'. Bolsheviks, he argued, should incorporate themselves within the broad democratic workers' organs and attempt to win them over to the party's platform. Only thus could the party gain the confidence of the mass organisations and accumulate sufficient material force to lead the civil war against the autocracy.

While the previous 'epochal shifts' which were discussed in the first two sections corresponded to the move from the terrain of propaganda to agitation, Lenin recognised that a revolutionary situation necessitated another shift onto the terrain of broad-based *military-political organisation for insurrection*. This shift was characterised by tactical flexibility, combining open, legal political tasks of explaining the conjunctural situation with underground activity in preparation for insurrection. At these moments the purposive role of the party assumed paramount importance. This shift corresponded with the "profound changes that had taken place in the conditions of life and in the whole mentality of the working class, as well as by the fact that increasingly wide strata of the working class were roused to more conscious and

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44 Harding, op. cit., p. 235.


46 On the impact of the revolution on Lenin's theory of the relationship between the party and the class, see Carlo, op. cit., pp. 24-5; J. Molyneux, op. cit., pp. 57-63.


48 Quoted in ibid., p. 88.
active struggle. The organisational metamorphosis of the party was a reflection of the perceived need to mobilise and direct the energy of the insurrectionary classes during the revolutionary situation. While the hegemony of the establishment was substantially shaken, the insurrectionary challenge suffered from organisational inexperience. According to Lenin, the raison d'être of Bolshevism was to provide the necessary organisation and coordination to overcome this deficiency.

By April 1906 Bolshevik membership had increased to an estimated 13,000 and by 1907 had escalated to 46,143. By this stage the Bolsheviks could be regarded as a mass working class party, not only in terms of social composition, but also in terms of its influence on the direction of the broad class movement. It was the Moscow Bolsheviks who led the local Moscow Soviet uprising of late-1905.

In addition to demanding the organisational restructuring of the party during the period of revolutionary ascent, Lenin continued to argue for clarification of the party programme in order to ascertain the limits and realisable goals of the anti-autocratic democratic revolution. Lenin stressed that a Marxist insight into Russian reality necessitated a sharp distinction between the 'immediate' aims of the movement and its 'ultimate' aim. It was on the basis of this distinction that Lenin argued in 1905 that Marxist political practice departed from other revolutionaries such as anarchists and Social Revolutionaries who sought the immediate introduction of socialism. The task of the Bolsheviks was to forge "class alliances" around the 'minimum programme', thus fully representing the community of forces and demands of the democratic revolution as a whole. The Bolshevik programme thus included "the demands of the workers in the political sphere, and economic demands within the framework of capitalism in the economic sphere." On the basis of this distinction between the minimum and the maximum programme Lenin continued to adapt practice to the basic tenets of Russian orthodox Marxism. This involved recognising the democratic, rather than socialist, nature of the impending revolution, the hegemonic role of the proletariat in realising the democratic tasks, and the political unreliability of the bourgeoisie.

Six fundamental demands were raised by the party as its "political banner and immediate programme". This minimum programme included a constituent assembly of all the people, arming of the people, political freedom, complete freedom for the oppressed and disenfranchised nationalities, the 8-hour day and the establishment of peasant revolutionary
While Lenin had to defend the cautious policy of Bolshevism against leftist critics, he increasingly had to defend the basic tenets of Russian orthodox Marxism against a trend within Menshevism which mistook the democratic tasks of the revolution for the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the process. As Schapiro notes "One of the casualties of 1905 was the menshevik belief in the 'hegemony' of the proletariat..." In Lenin's theoretical and programmatic equation the immediate task was to institute the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry", representing the only two classes which could be relied upon to realise the democratic objectives of the revolution.

This assessment of the composition of the revolutionary classes distinguished the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks, who retained greater optimism in the revolutionary potential of the liberal bourgeoisie. Lenin, on the other hand, argued that the bourgeoisie, confronted with a proletarian and peasant uprising, had ceased to be a revolutionary class. Despite this appraisal, which still incorporated the fundamental tenets of 'orthodox' Russian Marxism, Lenin's characterisation of the revolution was ambiguous. Along with the Mensheviks, he remained a prisoner of the overdrawn orthodox Marxist distinction between the bourgeois and the socialist stages of the revolution.

The disagreements between Lenin and the Mensheviks continued to revolve around an axis which a priori constrained the movement of the revolution within a mechanical stage theory of social development. According to this dogma, the objective conditions of existence limited possibilities within a 'bourgeois democratic' framework. It was Leon Trotsky who recognised the theoretical and practical deficiencies inherent within the framework when he argued that the "general sociological term bourgeois revolution by no means solves the politico-tactical problems, contradictions and difficulties which the mechanics of a given bourgeois revolution throw up." The proletariat, being the "chief actor" in the Russian Revolution, would inevitably be "impelled towards power, and that once this power had been established it will not give it up without a desperate resistance, until it is torn from its hands by armed force." While this was essentially the position which Lenin adopted in 1917, during 1905 he persevered with the immediate task of implementing the 'democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the

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53 Lenin, (8; 566-7). Defending the cautious nature of the programme against 'anarchistic' objections that the Marxists were putting off the socialist revolution Lenin replied that they "were not putting it off, but are taking the first steps towards it in the only possible way, along the only correct path, namely, the path of a democratic republic." Lenin, (9; 29).

54 Schapiro, op. cit., p. 82. This was especially true of Potresov who, after 1905, aimed "his sharpest darts at the idea of the proletariat's 'hegemony'." Sapir, op. cit., p. 359. Plekhanov had sought the views of Kautsky in order to 'clear up' this confusion and Kautsky had replied in a manner closer to Lenin's understanding than that of the new tendency within Menshevism. In an article in December 1906 Lenin used Kautsky's authority to berate the Mensheviks. "Of course the Russian revolution is not a socialist revolution. The socialist dictatorship of the proletariat (its 'undivided sway') is out of the question. But neither is it a bourgeois revolution, for "the bourgeoisie is not one of the driving forces of the present revolutionary movement in Russia". "Whenever the proletariat comes out independently, the bourgeoisie ceases to be a revolutionary class."" Lenin, (11; 372).

55 For variations within Menshevism on the behaviour of the bourgeoisie, see Haimson, op. cit., p. 200-2.


peasantry'. As Max Shachtman points out, no "polemical attack could compel him to be consistently specific about the relationship between the two classes in the democratic dictatorship or about the relationships between the political parties that would represent them in it. When the revolution finally occurred, the formula proved to be disoriented and worthless."53 It took a reassessment of the dynamics of the laws of uneven and combined development, stimulated by the events of the First World War, in order for Lenin to discard this theoretical straitjacket and dogmatism. This theoretical revision would compel the Bolsheviks to discard the old minimum programme of 1905. However, Lenin's polemics with the Mensheviks over the nature and class hegemony of the revolution marked an important step in clarifying the distinction between the two factions. After 1905, the two tendencies within Russian Marxism progressively diverged over these problems.

The epoch between 1895 and 1907 witnessed a quantitative and qualitative transformation within the Russian Marxist movement. In organisational terms the movement had succeeded in creating a disciplined national structure adhering to a party centre and definite programme. While the Second Congress in 1903 resulted in a serious split within the RSDLP, contact between local Bolshevik and Menshevik factions (where they existed) remained strong and did not inhibit united grass-roots activity during the 1905-6 upheavals. Ideologically, the party was able to transcend the debate with the Narodniks over the feasibility of capitalist development in Russia and concentrate upon the internal debate relating to the nature of the revolutionary process in Russia and the relationship between the party and the class. While the original split of 1903 appeared to bear little relation to these problems, the experiences of 1905-6 began to clarify ideological differences between Bolshevism and Menshevism. Within this ideological division Lenin and the Bolsheviks upheld the mantle of 'orthodox' Russian Marxism, and secured their reputation as the more radical wing of Russian Social Democracy in programmatic and practical terms.

The revolution also witnessed the quantitative growth of the party and the broadening of its working class base. Given the Bolshevik understanding of the party-as-vanguard the recruitment of 40,000 members by 1907 reflects the popularity of Bolshevik demands and ability of the party to lead the broad movement, such as the events in Moscow in late-1905. The ability of the Bolsheviks to expand rapidly and mobilise the forces of revolution reflected Lenin's recognition that organisation had to be subordinated to the concrete tasks of the day. The party's task was to represent, mobilise and channel the elemental forces of the revolution in the direction that the party's theoretical insight into the possibilities of the revolution dictated. In other words, it had to fulfil the role of a purposive spearhead. The experience of 1905-6 was an important practical lesson for Lenin on the relationship between party and class, and of the dangers of the party falling behind the mass momentum. Despite the ebb which followed, the movement drew a significant number of workers and cadres into the Social Democratic orbit, and the resulting experience provided a historical reference, ideologically and organisationally, which would help frame and inform praxis in the future.

During each of the epochs analysed in this chapter, the Bolsheviks were forced to respond to specific conjunctural changes in Russia's political and economic climate. These changes were problematic, involving different perceptions of Russian reality and the potential, or possibilities, inherent in each situation. Conflicting organisational and ideological views affected the relationship between the various parties and the various classes, and also the ability of a purposive movement to mobilise and channel the elemental forces of the revolution. Furthermore, conflicting perceptions of the nature of the revolution affected the willingness of the various parties to channel the revolutionary current towards a particular goal. This is not to suggest that these purposive factors (or lack of) determined the outcome of the revolutionary situation in 1905. Structural factors were crucial in determining its potential. The army remained the coercive bulwark of the existing polity. This would not occur in February and October 1917. Furthermore, the elemental surge of the revolution reached its climax as a united effort of 'society' against the 'state'. The class heterogeneity of the movement was a blessing in disguise for the Tsarist order. Its demands and activity were unco-ordinated, and in the midst of this chaos the tottering state was able the diffuse the explosive situation through promising piecemeal reforms. The appeasement of the liberal bourgeoisie, the stability of the army, and the defeat of the Moscow Soviet uprising, all account for the rapidity with which the coalition of the anti-autocratic revolutionary forces disintegrated. During the revolutionary situations of 1914 and 1917 the coalition of revolutionary forces was more polarised. Never again would the liberal bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia be presented with such a splendid opportunity to lead society against the old regime. Their half-heartedness, and inability to fully capitalise on the revolutionary potential led to a more polarised anti-autocratic movement in the aftermath of the revolution.

As the social instability of 1914 and 1917 revealed, the working class never recovered this same degree of confidence in the bourgeoisie. Yet as a comparison of these years will demonstrate, the working class required a purposive organisational centre in order to realise its revolutionary potential. In 1914 this purposive centre was absent. In 1917 the Bolsheviks were the only organisation willing to break completely with the liberal bourgeoisie (or, as Martov put it, to "throw down the gauntlet to the anti-proletarian forces") and were the only organisation willing to fulfil the purposive role of leading the movement towards insurrection. They did this on the basis of a socialist programme. During 1905 Lenin considered this inconceivable and 'pre-scientific'. It would take a conceptual shift in Lenin's thought before he argued that the Bolsheviks could fulfil this role of leading the revolution in the direction of socialism. This transformation will be the subject of the next two sections.

As argued above, Lenin's reading of structural developments during 1905, like the Mensheviks', limited its possibilities far more than Trotsky's. However, 1905 provided Lenin

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59 See L. Haimson, "The Problem of Urban Stability in Russia, 1905-1917", in M. Cherniavsky (ed), The Structure of Russian History, Random House, N.Y., 1970. "For this flickering moment, the intelligentsia, which had emerged as the prototype...of this united nation, managed to induce the groups under its sway to bury the long-standing differences of interests, outlook, and values that had separated them and to agree on a common set of discrete political objectives, to a common vision, however partial and abstracted of Russia's immediate political future, if not her ultimate destiny," p. 375.
with important lessons concerning the relationship between the party and the insurrectionary classes during an insurrectionary situation. These lessons would be reviewed during 1917 when Lenin once more emphasized the purposive role of the party in realising the revolution's socialist potential. However, before this occurred, Lenin's flexibility would be tested once more in the years of reaction between 1907 and 1911, and the renewed upsurge in the workers' movement immediately prior to the First World War.

4.5. REACTION, REVIVAL AND THE MASS MOVEMENT

The reaction associated with the Tsarist Minister of the Interior Stolypin extinguished the revolutionary impulse of 1905-6 and reimposed severe restrictions upon workers' organisation. The revolutionary movement was "spectacularly crushed". From a total of 150,000 members in 1907, the RSDLP dwindled to 10,000 in 1910. The inhospitable political climate forced the Social Democratic movement to revise its activity, and assume a pure 'survival' footing. In addition to the inevitable disillusionment following the failure of its aspirations during the revolution, the Marxist movement remained split, and differences crystalised. Even within the tendencies, tendencies emerged. The movement was rent asunder due to conflicting appraisals of the past events and current attitudes towards the state. Repression and police infiltration continued to hinder freedom of activity and helped to poison the revolutionary atmosphere and deplete it of valuable cadres. Despite this, the debates during the reaction were important in clarifying the different assessments of reality adopted by the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. These assessments would be tested once the workers' movement revived in 1912.

The disunity within the movement was exacerbated as early as 1906 over the tactics to be adopted towards the liberal parties in the Duma. The practical implications of this debate would manifest themselves during the revolutionary situation of 1917. Lenin berated the Menshevik Duma faction for their conciliatory attitude towards the Constitutional Democrats (Kadets). The Mensheviks adopted a rosier appraisal of the potentialities of Russian liberalism, revising their pre-1905 position towards the bourgeoisie and liberalism, arguing that the bourgeois nature of the revolution required joint action with the liberals in order to dismantle the structure of Tsarism and replace it with a democratic order. They pointed to the role of liberalism during 1905, when it marched under the anti-autocratic banner in order to wrest constitutional concessions from the Tsar.

Once more, the nature of the revolution and the role of the proletariat and the party became the axis around which the party debated. However, while at the turn of the century the Iskraites had challenged the economists tailism, after 1905 sectors within the Menshevik faction adopted a position similar to the heresy of economism. As Harding points out:

It was in the name of the leading role of the proletariat in the democratic revolution that Lenin and the orthodox inveighed against the economists at the turn of the century. It was in the name of this principle that Lenin excoriated the Mensheviks who, he alleged, moved progressively away from 1903 onwards to the point where, in 1905, they were prepared to accept the ignoble

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role of merely 'assisting' the treacherous bourgeoisie in prosecuting the democratic revolution.61

Lenin denounced what he described as a 'liquidationist' trend within the party seeking to dismantle the conspiratorial, illegal party structure and convene a workers' congress which could take advantage of the legal possibilities opened by the October 1905 constitution. Aksel'rod and Potresov argued that the party should take advantage of the concessions wrested from Tsarism and develop a party along Western European Social Democratic lines, emphasizing more 'gradualist' change.62 The Duma and the formal constitutional guarantees ceded by the Tsar in the height of the revolutionary foment were interpreted by many Mensheviks as a step along the gradualist, evolutionary transformation of Russia into a civil, constitutional regime. Consequently, Marxists had to utilise these openings to improve the bargaining position of labour and expand the legality granted in 1905. This necessitated the dismantling of, or de-emphasis on, the moribund conspiratorial party structure. Furthermore, it was important not to alienate the liberals or drive them into the camp of reaction.

The psychological environment produced by the reaction hit the Mensheviks especially hard and contributed to their reconsideration of the restructuring of the party. Potresov admitted at the end of 1907 that "I do not think that this disintegration, this demoralisation have anywhere manifested themselves so vividly as with us Mensheviks. Not only is their no organisation, there are not even elements of one." Given this appraisal, it was natural for Potresov and Martov to argue that it was not even necessary to dismantle the illegal structure, for this structure was effectively dead, composed principally of an 'intellectual dictatorship' divorced from the life of the working class.63 The former bluntly stated; "Let my readers judge: in the summer of 1909, can there exist in sober reality, and not merely the figment of a diseased imagination, a school of thought that advocates liquidating what has already ceased to be an organic whole."64

On the other hand, Fainsod notes that the Bolshevik faction, reviving the organisational principles adopted prior to 1905, adjusted better than the Mensheviks to the Stolypin reaction.65 This led them to a less negative appraisal of maintaining and emphasizing the underground in

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61 Harding, op. cit., p. 47.


63 See Sapir, op. cit., p. 360.

64 Quoted in A. Ascher (ed), The Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution, Thames and Hudson, G.B., 1976, p. 70.

65 Fainsod, op. cit., p. 45.
the prevailing conditions. Lenin argued that given the democratic revolution had failed to be consummated and reaction had set in, the old Iskraite position still retained much validity. To dismantle the national underground party and subsume it under an open ‘workers’ congress’ (to play at European Social Democracy) would leave the movement unprotected from reaction and would blunt the spearhead of the revolutionary movement. The ‘realism’ of Menshevik demands would lead inevitably to its subordination to liberalism and the rejection of the revolutionary democratic demands set forth in 1905.

For Lenin, the reaction and demoralisation were merely conjunctural. The experience of 1905 and its aftermath, while providing the movement with instructive lessons, did not transform the nature of existing power and class relations. Consequently, the socio-economic analysis he presented remained tied to the orthodoxy of the pre-revolutionary period. His political and organisational principles corresponded to this analysis, resting upon an optimism that the conjuncture of reaction would merely spawn a stronger and more determined revolutionary upsurge. The Mensheviks argued that though the revolution had failed to fulfil its democratic objectives, a constitutional process had begun and its consolidation required an alliance with liberalism in order to ensure that Russia was granted Western European legal guarantees. Organisationally, this corresponded to the need to transform the party along Western Social Democratic lines.

Thus, an accumulation of factors deepened the rift between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks after 1905. These included conflicting appraisals of the revolution and the respective roles of the proletariat and the liberals, conflicting attitudes towards internal organisational reform and interests relating to the respective social composition of the factions. The validity and strength of these respective theoretical insights and praxis were tested as the workers’ movement re-emerged after 1910.

At the end of 1911 Lenin observed that the bleakest period of reaction appeared to have run its course and, as predicted, the workers were "gradually going over to the offensive". The number of strikes doubled to 100,000 during 1911. Moreover, the Lena Goldfields massacre in February 1912 provided fresh evidence that ‘gradualist’ policies within the confines of the autocratic structure would doom the movement to impotency. By mid-1912, strikes and

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66In 1920, Lenin recalled that; "Of all the defeated opposition and revolutionary parties, the Bolsheviks affected the most orderly retreat, with the least loss to their ‘army’, with its core best preserved." Lenin, (31; 28). David Lane, op. cit., in his analysis of the social composition of the RSDLP in 1907, has argued that the greater emphasis which the Mensheviks placed upon ‘economistic’ activity and their ‘less aggressive policy’ in general may be attributed to the social composition of their faction. At the grass roots, he observes, the Bolsheviks were based mainly upon the urban proletariat, whereas the Mensheviks had “supporters across class lines.” Furthermore, Menshevik recruitment within the proletariat derived from “the better paid and more skilled workers and less from among the poorer peasant urban newcomers.”(p. 213) Lane also mentions that Menshevik demands for greater decentralisation and local autonomy may well have been related to the fact that whereas Bolsheviks were based largely in Russian-speaking areas, the Mensheviks had a larger proportion of national minorities.(p. 42.) "The Menshevik demand for more autonomy to local units was related to their local factional strength, to their support among the national minorities and across economic class lines. Their demand for a more decentralized form of party, for more ‘democracy’ in local units were closely related to the social structure of the Menshevik faction and to the political interests of its leaders.”(p. 211.)

67Harding, op. cit., 283.
demonstrations against Tsarist repression had erupted throughout the empire. While most of the strikes during the upturn of 1911 had been of an economic nature, 1912 witnessed an increase in political strikes. This was due to the uncompromising response of Tsarism towards workers' economic demands, highlighted by the Lena events. Elwood argues that behind "these economic and political strikes was a sense of frustration with parliamentary reform and moderate trade-unionism". It was precisely in these fields that the Mensheviks had targeted their activity.

In a repetition of 1905, this increase in worker militancy found the Social Democrats unprepared, still reeling from the years of repression and police surveillance. Although the Bolsheviks succeeded in establishing a Russian Bureau of the Central Committee early in 1912, and a St Petersburg Committee in November of the same year, the development of the underground was still plagued by arrests and police infiltration. Despite this, their radical demands began to strike more of a chord within the growing workers' movement than the Mensheviks' gradualism.

In legal areas of activity (such as unions, the Duma and insurance boards) the Bolsheviks began to outpace the Mensheviks. As Elwood notes: "By articulating the growing dissatisfaction of the members of these groups and by offering militant solutions to their long-standing grievances, the Bolsheviks in particular were able to broaden their appeal and their influence." In the areas which the Mensheviks had targeted, the Bolsheviks began to win spectacular victories. As Getzler notes, the Mensheviks "found themselves harassed and beaten in their own areas of activity." The circulation of the Bolshevik paper, Pravda, outstripped the Menshevik paper, Luch. In union elections the 'pravdists' defeated the 'liquidationists' winning control of 10 of the 13 unions. In the elections for the Fourth Duma in 1912 the nine seats allocated to the workers curia were dominated by the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, in the elections for workers delegates on the All-Russian Insurance Boards the Bolsheviks took 82.4% of the seats. Assessing the Mensheviks' position, Martov admitted in September 1913 that: "It is altogether likely that in the course of this season, our (union) positions in Petersburg will be

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69 As Sapir has noted, "When the workers recovered from their post-1905 apathy, it was the Bolshevik underground that caught up with most of the new cadres in the legal organizations that the Mensheviks had created. This began, roughly, after the Lena shootings..." Sapir, op. cit., p. 357.

70 Noting the upsurge Lenin lamented to Gorky: "...there is no organization - I could simply weep." Quoted in Elwood, op. cit., p. 237.


72 Elwood, op. cit., p. 241.

73 Getzler, op. cit., p. 135.


75 See Lenin, (20, 381-391), for a compilation of data.
squeezed even further. But that is not what is awful. What is worse is that from an organizational point of view, Menshevism...remains a weak little circle."76 The respective strengths of the two wings of Russian Social Democracy was a reflection of their perceptions of socio-political developments moulded during the years of repression. As Haimson notes, the anti-autocratic movement had polarised since 1905, and the workers' movement was less prepared to compromise with the liberal bourgeoisie.77 One can concur with Ascher that "in de-emphasizing illegal organisations the [Mensheviks] had handed the Leninists with a clear advantage in waging propaganda and in recruiting supporters among the workers".78

However, the Bolsheviks' capacity for recruiting workers and rallying them around Bolshevik demands was not matched by co-ordinated organisation. This absence of sufficient organisation became apparent on the eve of the First World War, as the militancy of the workers' movement assumed revolutionary proportions. As the previous molecular development of the party's organisation and ideology suggested, periods of heightening class warfare required the existence of a purposive revolutionary centre capable of co-ordinating underground politico-military activity. As Haimson observes, despite the growing correspondence between Bolshevik slogans and the workers' spontaneous radicalism the party was unable to organise and coordinate effectively the workers' "elemental mood of revolt".79 Elwood also notes that "side by side with the 'collosal growth of the mass movement' there was the helplessness of the underground party and its obvious inability to give direction to the popular unrest...Just as the party did not cause the revival of workers' unrest in 1912, so also it could neither lead nor restrain the workers in July 1914."80

However, the events of the previous years had revealed that Menshevik 'gradualism' and 'legalism' was ill-attuned to periods of workers militancy, and that Bolshevism was closer "in spirit to the masses",81 as one Menshevik trade-unionist admitted. Despite their organisational weakness, Lenin could justifiably reflect on the eve of the war that:

The correctness of the Pravdists' programmatic, tactical and organizational ideas, their decisions and line has been wholly and splendidly confirmed by the experience of the mass movement in 1912, 1913 and half of 1914.82

76 Quoted in Getzler, op. cit., pp. 135-6.
79 Haimson, op. cit., p. 356.
80 Elwood, p. 240 & p. 243. Victoria Bonnell comes to a similar conclusion. "The Bolsheviks cannot be credited with having radicalized workers: the disposition to embrace radical solutions arose out of the workers' own experiences with employers and the state. But the party gave tactical and ideological expression to these experiences, calling for the abandonment of a gradualist approach and the adoption instead of revolutionary methods to end tsarist rule." V.E. Bonnell, Roots of Rebellion: Workers' Politics and Organizations in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 1900-1914, University of California, 1983, p. 437.
81 Ibid., p. 242.
82 Lenin, (20; 387).
The epoch between the revolution of 1905 and the First World War revealed Lenin's tactical flexibility, and the strength of his organisational theory. His arguments concerning the need for a disciplined, underground organisation were confirmed by the 'legal' successes which the Bolsheviks achieved once the workers' movement re-emerged after the worst years of repression. This conviction was based upon the realisation that Russia had still not embarked upon the Western track of development. Therefore, party tactics could not correspond to the Western European Social Democratic mould which the Mensheviks wished to insert themselves. The experience of the years immediately prior to the war also pointed to the need for the party to concentrate its efforts upon developing politico-military activity in order to co-ordinate the challenge to the existing polity once a revolutionary situation re-emerged. It would require the more open political environment of 1917 in order to provide the link between the demands of the mass movement and a purposive organisational centre intent upon channelling and realising these demands. During 1917, Lenin drew upon these lessons of this molecular development in order to transform the party into the purposive vanguard of the October Revolution.

4.6. THE WAR AND THEORETICAL REAPPRAISAL

Russia's declaration of war on the Hapsburg empire and the subsequent engagement of the Entente and Alliance partners in the world war had the effect of engulfing Russia under a wave of patriotism which extinguished the revolutionary fire in St Petersburg.83

Lenin immediately embarked upon a theoretical explanation for the war and the response of the Second International, whose national sections, almost without exception, capitulated to the patriotic nationalism of their governments. What emerged from Lenin's endeavour was a profound and radical reappraisal of his socio-economic analysis. The application of this analysis to Russia's concrete problems resulted in a reassessment of the relationship between the objective and the subjective preconditions for socialist revolution. It represented a break with Western European and Russian orthodox Marxism. As Lowy notes, this orthodoxy was characterised by a 'pre-dialectical' (mechanical, deterministic, evolutionary) form of materialism in which the economic base was viewed as the underlying determinant of consciousness.84 Lenin's philosophical break with this dogma provided the basis for his explanation of the 'degeneracy' of the Second International, and also his analysis of imperialism. Ultimately it led to a conclusion fundamentally similar to Trotsky's; namely, that a less developed country could, on its own, create a socialist revolution, which could then be externalised to the more advanced nations. Without this theoretical shift, Lenin and the Bolsheviks' praxis during 1917 cannot be understood. This section will examine this theoretical shift.

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83 The St Petersburg insurrection had been crushed four days before the declaration of war.

84 See M. Lowy, 'From the 'Logic' of Hegel to the Finland Station', Critique, 6, 1976.
The first problem Lenin confronted was the collapse, or capitulation, of Western European Social Democracy. It was precisely in the most industrially developed nations, where objectively socialist revolution and proletarian class consciousness should have been most advanced, that the Social Democrats’ subservience to the imperialist designs of the capitalist state was most notable. The European Social Democrats’ approval of war credits for the prosecution of the war effort (which conflicted with their previous declarations of opposition to capitalist warmongering) revealed to Lenin the utter and irreparable bankruptcy of the Second International. In addition to calling for the foundation of a new International, Lenin provided a dialectical explanation for the response of the European parties. Even before the war Lenin (like many other Left Social Democrats such as Pannekoek and Luxemburg) had warned of the dangers of revisionism within the movement. This trend accepted the liberal parliamentary framework as the appropriate vehicle for peacefully introducing socialist measures. The long period of parliamentary passivity and open, legal pressure upon the capitalist state to improve piecemeal the conditions of labour had brought to the fore union leaders and party bureaucrats who had lost sight of the ultimate goal of Social Democracy, and had transformed the movement into a pressure group within the confines of the bourgeois order seeking to defend their achievements through class collaboration. The theoretical consequence was the acceptance of the confines of the capitalist state and legal framework as a premise for action. Labour and party bureaucrats, with an aristocracy of labour as its social base, had thus truncated Marxism as a movement for overthrowing capitalism and instituting the socialisation of production and had transformed it into a movement for improving the condition of wage labour. The movement, to paraphrase Eduard Bernstein, became everything, while the goal meant nothing. This was anathema to Lenin, for whom the goal of transcending the form of wage labour and abolishing exploitation was the rationale which justified the existence of the party. It lay at the very heart of Lenin’s conception of a purposive vanguard.

Neil Harding has argued that Lenin’s analysis of the degeneration of Social Democracy bore a "striking resemblance" to Robert Michels’ analysis in Political Parties, published in 1911. However, these similarities are not as striking as the differences in the two approaches. While Michels’ analysis rested upon his universalistic ‘iron law of oligarchy’ (the tendency of power and decision-making within large-scale organisations, no matter how democratic, to become accumulated into the hands of a few strategically positioned individuals), Lenin emphasized the particular socio-economic environment which had spawned the organisational and ideological degeneracy of the movement. He argued that:

...decades of a so-called peaceful epoch have allowed an accumulation of petty-bourgeois and opportunistic junk within the socialist parties of all the European countries....There is hardly a single Marxist of note who has not recognized...that the opportunists are in fact a non-proletarian element hostile to the socialist revolution. The particularly rapid growth of this social element of late years is beyond doubt: it includes officials of the legal labour unions, parliamentarians and other intellectuals who have got themselves easy and comfortable posts in the legal mass

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85See Lenin’s article on the thirtieth anniversary of Marx’s death. Lenin (18: 582-5).
movement, some sections of the better paid workers, office employees etc., etc."  

The second difference between Michels and Lenin was that while Michels (in his 1915 afterword) viewed the Social Democrats' response to the war as a manifestation of the bankruptcy of socialism as a living ideology (and its supersession by nationalism), Lenin saw contemporary Social Democracy as a betrayal of socialism. A new International had to be formed, operating on an ideological and organisational foundation which would ensure that the movement was protected from the seduction of class collaboration within the capitalist state.

These differences were a reflection of opposing models of social analysis. While Lenin, like Hegel and Marx, opposed "making the concept of law absolute" and used theory as a guide for action, Michels sought a universal determinism which led to an "uncritical treatment of aspects of the present, as if they were historically final." Another methodological difference was Lenin's more holistic approach to the study of social phenomena, compared to Michels more atomistic method. The iron law of oligarchy derived from Michels' treating Social Democracy in itself, abstracted from its social environment. The 'law' was seen as inherent in the object as an isolated entity. Lenin, on the other hand, approached the study through analysing its interrelationships in the totality of social relations. This was crucial, because it led Lenin to focus not only upon the relationship between the party and society, but also upon the particular phase of world capitalist development, namely imperialism. The bankruptcy of Social Democracy, Lenin argued, was inseparable from its role in perpetuating colonial plunder. Imperialism, Lenin claimed:

meant a sum of super-profits and special privileges for the bourgeoisie. It meant, moreover, the possibility of enjoying crumbs from this big cake for a small minority of the petty-bourgeois, as well as for the better paid employees, officials of the labour movement etc... In a word, the 'all-pervading gradualism' of the (last years) has created...an entire opportunist trend based on a definite social stratum within present day democracy and linked with the bourgeoisie of its own national 'shade' by numerous ties of economic, social and political interests - a trend directly, openly, consciously, and systematically hostile to any idea of a break in gradualism.

Thus, the concept of imperialism and colonial super-profits was not simply an extension of Lenin's socio-economic analysis. It signalled an entire theoretical shift in his understanding of the dynamics of capitalist development and thus, socialist revolution. This reappraisal brought Lenin's analysis closer to Trotsky's position.

As demonstrated above, Lenin's socio-economic analysis up to the world war differed from other trends within Russian Marxism. However, all tendencies had been involved in the same problematic; namely, the rate of capitalist development in Russia, and the nature of the Russian

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87Quoted in Harding, op. cit., pp. 27-8.
89Lowy, op. cit. p. 10.
Revolution. According to Lenin, the war and the debate over the state and imperialism, rendered this national outlook obsolete. His analysis now assumed a more holistic stance, concentrating not upon national capitalist development, but the dynamic interaction and interrelationship between national capitals on the world-wide scale. The era of imperialism ("the highest stage of capitalism") made imperative a correct appreciation of the whole world-system in order to determine the function and dynamics of the parts.

A consequence of this theoretical shift was that the question of the peasantry assumed a less important position in Lenin's political understanding of the revolution. Whereas before, peasant differentiation had been a central concern of Russian Marxist analysis, because this served as an indicator of the growth of capitalism, its importance now diminished in Lenin's general analysis of the dynamics of the revolution. A correct understanding of the dynamics of Russia's development and the likelihood of the collapse of the Tsarist order had to take into account Russia's integration within the international capitalist order.92 Lenin's analysis led him to the conclusion that it was possible that Russia, as the weakest link in the chain of capitalist states, could provide the spark which would change the form of the world conflagration.

This account of the relationship between Lenin's theory and practice can be contrasted with most unsympathetic accounts of Leninism. For example, Plamenatz argues that "Bolshevik additions to and distortions of Marxian doctrine were made to justify policies adopted to take advantage of Russian conditions."93 This diminishes the importance of ideology in the development of Leninist praxis. The account provided here demonstrates that Lenin consistently attempted to apply a Marxist analysis of reality in order to inform his praxis. Imperialism had stimulated the concentration of capital, fulfilling Marx's prediction concerning the growing contradiction between the social nature of production and the private nature of the appropriation of wealth. This contradiction had manifested itself in the obscenity of the imperialist slaughter in the trenches, as national capitals competed through war in order to secure and expand their markets. For Lenin this was evidence than this that capitalism had become a fetter upon the further development of history. Consequently, the immediate task of socialists was to transform the imperialist war into a civil war between capital and the proletariat. This applied to all belligerent nations. The outbreak of civil war in one, single country would spur the proletariat of other nations to turn their weapons against their own generals and capitalists. The chain of imperialist states would break, ushering in the historical task of the hour; the construction of the world-wide socialist order.

On the eve of the February 1917 Revolution, Leninism had evolved, through a molecular process of development and transformation, the features which would characterise Bolshevik praxis throughout 1917. However, on the eve of the revolution the Bolsheviks remained

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structurally weak and disorganised. The molecular development of the party was both ideological and organisational. The relationship between the party and class which Lenin drew from this experience and theoretical development always had as its focal point the goal of leading the revolutionary movement in a revolutionary situation. Its success in harnessing and organising these forces and fulfilling the purposive role of channelling the mass movement towards a socialist vision was a product of the organisation's ability to draw upon and interpret these accumulated experiences of the past. From this experience a particular and unique interpretation of the dynamics of social development had evolved. Had the organisational and ideological development of Bolshevism been different it is conceivable, indeed probable, that there would not have existed a purposive organisation prepared to channel the elemental forces of the revolution in the direction of socialism. The revolutionary situation on the eve of the war was not caused by the Bolsheviks. Neither did they cause the demise of the Tsarist order in February 1917. However, as the next section will argue, the purposive role of the party was necessary in order to mobilise the mass movement towards realising its socialist potential.

4.7. FROM FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER: THE SEIZURE OF POWER

The year 1917 is the climax of the Russian component of this thesis. The World War heightened the tensions within Tsarist society and accelerated the collapse of the system. A situation of multiple sovereignty, or dual power, arose from the wreckage. The immediacy of multiple sovereignty was the product of the growing polarisation of the anti-autocratic movement since 1905. However, the two centres of authority (the Provisional Government and the Soviets) operated in an uneasy peaceful co-existence. As the year progressed, the Provisional Government proved itself unwilling or unable to deal with the fundamental social dilemmas which promoted the demise of Tsarism. Amidst this disillusionment with the government, the Soviets wavered over the question of assuming full governmental authority. Throughout the year (or at least since April) the Bolsheviks were the only major party which advocated Soviet power. The triumph of the Soviets in October was not the inevitable outcome of a structural crisis. There were many within the Soviets who opposed the transfer of power, and even within the Bolshevik Party itself there was dissent over the question of assuming power. Throughout the year Lenin repeatedly had to stress that 'revolutionary democracy' would not unfold naturally out of the objective environment. Despite growing disillusionment with the Provisional Government, he argued, a Soviet victory was not an inevitability. His previous experiences had convinced him that revolution was an art, and timing was of the essence. The Bolshevik role was to act as the purposive agent mobilising and channelling the elemental forces of the revolution. This role was fundamental if the popular classes were to reap the harvest of revolution, rather than suffer the consequences of counter-revolutionary repression. In revolutionary situations it was essential that praxis be effectively engaged at the correct point at the right time. In these moments agency rather than structure determined the immediate course of history. As Neil Harding points out, "there was no absolute certainty that a socialist revolution would occur, or, even if it did, that it would be successful. The maturation of the objective and subjective conditions for a socialist revolution was certainly necessary but still not sufficient for its success. To these conditions would have to be added another which
might be summarised as the purposive organisation of the force that would accomplish the revolution.\(^\text{94}\) In other words, a structural environment can be favorable for socialist revolution, but this remains only a possibility, dependent upon the existence of purposive factors. As this final section will show, there were many even within the Bolshevik Party who clung onto a revolutionary fatalist belief that if they sat tight and allowed events to progress, power would inevitably gravitate towards the Soviets. During 1917 Lenin constantly was forced to pull the party away from this revolutionary fatalism in order to ensure that it would fulfil the missing purposive link of a military-political director of the revolution. For Lenin, the outcome of a revolutionary situation was not pre-determined. If the Bolsheviks succeeded in their *raison d'etre* of becoming the vanguard force of the revolutionary movement, then the course adopted by the party would have a crucial bearing on its outcome. A given correlation of structural forces in itself could not determine the outcome. The role of active purposive intervention was required. Lenin's argument supports the basic contention of this thesis, namely that a structural analysis can account for a revolutionary situation, but it cannot account for the outcome, due to its neglect of purposive factors.

The patriotic sentiment of late-1914 proved short-lived. Tsarist Russia, forced to compete in the war on the same terms as its more industrialised allies and enemies, rapidly began to experience the adverse effects of 'underdevelopment', or relative economic backwardness. This was manifested in the breakdown of transport and distribution networks, disturbance of town-country trade and a break in international trade, decline in industrial output and shortages of fuel, metal and agricultural implements. The general malaise triggered a rise in urban militancy and a reluctance on the part of the peasantry to trade. Furthermore, military defeats and shortages at the front sapped the morale of the army. While autocratic inefficiency incurred the wrath of patriotic liberals and conservatives alike, the underlying reality was that the intensity, scale and length of the war vastly overstretched the economic and organisational capacity of a nation at Russia's level of socio-economic development. The war simply acted as an accelerator, heightening the inherent social tensions within Russia's social structure.

In late-February and early March 1917, amidst a series of strikes, demonstrations and growing troop disloyalty, the Tsar abdicated. A Provisional Government was formed, led by members of the Fourth Duma. Parallel to this process, Soviets re-emerged throughout the empire, representing the interests of factory workers, soldiers and sailors. The uneasy relationship between the two spheres of authority was temporarily overcome through the Soviets' agreement to provide critical support for the Provisional Government. This resolution of the question of 'dual power' was a reflection not only of the Soviets' initial faith that the government could, or would, implement the demands of the forces of the 'revolutionary democracy',\(^\text{95}\) but also a reflection of the assessment of the nature of the revolution by the leading parties which dominated the early Soviets, the Mensheviks and moderate Social-

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\(^{94}\) Harding, op. cit., Vol.2, pp. 72-3.

\(^{95}\) This general term referred to the institutions closer to the Soviets and mass organisations rather than the Provisional Government.
Revolutionaries. These parties perceived the Provisional Government as a temporary step towards the convocation of an All-Russian Constituent Assembly which would consolidate a democratic order representing all classes.

According to Tilly there are three proximate causes of a revolutionary situation, or multiple sovereignty. These are the existence of contenders advancing an alternative claim to governmental authority, a commitment by significant sectors of the population to the contender’s claims, and the incapacity or unwillingness of the polity to suppress the contender. The third condition was clearly present at the beginning of the reign of the Provisional Government. It is contentious whether or not the first two conditions were originally present. At the outset it was possible for the population to support the aspirations of both the Soviets and the Provisional Government, because the nature of the polity had not been tested in practice. Marc Ferro’s study of workers’ telegrams, petitions and letters reveals that during the first month after February, the workers’ aspirations were couched mainly in economic terms. In the general euphoria coinciding with the overthrow of the autocracy this can be interpreted as a sign of workers’ confidence in the ability of the polity to satisfy its aspirations. Furthermore, it was only in April that the Bolsheviks became the first party to consistently advance the slogan "all power to the Soviets", which would be a necessary claim to fulfil Tilly’s first condition. It was much later in the year that the Bolsheviks attained a majority in the most important Soviets. However, despite this, it is still possible to speak of a revolutionary situation, or multiple sovereignty as early as March, due to the conditional support which the Soviets offered the Provisional Government. The most important condition was Order Number 1 which stated that the "orders of the Military Commission of the State Duma shall be executed only in such cases as do not conflict with the orders and resolutions of the Soviet of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies". As the year progressed Tilly’s first two conditions for multiple sovereignty began to manifest themselves more acutely. In this sense it is possible to speak of a ‘creeping’ revolutionary situation.

The Bolsheviks’ initial response to the relationship between the polity and the contender was ambiguous. The February Revolution found the Bolshevik organisation in disarray, due to the effects of Tsarist repression and the exile of its leading cadres. Estimates of the numerical strength of the party range from 23,000 to 45,000, although, as Service acknowledges, this is guesswork, complicated by the maintenance of ‘joint’ Social Democratic organisations in many urban centres, despite the formal Bolshevik-Menshevik split in 1912.

Between late-February and the party conference of late-March the party grappled with the

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question of their attitude towards the new form of state authority. Prevailing views were altered as authoritative spokesmen and Central Committee members returned from Siberian exile. These exiles toned down the initial Bolshevik manifesto and replaced it with a more conciliatory position towards the Provisional Government and more in line with the assessment of the Mensheviks. Fyodor Raskolnikov, the Bolshevik sailor leader in Kronstadt, recalls that during this period "there was rather a lot of confusion in the party. There was no definite consistent line... Inside the party there was no unity of thought: vacillation and disunity were typical, everyday phenomena especially showing themselves at broad Party and fraction meetings."  

The returning Siberian exiles asserted their authority over the more radical, maximalist position of the St Petersburg rank and file. The adopted position called for consolidating the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and called for a less hostile stance on revolutionary defensism. Thus, if the workers' demands had to be presented within the framework of capitalist relations, it flowed logically from this premise that Bolshevik praxis should be informed by the minimum programme of 1905. At the Seventh Conference in late-March the ambiguity of the Bolsheviks' attitude towards supporting the government revealed itself. While all speakers agreed upon the need to deepen the revolutionary process, and upon the bourgeois, imperialist nature of the Provisional Government, controversy raged over the extent to which the Soviets could pressure the government into implementing revolutionary changes inimical to its class interests. Stalin's motion, proposing to "support the Provisional Government in its activity only in so far as it moves along the path of satisfying the working class and the revolutionary peasantry", appealed enough to secure a majority. However, the 'only in so far as' clause evaded the question of the practical Bolshevik response given the hypothetical non-compliance on the part of the government with Soviet wishes. 

These were the prevailing conditions which Lenin encountered upon his return to Petrograd in early-April. He immediately attacked the 'moderates' conciliatory line towards the government and adopted the slogan, "all power to the Soviets". Kamenev, speaking for the majority of the Central Committee, accused Lenin of misreading Russian reality. "As regards Comrade Lenin's general line, it appears to us unacceptable inasmuch as it proceeds from the assumption that the bourgeois-democratic revolution has been completed and it builds on the immediate transformation of the revolution into a socialist revolution." Kamenev's process of deductive logic would have been in line with Lenin's assessment of the 1905 revolution.

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100 The manifesto was published in Izvestia and is summarised in Carr, op. cit., pp. 83-5. The more conciliatory position is summarised in pp. 85-8. 

101 Indeed, Leibman has labelled the Bolsheviks a 'Menshevik tending party' during this period. See Leibman, Leninism..., pp. 117-24. 


However, as pointed out above, during the war Lenin had shifted his theoretical position on the dynamics of Russian development, through incorporating the concept of imperialism. Russia, as the weakest link in the chain of imperialist states, had been given an unique opportunity to end the war and ignite the torch of international class warfare. Rather than arguing that Russia was unripe for socialist revolution, he argued that capitalism on a world scale had entered a period of degeneracy, rendering conditions ripe for world revolution. The imperialist nature of the Provisional Government would inhibit its ability to solve the fundamental structural problems which provoked the demise of Tsarism.

Given this analytical shift, Lenin argued that the old minimum programme of 1905, which the conference majority clung to, was obsolete. In his April Thesis he called for an immediate Party congress which would change the party programme, chiefly "on imperialism, the state and amend the outdated minimum programme."¹⁰⁵

Lenin recognised that his slogan did not correspond to the immediate aspirations of the majority of the Russian masses. However, his socio-economic analysis predicted their growing dissatisfaction with a government tied to the Entente and the logic of imperialism. Given this, it remained the task of the party to explain the conjunctural changes to the mass movement and become open enough to mobilise and channel the growing militancy which would inevitably arise. The experiences of 1905 and the first half of 1914 had sharpened his awareness that without a purposive organisation to channel mass dissatisfaction an objectively revolutionary situation could be lost and lead to reaction.

In the turmoil of the revolutionary environment it was the emphasis upon 'the tasks of the day', the immediate political demands of deepening the revolution, which brought the question of socialist power to the surface of the political agenda, rather than a search for socialism on the basis of a dogmatic unilinear conception of social development.

Lenin's April Theses were simultaneously an analysis of the conjunctural socio-political reality and an outline of a new minimum programme. It differed from the old minimum programme through telescoping the bourgeois and socialist stages. The immediate objective was Soviet power and the movement towards socialism. The first four theses outlined the attitude that the party should assume towards the most important political issues facing the nation; namely, the war, the revolution, the Provisional Government and the Soviets. He argued that no concession could be made to 'revolutionary defencism' as long as the war remained imperialist in character. Furthermore, the party should relentlessly expose the imperialist character of the Provisional Government and deny it support. The current tasks of the party derived from his assessment that the "peculiarity of the present moment in Russia consists in the transition from the first stage of the revolution, which gave power to the bourgeoisie on account of the inadequate organization of the proletariat, to the second stage, which

¹⁰⁵Quoted in Trotsky, op. cit., p. 234-5.
must give power to the proletariat and the poorest layers of the peasantry."\textsuperscript{106} The task of organising the revolutionary forces had been facilitated by Russia's transformation into the freest of all belligerent nations. Consequently, unlike the Tsarist environment, the party could patiently work within the Soviets and mass organisations to explain to the workers "the necessity of transferring the entire power of the state to the Soviets of Workers' Deputies.\textsuperscript{107} The main obstacle in realising this task was the "naive confidence of the masses in the government of capitalists", and the control of the Soviets by "a bloc of all the petty-bourgeois opportunist elements."\textsuperscript{108}

It would be retrogressive, Lenin continued, to call for a parliamentary republic when power lay at the feet of the Soviets. Furthermore, evoking the measures implemented by the Communards, he called for the abolition of the police, army and bureaucracy. All officials were to be "elected and subject to recall at any time" with fixed salaries not exceeding "the average wage of a competent worker."\textsuperscript{109} Soviets of Agricultural Labourers deputies would oversee an agrarian programme which would confiscate all landed estates, nationalise farms and control model farms established on large capitalist estates. The theses relating to economic measures called for the amalgamation of all banks into a single trust under Soviet control. Production and distribution of goods were also to be brought under the control of the Soviets.\textsuperscript{110}

Though Lenin argued that "our immediate task shall not be the 'introduction of socialism', he was less clear on the nature of the regime which would introduce these measures. Lenin had nothing to say on the relations between capital, labour and the state. This is surprising given the attention Lenin devoted to the question of the state during 1917 and his wartime correspondence with Bukharin.\textsuperscript{111} Despite this, the adoption of the April Theses was regarded by the moderate socialists as a call for the immediate leap into the realm of socialism, and the Bolsheviks became generally accepted as a maximalist party, clearly to the left of the 'moderates'.

Lenin's maximalism also encountered opposition within his own party. It was only towards the end of April that he succeeded in convincing a majority of the party that the old, pre-war economic analysis was obsolete, and that their previous understanding of the dynamics of Russian development was flawed.\textsuperscript{112} Lenin's victory was only partly determined by his personal authority. He was also assisted by the growing disillusionment of the masses with the Provisional Government, and the influx of new party members who were not encumbered with

\textsuperscript{106}Quoted in Trotsky, op. cit., p. 230. (The second emphasis is my own)

\textsuperscript{107}Lenin, (24; 21-6). Subsequent quotations of the April Thesis are from this edition.

\textsuperscript{108}Ibid., pp. 52-3.

\textsuperscript{109}Ibid., pp. 53-4.

\textsuperscript{110}Ibid., p. 54.


\textsuperscript{112}Lenin repeatedly labelled this 'old Bolshevism'. 
the old theoretical baggage of pre-war Bolshevism. Throughout the summer and autumn Lenin's main obstacle within the party remained the older cadres in the upper echelons of authority. He was repeatedly forced to call upon the rank and file in order to carry through his demands.

The popularity of the Bolshevik programme and Lenin's assessment can be discerned through the growth of the Bolshevik party membership during the ensuing months. As the problems of the economy, war and land became increasingly acute during the autumn, the Bolshevik programme began attracting ever increasing numbers of workers, peasants and soldiers. Any attempt to measure the growth of the party during the year defies mathematical exactitude. However, Rigby estimates that from 23,000 in February party membership grew to 46,000 by the April conference. By the Sixth Congress Fainsod estimates 177,000, while by October Sverdlov claimed 400,000. The social composition of the party consisted of approximately 60% workers, 32% salaried staff and 8% peasants in February 1917. One year later the only significant difference was an increase in peasant recruitment to 15%. This can be attributed to the return by soldiers to their villages. Growth also appears to have be constant, if not exponential. Even the events of the 'July Days', when Bolshevik fortunes reached their lowest ebb, do not appear to have dramatically reduced recruitment rates. The 'opening' of the party also meant that enrolment "as a Party member was greatly simplified at this time. It was enough to give the secretary one or two acceptable recommendations and anyone who wanted would be given a party card without delay."

The growth and success of the party during 1917 had little to do with the popular mythology of a closed, conspiratorial sect. As Service's study of Bolshevik organisation reveals, the most notable factor in the events leading to the October Revolution was how the party, swollen with new, untried recruits, stretching the party organisation almost beyond straining point, was ever able to harness its forces for a co-ordinated insurrection. The conclusion which must be drawn is that it was the Bolsheviks' ability to reflect the demands of the masses and secure sufficient support among the mass organisations which lay at the heart of their success. Success equalled Bolshevik organisation, ideology and programme fused with the mass organisations.

Marcel Leibman has argued that the opening of the party represented an organisational

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113The above figures are drawn from T.H. Rigby, CPSU Membership History, pp. 59-66; Service, op. cit., pp.43-7; Fainsod, op. cit, p. 68; and Bunyan and Fischer (eds), op. cit, p. 19.

114See Service, op. cit., p. 43.


117As David Mandel argues: "The growth of support in the working class for the Bolsheviks was...not the result of the party's successful tapping of the workers' irrational impulses but the expression of the growing correspondence between the latter's aspirations and the party's programme and strategy." D. Mandel, The Petrograd Workers and the Fall of the Old Regime: From the February Revolution to the July Days, 1917, Macmillan, London, 1983, p. 3.
metamorphosis, or a 'de-bolshevisation' of the party. However, if this metamorphosis is related to the past molecular ideological and organisational development of Bolshevism it is clear that Lenin was acting on the accumulated experience of the party's past. In 1905 he had argued for the same opening of the ranks of the party. It was the changing social environment which necessitated this flexible change rather than any sudden overall change in Bolshevik organisational theory. In July 1917 he warned the party that failure to understand the changing environment and change tactics accordingly would consign the party to oblivion. "It happens all too frequently that when history makes an abrupt turn, even the most advanced parties are unable for a longer of shorter period of time to adapt themselves to new conditions. They keep on repeating the same old slogans of yesterday - slogans which were correct yesterday, but which have lost all their meaning today, becoming devoid of meaning 'suddenly', with the same 'suddenness' that history makes its abrupt turn." In a comment he made after the revolution Lenin spelt out the philosophy of revolutionary which he applied during 1917. It represented a total rejection of the deterministic revolutionary fatalism which characterised the moderate socialists and the 'right' Bolsheviks, and stressed active, purposive intervention on the basis of a correct reading of a conjunctural moment.

You must be able at each particular moment to find the particular link in the chain which you must grasp with all your might in order to hold the whole chain and to prepare firmly for the transition to the next link: the order of the links, their form, the manner in which they are linked together, the way they differ from each other in the historical chain of events, are not as simple and not as meaningless as those in an ordinary chain made by a smith. In this manner the Bolsheviks succeeded better than any other party in responding to the immediate situations, and were able to keep pace with the elemental forces of the revolutionary situation.

Support for Bolshevik resolutions among the mass organisations reflected the growing popularity of their the party and the growing association between party and the popular classes. It was already in a majority among the more rank and file Petrograd Conference of Factory Committees in June 12-16, while on June 13 the Workers Section of the Petrograd Soviet passed a Bolshevik resolution endorsing the slogan "All Power To The Soviets". In June, at the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets the party mustered only 105 of the 777 delegates. However, by 31 August the Bolsheviks had gained a majority in the Petrograd Soviet and on 5 September repeated this in Moscow.

After the Bolsheviks had weathered the onslaught of the Provisional Government during the July Days, August witnessed the spectre of reaction in the form of the Kornilov coup. Bolshevik prestige as defenders of the democratic revolution rose during the coup, due to the spirited and

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118 pp. 148-57


120 Lenin, (27; 274).

121 Siriani, op. cit, p. 55.

active mobilisation for the defense of Petrograd by party cadres. The event helped to highlight the impotence of the Provisional Government and added weight to Lenin's theses. Russia's continued involvement in the imperialist war and the failure of the summer offensive had further exhausted and demoralised the army. Furthermore, in the towns inflation and the deterioration of production and distribution led to severe shortages and exacerbated relations between employers and workers. The peasantry also demonstrated its lack of faith in the government through spontaneous rebellion and unauthorised land-seizures. The postponement of elections to the Constituent Assembly added fuel to national disaffection. Furthermore, in the wake of the Kornilov coup rumours abounded in Petrograd that the Provisional Government was considering abandoning the capital to the Germans, in an attempt to emasculate the focal point of the insurrectionary feeling.

All this manifested itself in growing Bolshevik majorities in the mass organisations at the expense of the moderate socialists and for the call for power to be transferred to the Soviets. It also confirmed Lenin and the Bolsheviks' argument that the Provisional Government was unable to combat the 'impending catastrophe', avert counter-revolution and fulfill the democratic demands of the workers and peasants. These events leading up to the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets in late-October convinced Lenin that the time was ripe to 'grasp the next link in the chain' with or without the support of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries; the assumption to power by the Soviets.

By late-August and early September the revolutionary situation (as defined above by Tilly) was reaching its climax. The most prestigious Soviets in the land were now under Bolshevik control and clearly presenting themselves as an alternative contender for sole governmental authority, through the slogan "all power to the Soviets". While earlier in the year the popular classes could still give their allegiance to both the Soviets and the Provisional Government, the events of the intervening months clarified their conflicting interests and aspirations. The peaceful coexistence within multiple sovereignty was inherently unstable as long as the Provisional Government was unable to satisfy the popular aspirations for land, an end to the war, and the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. As the prestige of the Provisional Government declined, that of the Soviets rose. Furthermore, even if it had wanted to, the polity was unable to suppress the challenge of the Soviets, as the army rank and file began to look upon the Soviets as its only salvation for peace. Recognising the acuteness of the revolutionary situation, Lenin now argued that the seizure of power by the Soviets was the only way to

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123Lenin wrote in late-September: "Experience teaches us that the Bolshevik programme and tactics are correct. So little time passed, so much happened from April 20 to the Kornilov revolt." Lenin, (26; 60).


126As Mandel notes: "Before July, it had been a question of peacefully exerting pressure on the moderate leaders of the Soviet. After July, it could only be a question of armed struggle, and this required planning, organization and leadership to have any chance of success." D. Mandel, op. cit., p. 180.
promote the "peaceful development of the revolution." Against the procrastination within leading party circles, he began arguing for the immediate seizure of power. If the revolution did not move forward, he exhorted, it would be crushed by the combined force of bourgeoisie, reaction and the imperialist states. "Perish or full-steam ahead. That is the alternative put by history." Given the precarious balance of social forces and the impending economic catastrophe Russia could not remain socially static. It would be treacherous of the Bolsheviks, armed with their analysis of the real situation and movement of events, declaring for all power to be transferred to the soviets, and assuming a majority in these democratic and hegemonic organs, not to forge ahead when power lay prostrate at their feet. "History will not forgive us if we do not assume power now." "It is impossible to stand still in history in general, and in war-time in particular. We must either advance or retreat. It is impossible in twentieth century Russia, which has won a republic and a democracy in a revolutionary way to go forward without advancing towards socialism, without taking steps towards it." At this moment, Lenin urged the party to grasp the insurrectionary link in the chain of events. Under the conditions of an acute and heightening revolutionary situation it was imperative that the party perform the purposive role of a politico-military centre, directing and channelling the forces of revolutionary democracy. During September and October Lenin was engaged in a constant struggle to pull the party off the reefs of revolutionary fatalism in order to ensure that the elemental forces of the revolution were not engulfed under the threatening wave of counter-revolution. Once more, Lenin was stressing the importance of purposive action in determining the outcome of a revolutionary situation. It was in his article "Tasks of the Revolution", written in late-September, that Lenin gave a clear outline of the Bolshevik programme for post-revolutionary society which would serve as a guideline for the early decrees of the soviet state. The article provided the clearest indication of Bolshevik aspirations and their argument that the minimum programme and the advance towards socialism had coincided. Implementation was only possible through revolutionary insurrection.

Lenin began by noting the predominantly petty-bourgeois character of Russian society and argued that the vacillations of this class were inevitable. However, the horrors of war, poverty and hunger could only be overcome through following the "proletarian path". The stark choice between the "peaceful development of the revolution" and counter-revolution made it imperative that calls for conciliation and agreement with the bourgeoisie be abandoned. For this reason Lenin called for a boycott of the Pre-Parliament sponsored by the moderate socialists in

127Lenin, (26;67).
128Lenin, (25; 368).
129Lenin, (26; 21).
130Lenin, (25; 362).
131The lesson which Trotsky later drew from this episode was that a party "which pays superficial attention to the questions of civil war in the hope that everything will somehow settle itself at the crucial moment, is certain to be shipwrecked." Trotsky, op. cit., p. 61.
132Lenin, (26; 59-68). The following quotations are from this edition.
order to discuss the future Constituent Assembly. All power had to be passed exclusively to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies "on the basis of a definite programme and under the condition of the government being fully responsible to the Soviets."

The programmatic component of the article combined immediate tasks with economic measures which would reflect the nature of the post-revolutionary process. As in the April Theses Lenin never described the measures to be adopted as socialist, but merely as the "peaceful development of the revolution". The Soviet Government would call for a general peace and armistice to all the belligerent peoples. This democratic peace included renunciation of annexations, repudiation of secret treaties and the full freedom of cessation for all nations.

The agrarian programme was encapsulated in the call for "Land to those who till it", and was influenced directly by the summary of the 242 mandates published in the SR-dominated Soviets of Peasants' Deputies' newspaper. It called for the abolition of landed private estates without compensation and their transference to peasant committees "pending the solution of the problem by the Constituent Assembly". Landowners' stock and equipment were to be placed at the disposal of the poor peasantry free of charge.

Regarding production and distribution, Lenin reiterated his call for the introduction of workers' control on a nationwide basis. Banks, insurance companies, and "the most important branches of industry (oil, coal, metallurgy, sugar etc.)" would be nationalised. Workers' control was considered necessary in order to abolish commercial secrecy, which Lenin felt was exacerbating shortages and promoting profiteering. It is evident that he viewed much of the economic malaise from the problem of inadequate and democratic regulation of distribution, rather than democratically controlling production. "There is plenty of bread, coal, oil and iron in Russia; for these products to be properly distributed it is only necessary for us to rid ourselves of the landowners and capitalists who are robbing the people." Resistance from 'delinquent' capitalists could be overcome through "supervision over the exploiters by workers and peasants, and such measures of punishing recalcitrants as confiscation of their entire property coupled with a short term of arrest..."

While the programme envisaged the "immediate placing of social production and distribution of goods under the control of the Soviets", full socialisation was not proclaimed, nor was the state to fulfil an all-encompassing role in the economy. In the agrarian sector, the numerical preponderence of petty-commodity production was firmly assured, while in the industrial sector workers' control in the form of supervision of production left the relationship between capital and labour open to wide interpretation, especially in areas outside the designated parameters of nationalisation. Only in the area of distribution and finance did the state appear as a monopoliser and unchallengeable regulator.

\[133\] The word 'socialism' does not appear once in the article.

\[134\] Workers' control was defined as "unrelaxing supervision by the workers and peasants over the capitalists."
In the political arena, 'all power to the Soviets' did not appear to translate itself into the monopoly of Bolshevik power in Lenin's programme. The Soviets, he argued would ensure the "peaceful election of deputies by the people" and the testing of the various party programmes in conjunction with power passing "peacefully from one party to another."

It was on the basis of this vision that the Bolsheviks, on the eve of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, assumed power in the name of the incoming Congress. The Bolsheviks had successfully persuaded the Soviets that their assumption to power was the only option blocking reaction. On October 11, the Petrograd Soviet elected a Military-Revolutionary Centre, which would act as the operational centre for co-ordinating the insurrection. It was through this body that the Bolshevik programme and Soviet power was declared on October 25.

While it is true that the Provisional Government was unable to put up any effective resistance to the insurrection due to its virtual disintegration, this is insufficient to account for the 'power vacuum' which the Soviets filled. It is also necessary to explain the direction which the Soviets took. This chapter has provided evidence for James Petras' claim that the October Revolution was "decisively dependent" upon the existence of the Bolshevik Party as a purposive contender for power, and as an organiser and channeller of the elemental forces of the revolution. In order to determine why the Bolsheviks assumed power through the Soviets and led the revolutionary situation to a socialist outcome this chapter has stressed the purposive factor of Bolshevik ideology and organisation. As Lenin stressed, the victory of the revolutionary insurrection depended upon "art and triple audacity", a reference to Danton, who Marx had called "the greatest master of revolutionary policy yet known". The revolution could not be predetermined through the unfettered evolution of structural relations. While structural conditions laid the framework for existing potentialities within the revolutionary situation, the actual outcome requires an understanding of purposive choices, decisions and non-decisions.

4.8. CONCLUSION

In Chapter 1 the argument was advanced that structural and purposive theories of revolutions are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It was argued that the approaches of Skocpol and Tilly were not necessarily in contradiction, but were distinguished more by the different problems which informed their analyses. While Skocpol was primarily concerned with the demise of old regimes, Tilly was concentrating upon the question of the mobilisation of contenders to the existing polity. Chapters 2 and 4 of this thesis have attempted to shed light on the apparent contradiction between structural and purposive approaches through a historical analysis of the Russian Revolution. Combined, these two chapters demonstrate that the October Socialist Revolution cannot be adequately understood without taking into consideration the intertwining of both structural and purposive factors. The peculiarities of Tsarist structural development explain the form which social contradictions assumed during the revolutionary situation. However, in this chapter it has been argued that the Bolsheviks' success in introducing Soviet

135 Lenin, (26, 181).
power, and in structurally transforming the class nature of state power, was not a mechanical reflection of the development of structural contradictions. In order to understand the success of the Bolsheviks it is necessary to appreciate its molecular process of ideological and organisational development. It is this that accounts for the successful passage in the revolutionary situation from mobilisation to socialist revolution.

Analytically then, in order to understand the success of a particular contender in a revolutionary situation, a structural analysis must be combined with a purposive analysis. This represents what C. Wright Mills labelled the intertwining of historical ‘drift’ with ‘thrust’. In Chapter 2, the analysis of the revolution concentrated upon ‘drift’ (“the consequences of innumerable decisions coalescing and colliding to form the blind and overwhelming events of historical fate”)136. Yet, while acknowledging the ‘inherency’ within this social process which led to the revolutionary situation, this chapter has argued that the outcome of the revolutionary situation cannot be understood as ‘fate’, or historical inevitability. If we remain upon the level of a structural analysis, the revolution resembles a Greek tragedy, with actors playing out their predetermined role. It is necessary to complement a structural analysis with a position which appreciates the role of human agency, and the decisions or non-decisions made by particular groups in strategic positions capable of making history. The ability of a party to take advantage of a situation is determined not only by its relationship to various classes and groups, but also by its organisational effectiveness and adaptability. Its willingness to perform a historical role is influenced by its ideology and its reading of a situation. As the analysis in this chapter reveals, Leninism was characterised not only by a particular interpretation of the structure and dynamics of Russia and world capitalism. It was also characterised by a profoundly anti-fatalistic conception of the dynamics of insurrection. It was for this reason that Antonio Gramsci lauded the Bolshevik insurrection as a ‘revolution against Das Capital’.137 Lenin’s success in bringing the party round to his position decisively influenced the Bolsheviks’ insurrectionary decision.

This thesis is not primarily concerned with the future consequences of the adoption of this decision, but rather the role of structure and agency in generating a revolutionary socialist outcome. Within this universe of discourse it is sufficient to register the fact that the decision was made and the revolution was carried out. If the Bolsheviks had adopted the non-insurrectionary option, it remains a matter of speculation (a ‘mental experiment’) what would have occurred in Russia. On the right wing of Menshevism, Potresov continued to argue that the bourgeoisie would have ultimately fulfilled its historical role. Accordingly, he considered the Bolshevik insurrection an irresponsible, purposive adventure, an aberration of history which had deflected Russia off from its destined path of development.138 On the left, Martov acknowledged that they were dealing with a ‘victorious uprising of the proletariat’, but stressed

136C. Wright Mills, op. cit., p. 52.
the structural argument that "to impose socialism on an economically and culturally backward country is a senseless Utopia." The Bolshevik Bukharin, on the other hand argued that structural factors were a cause for the ease with which the proletariat assumed power in ‘backward’ Russia, although he acknowledged that these structural conditions were "dialectically transformed" into the "supreme difficulties" of organising a post-revolutionary socialist economy. The concept of structure has been subsequently used in most analyses to justify or condemn the October Revolution as either an ‘inevitability’ or a ‘tragedy’. On the other hand Lenin, at the end of his political life, preferred to approach the revolution from a perspective which combined a concrete analysis of Russia’s structural peculiarities with the real options which were open during the revolutionary situation, or, to adopt the terms of this thesis, a perspective which acknowledged the role of both structure and agency in determining outcome. Criticising the Menshevik Sukhanov for repeating “the infinitely stereotyped argument learned by rote” that the "objective economic premises for socialism do not exist in our country", he went on the argue:

It does not occur to any of them to ask: but what about a people that found itself in a revolutionary situation such as that created during the first imperialist war? Might it not, influenced by the hopelessness of its situation, fling itself into a struggle that would offer it at least some choice of securing conditions for the further development of civilization that were somewhat unusual.

The history of socialist revolutions since October 1917 suggests that this ‘somewhat unusual’ development is in actual fact more a rule than an exception. Since then, all socialist revolutions have occurred on the periphery or the semi-periphery of the world capitalist system. The next chapter will supplement the structural analysis of Nicaraguan capitalist development outlined in Chapter 3 with an analysis of the Sandinista movement which led the Nicaraguan Revolution in July 1979. Out of this analysis some general conclusions will be drawn concerning the role of structure and agency in modern socialist revolutions.

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139 Quoted in Getzler, op. cit., p. 171-2.


141 Lenin 33: 477-8
Chapter 5

PURPOSIVE PRECONDITIONS FOR
THE SANDINISTA REVOLUTION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3 a long-range historical analysis was used in order to argue that the crisis of the Somoza dictatorship was a consequence of structural contradictions inherent within the form of Nicaraguan capitalist development. This chapter argues that these structural factors in themselves are insufficient to account for the successes and failures of the various contenders competing against the dictatorship. While the structural environment circumscribed the range of possibilities, there were a number of competing power blocs with conflicting visions and interests. The outcome of this conflict was determined by purposive intervention by the Sandinistas1 on the political and military level. The dictatorship had encountered opposition before, yet this purposive variable was absent or unable to effectively influence political crises. Structural analyses of the causes of the Sandinista Revolution have pointed to the position of constituent groups in prevailing class and state structures and demonstrated the need for a broad-based coalition of classes in order for success to occur. However, this necessity does not guarantee its actualisation.2

Despite a rich history of rebellion the Nicaraguan popular classes were traditionally one of the least organised in Latin America. The distinguishing characteristic of the Sandinistas was not their attempt to organise and mobilise a multi-class popular coalition. Other parties, such as the orthodox Marxist Partido Socialista de Nicaragua (P.S.N.), were also engaged in this project. The originality of Sandinismo within Nicaragua's political culture was its dedication to overcoming the fatalism which pervaded popular consciousness and the left-wing of the political spectrum. The organisational and ideological development of Sandinismo was moulded by this environment, while at the same time its praxis was aimed at transcending it. Direct action and armed opposition were the purposive tools which they used to puncture the inflated image of somocista omnipotence and to encourage mass organisation. On the ideological front, the Sandinistas challenged the fatalistic stage conception of economic development which dominated the Latin American left, and adopted a philosophy of action inspired by Che

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1Throughout this chapter the terms Sandinista, F.S.L.N., El Frente, or the Front, will be used interchangeably.

2Cf. K. Roberts & M.I. Midlarsky, "Inequality, the State and Revolution in Central America", in M.I. Midlarsky (ed), Inequality and Contemporary Revolutions, Vol 22, Book 2, Monograph Series in World Affairs, University of Denver, Denver.
Guevara. As a consequence, the Sandinistas opposed the subordination of an organised popular movement to the bourgeois opposition and argued that social liberation could only be guaranteed through an armed insurrection led by the popular classes. Ideologically Sandinismo was characterised by an anti-fatalistic Marxism, while organisationally they operated as a vanguard party aiming to mobilise the popular classes independently of the traditional bourgeois opposition.

Sandinismo emerged out of the structural contradictions of Nicaraguan society during the late-1950's as a critique of the perennial failures of the traditional moderate opposition. Through this critique the Sandinistas developed an organisational and ideological praxis which aimed at overcoming the problems of oppositional activity. An entire generation of elitist putsches and peaceful demonstrations had only served to consolidate the dictatorship through encouraging co-optation and compromise between the opposition and the Somoza dynasty. This in turn had engendered a fatalistic sentiment of the futility of revolt. The Sandinistas operated on the assumption that it was not revolt in itself which was futile, but the form of revolt practiced by the opposition.

As Harry Vanden observes, prior to the development of Sandinismo "Nicaragua was a little like Gabriel Garcia Marquez's tragic town of Macondo. It was a place where people could not comprehend their present reality because they had lost their sense of history." The self-conscious role which the Sandinistas assumed within the nation's political culture was to reinterpret and reappropriate past struggles in order to provide an awareness of the present, and to instil within the popular classes a consciousness of their potential capacity to seize power. The Sandinistas never believed that spectacular armed confrontations organised solely by a small band of guerrillas could cause the immediate destruction of the dictatorship. While the orthodox Marxist P.S.N. rejected Sandinista actions as a form of petty-bourgeois adventurism divorced from the real and prolonged struggle between capital and labour, the Sandinistas undertook guerrilla action for a different reason, rooted in their understanding of the problems which a generation of unsuccessful opposition had created for collective action and political mobilisation. Armed actions functioned as a demystification of the invincibility of Somoza. This myth was powerful not only because Somoza cultivated it, but more importantly because decades of defeat had internalised it within the popular consciousness and made it self-reproducing. Like the unnamed Caribbean country in another of Garcia Marquez's novels, Autumn of the Pariarch, the myth of the dictator merged with reality to produce the picture of a gargantuan monster which few dared to confront. In the popular imagination, three successive Somozas merged into one dynasty and made 'the man' appear eternal. In a land where the average life span was 50 years few by the mid-1970's could recall a Nicaragua without a Somoza.

Against this prevailing myth, the Sandinistas constructed the counterveiling myth of Sandino,

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the legendary guerrilla hero of the Segovias, who evicted the U.S. Marines from Nicaraguan territory, and was eventually assassinated by el ultimo Marine, Somoza. Sandino became the Sandinistas' mobilising myth for popular organisation, national liberation and anti-imperialism.

The construction of this social base was accompanied by a praxis designed to open the insurrectionary road through Nicaragua's political landscape. Inspired by Che Guevara, and rejecting the mechanistic, economic determinism of orthodox Latin American Communist parties (of which the P.S.N. was a classic representative), the Sandinistas argued that it was not necessary to wait until all the objective conditions for revolution matured. The active, purposive intervention of a revolutionary vanguard could contribute to the development of these conditions through modifying the stakes involved in political activity.

This chapter will demonstrate that the events culminating in the July Revolution of 1979 cannot be understood without taking into consideration this molecular process of ideological and organisational development of the F.S.L.N. The Sandinistas were able to overcome their initial weakness during the opening phase of multiple sovereignty in 1978 due to their preceding activity among the popular classes and their military experience against the dictatorship. These experiences provided the Frente with the insight which informed their praxis during the revolutionary situation of 1978-9. This enabled them to take the lead in the broad anti-regime coalition and ensure that it propelled itself forward towards a profound social revolution. Thus, in order to understand why the Sandinistas emerged as the foremost challenger to the dictatorship this chapter will begin by examining the genesis and development of Sandinismo. The conclusion which will be drawn is that even through the Sandinistas did not make the revolutionary situation, their praxis, developed and tuned through almost two decades of direct action and struggle, ultimately moulded the form which the revolution assumed.

5.2. THE NICARAGUAN WORKERS' MOVEMENT BEFORE THE F.S.L.N.

The origins of the F.S.L.N. can be traced to a conjuncture of events and circumstances related to local and regional political economy of the late-1950's. However, in order to understand adequately the political space the F.S.L.N. were able to occupy it is necessary to recognise that Sandinismo emerged as a reaction to the entire prevailing range of oppositional strategies and philosophies. Sandinismo self-consciously perceived itself to be a transcendence of the traditional opposition and its philosophy was moulded by its rejection of this political culture. The entire history of the F.S.L.N. up to the revolution of 1979 was an engagement with this culture over the means of ousting the dictatorship. This section provides a brief history of this culture and the origins of the politics of the Nicaraguan popular classes. Sandinismo eventually emerged out of a reassessment of the praxis of the left-wing of this movement.

As noted in Chapter 3, the two traditional political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, were historically unable to institutionalise mechanisms for the peaceful and orderly transference of governmental authority prior to the rise of the Somoza dictatorship. This feature
of the nation's political culture was conditioned by a variety of factors, including the dispersal of the population, the conflicting socio-economic interests of the two colonial cities (Granada and Leon), the retention of the tradition of caudillismo, and the ease with which contending parties could recruit external assistance. Furthermore, although elections were held periodically prior to the rise of the dictatorship, limited representation and electoral fraud convinced political contenders that violence and force of arms were the most effective, if not the only, method of replacing governments.

As political philosophies, the terms 'Liberal' and 'Conservative' had lost much of their traditional meaning even before Somoza arrived on the scene. During the Constitutional War of 1925-7, both Somoza and Sandino emerged as self-styled Liberal generals. As early as 1925 factions of the two parties had created a joint government. The Espino Negro Treaty of 1927 was a tacit recognition between the elites that the avoidance of manifest conflict between the two parties required prior agreement on the composition of the government. It also helped that this avoidance of manifest conflict corresponded with the interests of the United States' 'manifest destiny'. Remaining independent political entities, the core of both parties nevertheless became perceived by the population as 'parallel' structures, pursuing the factional interests of elites. Towards the end of his life, Sandino, struggling against this parallelism which, he argued, had sold the country to American interests, conceived of the idea of an autonomista party to break the political monopoly of the Conservatives and Liberals. However, after his murder and the elimination of his followers, the possibility of this third political force disappeared. Somoza's rise to power brought new questions to the political forum.

Somoza Garcia elevated the parallelism of the Liberals and the Conservatives to unprecedented heights. He transformed the core of the Liberal Party into his own personal instrument, and divided the Conservative opposition through offering them the crumbs of political participation, allocating them a minority share of seats in Congress. This cynical co-optation of sections of the Conservative opposition provided the dictatorship with a democratic veneer, and, as noted in Chapter 3, the necessary degree of political stability needed for post-war dictatorial capitalist development. Somoza's social control was based on the rule of the "three political p's", money (plata) for friends, sticks (palos) for the hesitant and bullets (plomos) for his enemies. The model agreement for parallelism was the 'pact of generals' signed in 1950 between Somoza and the Conservative general Emiliano Chamorro.

Sections of the traditional parties which opposed the dictatorial structure contemptuously branded the co-opted sectors zancudos, or mosquitos, and formed independent movements in order to immunise themselves from zancudismo. The Partido Liberal Independiente (P.L.I.), formed in 1944 amidst growing regional unrest against the dictators, emerged as the strongest

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contender to the structure of parallelism. While the party attempted to exploit all possible legal channels at its disposal, a significant section, especially its youth movement, were more attracted to the strategy of returning state violence in kind. Tomas Borge, one of the future co-founders of the F.S.I.N. was a notable example of this trend. It was also a young P.L.I. supporter, Rigoberto Lopez Perez who assassinated Somoza Garcia in 1956. This act of retribution brought the weight of state repression down upon the party, and every known leader was arrested in the aftermath.

Throughout the 1940's and 1950's the dictatorship survived a colourful variety of uprisings and coups, led by dissident Liberals, Conservatives and disaffected elements within the Guardia. These actions were elitist in nature and were characterised by their lack of attention to organising the growing popular classes excluded from the benefits of capitalist expansion. Their defeat symbolised the death rattle of caudillismo (the phenomenon of multiple centres of armed bands led by charismatic leaders) which could not survive and adapt to the growing strength of the dictatorship, which had developed an overwhelming monopoly over coercion.

The 1950's also witnessed the decline in the organised labour movement, despite the numerical growth of the urban and rural proletariat. This decline contrasted with the three preceding decades when the initial attempts to independently organise the workers movement had culminated in the establishment of an influential Marxist party by the mid-1940's.

The origins of the Nicaraguan workers' movement can be traced to the turn of the century when mutual aid societies appeared among urban artisans. During the years of U.S. intervention these societies directed their political energy against the most reactionary elements within the Conservative party and foreign interference. According to Perez-Bermudez and Guevara, these groups were unable to transcend the political and philosophical views of the Liberal Party. In 1916 the first workers' newspaper, El Obrerismo Organizado was published, and in 1920 La Federation de Trabajadores Liberada organised the first celebration of May Day in Nicaragua.

The enclave capitalism which accompanied U.S. intervention attracted the labour force which constituted the most important nucleus of the Nicaraguan proletariat during the 1920's. Until the decline of the enclaves in the early 1930's this section of the working class remained the most militant and confrontationist. A series of strikes among workers of the foreign-owned banana and timber companies during 1921-2 led to the first violent confrontations between labour and capital. It was also in the Atlantic Coast mines that Sandino recruited the nucleus of his army which later fought the Marines. However, the enclaves remained isolated from the

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7For a history of armed actions against the dictatorship between 1934 and 1961, see J.M. Blandon, Entre Sandino y Fonseca, Publicacion Silvio Mayorga, Managua. 1982.


10Bermudez-Perez and Guevara, op. cit., p. 23.
more populous Pacific Coast which stagnated economically during the years of intervention. Despite this, the decade of the Twenties witnessed the first attempts to organise an independent workers' movement.

The first recorded attempt to unionise labour occurred in Managua after a shoemakers' strike in 1922. In March 1923 Obrerismo Organizado, an extension of the mutual-aid societies was founded. Although this movement participated independently in the 1929 elections it "always acted as an appendage of the Liberal Party,"11 A second organisation with a more unionist orientation, La Federacion Obrero Nicaraguense, was also formed during the decade, and had links with the American Federation of Labour.12 However, during Sandino's guerrilla war neither of these movements were prepared to break from the parallelism of the Liberals and Conservatives.

In opposition to this parallelism a broad urban front for Sandino's anti-imperialism emerged, La Union Patriotica. Despite suffering repression at the hands of the Managua police constabulary and the newly-formed Guardia Nacional, this civic movement attracted a 10,000-strong anti-imperialist demonstration in Managua during 1930.13

The first independently organised workers party opposed to parallelism, El Partido Trabajador Nicaraguense (P.T.N.), was founded in August 1931. Although most of its founders were artisanal or petty-bourgeois in origin, the ideology of the party was overtly socialist and classist. Its communist influence was apparent through its links with the Salvadoran Communist leader, Augusto Farabundo Marti, who had fought alongside Sandino. The party was uncompromising in its position against the U.S.-constructed political settlement and campaigned against the 1932 elections under the slogan "Against the Elections, in Favour of Sandino." The P.T.N. were instrumental in organising a variety of unions, including cobblers, carpenters, tailors, construction workers, printers, coach drivers, bakers, brewers and masons, in the face of deteriorating economic conditions of the early-1930's. The P.T.N.'s synthesis of Sandino's anti-imperialism and socialistic anti-parallelism was confronted with governmental repression. Their leader, Castro Wassmer, was exiled to Honduras in April 1932, only months after the worker and peasant uprising in El Salvador. Thus even prior to the rise of somocismo any independently organised workers movement was perceived by the dominant elite as a manifestation of bolshevismo.14

The P.T.N. remained in existence until 1939. Its decline was symptomatic of the political confusion and realignment within Nicaraguan politics during the consolidation of the Somoza dictatorship. As repression intensified many P.T.N. members fled to Costa Rica where they

11Ibid., pp. 25-8. (my translation)
12Ibid., pp. 29-31.
13Ibid., p. 32-3.
14See ibid, p. 60.
formed contacts with the newly established Costa Rican Communist Party. Meanwhile, others remained inside Nicaragua engaged in reformist unionism within the confines of Somoza’s tolerance.

It did not take long before a successor was created. During the Second World War broad-based opposition to the dictatorship intensified, as workers, students, professionals and opposition businessmen took advantage of Somoza’s opportunistic support of the Allied cause for the preservation of world democracy against the threat of fascism. This provided political space for the re-emergence of an independent workers’ party. Somoza’s support for the Allied cause entailed the acceptance of broad anti-fascist fronts which included pro-Soviet organisations. Under these conditions, and with Somoza’s approval, a successor to the P.T.N. was formed in July 1944, the Moscow-aligned Partido Socialista de Nicaragua. Somoza’s tolerance of the party was assured by its identification with brauderismo, whereby Soviet-aligned parties in the Americas opened a ‘united front’ with capitalist governments with the aim of defeating the Axis powers.

This tolerance however was not based upon the fear of the Axis invading Nicaragua. Somoza’s populistic demagogy was calculated to divide the anti-dictatorial movement, through securing the support of the growing urban proletariat, which had increased substantially during the war. A labour congress in May 1944 had provided Somoza with a ‘qualified vote of confidence’ conditional upon the dictator promulgating a progressive labour code. Somoza’s courtship of the workers movement was assisted by the recognition by left-wing labour militants that “Somoza offered rights to workers, and the Conservative led opposition seemed to offer a return to the dark ages.” While Somoza recognised that P.S.N. support in mid-1944 was essential to preserve the dictatorship from the growing opposition, he was forced to struggle with the P.S.N. over hegemony over the workers’ movement between 1944 and 1947. His failure to provide substance to his rhetoric assisted the growth of the P.S.N. which dominated the founding convention of the recently reorganized national union federation, the C.T.N. which represented 15,000 workers and 140 unions. Gould estimates that by 1946 the party numbered around 12,000 members. As repression intensified the party initially provided support for the anti-Somoza candidate in the 1947 elections. However, after conflict with the anti-communist right of the opposition the P.S.N. decided upon electoral abstention.

In the aftermath of the election Somoza regained personal control, turned upon the workers’ movement and ignored compliance with the labour code. This paved the way for a pact with

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15 The manifesto of the P.S.N. is reprinted in ibid., pp. 79-107.
16 Named after the US Communist Party leader, Earl Browder.
the zancudo conservatives and provided the political cement for the building of dictatorial capitalist development during the ensuing decades. The relatively comfortable conditions in which the P.S.N. was born, its reformist orientation within the structure of somocismo and the ideological constraints of brauderismo, combined to leave the workers’ movement totally exposed to the anti-communist, Cold War repression of the dictatorship. Adhering to the Latin American Communist parties’ rigid stage theory of development, the socialist movement operated clandestinely during the 1950’s as a tail to the conservative-led opposition, arguing that only the destruction of the dictatorship could accelerate the maturation of social conditions conducive to organising the workers for socialist revolution.

Caught between the legalism, passivity and tailism of the P.S.N. and the caudillista Conservative opposition, excluded from the benefits of Somoza’s ‘pact of generals’ and the cotton boom, and reeling under Somoza’s repression exacerbated by Cold War anti-communism, the Nicaraguan workers’ movement lacked direction and organisation during the first half of the 1950’s.

Violent opposition to the dictatorship increased in the wake of the expansion of cotton cultivation and the expulsion of peasants from the Pacific plains. However, organised armed uprisings remained atomised, elitist, and lacked contact with those excluded from somocista development. In accordance with its ideological predisposition, the P.S.N. continued to renounce armed struggle as adventurism, whether in the form of dissident elements within the National Guard, the Air Force, conservative caudillos or remnants or successors of Sandinismo.

The principle feature of ‘the period of decline’ between Sandino’s death and the late-1950’s was not so much popular passivity in the face of somocista repression and development, but the dispersal and atomisation of popular struggle, combined with the lack of any strategy for independently organising the popular classes against the dictatorship. The P.S.N., unlike its predecessor the P.T.N., totally opposed the Sandinista armed tradition. This belief predominated despite the fact that the traditional political culture had become increasingly delegitimised in the eyes of the popular classes. The ‘tailism’ of the P.S.N. discouraged independent popular initiatives and direct action. While Fonseca argued that the "principle character of the period" was the "interruption of the traditional armed struggle as a systematic tactic to fight the ruling regime",20 it would be more accurate to say, given Jesus Blandon’s documentation of armed struggle during the period,21 that the principal characteristic was the lack of coordination between a focus of armed struggle and an independently organised

21Blandon, op. cit.
popular opposition.22

The beginning of the period of revolutionary ascent, and the immediate preconditions for the emergence of the Sandinista National Liberation Front, was the outcome of a number of internal and international factors. Firstly, the assassination of Somoza Garcia in Leon in 1956 unleashed a period of intensified repression which confirmed that the dictatorship had established itself as an entrenched dynasty. Secondly, the slump in international coffee and cotton prices adversely affected the fragile dependent capitalist development strategy upon which Somoza had based his co-optation of the bourgeoisie. The dictatorship cushioned the effects of the slump from the elite through lowering living standards. The result was an increase in middle and lower class opposition. Workers responded through broadening unionisation. In 1958 alone, the number of unions increased from 5 to 18.23 More than twenty armed uprisings occurred across the political spectrum between 1956 and 1960. Student militancy and organisation also increased, and national indignation towards the dictatorship was provoked in July 1959 when the National Guard opened fire upon a peaceful student demonstration in Leon.24 Numerous student groups began to reconsider the Sandinista heritage of armed struggle. The connection between the student movement and the reappropriation of the Sandinista heritage had begun in the mid-1950’s when a group of Leon university students had formed a Marxist study group, and attempted to inject activism into the P.S.N. The popular upsurge and the reappropriation of the tradition of armed struggle by socialists dissatisfied with prevailing approaches to social change provided the context within which a group emerged aiming to synthesize popular aspirations with armed revolt. Concrete evidence of the efficacy of popular armed struggle was provided by the example of the Cuban Revolution. The July 26 Movement in Cuba had proved that it was possible for a small guerrilla army to mobilise the popular classes and overthrow a dictatorship.

By the late-1950’s, after a quarter of a century of dynastic dictatorial rule, the range of strategies and philosophies across the oppositional political spectrum had proven unequal to the task of democratising Nicaraguan society. The traditional Conservative opposition had demonstrated a willingness to accept a minority role within the dictatorial structure in order to reap the benefits of somocista capitalist development. Those Conservatives who refused co-

22In their May 1977 document, the FSLN outlined ten characteristic features of the period. They were 1) lack of revolutionary leadership; 2) absence of a vanguard revolutionary organization; 3)incipient armed spontaneous revolt of the masses; 4) popular leftist organisations, weak and in the gestation stage; 5) unorganized, heterogeneous student struggle; 6) disorganized activities abroad by exiled Nicaraguans, consisting mostly of periodic denunciations; 7) uninterrupted bloody repression of the people; 8) political hegemony in the anti-Somocista struggle will be in the hands of the conservative bourgeoisie, dragging the people behind pseudo-popular leaders; 9) the masses will be ‘conservative’ because they are fundamentally anti-somocista and because they lack a revolutionary vanguard; 10) Yankee imperialism’s unconditional economic, political, diplomatic, and ideological support, and unrestricted military support of the dictatorship by way of advising and equipping the National Guard. See F.S.L.N., ‘General Political-Military Platform of the F.S.L.N. for the Triumph of the Popular Sandinista Revolution (May 1977), in J. Valenta & E. Duran (eds), Conflict in Nicaragua: A Multi-dimensional Perspective, Allen & Unwin, 1987, pp. 293-4.

23However, this still only included 3.4% of the EAP, 16,000 workers, and less than 1% of rural workers. Black, op. cit., p. 31.

24The demonstration had been called as a response to somocista repression against a guerrilla column in Chaparral, Honduras.
optation were unable to transcend a strategy based on elitist putschism. The P.L.I. fared little better, oscillating between participating in fraudulent elections and individual acts of terrorism. These upper and middle class responses to the dictatorship would remain substantially unaltered in the following two decades. The popular classes remained even more atomised and disorganised during the 1950's. After an impressive growth during the 1940's the P.S.N. survived on the margins of legality and acted as a support, or a tail, to the anti-Somoza opposition. The philosophy of the P.S.N. amounted to a mechanical form of materialism which in practice rejected popular initiative and armed struggle. According to the P.S.N. objective socio-economic circumstances underscored the need for a bourgeois-democratic revolution, and it was the task of the working class to assist the bourgeoisie to implement capitalist democracy. However, if this was the necessary task, the necessary agent, the local bourgeoisie, appeared unwilling or unable to take the necessary steps to realise it. This dilemma of the absence of a revolutionary bourgeoisie was the product of the same unilinear philosophy of history which had plagued the Russian Mensheviks.

Within this political and ideological environment there was sufficient space for the emergence of an alternative anti-dictatorial strategy. This vacuum was filled by a group of P.S.N. dissidents and radical students who attempted to synthesise the lessons of national history with an undogmatic interpretation of Marxist theory. The negative lessons of a quarter of a century of opposition were analysed in the light of two positive historical events. This circle of heretics invoked the spectre of Sandino while finding inspiration in the Cuban Revolution.

5.3. THE IDEOLOGY OF THE F.S.L.N.

The preceding section explained that by the end of the 1950's the political environment was conducive to the emergence of an alternative oppositional strategy to the dictatorship. The existing political spectrum provided space for a strategy and programme which aimed at mobilising the broadening sections of the population which were excluded from somocista development and alienated by the ineffectiveness and collaborationism of the existing parties.

Sandinismo arose from the growing disenchantment with the orthodox mechanical Marxism of the P.S.N. The Sandinistas rejected the cautious, conservative praxis of the P.S.N. based upon bourgeois leadership over the anti-dictatorial struggle and a distaste for petit-bourgeois adventurist armed struggle. The Sandinistas called for direct armed action against the dictatorship and the hegemony of the popular classes over the vacillating bourgeoisie. In contrast with the P.S.N. the direct objective of the F.S.L.N. was the seizure of power.25 Through armed struggle and direct action it was possible for a vanguard party to seize the initiative and transform the conditions of political participation. In order to ensure the complete destruction of the dictatorship and its links with imperialism, the hegemony of the popular classes over the anti-autocratic movement was required.

25 As Tomas Borge pointed out, one major difference between the Sandinistas and the P.S.N. was that: "From the very beginning we always had a nose for power, and we went on developing that instinct and translating it to our cadres, even when we recruited them through struggles for immediate demands." T. Borge, "The F.S.L.N. and the Nicaraguan Revolution", in B. Marcus (ed), Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution, Pathfinder, N.Y., 1985, p. 110.
These views on political action brought young P.S.N. members into conflict with the party leadership. Carlos Fonseca, Tomas Borge and Silvio Mayorga, who founded the F.S.L.N. in 1961 as an organisation independent of the P.S.N., originally considered it possible to transform the conservatism of the P.S.N. from within. However, by 1962 they concluded that the party was irretrievably lost in the rigid theory and practice of the orthodox Latin American Communist parties. From this moment on they concentrated upon building an armed organisation outside all existing political institutions.26

Although they emerged as an activistic trend within Marxism, Sandinismo received its inspiration from the reappropriation of Nicaragua’s pre-Marxist vernacular revolutionary tradition.27 It was Sandino’s guerrilla experience which opened the eyes of the Sandinistas to insurrectionary praxis. As the Sandinistas acknowledge, “Sandino was not a theoretician, but a man of action.”28 However, this praxis gave the Frente the strategic politico-military insights for overthrowing a military/economic dictatorship aligned to external interests.

The Sandinistas borrowed four basic premises from Sandino which distinguished them from the orthodox Marxism of the P.S.N. Firstly, their praxis was based on Sandino’s belief “that freedom is not conquered with flowers but with bullets”. Under existing socio-political conditions “the armed struggle was the only road that would lead to the transformation of society.”29 The existence of an armed movement with roots among the popular classes had been absent from Nicaragua’s political spectrum since Sandino’s guerrilla war. The Sandinistas argued for the mobilisation of popular discontent and its articulation with the armed struggle. In contrast, the P.S.N. argued that armed struggle was a form of petit-bourgeois adventurism. Secondly, the Sandinistas appropriated Sandino’s statement that “only the workers and peasants will go all the way; only their organised forces will bring about the triumph.”30 Sandino did not consciously apply a class analysis to inform his actions, but he intuitively recognised through his own experience that the bourgeoisie and landowners would vacillate over the realisation of national liberation and were unreliable allies in the struggle against social injustice and foreign interference. It was necessary that the aspirations and organised force of the popular classes remain at the helm of the anti-dictatorial movement. In contrast, the P.S.N. were content with their vision of the bourgeoisie fulfilling their historical mission of establishing a bourgeois-democratic order. Thirdly, the Sandinistas rejected the parallelism of the existing political structure. For Sandino, this political arena was a stage for contesting who


29See Borge, “The F.S.L.N…”, p. 110. One of Sandino’s most famous announcements was that “The sovereignty and liberty of a people are not to be discussed but rather defended with weapons in hand.”

30Sandino, op. cit., p. 72.
would bare "the caress of the foreign whip". The Sandinistas consciously perceived themselves as the 'third force' signalling a radical departure from the nation's traditional political culture. They argued that Sandino's enterprise had failed due to the prevailing socio-economic conditions under which he fought. Again, the P.S.N. rejected this as a form of voluntaristic sectarianism which ignored the objective limitations of Nicaraguan reality. Fourthly, the Sandinistas reappropriated the centrality of Sandino's anti-imperialism. The struggle for national independence was the primary contradiction present in Nicaraguan society, and revolutionary nationalism required an awareness of imperialism as a world order. Revolutionary praxis had to be linked to solidarity with all oppressed peoples subjugated by imperialism and praxis could be enhanced from lessons of other anti-imperialist struggles.

The sterility of the P.S.N.'s interpretation of Marxism was exposed further through the success of the Cuban Revolution. The strategy of the July 26 Movement reaffirmed the heretical tenets which the Sandinistas had adapted from Sandino. The inspiration which the Sandinistas drew from this event cannot be understated. Borge recalls that:

澄清 of such curtains, an explosion that showed the naive and boring dogmas of these times for what they really were. The Cuban Revolution sent a terrifying chill through Americas ruling classes and shattered the suddenly outmoded relics with which we'd begun to adorn our political alters. For us, Fidel was the resurrection of Sandino, the answer to our doubts, the justification of our heretical dreams of just a few hours before.

If history had absolved Fidel Castro, then Castro had vindicated the Sandinistas, emancipating them from their heretical guilt of synthesising Marxism with the vernacular revolutionary tradition of Sandino. Fonseca wrote that through the Cuban Revolution "the rebellious Nicaraguan spirit recovered its brilliance. The Marxism of Lenin, Fidel, Che, Ho Chi Minh was welcomed by the Sandinista Front of National Liberation."

Thus, originating as a tendency within the P.S.N. the Sandinistas incorporated a number of Sandino's beliefs (anti-imperialism, the centrality of the workers' and peasants' struggle, rejection of existing political institutions and armed struggle) with a universalistic, class theory. From within the Marxist paradigm, the Sandinistas analysed Nicaraguan reality, and on the basis of this insight outlined a political strategy and vision which demanded the reappropriation of the Sandino heritage. As Borge argued, the ideas and lessons of Sandino:

were brought together with the revolutionary theory that synthesizes the experiences of all revolutions. And it was the application of this notion, without dogmatism, that led to a handful of revolutionaries to found the F.S.L.N. in 1961.... Sandino's cause had indeed gone on living, and the Sandinista Front did no more than take it up again under different material conditions and with the guidance of a revolutionary theory.

The stamp which the Sandinistas impressed upon this revolutionary theory was a rejection of

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33Borge, Carlos, p. 28.

34Quoted in Vanden, op. cit., p. 49.

35Borge, "The F.S.L.N...., p. 111. Ramirez also argues that the ideology of the FSLN "is based simultaneously on Sandino's thinking and on the scientific concept of history, on universal scientific concepts." Ramirez, ibid. p. 17.
the mechanical materialism characteristic of the P.S.N. This interpretation of Marxism justified political passivity, arguing that praxis could not transcend the objective conditions of social existence. The Sandinistas, drawing upon the Cuban experience, and reviving the Leninist notion of a vanguard, replied that it was possible for people, guided by a revolutionary theory, to influence decisively the terms of political struggle, and contribute to accelerating the approach of a revolutionary situation.

Their struggle against the P.S.N. bore many similarities with the Bolshevik struggle against Menshevism. Both the Sandinistas and the Bolsheviks rejected the tailism of their rivals and argued for the hegemony of the workers and peasants in the struggle against the existing regime. Both also upheld a vanguard conception of the relationship between the party and the class. This made both far more uncompromising than their rivals in their relations with other parties on the oppositional spectrum. Furthermore, the Sandinistas openly adopted Lenin's conception of imperialism as a theoretical tool for assessing the potential inherent within the political struggle.

However, in their ideological struggle against the P.S.N. the Sandinistas self-consciously borrowed maxims from the vernacular revolutionary tradition. This contrasts with the Bolsheviks who never directly appealed to the Narodnik tradition in their struggle against the Mensheviks' interpretation of Marxism. The pre-Marxist revolutionary tradition in Russia was richer and more diverse than in Nicaragua. Marxism in Russia had originated as a direct ideological challenge to the peasant-oriented Narodniki. In order to secure political space, the Bolsheviks not only had to reject Menshevism, but also the descendants of the Narodnik tradition, the Social Revolutionaries. There were ideological and practical reasons why the Bolsheviks were unable to use elements of the vernacular as a mobilising myth against the autocracy. These problems were absent in the development of Sandinismo. No organised political descendant of Sandino had survived the quarter of a century of dictatorship, and he bequeathed no coherent philosophy. The Sandinistas were able to borrow various tenets from Sandino's experience in order to create space within the existing political spectrum and present themselves as a real alternative challenger. Sandino's martyrdom in armed struggle made him an ideal myth around which a radical anti-dictatorial and anti-imperialist movement could mobilise.

While the political conditions, combined with the socio-economic environment of the late-1950's, were conducive to the emergence of the F.S.L.N. as an ideological and organisational alternative, the early years of its existence corresponded with conditions less conducive to its growth. From its foundation in 1961 throughout the decade of the 1960's, the Sandinistas remained a small, embryonic organisation, vulnerable to repression. These years, (especially prior to 1967) corresponded with the halcyon years of the somocista model of dictatorial capitalist development, and a significant downturn in oppositional activity. Consequently, immediately after its emergence the organisation was faced with an environment conducive only to a survival footing, and the protection of its ideological distinctiveness, rather than development and the accumulation of forces among the popular classes.
5.4. ASSESSING THE TERRAIN: PROBLEMS OF APPLIED SANDINISMO

The initial phase of Sandinista development described above was characterised by the formation of a politico-military organisation and corresponding ideology dedicated to working outside the boundaries of the existing political structure. During its second phase of development the Sandinista movement experimented on a number of political terrains in an effort to forge links with the popular classes. The problems involved in this process bore many similarities to the problems the early Russian Marxists faced in their transition from the realm of propaganda to the realm of agitation. In the Sandinistas case the problem of translating ideology into political activity coincided with a questioning on the part of the Latin American left of the conduct and timing of revolution. The success of the Cuban guerrillas appeared more spectacular in the light of the sterility and stagnation of the orthodox Latin American Communist parties. Yet, to what extent could the Cuban lesson be generalised throughout the continent? While Castroism and Guevarism broadened the options available to the revolutionary left, the choices of strategy were often formulated and presented in terms of two incompatible lines; urban or rural activity, mass party or guerrilla foco, political or military strategy. Between 1961 and 1967 the Sandinistas faced and explored each of these options.

As the last section demonstrated, Sandinismo was not a derivative of the Cuban model and strategy. They discovered armed struggle and Marxism independently of Cuba. They merely received some justification and moral inspiration from the Cuban success. Likewise, early Sandinista activity did not attempt to emulate the Cuban guerrillas. Through a multi-dimensional praxis which chartered all political paths they were able to assess what worked and what didn’t work under Nicaraguan conditions. On the basis of this experience the F.S.L.N. was able to adapt Che Guevara’s philosophy of action to Nicaraguan reality.

As this review of early Sandinista praxis will reveal, it is oversimplistic to argue that between 1961 and 1967 the Frente attempted to “transplant” the Cuban foco strategy onto Nicaraguan soil. This is a common reading of Sandinista activity between 1961 and 1967 which appears in authoritative accounts of Henri Weber and David Nolan, among others. On the basis of Sandino’s experience and the failures of opposition putsches, the Sandinistas affirmed Guevara’s lesson that in “underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area for armed struggle”. The Sandinistas never elevated _foquismo_ to the status of a theory. Rather, it was considered one important element in a more general theory of mass insurrectionary warfare. In contrast, in many other areas of Latin America the elevation of the foco principle to a general theory led to a spate of guerrilla defeats and subsequent disillusionment in guerrilla warfare by the late-1960’s. These movements had emphasized armed struggle in the countryside to the detriment of urban mass struggle. The Sandinistas survived this general crisis of the Latin American guerrilla movement through their more multi-dimensional application of Guevara’s theory. As Guevara himself pointed out in 1963:


In debates on the subject criticism is usually levelled at those who wish to wage a guerrilla war, on the grounds they forget mass struggle; as if the two methods were incompatible! We reject the concept this position involves. A guerrilla war is a people’s war, and it is a mass struggle. To attempt to conduct this type of war without the support of the populace is a prelude to inevitable disaster. The guerrilla force is the people’s fighting vanguard, located in a specific point of a given territory, and it is armed and ready to carry out a series of military actions tending towards the only possible strategic aim: seizure of power. It is supported by the masses of peasants and workers of the region and the entire territory in question. Except on this basis, guerrilla warfare is unacceptable.

The rural guerrilla foco neither created the objective conditions for revolution nor did it retain dominance over the entire pre-revolutionary process. It merely engaged the enemy on the most suitable terrain in the opening sequence of the struggle. Between 1961 and 1967 Sandinista praxis was characterised by its attempts to combine the methods of guerrilla warfare and mass struggle, urban and rural activity, and legal and clandestine operations.

From its inception the Sandinistas organised guerrilla squadrons of workers and students in the urban centres of Leon and Managua, and peasant squadrons in the vicinity of Chinandega, Matagalpa, Esteli, Somoto and Ocotal. In 1963 the F.S.L.N. were active in the stevedore strike at the port of Corinto and also in Somoza’s textile plants. Other early urban activities included numerous bank raids (known as acts of ‘economic recovery’) and a high profile in the students movement through el Frente Estudiantil Revolucionario (F.E.R).

In mid-1963 the F.S.L.N. initiated its first major armed confrontation with the National Guard in clashes along the Rio Coco and Bocay. The attack was launched from Honduran territory and villages were occupied with little prior politicisation and exposure of the inhabitants to the F.S.L.N. While Fonseca later described the actions as a "dry run for the revolutionary sector", the costs were high in terms of Frente casualties. The Frente would never again engage in rural armed confrontaion with the Guardia without prolonged, patient political exposure of the local population to the aims and character of the movement. However, the historical significance of the actions lay in the fact that "the guerrilla of 1963 represent(ed) the emergence of the first armed organisation with a homogenous ideological character and the raising of a revolutionary programme for the construction of a socialist society, and the unity (combination) of the dispersed combatants identifiable with this programme and establishment."

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39See C. Guevara, “Cuba: Exception or Vanguard”, in ibid., p. 137.

40See Borge, Carlos... , p. 39.

41See B. Arce, El Papel de las Fuerzas Mortices Antes y Despues del Triunfo, Centro de Publicaciones Silvio Mayorga, Managua, 1980, p. 19.

42Fonseca, op. cit., p. 34.


44Ibid., p. 103. (my translation)
The Frente survived this confrontation and future rural military defeats due to the maintenance of strong urban links through workers and student cells. As Borge notes:

Carlos (Fonseca) always said in his writings that the guerrilla experiences at Bocay and Rio Coco weren't focos and that the F.S.L.N. was born in the defense of the exploited classes and was linked to them through the placenta.... Proof of this, Carlos argued, was the fact that the F.S.L.N. survived the terrible setbacks of 1963 and 1967, as opposed to other guerrilla efforts in Latin America, most of which disappeared once they were defeated militarily leaving only the memories of their heroic footsteps. The F.S.L.N., on the other hand, was able to strengthen itself, in political terms, after each of its military defeats. It is impossible to analyse the survival and development of the Sandinista organisation unless we understand the clear architecture of its roots in the socially oppressed and exploited sectors of our society.45

The lessons of Bocay and Rio Coco coincided with a general downturn in oppositional activity throughout Nicaragua. Somocista capitalist development entered its halcyon years between 1961 and 1967 through a combination of economic factors including the rise in world cotton and coffee prices, the establishment of the Central American Common Market and the Alliance for Progress. The boom years also corresponded to a period of superficial political liberalisation under Luis Somoza. The presidential ascendancy of Rene Schick was a reflection of better relations between capital and the dictatorship during the boom. The period after Bocay and Rio Coco also coincided with less hostile relations between the orthodox Communist Parties of Latin America and guerrilla movements.46 With human resources depleted after their rural adventures, all these factors had to be considered by the F.S.L.N. in reassessing their methods and terrain of struggle.

During the following two years the Frente reoriented its activity towards collaboration with the P.S.N. and other sectors of the left in legal reformist activity within a broad front organisation, the Partido Movilizacion Republicana (M.R.). In contrast with the general misconception that the Sandinistas activity between 1963 and 1967 was mainly an application of clandestine rural armed struggle, one Sandinista account of the period has labelled it the "legal interval" (el intervalo legalista).47

One important initiative which emerged from the M.R. was the encouragement of comites civicos populares (popular civil committees). These loosely structured broad-based groups were formed as a vehicle to press for improvements in basic living standards within the barrios of Managua. These were the first real attempts by the left to mobilise the growing marginalised sectors of the population uprooted by somocista capitalist development. Previously, the left had oriented its attention towards the industrial proletariat and the comites civicos populares were able to attract sectors of the population whose subordination to the dictatorship was just as real as the proletariat proper, even though they were not exploited in the formal Marxist sense of the word. The subsequent success of the Sandinistas during the 1970's to mobilise broad popular support was based on their understanding of this relationship between somocista capitalist

45Borge, op. cit., pp. 41-4.


development, urbanisation and proletarianisation. As Lopez et al. point out, "...the industrial development had not produced an urban working class proportional to the quantity of personnel that the consequent process of urbanisation had produced in Nicaragua." This is a feature, it should be noted, of many other peripheral capitalist societies.

However, during the intervalo legalista F.S.L.N. agitation within the popular movement generally met with indifference. Despite formal collaboration, the Frente competed with the P.S.N. on the basis of piecemeal economic demands in worker and peasant organisations. In their attempts to lead the mass reformist organisations, the F.S.L.N. were often accused of ultra-leftism and adventurism from the orthodox left, who warned workers that the Frente were "leading the workers to a certain death, through an adventurist method of struggle". The industrial boom and the relative liberalism of the Rene Schick period engendered confidence within the legal organisations that peaceful reformist demands could gradually improve the condition of the popular classes. The Frente consequently made little headway in their attempt to instil their fundamental maxim of armed struggle into the fronts initiated by the M.R.

As the M.R. followed the P.S.N. in mobilising behind the traditional opposition for the 1967 elections, the Frente were forced to reconsider the effectiveness of collaborative work with the orthodox left. Carlos Fonseca, reflecting on the period between 1964 and 1966, argued that the contradiction between the Frente's terrain of struggle and its underlying ideology had led to vacillation and confusion.

Although it raised the banner of anti-imperialism and the emancipation of the exploited classes, the Front vacillated in putting forward a clearly Marxist-Leninist ideology. The attitude that the traditional Marxist-Leninist sector had maintained in the Nicaraguan people's struggle contributed to this vacillation... (This) sector in practice has openly played the game of the Somoza clique. This factor, together with the ideological backwardness prevailing in the revolutionary sector of the country, led to vacillation in adopting an ideology that was rooted in compromise. It can be said at that time that there was a lack of clear understanding that it was only a question of time before the youth and people of Nicaragua would begin to distinguish between the false Marxists and the true Marxists.

As a consequence of their experiences during the intervalo legalista the Frente refocused attention upon "insurrectional-type tasks" and by "the end of 1966 they began speaking again of preparations for armed struggle." These preparations for opening a rural guerrilla front

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50 The Frente later reflected that the period engendered "an exaggerated illusion of legal possibilities and in the role of the 'traditional left'. "Unidad de Combate 'Juan Jose Quezada', op. cit., p. 103. (my translation)

51 Fonseca, op. cit., p. 35.

52 Ibid, p. 35; see also the testimony of Jacinto Suarez, in Arias (ed), op. cit., p. 39.
centred upon the Matagalpa region where Pablo Ubeda had been successfully conducting propaganda and agitation since 1963. This preparatory rural work marked an important advance over the guerrilla of 1963, when the Frente had initiated armed action from foreign territory with minimal political preparation.

While these preparations were advancing the Frente were calling for a boycott of the 1967 elections. The M.R. and the P.S.N. on the other hand had decided to support the Conservative opposition candidate, Fernando Aguero. The opposition called for a peaceful mass demonstration in its support through Managua on January 22. However, a sector of the bourgeois opposition planned to exploit the situation by provoking an armed confrontation with the Guardia, in the hope of stirring a brief insurrection and encouraging an O.A.S.-type intervention similar to the Dominican Republic experience. However, events did not follow this ill-prepared script. The Guardia crushed the provocation, leaving approximately 300 people dead. In the aftermath, the Guardia rounded up opposition spokesmen and manufactured another fraudulent election, bringing Anastasio Somoza Debayle to power.

In another tragic repetition of history, the demoralised opposition accepted a minority share of government. The dictatorship appeared as omnipotent and eternal as ever. The generation of 1967 had only helped to perpetuate the fatalistic appearance that history merely repeated itself, that opposition was futile and destined to end in the ignominy of collaboration.

However, the F.S.L.N., which had consistently condemned the strategy of the bourgeois opposition, used the defeat to advertise their strategy as the only viable alternative to the tragedy of repeated failure. The events of January refuted the reformist claim that somocismo could be peacefully transformed from within. Furthermore, the elitist putschism of sectors of the bourgeoisie had played openly into the hands of the Guardia. The Frente maintained their position that the dictatorship could only be overthrown through an armed struggle which actively involved and the popular classes and mobilised them for the seizure of power. This seizure could only be achieved through a prolonged period of agitation and accumulation of popular forces into organisational channels untainted with the brush of collaborationism. This lesson, resulting from the Sandinistas own praxis, was similar to the Vietnamese conception of a "prolonged peoples' war".

Although "the treachery and cowardice of the opposition leaders resulted in the historical liquidation of the Conservative Party and the confirmation of the duality and opportunism of the traditional left", this in itself was insufficient for popular sympathy to be mechanically transferred to the Frente. The F.S.L.N. had to demonstrate through their own purposive action that they represented the only force capable of effectively confronting the dictatorship. The objective lessons of the immediate past did not throw the popular classes into the arms of the Sandinistas. The prolonged period of accumulating forces could only proceed on the basis of purposive intervention by the Sandinistas in the politico-military arena. The lessons of 1967

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^Unidad de Combate 'Juan Jose Quezada', op. cit., p. 104.
may have ‘closed the horizon’ on the possibility of peaceful reform and opened people’s eyes to the necessity of armed popular insurrection. But it still had to be demonstrated that this form of change was possible.

The F.S.L.N. embarked upon a series of high-profile urban and rural actions in mid-to-late 1967 aimed at heightening the awareness of the possibility of confronting the Guardia through violence. The twin objectives of the actions were to remove the aura of omnipotence surrounding the dictatorship and to advertise the uncompromising and popular form of struggle being conducted by the Frente. As Jacinto Suarez recalls, "The very same day that the bourgeois opposition decided to go along with Somoza and accept seats in the National Congress, that same day, May 1, 1967, we began a campaign of bank raids, of bombings, with the result that the Sandinista National Liberation Front began to be felt as a political reality." This urban terror campaign against the most feared and hated symbols of the dictatorship culminated in September with the ajusticimiento (bringing to justice) of Gonzalo Lacayo, one of the Guardias most notorious torturers.

The Frente also opened its rural guerrilla campaign in August at Pancasan. Heavy fighting caught nationwide attention. Although Guardia casualties were heavier, the losses suffered by the Frente were qualitatively graver. Among their leaders killed were Silvio Mayorga and Pablo Ubeda. The Frente claimed a political and moral victory at Pancasan. The events of 1967 had provided the masses for the first time since the formation of the Frente with a concrete lesson on the validity of the Frente’s ideology within the context of Nicaragua’s political culture. As Borge claims:

Despite the military defeat Pancasan had immense significance for the revolutionary movement. The armed struggle was reaffirmed, while the impossibility of overthrowing the military dictatorship through peaceful methods was demonstrated. When I say this, I mean that the Nicaraguan people became conscious that only armed struggle was capable of defeating the somocista dictatorship. (Pancasan) managed to consolidate the F.S.L.N.’s influence among the Nicaraguan people. It convinced the people that ours was the only organisation truly able to represent the people’s interests, the only force capable of seriously confronting the somocista dictatorship. This elevated the moral authority and the political standing of the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

The strategy pursued by the F.S.L.N. from Bocay to Pancasan is often portrayed as a classical adaptation of rural foquismo, inspired by Che Guevara. According to this view the experiences of military defeat in 1963 and 1967 convinced the Frente that the Guevarist model could not be mechanically transplanted into Nicaraguan soil. Pancasan was the end of an era. Symbolically, Pancasan coincided with the capture and death of Che Guevara in Bolivia, and a period of crisis

55Michael Lowy, in his discussion of Guevara’s theory of revolutionary warfare, notes that its subjective conditions include not only an "awareness of the necessity for a revolutionary change of regime", but also an "awareness of the possibility of this change". See M. Lowy, The Marxism of Che Guevara, Monthly Review Press, N.Y., pp. 91-2.
56J. Suarez, quoted in Arias (ed), op. cit., p. 41. (my translation)
57See Borge, op. cit., pp. 49-50; see also the U.S. intelligence report quoted in Gott, op. cit., p. 564.
58Borge, "The FSLN...", p. 114.
and reflection within the Latin American guerrilla movement. However, this neat picture fails
to highlight the richness and diversity of the Frente's praxis during the era. It concentrates on
its two most spectacular actions and eclipses the more mundane urban agitation which
preoccupied the movement between the actions. It also tends to abstract the rural actions from
the concrete circumstances surrounding them. If these are taken into consideration, Pancasan
can be said to have opened, rather than closed, an era.

This section has argued that the F.S.L.N.'s understanding of the relationship between guerrilla
warfare and mass struggle was more complex and flexible than that of most other guerrilla
movements inspired by Che. The period was characterised by the Frente's initiation into
agitation among both the urban and rural popular classes, and through this agitational
experience and military confrontation they confirmed their initial hypothesis that the
dictatorship could only be overthrown through a popular armed insurrection outside the
confines of the traditional opposition. The electoral farce of 1967 provided additional evidence
for this.

While other guerrilla movements throughout the Americas were unable to withstand the
blows of counter-insurgency, the Sandinistas' more multi-dimensional application of
Guevaranism helped them overcome conjunctural defeats and learn from failures. In the face
of the fatalistic, defeatist myth of the invincibility of somocismo the Sandinistas burst onto the
political scene to advertise the only possible alternative, armed popular insurrection. Thus,
Henri Weber oversimplifies the history of the Frente's development when he argues that they
abandoned focuzismo after Pancasan. After Pancasan the Sandinistas continued to be inspired by
a multi-dimensional interpretation of Che Guevara's theory of guerrilla warfare. Che continued
to be a source, not only of moral inspiration, but theoretical insight and political guidance. The
Sandinistas continued to 'kneel before his alter' because his strategy continued to be confirmed
in Sandinista praxis. In 1969 Carlos Fonseca (by then the undisputed leader of the F.S.L.N.)
maintained the validity of the "fundamental lessons" of Che's theory on guerrilla war, arguing
that under Nicaraguan conditions, "as well as in most countries in Latin America, the centre of
action of revolutionary war has to be the countryside." However, the "most developed cadres"
of the revolutionary movement continued to be provided by the cities.60

Ideologically reinforced through their own experiences, and confident of the correctness of
their anti-dictatorial strategy, the Frente turned their attention to the relationship between their
small cadre organisation and the popular classes. The fundamental problem was developing a

59 See ibid., p. 115; Fonseca, op. cit., p. 37; and P. Ross, "Theory and Practice of Revolution: What Works in Central
America", in J. Levy (ed), Crisis in Central America, U.N.S.W., Sydney, 1984, p. 46. A similar conclusion is also drawn in
an article much less sympathetic to the Sandinistas; see A. Hoehn & J.C. Weiss, "Overview of Latin American

60 Fonseca, op. cit., p. 39; see also Cabezas, op. cit., pp. 11-2. It is also significant to note that in his influential 1974
work on the general theory and practice of armed revolutionary insurrection, the four authorities cited by Humberto
Ortega in support of his position were Marx, Engels, Lenin and Che. See H. Ortega, "Generalidades Teoricas y Praticas
de la Insurreccion Armada Revolucionaria en el Proceso de la Guerra Popular Revolucionaria", in his collection Sobre la
means to "bring the mass and the vanguard into a closer relationship". Remaining faithful to Guevara's philosophy of praxis, the Sandinistas recognised that the realisation of this relationship could not be brought about through sitting tight until the objective conditions for insurrection matured. It required the purposive intervention in the political arena, and a large degree of organisational ingenuity and tactical flexibility. Without this purposive intervention the experiences of the past pointed only to a tragic repetition of the cycles of oppositional failure.

5.5. THE SILENT ACCUMULATION OF FORCES

This section analyses Sandinista praxis during the period between 1968 and the mid-1970's. The period corresponded with the end of somocista liberalism and the ascendency of Anastasio Somoza Debayle. The possibilities of exploiting legal opportunities diminished and the Frente's cadre structure was reduced after losses at Pancasan. In their attempts to fuse the vanguard with the mass movement the Frente was forced to employ all its resources of political ingenuity and innovation. The strategy adopted was labelled 'the accumulation of forces in silence'. This strategy operated on three levels of activity. Organisationally, the cadre structure of the F.S.L.N. operated increasingly underground; militarily, the Frente avoided direct combat with the Guardia, except when this was unavoidable; and mass work was undertaken through a host of 'intermediary organisations', not manifestly associated with the Frente, yet not subordinated to the traditional opposition.

Despite the political space which the Frente had acquired within the nation's political culture, cadres, supporters and sympathisers all recognised the dangers Frente membership entailed under conditions of Guardia repression. The leadership of the organisation was often forced to spend prolonged periods of time outside the country, while militants within the nation were forced underground or spent time in the 'wilderness' (la montana). The organisational method adopted under these conditions was 'compartmentalisation'. This involved decentralising cadres into small cells, with complex, limited links between each unit. As a consequence "none of the companeros knew the details of the organisation as a whole." This decreased the possibility of the Guardia destroying the entire party network in the case of one strategically placed militant being captured. It also made the Frente appear larger than life, given the disparity between the small size of its cadre underground membership on the one hand, and its high national profile and growing prestige on the other. This disparity, provided a psychological boost to Frente militants during the phase of silently accumulating forces. 'Economic recoveries' and ajusticiamientos, combined with their amplification by Somoza's official press organs, were like "the sweetest, most delicious candy", injecting morale and

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psychological energy into the compartmentalised *companeros* operating under conditions of physical deprivation and mortal danger.64 Omar Cabezas and Jaime Wheelock both admit being initially dismayed at finding out exactly how small the organisation was once they became cadres.65 In an epoch when the dawn appeared beyond reach, individual acts of heroism and martyrdom, and national attention, provided a psychological charge which ran through the cells. This helps account for the almost religious reverence the F.S.L.N. held, and still holds, for its fallen combatants.

The story of Julio Buitrago's death became legendary throughout Nicaragua, and it illuminates how the Sandinistas' praxis demystified Somoza's invincibility while constructing the image of their own indestructible force. In July 1969 the *Guardia* discovered the whereabouts of a Sandinista safehouse in Managua. Troops blocked and saturated the entire *barrio*. Somoza broadcast the entire siege on television. Initial attempts to take the house were repelled by a hail of bullets from the windows. Believing themselves caught in a stalemate with a large Sandinista battalion, the Guardia brought in two Sherman tanks and fired into the house at point-blank range. As the dust settled the *Guardia* confidently advanced towards the house, only to be sent fleeing for cover again by another hail of bullets. Finally, the Air Force was brought in and demolished the building with an aerial attack. Buitrago suddenly emerged from the house and charged at the *Guardia* firing his machine-gun until he fell to the ground. Somoza could hardly claim a great military victory. But Cabezas notes that acts like these "forged the great legend of the invincibility of the Frente among the Nicaraguan people. Or I should say the people themselves forged that legend around the Frente. It was based on concrete historical acts...."66

Organisational links between city and countryside were maintained through ensuring that underground workers and students spent periods of time in the rural wilderness and in guerrilla columns. Here combat experience was gained and urban recruits often experienced their first encounter with the conditions of peasant life. It was also in the mountains, through the privations of guerrilla life, that the Frente attempted to cultivate 'the new man' Che revered.67 Work among the workers and peasants since 1963 had assured the Frente a permanent and concealed presence among the population. This patient clandestine political work was not only essential for preparing the basis for guerrilla fronts, but also for establishing intergenerational continuity in the Sandinista struggle. While veterans of Sandino's initial struggle, such as Santos Lopez, were important in framing the original ideology of the Frente, only prolonged patient exposure of the Frente could convince members of the rural population who remembered Sandino's struggle that the F.S.L.N. were Sandino's inheritors. Once contact with such sympathisers was established, rural networks and safehouses could expand more

64See ibid., p. 13-20.
65Ibid., p. 17; and Wheelock, op. cit., p. 130.
66Cabezas, op. cit., pp. 21-3.
67See ibid., esp. pp. 94-5; Fonseca, op. cit., p. 38.
freely. Based upon the rural experiences of previous phases, and assimilating lessons of Vietnam, the Sandinistas developed the 'prolonged peoples war' strategy, engaging in combat "not when the enemy wanted to, but when the vanguard considered it appropriate." Encounters with the Guardia occurred during 1969 and 1970 at Zinica and Bijao. The Guardia was unable to destroy the guerrilla units in these combats and were forced to heighten rural repression against the peasantry. Significantly, the Zinica guerrilla column consisted primarily of peasants, revealing an increase in peasant sympathy for the Frente. It also hampered the Guardia's 'surround and destroy' tactic which had been successfully applied in previous campaigns. The Guardia responded with a less discriminate policy of rural repression, further isolating the dictatorship from the rural population. Capitalising upon this deteriorating relationship the Frente 'brought to justice' 14 local judges in the five years after 1969. While this rural vertebral column of the revolution was developing its own momentum the Frente was also devoting attention to urban mobilisation.

Severe repression, illegality and underground existence made the development of open workers' and students' Sandinista organisations impossible. On the other hand past experience had also suggested that a truly revolutionary movement could not be mobilised in conjuncture with the traditional parties on the left of the political spectrum. As Arce notes, the intervalo legalista between 1963 and 1967 convinced the leadership that:

"a revolutionary organisation such as the F.S.L.N. could not look for the organisation of the exploited classes of our people in the country in alliance with vacillating political organisations with dubious ideological firmness. It signified the F.S.L.N.'s own development of its own mass organisations, to develop its own mass political organisations, seek its own methods of organisation of the working class of our country and its incorporation into the revolutionary project which we led."72

This dilemma between illegality and the need to develop its own organisations was overcome through creating 'intermediate organisations', nominally independent, yet connected to the Frente. Networks were created linking militants to 'pre-militants' and 'collaborators'.73 These organisations brought the Frente into contact with a broad cross-section of social groups subordinated to the dictatorship. While the Sandinistas continued to engage in organising

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68Omar Cabezas' book is full of fascinating expressions of this intergenerational continuity, ranging from peasants leading the Sandinistas to stores of bullets they had hidden since the 1930's, to veterans asking the cadres where they had hid the old arms from the war against the marines. See Cabezas, op. cit. See also G. Black, *Triumph of the People: The Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua*, Zed, London, 1983, pp. 79-80.

69Unidad de Combate 'Juan Jose Quezada', op. cit., p. 104. (my translation)

70Borge, op. cit., p. 116.

71Unidad de Combate 'Juan Jose Quezada', p. 106.

72Arce, op. cit., p. 21. (my translation)

73On this distinction, see the testimony of Nora Astorga, in Randall, op. cit., p. 120.
workers' committees, their efforts at mobilisation transcended this traditional terrain of left-wing activity. As the adverse effects of Nicaragua's development decade began to manifest themselves during the latter part of the 1960's the Frente recognised the importance of mobilising those sections of the population which could not be attracted to purely unionist demands. This coincided with the establishment of contact between the Sandinistas and radical Christians operating in rural communities and the poorest urban barrios. The Church performed a catalytic role in rural and urban mobilisation, and Guardia repression forced many radicals to seek political direction in order to defend their efforts. In 1968, a group of Nicaraguan priests, with the blessing of their bishopric, established the Centre for Agrarian Advancement (CEPA) aimed at helping the peasantry to independently improve their conditions. Priests and Christian lay workers often acted as intermediaries between the campesinos and the guerrillas and many CEPA organisers themselves eventually became active members or collaborators of the Frente. By the late-1970's Christians were prominent in helping the Sandinistas form the first nationwide agricultural workers' union, the A.T.C. 74

A similar dialogue developed in the urban areas in the early-1970's. Radical Christians active in improving living conditions within the barrios were drawn towards Sandinista intermediary organisations for the release of political prisoners and campaigns against rural repression. The earthquake of 1972 accelerated the co-operative links between Christian Base Communities and the Frente. Monica Baltadano, who joined the Frente in January 1973, recalls the importance of the Christian movement for the Sandinistas organisational efforts:

...the whole Christian movement was being oriented in one way or another by the Front. There were many, many of us who belonged to the Front. The FSLN was very conscious that without a strong and broad-based movement it would be impossible to carry out armed struggle and achieve victory. They knew the Christian movement could facilitate this. The Sandinista Front couldn't work openly; it was an underground organisation. But the Christian movement had a broader base of operations. We were less subject to repression. We could go to the barrios talking politics and still be protected by the mantle of Christianity. That's one reason the movement was so important in the history of the revolution here. 75

The Sandinistas also regained the initiative in the student movement, through the rejuvenated F.E.R. The Social Christians had dominated the National University Student Council (C.U.U.N.) between 1963 and 1967. However, in 1970 'El Gato' Munguia "was the first C.U.U.N. president to be elected by going from class to class repeating over and over that he was a communist, a Sandinista, and a member of the F.E.R." 76 Bayardo Arce claims that "there did not emerge a single popular or workers organisation with revolutionary content that was not organised by a militant or cell of the F.S.L.N." 77

Another important characteristic of the period was the Frente's recognition that in order to

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76 Cabezas, op. cit., p. 25.

77 Arce, op. cit., p. 30. (my translation)
capitalise upon its increasing prestige and political space it was imperative that the organisation outline its project of post-Somoza society. In *Hora Cero*, Fonseca had argued that "at the present time, and for a certain period to come, Nicaragua will be going through a stage in which a radical political force will be developing its specific characteristics. Consequently, at the current time it is necessary for us to strongly emphasize that our major objective is the socialist revolution, a revolution that aims to defeat Yankee imperialism and its local agents, false oppositionists and false revolutionaries." With this aim in mind, the Directorate of the F.S.L.N. outlined its vision of post-revolutionary society. The importance of the 'Historic Programme' and its lasting significance cannot be overemphasized. It outlined the characteristics of Sandinista socialism and, in all its essentials, provided the framework for the revolutionary decrees of 1979 onwards.

The programme began by defining the F.S.L.N. as a "politico-military organisation" which arose from the Nicaraguan peoples' need for a "vanguard organisation", capable of directly confronting the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the dictatorship. The strategic objective of the Frente was the destruction of this apparatus and the "establishment of a revolutionary government based on the worker-peasant alliance and the convergence of all patriotic and anti-imperialist and anti-oligarchical forces in the country." This could only be achieved through confronting the dictatorship "arms in hand" and through "the development of a hard-fought and prolonged peoples war."

The revolutionary government would promulgate a full range of political and cultural freedoms, including "full participation of the entire people on national and local levels, respect for human rights, freedom of ideas and organisations" (including unions, peasants, youth, students, women, cultural and sporting groups), and guarantee asylum of citizens persecuted for involvement in revolutionary struggles in other countries. However, persons compromised by association with the somocista regime would be either "severely punished" or stripped of their political rights.

Economic measures proposed included the expropriation of "the landed estates, factories, companies, buildings, means of transportation and other wealth" usurped by the Somoza family and their political, military and financial associates. Other concerns targeted for nationalisation included "the wealth of all the foreign companies that exploit the mineral, forest, maritime and other kind of resources, the banking system and foreign trade." The mass transport system would also be 'centralised'. Furthermore, the government would "plan the national economy, putting an end to the anarchy characteristic of the capitalist system of production." Workers' control would be established "over the administrative management of

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78Fonseca, op. cit., p. 41.

79In late-1986, seven years after the triumph, 25 years after the founding of the Frente and ten years after Fonseca's death, the Sandinista paper *Barricada Internacional* ran a check-list, comparing post-revolutionary performance against the 1969 programme.

80The programme is reprinted in Borge et al, op. cit., pp. 13-22. All subsequent references are taken from this translation.
the factories and other wealth that are expropriated and nationalised.\textsuperscript{81}

Although the nature of the post-revolutionary social formation was not explicitly stated, it was apparent that the Frente recognised that a variety of modes of production would coexist alongside (or beneath) the revolutionary state sector. The state itself would function in varying capacities as a productive, distributive, administrative and regulative body, responsible for directing and planning the development of the economy. This can be implied from the restrictive nature of nationalisation and the sectors of the programme dealing with 'the agrarian revolution'.

An authentic agrarian reform would be instituted involving a massive redistribution of land in favour of small producers. Capitalist and feudal estates would be "expropriated and abolished", although provision was made (as in the industrial sector) to "protect patriotic landowners who collaborated with the guerrilla struggle, by paying them for their landholdings that exceed the limit established by the revolutionary government." The land would be given to the peasantry free of charge "in accordance with the principle that the land should belong to those who work it." However, no mention was made concerning the management of the expropriated somocista capitalist estates.

The state would also guarantee the peasantry agricultural credit, marketability and technical assistance, as well as the planning of livestock raising. Furthermore, it would "stimulate and encourage the peasants to organise themselves into cooperatives" with the view to their taking "their destiny into their own hands". Thus, the tendency would be towards creating a large petty-commodity producing mass of small rural proprietors, with the state controlling market and credit facilities. Through the former somocista estates and cooperatives the state would provide the peasantry with concrete examples of a more social form of agrarian production.

Other sections of the programme included a new labour code, reincorporation of the Atlantic Coast into the national economy, the emancipation of women, respect for religious beliefs, an independent foreign policy, solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles and the replacement of the Guardia with a "patriotic, revolutionary, and peoples army." The state would "establish obligatory military service and will arm the students, workers and farmers who - organised in people's militias - will defend the rights won against the inevitable attack by the reactionary forces of the country and Yankee imperialism."

The development of the Historic Programme fulfilled an important function in the prevailing political climate. Given previous experiences, there was a danger that concentration upon immediate barrio and workers' demands would disperse the Frente's cadre resources and play into the hands of the traditional opposition. However, the programme functioned as a unifying beacon, channelling the diverse activities within intermediate organisations inspired by the

\textsuperscript{81}The focus of planning would be "industrialisation and electrification", which appears to be a somewhat outmoded reference to Soviet development planning at the 8th Soviet Congress in December 1920. See V.I. Lenin, \textit{Collected Works}: Vol. 31, Progress, Moscow, 1977, pp. 532-3.
Frente. As Borge recalled, "we differed from other groups that made immediate demands their final aims. For us they were instead a means for seeking out the best individuals among the people and instilling in them the notion that they must organise for the taking of power.\textsuperscript{82} The programme provided cadres and intermediate organisations with a unifying vision of the content and form of this power, and stressed that its realisation was contingent upon a popular insurrectionary war.

These military, political and ideological activities during the late-1960's and early-1970's were consistent with the strategy of a prolonged people's war. Rejecting both putschism and economism, the Sandinistas engaged in developing covert organisational links with the popular classes. The accumulation of cadres and sympathisers proceeded silently, while instilling the intermediate organisations with the necessity of armed popular uprising. Clandestine operations, conducted under the cover of these groups, widened the influence of the Frente in a manner which belied its small underground nuclei of cadres.

However, by 1974 serious questions began to emerge over the effectiveness of a prolonged and silent accumulation of forces. Since Pancasan, the Frente had concentrated its attention upon work among the popular classes. As the traditional opposition re-emerged after the earthquake of 1972, the Frente was forced to reconsider the appropriateness of silent accumulation, and the need to develop an appropriate purposive response to the growing discontent across the political spectrum.

The insurrectionary timetable envisaged on the basis of a prolonged peoples war could accommodate a clandestine and gradual accumulation of forces for a distant and unspecified future popular insurrection. However, unforeseen events triggering political crises force revolutionary movements to immediately re-appraise the historical conjuncture and develop an appropriate response. As Lenin stressed in 1917, sudden historical turns can make yesterday's slogans and yesterday's praxis obsolete overnight. Unless the revolutionary party can adapt to the change, they will inevitably be unable to keep up with events. In 1974 the Sandinistas were faced with this same 'suddenness' and were forced to reconsider the effectiveness of their previous strategy. A number of conflicting evaluations of the historical conjuncture emerged provoking an acute organisational and ideological crisis.

5.6. THE CRISIS OF THE MID-1970'S

Through their silent accumulation of forces the Sandinistas had created organic links within the popular classes. Yet, despite these links the Sandinistas were unable to lead the antidictatorial movement as it re-emerged after the earthquake. As observed in Chapter 3, Somoza's direct assumption of power after the disaster, moral revulsion over his misappropriation of international relief and his encroachment into the traditional commercial pastures of the bourgeoisie, provoked a revitalisation of the traditional opposition.

\textsuperscript{82}Borge, "The FSLN...", p. 115.
In late-1974 this opposition once more coalesced into a united front against the dictatorship under the umbrella of the Democratic Union of Liberation (U.D.E.L.). Basing themselves on past experience the Frente refused to support the coalition, perceiving the dangers of a historical rerun of previous bourgeois initiatives such as the Arguero-led U.N.O. in 1967. On the other hand, the P.S.N. which had led a series of construction worker strikes throughout 1973, participated in U.D.E.L. The Frente argued that U.D.E.L.'s platform fell short of a revolutionary government led by the popular classes and sought only the democratisation of the existing structure. If U.D.E.L. became the hegemonic centre in the mobilisation against the dictatorship, the Sandinistas feared that their rejection of armed struggle and popular initiative would lead only to another episode in Nicaragua's tragic political history, another round of co-optation and the reaffirmation of the myth of dictatorial omnipotence.83

This political conjuncture called for an active response from the F.S.L.N. in order to promote the armed option as the only viable alternative to the dictatorship. This need to reassert themselves in the national political arena was made more imperative by a series of military and organisational setbacks during 1973 and 1974. While the traditional opposition gained momentum throughout 1974 in the cities, the Sandinistas' guerrilla front was being forced back upon defensive rearguard actions to protect their rural footholds in the face of increasing Guardia counter-insurgency. While most accounts of the period claim that somocista repression escalated after December 1974, this was only true for urban areas. In the countryside, as the F.S.L.N. communique the nation in late-1974 stated, since "the month of September 1973 the Guardia Nacional and the jueces de mesta have intensified the repression and persecution of the peasantry".84 The Guardia was acting less discriminately in the rural areas due partly to their inability and unwillingness to distinguish between guerrillas and peasants. The Sandinistas, learning from past experiences of peasant recruitment, had developed a network of irregular peasant guerrillas (guerrillos de medio tiempo) who remained on the land supplying sanctuary and military reinforcements for the regular guerrilla force.85

Furthermore, the policy of accumulating forces in silence had been undermined by Guardia imprisonment of invaluable cadres and sensational urban shootouts at discovered safehouses. In one shootout in Nadaime in 1973 the Frente had lost four leaders, Gonzales, Turcios, Morales and Quezada.86 Although campaigns by intermediate organisations to release political prisoners and a series of hunger strikes were launched, they failed to provoke any response


85This was first suggested by Fonseca in "Cero Hora", written in 1969. See also Bayardo Arce's testimony in Arias (ed), op. cit., p. 92.

from the dictatorship.87

Consequently, in order to regain the urban initiative, relieve pressure upon the rural armed front, and secure the release of incarcerated cadres, the F.S.L.N. finally decided to break with their silent strategy through a proactive initiative against a core symbol of the dictatorship. On December 27, 1974, the ‘Juan Jose Quezado’ Combat Unit of the F.S.L.N. gate-crashed a party held by Somoza confidant ‘Chema’ Castillo in honour of the U.S. ambassador Turner Sheldon, and held the entire company hostage. Eduardo Contreras, the commander of the unit, later recalled the objectives of the action:

Besides the concrete motives of obtaining the liberation of 18 imprisoned Sandinistas, the operation had other objectives: to deal a shattering blow to the somocista dictatorship and to be able to communicate to the world the tragic situation which Nicaragua endured as a consequence of governmental repression, administrative corruption and other equally serious matters....The action is a response of the people to the constant intensive repression that the enemy conducts in the mountains in the north of Nicaragua, the countryside and the cities...We consider this political action as the initiation of a war of liberation in which broad popular sectors will come to participate.88

Somoza was forced to concede to the immediate demands of the group89, including the publication of two Sandinista communiques in Somoza’s press. This gave the population its first opportunity to freely listen to, and read, the programme, philosophy and strategy of the Frente. The action not only reaffirmed the prestige of the movement in the eyes of the popular classes, it also provided concrete evidence of the effectiveness of audacious armed action, exposed the vulnerability of the dictatorship, and deflated the myth of its invincibility. As Black observes; "After taking the brief initiative in 1973 and 1974, the P.S.N. could hardly deny that the Chema Castillo operation had done more to radicalise the working class, by directly linking major wage increases to a political document denouncing the crimes of the dictatorship, than any number of strikes and peaceful forms of ‘civic action’."90

The response from the dictatorship was to decree a state of emergency and intensify and extend repression into the urban arena. This further accelerated the international isolation of the regime, polarised the opposition and further legitimised the armed solution. The repression in the northern regions of Matagalpa and Jinotega was particularly severe. Church workers and international organisations began to inform the world of rural human rights conditions. The increase in urban repression and the severity of counter-insurgency in the mountains combined with international attention resulted in the incoming Carter administration in the U.S. using Somoza as a test-case for its ‘human-rights’ policy.

87See Wheelock, *Hacia...*, pp. 77-8.

88Quoted in ibid, pp. 78-9. (my translation)

89The Frente presented Somoza with six main demands: 1) liberation of the political prisoners; 2) five million dollars in low denomination and numerically indiscriminate bills; 3) immediate decree of a law raising the minimum salary of the most exploited Nicaraguan workers, including the soldiers of the National Guard; 4) total suspension of repressive measures; 5) immediate publication of the FSLN communiques in the principal press outlets; 6) complete freedom of the press. Unidad de Combate ‘Juan Jose Quezada’, op. cit., pp. 111-3.

90Black, op. cit., p. 88.
While the Chema Castillo operation was designed partially to take heat off the northern guerrilla front and counteract accusations from Somoza that the Sandinistas had been crushed, the resulting repression forced even more 'legal' militants underground or abroad, and dealt heavy blows to the leadership in the mountains. Guerrilla columns lost contact with each other and were forced upon a survival footing. In addition, a number of leading cadres were killed in combat during 1975 and 1976, including Fonseca, Contreras, Rivera and Munguia.

The Castillo operation and subsequent repression opened up an intense period of debate over the tactics to be adopted in overthrowing the dictatorship. As Fonseca noted, this debate was "no more than an updated and expanded version of the earlier one" concerning the relationship between the vanguard and the masses, urban and rural activity, underground and legal work and alliances with the traditional opposition. The silent accumulation of forces was premised upon a prolonged and gradual period of mass mobilisation which would eventually prepare the subjective conditions for popular revolt. On the other hand, the Castillo operation stressed the purposive role of the revolutionary vanguard in accelerating these preconditions. The philosophy behind the action was more overtly Guevarist, arguing that it was not necessary "to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can make them". The Sandinistas were forced to ask themselves: to what extent can the revolutionary vanguard force the pace of events?

Conflict between various tendencies became acute during 1975. This was exacerbated by the disarticulation of the Frente's division of labour. The symbiotic relationship between guerrilla columns and mass urban work was undermined and the component parts became isolated entities unable to communicate and coordinate action. While this form of debate had been a constant source of tension since the formation of the Frente, the increased repression, disarticulation of activity, the necessity of an immediate response in the current political conjuncture and the existence of a strengthened traditional opposition, combined to heighten the tension and divide the F.S.L.N. into three tendencies pursuing separate tactics.

During 1974, an urban-based tendency, the Proletarios (T.P.), arose which criticised the leadership for its handling of the struggle. Led by Jaime Wheelock, Luis Carrion, Carlos Nunez and Roberto Huembes (with initial sympathy from Humberto Ortega and Eduardo Contreras) the Tendencia Proletario advocated a reorientation of activity towards the urban sector, based upon patient and prolonged mobilisation of the proletariat. Wheelock's book, *Imperialismo y...*
Dictatura had demonstrated that capitalist relations had accelerated since the World War to the extent that the proletariat had to be considered the "director of the revolution". The T.P. laid claim to a more consistently Marxist approach based upon the need to develop a class-based vanguard party. The F.S.L.N. had to project a more consistent class programme of action designed at "organising, educating, mobilising and directing the mass struggle for socialism and national liberation." The T.P. accused the national leadership of maintaining in essence a 'foco' approach, which assigned the guerrilla, supported by the peasantry, as the subject of history. According to the T.P., "the F.S.L.N. link to the masses seeks not so much to strengthen the popular organisations as to reinforce its own internal infrastructure." Whee Lock also criticised the Chema Castillo raid, arguing that 'putschism', 'adventurism' and 'senseless offensives' were no substitution to the difficult, patient process of urban mass organisation and the development of class consciousness through the workers' direct experience.94

In October 1975 the National Directorate decided to expel the T.P. on disciplinary grounds. The focal point of T.P. criticism up to this point had been directed against the members of the National Directorate who remained closest to the strategy which had been elaborated between 1970 and 1974; the strategy of a prolonged peoples war. As demonstrated above, this strategy was based upon a particular interpretation of Guevara's theory of guerrilla warfare which argued that in Latin America the countryside was the main arena of armed struggle. Those who retained this emphasis became known as the G.P.P. Guerra Popular Prolongada. The articulation of rural armed struggle with urban mass mobilisation had been a constant practical dilemma for the Frente and under current conditions the guerrilla had been disconnected from its urban lifeline. Remaining close to the idea of a prolonged peoples war, Fonseca admitted that the military and political conjuncture of forces had created serious problems for the Frente. However, he accused the T.P. of undermining unity and distorting the position of the majority. The T.P. "deviation" was the consequence of 'a state of veritable desparation' caused by the difficulties the Frente was encountering due to the Guardia offensive.95

The deaths of leading cadres, and the imprisonment of Borge, had reduced the National Directorate to 6 members by the beginning of 1977. A clear majority within the Directorate began elaborating a strategy throughout 1977 which was critical of both the T.P. and the G.P.P. This third, or tercerista tendency (known as the 'insurrectionists') based their appraisal of events upon the need to maintain mass mobilisation through a combination of audacious attacks upon the Guardia and broad-based internal and international pressure upon the dictatorship. According to the insurrectionists, the T.P. had merely adapted the strategy of passively accumulating forces from the rural to the urban arena. The F.S.L.N. could not accumulate forces in silence while "standing on the sidelines".96 Despite the weaknesses of Frente organisation

94See "FSLN-Proletarian Tendency", in Leiken & Rubin (eds), op. cit., p. 161-4. See also P. Hernandez, "Inside the F.S.L.N.", ibid, pp. 158-60.
95Fonseca, op. cit., p. 165.
96See M. Harnecker, "Nicaragua - The Strategy of Victory: Interview with Humberto Ortega", in Borge et al., op. cit., p. 58.
and numerical strength, it was essential that it transcend its defensive strategy. The vanguard should be compelled to take the military initiative against the dictatorship in an attempt to accelerate the insurrectional potential of the popular classes. The defensive had to be overcome "while avoiding the twin pitfalls of adventurism and an overly conservative analysis of this difficult and precarious situation." The 'conservatism' of the G.P.P. and the T.P. was attributed to their inability to analyse the totality of social relations during the existing conjuncture. Concentrating upon organising the proletariat or the peasantry was no guarantee of success if the vanguard was unable to correctly assess the strength of the enemy, whether Somoza or the traditional opposition. In other words, the accumulation of forces had to be premised upon a more dialectic analysis of the contending forces within the matrix of class relations; not merely the 'passive', gradual strengthening of the popular classes (whether led by the peasantry or the proletariat) but also upon the degree of unity within the bourgeois camp and its relationship with the dictatorship. As Daniel Ortega pointed out: "We measured accumulation not merely in material terms but also in terms of the dynamics of the enemy's decomposition." Given the current conjuncture of forces, unless the Frente was able to transcend the narrowness of the social perspective pursued by the T.P. and the G.P.P., the opposition bourgeoisie would assume hegemony over the movement. More than either of the other two tendencies, the insurrectionists stressed the purposive role of the revolutionary party in heightening and promoting a revolutionary situation.

The conflict between the three tendencies was centred on the tactics the Frente should adopt in the climate of Somoza's repressive offensive. All tendencies retained the twin tenets of armed struggle and popular insurrection. The distinguishing characteristic of the insurrectionist tendency was its stress on the purposive role of the vanguard in heightening the social and political contradictions within the social system. Unless the Frente actively intervened on the national political level, the traditional opposition would continue to present itself as the only viable challenger to Somoza through dressing itself up in new clothes. The insurrectionists were more acutely aware of the danger that the heightening social tension could be defused if the anti-dictatorial coalition remained under the hegemony of the traditional opposition. To combat this possibility the insurrectionists devoted more attention to weakening the moderate challenge of the traditional opposition, and attracting the most uncompromising opponents of Somoza towards the popular insurrectionary strategy. The tendency also appealed to foreign Social Democrats in the effort to isolate Somoza. This emphasis on the purposive intervention of the vanguard and the exploitation of contradictions within the traditional opposition led to charges by the T.P. that the insurrectionists represented "the most retrograde positions of the petit-bourgeoisie" within the Frente. Yet, despite its stress on broad-based coalition-building and voluntarism, the insurrectionists retained the same strategic vision of the nature of the revolutionary process and the nature of the post-Somoza state as the other tendencies. This was

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97 Ibid, pp. 57-8.
98 Quoted in Black, op. cit., p. 95.
demonstrated in their May 1977 General Military-Political Platform.99

In this document the insurrectionists maintained that "our most general strategy is that of the Popular Sandinista Revolution or Prolonged Popular War, which will lead us to national liberation and social liberation, towards socialism". The present phase, they argued, involved "the stern preparations of the minimum basic conditions for leading the people to insurrection by means of a process of Revolutionary Civil War." In terms of class, the document argued that "the working class is the fundamental force of the revolutionary process and that we should always depend on it above all else. Its force, development and organisation will be the guarantees of achieving the much desired socialist society." However, they also emphasized the role of coalition-building, claiming that "unless it has the tight support of all other popular sectors, especially the peasants and the petit-bourgeoisie, composed of intellectuals and students", the working class could not achieve its revolutionary goal.

The insurrectionists philosophy bore a resemblance to Lenin's understanding of the relationship between the party, class and revolution. The insurrection and revolution were necessary steps towards the transition to socialism, and this possibility could only be realised if the revolutionary forces were mobilised by a vanguard operating under the guidance of Marxist-Leninist theory.

To break the chains that bind our country to the yoke of foreign imperialism is the determining factor in our struggle for national liberation. Breaking the yoke of exploitation and oppression imposed by the dominant reactionary forces over our masses determines our process of social liberation. Both historical enterprises will advance together, indissolubly, if their exists a Marxist-Leninist cause and a solid vanguard to direct this process.

The present struggle against tyranny should lead us to a true democracy of the people (not a bourgeois democracy) that will form an integral part of the struggle for socialism. Our struggle should never be left midway, even if conciliatory bourgeois forces should strive for such a goal. The popular-democratic phase should be, for the Sandinista cause, a means used for consolidating its revolutionary position and organising the masses, so that the process moves unequivocally toward socialism. The necessary popular-democratic revolutionary phase, to be fulfilled once the tyranny is toppled, should not lead us to capitalism, reformism, nationalism, or any other development.100

It is therefore inappropriate to view the insurrectionists as a 'social democratic' or moderate wing within the Frente.101 Their emphasis upon coalition-building was premised on the hegemonic role of the Frente and the acceptance of armed popular insurrection.

The insurrectionists were placed in a more favourable position to accomplish the reunification of the three tendencies. Their capacity and willingness to strike spectacular military blows

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99While this document is not signed by any particular tendency, it was clearly written by the insurrectionists. Humberto Ortega claimed responsibility for writing it in an interview with Martha Hamecker, and it appears in a collection of his military writings. See Ortega, op. cit. Nolan, op. cit., pp. 66-7; Valenta & Duran (eds), p. 286; and D. Close, Nicaragua: Politics, Economics and Society, Pinter, London, 1988, pp. 112-3, all attribute the document to the insurrectionists.


could relieve pressure on the beleaguered Northern guerrillas, and their strengthening international diplomatic links could exert pressure on the dictatorship to relieve the repression which was hindering mass mobilisation. As the broad-based political pressure mounted against the dictatorship, the Sandinistas could only present themselves as a viable challenger to the polity if they succeeded in achieving greater coordination and effecting a "practical division of revolutionary labour".  

If the conflict between the three tendencies within the Frente had been over fundamental issues, then it would be expected that any tactical agreements between them would have simply papered over disagreements which would resurface at a future point in time. However, as will be discussed in the last section, once each tendency came to the recognition that a revolutionary situation had emerged the process of reunification proceeded relatively smoothly. This was due to the fact that the principle reason for disagreement had been lifted; namely over tactical preparations for a revolutionary situation and its timing. Once this obstacle to unification had been removed, the tendencies were able to operate as divisions of revolutionary labour on their specialist terrains in pursuit of their strategic goal; the transition to socialism through popular insurrection.

5.7. TOWARDS THE SEIZURE OF POWER

The revolutionary situation in Nicaragua proceeded through three phases, and was complicated by the existence of two main challengers to the polity. The first period was characterised by the hegemony of the traditional bourgeois opposition over the anti-dictatorial movement. The second phase was characterised by the changing fortunes of the two challengers. The bourgeois opposition was unwilling and unable to take the purposive initiative against the dictatorship, and began to look towards the United States for an ally against Somoza’s intransigence. However, as the bourgeoisie began to lose the initiative the anti-dictatorial movement did not automatically fall under the hegemony of the alternative challenger, the F.S.L.N. In order to emerge as the legitimate challenger to the polity, the Frente had to grasp the political initiative through a series of audacious military assaults on the regime and activate the the organic links which it had established with the mass movement during the preceding period. Furthermore, each move had to be calculated to inflict the greatest possible damage to the moderate challenge and counteract attempts to save the polity. In these calculations the Sandinistas applied insurrection as an art. The third phase of the revolutionary situation involved the undisputed hegemony of the Frente over the anti-dictatorial movement. This period, beginning in the early months of 1979 introduced a condition of dual power and the transformation of the Frente’s accumulated political forces into the co-ordinated military body which accomplished the popular insurrection.

The Nicaraguan Revolution supports the claim of this thesis that once a revolutionary situation has emerged, its revolutionary outcome is determined by military and political factors.

102 Lopez et al., op. cit., p. 176.
It is at this stage that structural theories must give way to the purposive role of revolutionary parties in conditions of multiple sovereignty.

No single event brought on the revolutionary situation in Nicaragua. As demonstrated in Chapter 3 the social tension which was inherent within the structure of somocista development manifested itself during the late-1970’s through Somoza’s encroachment on the traditional areas of non-somocista entrepreneurship. As well as isolating the bourgeoisie Somoza had also incurred the wrath of the Catholic Church hierarchy, which was not unwilling to communicate its distaste of the dictatorship’s repression to the public. The Carter administration had also distanced itself from the U.S.’s most loyal ally, and attacked Somoza for his human rights record. Although the popular classes remained relatively disorganised, and the F.S.L.N. was on the military defensive, this provided little comfort to Somoza. Appearances suggested that a powerful variety of factors were favourable for the success of the moderate solution.

Under the impression that the Frente had been crushed, and under domestic and international pressure, Somoza lifted the 33 month state of seige and martial law in September 1977. The immediate result was an upsurge in oppositional activity. Throughout October the traditional opposition, led by U.D.E.L., took advantage of the lifting of censorship in order to mount a campaign for a ‘national dialogue’ to negotiate the conditions for Somoza’s departure. While the P.S.N. added their voice to the chorus calling for a dialogue, the F.S.L.N. tendencies rejected it on both historical and programmatic grounds. Historically, the Frente pointed back to the long line of U.D.E.L. descendents which had clammered loudly for reform only to be silenced by co-option and repression. Programmatically, the Sandinistas argued that U.D.E.L.’s programme fell short of the real democratisation of Nicaraguan society, calling for the departure of Somoza while leaving the structure of somocismo substantially intact. No solution to the social and political crisis was possible without the direct participation of the popular classes.

Acknowledging both the mobilisation of the traditional opposition and the weakness of the popular forces, the insurrectionists embarked upon a political and military offensive in mid-October. The aim was to reassert the existence of an alternative challenger to the polity and frustrate any intensions the moderate opposition may have had for establishing somocismo sin Somoza (somozism without Somoza). The insurrectionists recognised that without mass participation, a spectacular military action (golpe) would be primarily a propaganda exercise aimed at advertising the fact that 33 months of intense repression had failed to destroy the Sandinistas. Basing themselves upon an active rather than a passive political strategy, they hoped that a purposive action which gained national attention could signal an opening volley in the popular insurrectionary phase.

Between 13-15 October the guerrillas co-ordinated three hit-and-run raids on Guardia barracks in Masaya, Ocotal and San Carlos. The T.P. and the G.P.P. denounced the attacks as adventurist

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103 See Lopez et al., op. cit., pp. 140-63.
acts which would be used by Somoza as an excuse to intensify repression against the popular classes. The insurrectionists responded by pointing out that a popular movement without revolutionary leadership would, in all likelihood, support the moderate challenge initiated by the bourgeois opposition. In order to prevent this possibility, it was necessary for the Frente to intervene in the political arena and announce their challenge through a military blow at the dictatorship. Humberto Ortega, in a later interview, claimed that if the insurrectionists had accepted the charges of adventurism this would have meant "falling prey to the big show the imperialists were mounting with all the talk about the bourgeois-democratic way out, in which the trade-union movement was to participate. For us, it was preferable that such a castrated trade union movement not be formed." Thus, while being sensitive to the charges of voluntarism, the insurrectionists acted with the purpose of widening the political choices open to the population. Basing themselves on existing political conditions their praxis was directed at creating new conditions.

Immediately after the attacks, the insurrectionists organised a declaration, issued from Costa Rica and signed by twelve Nicaraguans with "impeccable professional credentials", calling upon all "socially conscious Nicaraguans to solve our country's anguishing national problem with the participation of the National Sandinista Liberation Front". The purpose of this group, Los Doce, was to maintain pressure upon the moderate opposition and ensure that no solution could be reached which excluded the F.S.L.N.

By the beginning of 1978 the bourgeoisie still appeared to be the strongest challenger to the dictatorship. However, it found itself incapable of taking the struggle beyond proclamations and manifestos calls for dialogue. This peaceful and 'responsible' strategy was partly based upon their fear and respect for the United States. U.D.E.L. wanted to avoid being portrayed as violent insurgents taking the law into their own hands.

It was the Guardia itself which provided the accelerating impulse which brought the first phase of the revolutionary situation to a climax through assassinating Pedro Joachim Chamorro, the editor of the opposition newspaper, La Prensa, on January 10, 1978. This cataclysmic event culminated in spontaneous popular demonstrations throughout Managua and resulted in the symbolic destruction of somocista property.

The response of the bourgeoisie is informative, and brings into question Henri Weber's claim that "the bourgeois opposition itself opened up the crisis of the Somoza regime and actually led the first phase of the revolution." While it is accurate to say that the bourgeois opposition was the best organised challenger at this moment, its reponse to the uprisings of January and

104 See the communiques of both factions in Lopez et al., op. cit. pp. 158-9.
105 Hamecker, op. cit., p. 62.
106 On the creation of los Doce and its manifesto, see S Ramirez, "Interview", and Los Doce, "Manifesto", in Leiken & Rubin (eds), op. cit., pp. 170-3.
February demonstrated that they were unwilling to transcend their traditional strategy and take the initiative of mobilising the popular sectors. Thus, at the very outset of the revolutionary situation the bourgeois alternative proved to be ineffective and hesitant. Its proclivity towards elite mobilisation and formal negotiation immediately placed itself at a distance from the popular classes. In contrast, the Sandinista's response was directly interventionist, harassing the Guardia and activating the organic links it had established with intermediate organisations. Neither the bourgeois opposition nor the Sandinistas led the first phase of the revolution, just as neither the bourgeoisie nor the Bolsheviks led the February Revolution. In both cases the insurgent population initially looked towards the moderate response, and in both cases the moderate response was hesitant. In the face of this hesitancy, the Sandinistas and the Bolsheviks had to demonstrate through purposive action that they were a legitimate challenger. The Nicaraguan case is complicated by the fact that the condition of multiple sovereignty involved three, rather than two, centres of power. Nevertheless, this does not alter the fundamental similarities in the process of mobilisation.

Thirteen days after Chamorro's murder, the bourgeoisie responded with an employers' strike. The attempt to keep it within peaceful channels was undermined as workers, students and popular organisations were provided with the time and space to organise and co-ordinate their specific demands. Furthermore, Somoza's stake in production and distribution undermined the economic effectiveness of the employers' action. Within a week divisions emerged over the prolongation of the dispute, as the bourgeoisie recognised that the militancy of the popular sectors had transcended the limited demands of the traditional opposition. Meanwhile, the insurrectionalists held the cities of Rivas and Granada for a number of hours, and the G.P.P. launched military offensives in the North. In late-February, as U.D.E.L. was losing credibility due to its unwillingness or inability to lead or direct the increasing militancy, the barrio of Monimbo in Masaya erupted in open insurrection after provocation from the Guardia during a demonstration marking the anniversary of Sandino's death. The uprising was spontaneous, although the Frente attempted to support it through infiltrating members into the besieged area. However, the isolated character of the rising allowed the Guardia to concentrate its ferocity upon the area, and after a week of aerial assault and troop reinforcements, the district was pacified. As this occurred, the indian barrio of Subtavia in Leon (a Sandinista stronghold since the early-1970's) rose in arms. U.D.E.L., recognising that events were overtaking the moderate solution, called for a one-day strike, which only received a minimal response.

In the months following the Monimbo insurrection the bourgeois challenge to the polity remained characterised by elite mobilisation, while the Sandinistas took the initiative in strengthening its challenge through moves towards internal unification and popular mobilisation. Despite the fact that the dictatorship was unable to overcome its crisis of legitimacy, the bourgeoisie was unable to innovate an effective strategy to confront the polity. It continued to prefer negotiating power, and baulked at any means to seize power. After Chamorro's murder, Alfonso Robelo, president of I.N.D.E., formed the M.D.N., a party which

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simply reiterated U.D.E.L.'s platform, and providing more evidence that the traditional opposition were wasting their time pouring old wine into new bottles. In May, U.D.E.L. and the M.D.N. united the traditional opposition under another broad front, the Frente Amplio Opositor, (F.A.O.).\(^\text{109}\) The P.S.N. and Los Doce decided to participate in the venture. The insurrectionists supported the presence of Los Doce as an opportunity to develop a tactical alliance with the more militant sectors of the opposition. Robelo immediately tied the movement to the treadmill of Nicaraguan tragic political history by arguing that he was convinced that Somoza and his family could be persuaded to leave peacefully by the end of the year.

On the other hand, the F.S.L.N. exploited the lull in open insurrection in order to politically maneuver itself into the position of the legitimate challenger to the polity. The spontaneous popular uprisings of February had removed most of the obstacles blocking the path to reunification. Contrary to most expectations, it had been the masses which had led the events, leaving the politico-military ‘vanguard’ unprepared. All tendencies recognised that a prolonged period of consciousness-raising could not correspond with the immediate tasks of the moment. Through renouncing the insurrectionary option, the bourgeoisie presented the F.S.L.N. with a unique opportunity to propagandise its ideology throughout the popular movement and provide it with direction. The conjuncture gave the Frente the time and space to seize the initiative and accumulate the popular forces around an alternative front and highlight the distinction between the bourgeois option and the Sandinista project for popular social revolution.

The three tendencies began a process of uniting their forces into a more harmonious division of labour which would act as a co-ordinating politico-military centre for the ultimate assault on the dictatorship. They were able to regroup and activate the organic links which they had developed through the intermediate organisations during the prolonged period of silent accumulation. While the spontaneous nature of the upsurge in urban militancy cannot be denied, it was also influenced to a large degree by the numerous nuclei of popular organisations which assisted the co-ordination and channelling of activity. The T.P. had been active in organising workers’ cells and the student youth. The Sandinistas’ links with radical Christians also facilitated the establishment of local barrio defense efforts, and these efforts later spawned the more structured Civil Defense Committees, which acted as alternative forms of local government during the final offensive. As noted before, by late-1977 the Sandinistas had also created a nationwide rural workers’ association, the A.T.C. which published its first national newsletter, El Machete, in April 1978. Also in 1977 a women’s movement associated with the Frente, AMPRONAC, was founded which addressed the grievances of all women opposed to the dictatorship. Many of these women had been initiated into the anti-Somoza struggle through their involvement in campaigns to release political prisoners.\(^\text{110}\) Patricia

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\(^{109}\)The programme of the F.A.O. is reprinted in Lopez et al., op. cit., pp. 357-9.

\(^{110}\)While Black claims that AMPRONAC was formed ‘spontaneously’, Lea Guido, an FSLN militant argues that the initiative came from a note she received from Wheelock in April 1977. The FSLN had failed in two previous attempts to mobilise women. See Randall, Sandino’s Daughters, op. cit., p. 2.
Flynn estimates that women represented 30% of Frente membership by 1979, although Vilas has provided much lower figures based on a sampling technique and concludes that during the final offensive women's participation "seems to have taken place fundamentally in support tasks: as message carriers, providing safe houses, providing food and medicines, hiding and moving arms, clandestine hospital attention, and the like." However, as Linda Reif's analysis of women in Latin American guerrilla movements points out, the role of women was exceptionally high in relation to other guerrilla movements, and taking into consideration the structurally subordinate role of women in Latin American society.

Apart from these worker, peasant, women and barrio organisations each of the three tendencies had recruited students, although the G.P.P. was the strongest due to its links with the prestigious F.E.R. However, the main role of the G.P.P. within this new division of labour remained the vertebral column of guerrilla struggle in the countryside. The insurrectionists on the other hand performed an important role mobilising support among the radicalised Christians, academics and the middle class. Apart from organising armed combat units in the urban areas, they also linked the Sandinistas diplomatically to the outside world.

Numerically, membership remained small. Weber estimates that by 1977 cadres numbered 200, while Booth estimates that by mid-1978 "all three F.S.L.N. tendencies probably numbered between 500 and 1,000 armed regulars." The F.S.L.N. retained a strict distinction between militants, pre-militants and sympathisers. Due to clandestinity, open proclamation of F.S.L.N. membership remained impossible. Legal workers and sympathisers operated through channelling the activities of the intermediate organisations and other organisations towards the strategic vision of the Frente. This organisational strategy gave the appearance that the Sandinistas were both everywhere, yet nowhere. Under these conditions Guardia repression became increasingly indiscriminate and the outward spiralling target of violence soon contributed to a situation in which Somoza appeared to be at war with an entire nation.

As support for the Sandinista platform grew it became necessary to establish a broad front organisation which would challenge the F.A.O. on the national level for hegemony over the struggle against the polity. With this object in mind the Sandinistas formed the Movimiento del Pueblo Unido (M.P.U.) in July. The movement, which eventually incorporated 23 political and civic organisations was designed to facilitate the unification of the revolutionary sectors. Its programme, in all the essential details, reflected the Sandinistas' Historic Programme of 1969.

By the beginning of August a delicate political balance had emerged. As in all conditions of

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114Booth, op. cit., p. 145.

115The programme is reprinted in Lopez et al., op. cit., pp. 360-72.
multiple sovereignty, this balance was inherently unstable. The Somoza polity was aligned against the twin challenge of the F.A.O. and the M.P.U. In this tension a single initiative can disturb the delicately poised balance, and the difference between victory and defeat depends primarily upon purposive action informed by an artful understanding of insurrection. The Sandinistas feared that the Guardia was planning to seize the initiative through a coup which would remove Somoza and install a civil-military junta with the most unprincipled sectors of the F.A.O. Throughout August rumours circulated around Managua. Weighing up its political implications the Sandinistas feared that it could demobilise the popular challenge and decided to take pre-emptive measures to block it.

On August 22, in a perfectly executed operation, 26 Sandinistas stormed the National Palace in Managua and held the entire House of Deputies hostage. Their release was conditional upon a sum of money, the release of 85 Sandinista prisoners and the publication of an F.S.L.N. communique which reaffirmed the M.P.U. programme. After two days of seige, Somoza was forced to concede to the demands and the insurgents, with their released prisoners, flew to Panama. The Guardia were unable to prevent the Caraterra Norte from being paved with red and black flags demonstrating support for the F.S.L.N.

The episode provoked an immediate response from all contending parties. Somoza purged and reorganised the army, confirming the existence of elite discontent within his coterie. On August 25, the F.A.O. attempted to regain the initiative through repeating a call for a national stoppage, designed to force Somoza to negotiate over the F.A.O. programme. Support for the strike had been strengthened by growing opposition from the bourgeoisie to Somoza’s intransigence. On the other hand, calls from the F.A.O. for people to stay at home while they negotiated were immediately disregarded by the mass movement, indicating the extent to which the bourgeoisie had lost the initiative since February.

As the mass movement rejected the calls for a mediated solution, the Sandinistas were faced with a dilemma. They did not consider themselves organisationally prepared to lead to mass insurrection at this moment, yet the movement was showing signs of transcending the bourgeois solution. In their palace communique the Sandinistas revealed their unpreparedness when they wrote: "The hour of unity of the revolutionary forces must not be delayed: the path to be taken by the popular democratic process depends upon Sandinista unity." The dilemma the Sandinistas faced was similar to the Bolsheviks dilemma during the July Days in 1917. As Humberto Ortega recalled:

We issued a call for the uprising. A series of events, of objective conditions, came up all of a sudden that prevented us from being better prepared. We could not stop the insurrection. The mass movement went beyond the vanguard’s capacity to take the lead. We certainly could not oppose that mass movement, stop that avalanche. On the contrary, we had to put ourselves at the

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forefront in order to lead it and channel it to a certain extent. 117

The uprising began in Matagalpa at the end of August, and by early-September Esteli, Leon and Masaya had been lost by the Guardia, barricades were erected, and authority was placed in the hands of local committees of defense. Due to problems of terrain, the uprising in Managua was contained by the Guardia. The insurrection resembled the Monimbo uprising on a national scale and this characteristic made it vulnerable to repraisal. Its spontaneous, unco-ordinated character offered the Guardia the opportunity of pacifying the cities individually. The numerical weakness of the guerrillas, combined with the lack of arms and the inability to open rural fronts, forced the Frente to assign its cadres to the isolated insurgent cities in a 'war of position'. By the end of September, Somoza had retaken each city through concentrating the Guardias force upon each town one by one. However, the Frente was able to retreat from the urban areas in order, with their ranks swollen by thousands of the most combatant youth fleeing from Guardia revenge and reprisals.

The Sandinistas drew an important lesson from the September uprisings. Under Nicaraguan conditions, the popular insurrection could not succeed through a war of position which statically defended urban strongholds. It was imperative to co-ordinate a mass urban uprising and a general insurrectionary strike with armed rural guerrilla assaults. This war of maneuver would strain the Guardia through diverting their concentrated forces away from the insurgent cities. Once the guerrillas had broken through the Guardia curtain surrounding the cities they could enter and liberate the besieged insurgents. The success of this strategy demanded a joint politico-military command in order to synchronise urban and rural work. After the September uprisings the process of Sandinista unification accelerated.

Although the Guardia was able to pacify the urban revolts by the end of September, Somoza was unable to undermine the revolutionary situation. The ferocity of the Guardia only served to increase the alienation of the polity, and the population remained mobilised behind the twin threat of the F.A.O. and the M.P.U. Somoza also found it increasingly difficult to appeal to the United States through using alarmist anti-communist propaganda.

The September events had also demonstrated the extent to which the relationship between the two challengers had changed. The F.A.O. had clearly lost the initiative, while the Sandinistas had succeeded in articulating an alternative vision corresponding to the active mobilisation of the masses.

The F.A.O., increasingly aware that its moderate challenge lacked both a militant social base and an effective strategy for getting rid of the dictator, eagerly consented to a proposal by the Carter administration to participate in an O.A.S.-sponsored Tri-National Commission for Friendly Co-operation which would attempt to negotiate a settlement with Somoza. Both the U.S. and the F.A.O. were now actively seeking a moderate solution to the crisis which would

117 Hamecker, op. cit., p. 66.
isolate the growing Sandinista challenge. Both Somoza and the F.A.O. believed that their victory was contingent upon the support of the U.S. Neither now possessed the sufficient social support or military capacity to overcome the revolutionary crisis on their own.

The unintended consequence of the negotiating process was the further polarisation of the political spectrum. The spectacle of the traditional opposition planning Nicaragua's future with Somoza under the paternal gaze of the United States provided additional credence to the Sandinista charge that the F.A.O. project only sought to remove the man, rather than destroy the system. Somoza's intransigence also helped to heighten the awareness that the realisation of the F.A.O. project rested on a 'Dominican-type' intervention from the U.S. or the O.A.S.\textsuperscript{118} The Sandinistas exploited this spectacle by presenting themselves as the authentic vehicle for national liberation and social transformation. In late-October Los Doce withdrew from the negotiations. Their withdrawal precipitated a mass exodus from the F.A.O. during the following two months by left and centre organisations wanting to flee from the accusation of collusion with the polity. By the end of the year the erosion of the F.A.O. had significantly reduced the weight of the bourgeois challenge. It was no longer capable of presenting itself as a viable challenger and was restricted to choosing between the alternatives of the polity or the Sandinistas. Their dilemma reflected the extent they had been outmaneuvered during the year, and their inability to initiate any purposive advance.

Their only available means to pressure Somoza were civic stoppages and U.S. pressure. Yet the efforts of January/February and September/October had demonstrated the ineffectiveness of this dual strategy. Furthermore, disregarding calls to stay at home, the popular classes had used the opportunity to demonstrate their intention to go beyond peaceful means, and to take matters into their own hands. Civic stoppages had merely provided them with the time and space to organise independently of elite mobilisation. Thus, as protracted negotiations reached a stalemate with Somoza, the bourgeoisie's middle ground between the dictator's intransigence and the mobilised mass movement was as secure as quicksand. By December they recognised that if they were to retain any influence over the course of events they would have to throw themselves into the arms of either the dictatorship or the popular classes under the hegemony of the M.P.U. and the F.S.L.N. However, if it adopted a policy of compromise with Somoza (which the Carter administration desired) it ran the risk of elimination in the event of a popular insurrection. Unwilling to accept this moderate solution, the MPU-led mass movement would direct its energy toward the destruction not only of somocismo but also capitalism itself. On the other hand, if it submerged itself in an alliance under the hegemony of the M.P.U.-F.S.L.N. it could not guarantee that its privileged social status and power would be maintained after the dictatorship was overthrown. However, given the determination of the popular urban classes to destroy the dictatorship and the awareness of, and hostility toward, any negotiated form of somocismo sin Somoza, the bourgeois opposition began abandoning the sinking F.A.O.

\textsuperscript{118}The U.S. had considered this. A State Department official said candidly that "We've been looking for another Balaguer but we can't seem to locate him." Quoted in A. Bandana, "Crisis in Nicaragua", \textit{NACLA Report on the Americas}, Vol. XII, No. 6, Nov-Dec, 1978, p. 35.
By early-1979 it is possible to replace the concept of multiple sovereignty with the more restrictive concept of dual power. Yet, even at this moment, despite the fortuitous run of events, it is inadmissible to speak of the popular social revolution as inevitable. In addition to the necessary social structural preconditions for revolution, the successful seizure of power was dependent on the effective purposive action of the revolutionary party which had assumed hegemony over the mass movement. It is impossible to understand the success of the popular revolution without taking into consideration the premeditation, planning, organisation and timing which was required in preparation for the final military offensive. Successful revolution, as Lenin and Trotsky repeatedly emphasized in 1917, is an art which cannot be reduced to the 'objective scientific laws' of social development. While the possibility of socialist revolution is dependent upon a set of advantageous structural preconditions, an explanation of its realisation must involve exploring the conscious intervention of agency, and its role in transcending a given matrix of social relations.

The success of the Sandinista's final offensive, which began in May, was dependent upon the fulfillment of three tasks; winning over the left and centre parties which had fled the F.A.O., preparing the military strategy, and maintaining a state of mass mobilisation. The first preparatory task involved completing the building of a loose "negative coalition" under the hegemony of the Frente. As the flight from the F.A.O. continued the Frente accepted a coalition between the M.P.U. and the F.A.O. dissidents and created the Frente Patriótico Nacional (F.P.N.). This coalition formalised the political polarisation in the revolutionary situation through drawing the lines of demarcation between the challenge of the popular classes and the wreckage of the polity. A 21-point programme was adopted which reiterated the demands of the M.P.U., and a National Directorate was formed in which Los Doce, the M.P.U. and the F.S.L.N. predominated. Despite reservations from sectors of the left that the F.P.N. reflected a weakening of the independence of the mass movement and the popular classes, the establishment of a popular front with bourgeois representation reflected the sensitivity of the F.S.L.N. to the threat of a resurrected dictatorial system without fundamental social change. It signalled a moment in the process of the 'decomposition of the enemy' through splitting the most advanced and respected sectors of the bourgeoisie from the moderate solution. Marx and Engels had given similar advice to would-be insurgents in their writings on the German Revolution; "rally those vacillating elements to your side which always follow the strongest impulse, and which always look out for the safer side." By securing the passive collaboration of the bourgeois opposition, the F.P.N. sealed the fate of any U.S. negotiated solution involving the maintenance of the National Guard and other somocista institutions. From this moment on the path of compromise was effectively closed. The alternatives confronting the population...

119Robert Dix argues that the ability of a movement to construct a broad "negative coalition" from the opponents of a government is an underlying condition for success. R. Dix, "Why Revolutions Succeed and Fail", Polity, 16, 1984.

120The full text of the programme is reprinted in Lopez et al., op. cit., pp. 372-78.


were clear; either a Sandinista-led mass insurrection, or the restoration of the dictatorship. Having raised the stakes in the political contest through polarisation and a programme for mass insurrection, the Sandinistas were now obliged to act immediately by transforming their words into deeds.

Again, a comparison with the Bolshevik Revolution is useful. During September and October 1917 Lenin was arguing that it was criminal for the Bolsheviks to repeat the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets' and refrain from acting once the party found itself in an advantageous position. "History", wrote Lenin on the eve of the insurrection, "will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today...while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything.... To delay action is fatal." Like Lenin, the Sandinistas recognised the importance of timing. It was impossible to maintain an active state of mass mobilisation indefinitely without making moves towards the seizure of power. Failure to proceed to the revolutionary offensive would inevitably result in the passing of the revolutionary situation and the restoration of the old order.

Within weeks of the formation of the F.P.N. the Frente gave indication of its preparedness for the offensive through announcing its "irreversible and unbreakable unity", and assigned a joint National Directorate representing three members from each tendency. In April the Frente released an announcement which called the F.P.N. the "legitimate alternative to the oppressive regime of the Somoza's." The lessons of September had demonstrated that insurrectionary warfare required the complete unity of the 'revolutionary centre' in order to achieve national co-ordination between a general strike, urban insurrection and rural armed struggle. The joint command finalised military preparations for the opening of seven guerrilla fronts spread throughout the country, designed to disperse the Guardia in rural confrontations. These fronts would divert the Guardia from the urban arena once the Frente had issued the call for the 'final offensive'.

The third preparatory task, maintaining a state of mass mobilisation and alert was simplified by Somoza's intransigence. The broad cross-sections of the population which had been inspired by the intermediate movements played a crucial role in preparing the urban areas for mass insurrection, and even many of the less politically inclined were drawn along by the sentiment that the sacrifices of the past year made any alternative to Somoza desirable. This explains the journalistic accounts of the time which observed that 'every Nicaraguan is a Sandinista'.

Diversionary attacks were staged throughout the North in April in an attempt to drive the Guardia north. By May the Frente considered objective conditions ripe for the final offensive. The devaluation of the cordoba, and a consequent upsurge in prices, had further isolated Somoza, while diplomatic isolation increased as numerous Latin American nations suspended

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123 Lenin, op. cit., (26; 235).
diplomatic relations with Somoza and granted the Sandinistas 'belligerent' status. The Sandinistas began planning the establishment of a provisional government on their 'southern front', preferably the town of Rivas close to the Costa Rican border from where they could receive international recognition. Furthermore, disgust with the role of the U.S. was heightened through the U.S. vote for a $US66 million IMF loan to Somoza.

In late-May the Sandinistas opened their northern and southern fronts, and on the last day of the month issued their call for a national insurrection; the final offensive. On June 4, a general strike began which immediately paralysed the nation and instituted a situation of dual power between the regime and local self-defense committees under the direction of the Frente. On the same day the F.S.L.N. entered Leon. On the 9th the insurrection began in the eastern region of Managua even before the F.S.L.N. issued their general call. Throughout the month town after town fell into F.S.L.N. hands and a five-person Junta of National Reconstruction was named from Costa Rica, in which the F.S.L.N. carried a majority due to its relations with Los Doce and the F.P.N.

Despite the fact that the Sandinistas were forced to abandon Managua at the end of June and retreat 30 kilometers south to Masaya they had once more surrounded the capital by July 10. A last ditch effort to contain the revolutionary process by the U.S. met with local and international rebuffal. The Carter administration received one of its greatest diplomatic setbacks on June 22 when the O.A.S. rejected the U.S. proposal that a peace-keeping force be sent to Nicaragua. Venezuela responded by pushing through a motion that Somoza resign. By July 8, the U.S. had secured Somoza's resignation but retained it as an instrument to pressure the resistance to accept a role for the National Guard and the National Liberal Party in future politics. As barrio after barrio was recovered in Managua by the F.S.L.N. Somoza resigned and fled to Miami on July 17. Somoza's designated replacement refused to fulfil his role in the US-orchestrated plan to negotiate a ceasefire and hand power over to the Junta. By ordering the Guardia to fight on, he effectively ensured its total destruction as an institution. The F.S.L.N. entered Managua from all fronts on July 19, and proclaimed the victory of the Sandinista Popular Revolution.

5.8. CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that the reason why such a rapid and fundamental socio-political transformation occurred in Nicaragua in July 1979 was due to the purposive initiative of a revolutionary party, the F.S.L.N. It is interesting to speculate what would have transpired had this movement been absent from the political spectrum. The historical precedents which have been analysed in this chapter suggest that the traditional opposition would have been unable and unwilling to lead such a profound regime transformation; in other words, social revolution

125 Good accounts of the final offensive are found in Black, op. cit., pp. 142-180; and Gonzalez Janzen, op. cit., pp. 30-54.

126 The insurrection in Managua and the Central Front "Camilo Ortega Saavadra" is described in C. Nunez, Un Pueblo en Armas, Centro de Publicaciones 'Silvio Mayorga', Managua, 1980.
would not have occurred. What has been described in this chapter as the ‘tragedy’ of past opposition mobilisation had only led to the strengthening of the dictatorship, and the cultivation of the myth of dynastic invincibility. To a large degree this was due to the absence of an alternative political challenger. As the revolutionary situation intensified at the beginning of 1978 the traditional opposition emerged at the forefront of the challenge against the polity. And true to historical form, it lack the requisite combativeness, initiative and social base to maintain the challenge.

The structural underpinnings of the revolutionary situation in themselves cannot explain the social revolution. This outcome was determined by the political and military preparedness of the F.S.L.N. The existence of advantageous conditions, or the maturation of objective social circumstances did not automatically result in a broad-based coalition aimed at radical social transformation. While structural analyses are able to point to the necessary shape this coalition had to take in order to be successful, this in itself does not guarantee that the necessary agents will be on the spot ready to fulfill their ‘historical role’.

The reasons why the Sandinistas were able to assume the hegemonic position over the anti-dictatorial movement, and its capacity to lead the movement towards a popular revolutionary insurrection, can only be explained through appreciating its organisational and ideological development, and its molecular accumulation of social forces. This practical historical experience dictated the form which the political and military praxis of the Frente assumed during the revolutionary situation.

The Sandinistas were the only party which had consistently advocated the path of armed struggle and the only one which argued that the popular classes had to seize power in order to democratise Nicaragua. The prolonged and arduous process of agitation among the popular classes throughout the 1960’s and 1970’s enabled them to immediately take the political initiative after the bourgeois opposition began to falter early on in the revolutionary situation. Furthermore, the accumulated experience of twenty years of military confrontation and mass agitation gave the Frente an unequalled ability to assess what worked and what didn’t work in Nicaraguan conditions.

However, this accumulation of forces and experience is insufficient to account for their success. Apart from consolidating its position as the vanguard of the popular classes, the Sandinistas political praxis was also characterised by an ability to maneuver, taking into consideration the dynamics of the enemy’s contradictions. As this chapter has shown, each political move was calculated to take full advantage of the decomposition of the polity and the bourgeois challenge and heighten the preparations for popular insurrection. The Sandinistas may not have caused the decomposition, but their success demanded that they actively use it to their advantage.

While this chapter has analysed the development of Sandinista praxis and the purposive role it performed in determining the revolutionary outcome, it is also important to note the
philosophy of praxis which informed Sandinismo. It has been argued in this chapter that the Sandinistas' understanding of the role of agency in the process of social development was influenced most directly by Che Guevara. The Cuban Revolution provided the Sandinistas with a justification of their heretical synthesis of Sandino and Marx. Through Guevara, the Sandinistas discovered a Leninism which was absent from the praxis of the orthodox Marxist party, the P.S.N. Guevara emphasized the dialectic between structure and agency arguing that "a vanguard...increasingly influenced by Marxist-Leninism, is capable of consciously anticipating a whole series of steps leading towards realizing and hastening the course of events, but hastening them within the limits of what is objectively possible." While the origins of Sandinismo were the product of given conditions, its development was based upon intervening purposively in this environment, understanding the potential within the conditions, with the object of ultimately achieving the transcendence of the conditions.

It has also been noted that the controversy between the Sandinistas and the orthodox P.S.N. bore striking similarities with the debates between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in Russia which were discussed in Chapter 4. These similarities will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion.

Chapter 6
TOWARDS A THEORY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTIONS

The evidence presented in the previous two chapters reveals the importance of purposive factors for any attempt to theorise socialist revolutions. In order to explain why a societal condition of multiple sovereignty was transcended by a socialist seizure of power it is essential to understand the origins and development of the revolutionary party which assumed hegemony over the mobilised mass movement. Theorising socialist revolutions requires assigning a more independent status to revolutionary parties than structuralist analyses allow.

However, as Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated, structuralist analyses provide an insight into the socio-economic conditions which generated revolutionary situations. They also point to factors which constrain the options available to states, classes and other social groups, and also to the possibilities of coalitions between different classes. In terms of the thorny dilemma in the social sciences between structure and agency, and constraint and choice, the evidence presented here points away from any 'either/or' dichotomy and towards the interdependency of structural and purposive variables.

This chapter draws together the two historical case studies of Russia and Nicaragua. No two revolutions are ever identical, and the sociology of comparative revolutions must constantly retain respect for national peculiarities while at the same time attempt to uncover the general features which transcend individual cases. As Michael Lowy notes, world revolution "has unfolded during the twentieth century through an uneven process resulting from the contradictions of capitalism as a world system, yet these contradictions have always materialised in one particular country and at one particular time."¹ For this reason, the thesis up until this point has emphasized the national peculiarities of the development of revolutionary events in Russia and Nicaragua, while drawing upon the lessons from the theoretical critique of the existing literature on revolutions which introduced this thesis. This chapter analyses the similarities and differences between the two case studies and demonstrates that the similarities are more fundamental for understanding the nature of the revolutionary processes than the differences.

6.1. STRUCTURAL SIMILARITIES AND CONTRASTS

6.1.1. The Development of Capitalist Relations

The departing point for any understanding of the generation of a revolutionary crisis resulting in a socialist seizure of power must be the process through which capitalism emerged as the dominant mode of production within the social formation. It is this mode of production which gives rise to the matrix of class relations and social contradictions which generate the inherent conflict culminating in the revolutionary situations examined in this thesis. For this reason Wallersteinian World Systems Analysis is a useful theoretical point of departure for situating both pre-revolutionary Russian and Nicaraguan society.

Both nations were located outside the core of the world capitalist system, and their linkages to this system were based primarily upon the exportation of primary commodity products for the world market, and the importation of manufactured, and other value-added, products from core nations. In both cases, the periods of greatest expanded capitalist reproduction corresponded with high prices for their principal commodity exports upon the world market. High grain prices on the European market were exploited by the Tsarist state at the turn of the century, while Nicaragua's most sustained periods of growth were associated with high world market prices for gold, cotton and coffee. While this international economic articulation created an external dependency with negative socio-economic repercussions during periods of foreign market and credit contraction, it is undeniable that this linkage was essential for the particular form which capitalist development assumed. Although growth rates depended upon this fluctuating and erratic external linkage, both countries registered exceptionally high rates of growth by regional and even international standards.

In the case of Tsarist Russia capitalism (through state inducement and foreign capital and trade) began to emerge as the dominant mode during the 1880's. It progressively expanded up until the First World War. However, the dominance of capitalism within the social formation was complicated by the existence of a large rural sector which remained essentially pre-capitalist. Despite growing articulation between the two sectors of the economy, it was still appropriate to speak of a 'dualistic' relationship within the socio-economic formation. This dualism would have important repercussions for any political movement attempting to channel and harness the energies of the anti-autocratic classes. Although both the proletariat and the peasantry increasingly directed their discontent against the prevailing system, their contrasting matrix of social relationships made the co-ordination of their divergent demands problematic. It is in this sense that Moshe Lewin speaks of two currents temporarily drawn together into a single stream, yet destined to diverge once the immediate objective had passed. Capital was highly concentrated around urban centres, such as St Petersburg and Kharkov. This geographic concentration was intensified through the scale of industrial enterprises, with Russia registering one of the highest concentrations of workers per plant in the world. Heavy industrialisation

predominated, reflecting the state's concern with maintaining international military competitiveness. This concentration of labour and infrastructure was also associated with a high level of monopolisation of capital.

The two principal differences between Russian and Nicaraguan capitalist development involved the bonds of articulation between the urban and rural sectors of the economy, and the contrasting strengths of urban capitalism. It was only during the early-1950's, with the emergence of Nicaragua as one of the largest cotton producers in the world market, that capitalism began to revolutionise social relations. Prior to this, capitalist development had proceeded haltingly, firstly through the truncated process of 'manorial' coffee production, and then through foreign-based enclave capitalism. However, this later process was isolated and disarticulated from the main population centre of the nation and contributed little to the capitalist transformation of the nation as a whole. It was not so much the penetration of foreign capital or the links with the world capitalist system which caused this truncated development, but foreign political intervention in the form of the geo-political interference of the United States.

In association with the expansion of cotton cultivation after the Second World War (which required greater proletarianisation of rural labour than coffee) urban industry began to expand. This expansion and diversification further increased (albeit in an unbalanced manner) during the 1960's under the guidance of the Central American Common Market. However, the development of urban capitalism remained tied to light industry and inputs for agricultural production. Furthermore, cotton cultivation created a large semi-proletarian itinerant workforce, increasing the indicators of urbanisation at a quicker pace than proletarianisation. Foreign capital and trade fulfilled an important role in supplying the inputs for cotton production, while finance and value-added production in cotton was highly monopolised.

Consequently, while the gestation period between the emergence of the dominance of capitalism and the revolutions were temporally similar in Russia and Nicaragua, there were differences associated with the form capitalist development assumed. In Nicaragua there was a stronger bond of articulation between the rural and the urban economy through the emergence of cotton production. This type of production also encouraged a more complete severance of the direct producer from land-ownership than in Russia. In Tsarist Russia a more 'dualist' yet articulated relationship existed between the rural and the urban economy. The extraction of surplus from the predominantly pre-capitalist rural economy was channelled into a process of industrialisation, through the mediation of the Tsarist state and foreign capital and trade. Thus, it can be argued that in Nicaragua, capitalist relations had secured a more predominant role in the totality of the social formation than in Tsarist Russia, where peasant solidarity and community remained stronger and, relatively speaking, more autarkic.

Both forms of capitalist development resulted in large-scale population movements and urban migration. However, the rise of heavy industry in Russia created a more stable urban industrial workforce with consequent opportunities for worker mobilisation. In Nicaragua on the other hand, the requirements of an itinerant rural proletariat for the cotton harvest produced a more mobile and less easily organised proletariat. Between harvests rural workers were forced to find
employment in a saturated urban labour market. This situation explains the extremely large 'service' component of the Nicaraguan workforce, which concealed a large informal petty-merchant sector. Any attempt to organise the population against the somocista model of capitalist development required greater sensitivity to the 'real' rather than 'formal' exploitation and subordination of the popular classes to capitalism. In other words, a socialist movement based primarily upon a factory-based proletariat would be unable to strike at the heart of Nicaraguan capitalist accumulation. The critical position afforded to the Russian urban proletariat in the dynamic of capitalist development did not apply to the same degree in Nicaragua.

As Malcolm Alexander notes, the theoretical utility of the structuralist approach of World Systems Analysis lies in its ability to explain "not why certain world-historical events occur, but rather why they occur in particular regions of the world-system at particular historical junctures." The implication for the study of modern revolutions is that if analysis ends on this situational level, then revolutionary theory loses its explanatory power. Unless this world framework is supplemented with a concrete analysis of the specificity of the class struggles within nation states, then World Systems Analysis remains (to quote from Jean-Paul Sartre's critique of abstract Marxism) "an arbitrary limitation of the dialectical movement, an arresting of thought, a refusal to understand". In order to render modern revolutions intelligible, it is necessary to explore the particular processes of class conflict and the role of the state in reproducing the specific model of capitalist development.

6.1.2. The State, Development and the Popular Classes

In both Russia and Nicaragua capitalist development was premised upon the state performing an active and interventionist role in the economy. From the emancipation of the serfs until the 1880's the Tsarist state's laissez-faire attitude towards the economy brought only limited, light industrial expansion. It was the utilisation of fiscal pressure upon the rural sector that promoted state-sponsored rapid heavy industrial development from the 1880's onwards. The state performed a crucial articulating role between the archaic rural structure and the world economy through measures including taxation, manipulation of tariff barriers and the encouragement of foreign capital and loans. Apart from encouraging private domestic and foreign capital the state also performed a role as direct owner.

The Nicaraguan experience provides even stronger support for the importance of an interventionist state to promote capitalist development in the periphery of the world capitalist system. The relationship between a dynamic coffee-exporting bourgeoisie and the state had

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4J-P. Sartre, Search for a Method, Vintage, N.Y., 1968, p. 57. Again to paraphrase Sartre, Russia may have been a semi-peripheral nation, but not every semi-peripheral nation was Russia. The same logic applies to Nicaragua's peripheral status.
been undermined after the overthrow of the Zelaya administration, resulting in the stagnation of the internal economy under the auspices of U.S.-directed financial control. It was only after the Somoza dictatorship consolidated its base and appeased U.S. concern for its geo-political hegemony that Nicaragua achieved the political and social 'stability' crucial for sustained capitalist development. As Chinchilla and Hamilton argue; "Contrary to the ideology of free enterprise and free trade...state intervention is, in fact, essential for capitalist development."5

The Tsarist and the somocista states performed roles beyond mere regulation of the economy. Both states were owners and controllers of capital in their own right, and manipulated economic levers for the purpose of promoting their own vision of development. In Russia this involved promoting heavy industry to bolster the military strength of the regime. In Nicaragua, the state functioned as a personal appendage to the somocista entrepreneurial empire, which eventually grew to become one of the largest in Latin America.

It is this role of the state-as-capitalist which justifies the utility of Skocpol's 'autonomy of the state'. However, once the state undertakes to directly own and control the most dynamic sectors of production and exchange in a model of capitalist development its autonomy is restricted by certain 'structural imperatives' of capitalist accumulation. This in turn elevates the state into a direct participant in class conflict. Under these conditions, the liberal notion of the state as an arbiter of social conflict is undermined. In Russia and Nicaragua the economic role of the state precluded the institutionalisation of mechanisms of arbitration perceived by the popular classes as independent from the conflicting social classes. For this reason strikes and demonstrations often assumed a more directly political flavour. Furthermore, economic crises were transformed more immediately into crises of state legitimation. Corporativist experiments with unionism in both Russia and Nicaragua were undermined once workers' demands exceeded the limits of state tolerance. Zubatovism, the experience of Bloody Sunday, Somoza's demagogic populist experiments with unionism in the mid-1940's, all ended with the recognition by workers of the need to built organisations independent of, and against, the state. These embryonic ventures of workers' self-organisation met the full force of state coercion. In both cases state-sponsored capitalist development heightened the political stakes through undermining the utility or effectiveness of workers' economistic demands, and their replacement with fundamental political demands for deeper structural transformations. This role of the state-as-capitalist also accounts for its inability to transcend autocratic, dictatorial mechanisms of rule, and its ultimate reliance on overt coercion against economic or political demands by those sectors of society which paid for the model of state-sponsored capitalist development.

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6.1.3. The State And The Bourgeoisie

Given the importance attached to the state and capitalist development in this explanation of the preconditions for modern socialist revolutions, attention must also be paid to the relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie. In the Russian and Nicaraguan cases a rigid 'stage' theory of development is an inadequate theoretical tool to predict the nature of any crisis of autocratic, dictatorial state legitimation. The possibility of a bourgeois revolution was undermined by the relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie.

In the Russian case, this relationship lay at the heart of Marxist polemics concerning the nature of the anti-autocratic revolution. Optimistic predictions of a classic bourgeois revolution based upon a suprahistorical interpretation of Marx were soon tempered by the empirical realisation of the 'cowardly' and 'niggardly' nature of the Russian bourgeoisie. There were structural underpinnings explaining this behaviour. For reasons associated with the absolutist nature of the Tsarist state the bourgeoisie was unable to develop an independent social base prior to the emancipation of the serfs. Once the state had embarked upon its ambitious model of heavy industrialisation and depressed internal demand, the bourgeoisie had little option other than to prefer state patronage rather than lead an anti-autocratic revolution. As the experience of 1905 demonstrated, the mass popular movement was capable of transcending bourgeois demands and interests. During the First World War the crisis of state legitimation experienced by the Tsarist state was, in terms of bourgeois interests, one of incompetence and corruption rather than a perceived need to restructure fundamentally the system. However, the articulation of the Russian economy with the world market (which had been a cornerstone of Russian state-sponsored capitalist development) was interrupted during the war, resulting in rapid economic disintegration and social crisis. Once the Tsarist state had collapsed, the Provisional Government (composed of sectors of the bourgeoisie and moderate socialists) was unwilling or unable to implement fundamental structural changes to combat an impending socio-economic catastrophe. The crucial questions concerning participation in the war, agrarian reform and industrial relations were left unattended or were shelved. This inactivity, combined with democratisation at the political level, led rapidly to the intensification of conflict between two structures of dual power, or multiple sovereignty, and opened the path for a popular revolutionary solution to the structural catastrophe.

In the Nicaraguan case, while the relationship between the dictatorial state and the bourgeoisie was fraught with more tension, ultimately the bourgeoisie was unable to provide a solution to the structural crisis of somocismo. As noted above, the immediate pre-history of somocismo was characterised by U.S. interference in domestic political economy, economic stagnation and the inability of a potentially dynamic export-oriented bourgeoisie to influence the direction of state policy. It was only during the early-1950's that stable political and economic conditions were secured for the somocista model of capitalist development. This model was premised upon a number of pacts between the Somoza clan on one hand and the most dynamic fractions of non-somocista capital on the other. This promoted political stability through prior electoral agreements which left the ultimate structure of dictatorial authority
intact. These pacts also delineated sectoral spheres of economic influence. However, they also revealed the latent conflict underlying the relationship between the somocista state and other dynamic fractions of capital. Manifestations of this conflict could only be controlled through continual capital expansion, modernisation, diversification and the repression of the popular classes. For this reason, periods of economic contraction, such as the late-1950's and late 1960's, were periods of heightened opposition from the bourgeoisie. The non-somocista bourgeoisie could tolerate administrative corruption and Somoza's abuse of state power as long as expansion continued and labour was held in check. Thus, despite periodic opposition, bourgeois ties to the dictatorship were strong, and Somoza was recognised as the guarantor of Nicaraguan capitalist accumulation.

The crisis of late-somocismo began to manifest itself acutely after the 1972 earthquake when Somoza started to encroach upon the traditional pastures of his bourgeois competitors. Non-somocista capital perceived this breach of convention as 'disloyal competition' and coalesced into a broad-based movement demanding the democratisation of the system. Although initially in the forefront of the anti-Somoza movement, the bourgeoisie hesitated as soon as popular action exceeded the limits of bourgeois authority and control. Throughout 1978, the bourgeoisie attempted to defuse the explosive social conflict as the popular classes assumed greater independence. As the pace of events escaped them, the bourgeois front (F.A.O.) became more amenable to U.S.-sponsored negotiations with the dictatorship. The Sandinistas denounced this maneuver as a desire on the part of the bourgeoisie opposition to resurrect the structure through removing the figurehead (somozaism without Somoza). By early 1979 the aspirations of the popular classes (under the hegemony of the Sandinistas) had clearly gone beyond any 'moderate solution'. This, combined with Somoza's intransigence, placed the bourgeoisie on the horns of a political dilemma; with the popular classes, or with Somoza. They had lost any independent base upon which to negotiate. While a substantial proportion of the bourgeoisie was attracted to the moderation and conciliation of the Sandinistas, their participation in the revolution was one of hesitant support and apprehension. By May 1979 the choice facing the bourgeoisie was to follow the Sandinistas or loose everything. Acceptance of the Sandinista terms of compromise was the only means available of retaining any influence in post-Somoza society. The bourgeoisie was neither the hegemonistic partner in the revolutionary leadership, nor in the eyes of the popular classes. This role belonged to the Sandinistas through their ability to mobilise and maneuver the mass popular movement into a contending position for the assumption of power.

6.1.4. Conclusion

An adequate understanding of the preconditions of socialist revolutions must begin with an analysis of the variables referred to above; namely, the incorporation of the nation within the world capitalist system, the specificity of the model of capitalist development, the form of exploitation and articulation of the popular classes within this model, the nature of the state and its relationship to the model and the relationship between the state and the bourgeoisie.
While these structural variables can account for the generation of a crisis in a model of development, they are not sufficient in themselves to render the outcome of the crisis intelligible. From within these structural constraints and opportunities there must emerge a purposive social movement capable of harnessing, mobilising and channelling the forces of the popular classes, whose exploitation and compliance was essential for the maintenance and expansion of the particular model of capitalist development. The manner in which the various components of the popular classes are articulated into the revolutionary movement determines the success or failure of the socialist revolution.

6.2. PURPOSES SIMILARITIES AND CONTRASTS

For the Bolsheviks in 1917 and the Sandinistas in 1979 the necessity of revolution was not argued in terms of inevitability, but its desirability. For Lenin, although imperialism and state monopoly capital had created the preconditions for the transition to socialism, it did not follow that socialism would arrive as a matter of due course out of the structural contradictions which had contributed to Russia's social catastrophe. Both the Sandinistas and the Bolsheviks recognised the existence and threat of conflicting class projects, such as the repetition of a Kornilov-type coup or the German occupation of St Petersburg in the Russian case, and somozaism without Somoza or a U.S.-backed O.A.S. peace-keeping force in the Nicaraguan case. In order to secure social conditions more favourable for the popular classes both movements demanded the destruction of existing channels of authority and their replacement through the seizure of power by the mass organisations. Socialism was not perceived primarily as an inevitable step on the historical ladder, but as an opportunity which had to be grasped.

The factors contributing to a socialist seizure of state power out of revolutionary crises cannot be mechanistically derived from the structural factors which contributed to the revolutionary crisis. While these structural factors inform an analysis of the conflict and interests of the various social groups within a social formation, socialist revolutions have been "decisively dependent" upon the existence and development of revolutionary movements.

In this thesis the argument has been advanced that the development of the revolutionary movement is in itself a complex process which must be given greater independent status than most structural analyses allow. Consequently, any notion of structural determination must be removed from an adequate theoretical explanation of the success of socialist revolutions. This section highlights the crucial factors which contributed to the emergence and development of the 'purposive' revolutionary organisation.

6.2.1. Political Culture And Political Space

An assessment of the nature and significance of a revolutionary social movement must begin with an understanding of the political culture from which the movement emerged. Derived from this is an understanding of the political space a movement carves for itself within that culture, the praxis it adopts and the interests it attempts to serve.
In both Russia and Nicaragua, vernacular revolutionary traditions had existed prior to the emergence of the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas. These traditions reflected the predominantly pre-capitalist nature of the social formations, although in Nicaragua's case it also incorporated an anti-imperialist response to U.S. intervention in domestic affairs. Both the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas emerged as social movements which stressed the centrality of understanding the development of capitalist relations in order to gain an insight into the dynamics and trends of social change. Their praxis was premised upon this insight.

In the Russian case, Marxism emerged as an intellectual competitor to the Narodnik tradition. The acceleration of urbanisation and industrialisation during the last decades of the nineteenth century provided empirical support for the Marxist contention that capitalism was an unavoidable path along historical development. However, as the Russian Marxist movement moved from the terrain of intellectual 'propaganda' to mass 'agitation' differences surfaced within the movement over the relationship between class and party, and the limits of, and potential within, the forthcoming revolution. The Bolsheviks emerged out of this debate as the more radical wing of Russian Marxism. Their position included a less compromising attitude towards the liberal bourgeoisie, the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution and the conception of the vanguard role of the party in relation to the proletariat. In turn, their Menshevik opponents accused the Bolsheviks of reappropriating the 'pre-scientific' Narodnik and Anarchistic traditions derived from political thinkers such as Tkachev and Bakunin.

The Sandinistas arrived at similar political conclusions as the Bolsheviks through an inverted relationship to the vernacular tradition. The movement emerged as a tendency within the Marxist Nicaraguan Socialist Party, which had adopted a hostile attitude towards the nationalist revolutionary tradition of Augusto Cesar Sandino. On the basis of a Marxist critique, the Sandinistas incorporated a number of basic tenets of Sandino's thought and practice in order to adapt their praxis to the concrete reality of Nicaragua in the late-1950's. As one of their founders Carlos Fonseca argued, in doing so, they 'embraced' the Marxism of Lenin. Central to the ideology of the Sandinistas was an uncompromising stance towards the 'parallelism' of the traditional anti-dictatorial opposition, the leading role of the workers and peasants in the forthcoming revolution, the vanguard role of the movement in relation to the popular classes, and the adoption of armed struggle to fulfil the goal of overthrowing the dictatorship. As in the case of the Bolsheviks, the Sandinistas were accused of employing 'ultra-leftist' and 'adventurist' tactics by their Marxist opponents, and of ignoring the objective limitations of the level of socio-economic development.

In contrast with their opponents within the Marxist movement, both the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas adopted a less rigid and less suprahistorical conception of social development than their Marxist rivals. This determined their insight into the nature of the anti-monarchical/dictatorial movement. Both movements argued that the revolution would or should transcend the limits of bourgeois revolution. However, it was only during the First World War that Lenin and the Bolsheviks began to argue that the transition towards socialism was the fundamental task of the day. This occurred once the concept of imperialism was
introduced into their theoretical schema, providing a more world-holistic approach to Russian national development. The Sandinistas, on the other hand, used the concept of imperialism from their inception, despite the fact that it had remained "conceptually dormant" since Lenin, and had been dropped by the orthodox Marxist movement during the period of Stalinisation. Discarding the rigidity of the Latin American Communist parties conception of development, and drawing upon the experience of the Cuban Revolution, the Sandinistas reappropriated the imperialist framework. The link between imperialism, capitalism and the state led them to call for a popular-socialist rather than 'bourgeois-democratic' solution.

Thus, both the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas initially emerged as intellectual currents within their national political cultures. Structural, ideological and organisational factors contributed to their emergence as a distinct movement. In the Bolshevik case, the rapid development of capitalism and industrialisation, the consequent numerical growth and militancy of the urban proletariat and the crisis within Narodnik thought all contributed to open the political space for the emergence of a Marxist alternative. In the Sandinista case, the consolidation of the Somoza dynasty and its model of development, its links with imperialism, the consequent rapid social change and economic growth during the 1950's and the impotence of the traditional opposition, all contributed to open the political space for an alternative to the P.S.N. which incorporated the vernacular tradition of Sandino. Their insights into social reality led both the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas to stress the manner in which the bourgeoisie was tied to autocratic/dictatorial capitalist development. This offered a vision of revolution led by the popular classes, rather than the bourgeoisie.

6.2.2. The Party And The Popular Classes

In the most general sense the success of the revolutionary movement is dependent upon its capacity to unite and direct the energy of the various subordinate classes who are the subjects of exploitation within the model of capitalist development. Thus far, socialist revolutions have occurred on the periphery or the semi-periphery of the world capitalist system. The retention of an important agricultural exporting base, and the retention of pre-capitalist relations linked to a specific capitalist model of development, has forced socialist movements to recognise the need to orient their attention towards a corresponding articulation of activity between the various subordinate classes. These models of development affect not only urban classes but also rural class relations. For example, in Russia the Bolsheviks recognised the imperative of a 'revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and the peasantry', while in Nicaragua the Sandinistas recognised the importance of the unity of the 'popular classes'. In both cases what was involved was a recognition that the conditions of capitalist reproduction in the social formation transcended the 'formal' conditions of capitalist exploitation by drawing in other independent or intermediary classes affected by this real subordination to the model of development. It is this real subordination to the conditions of capitalist accumulation which defines the term 'popular classes'.

In order to determine whether a revolution transcends ‘populism’, or ‘anti-imperialism’, it is imperative not only to analyse the organisation of the revolutionary movement and its relationship to the popular classes, but also the ideology of the movement. As Henri Weber points out, an adequate definition of a revolutionary movement must go beyond its social class composition and determine the interests the movement projects:

...a party cannot be characterised mainly in terms of the social origin or composition of its members - unless one is to postulate a relation of mechanical determination between class origin and class position. The relationship between a political organisation and its social base, whether actual or potential, is much more complex in reality, for it involves both a temporal dimension (the political tradition and perspectives) and a spatial dimension (the mode of insertion in the international class struggle). A political party that sets out to mobilise, organise and represent the proletariat, equipping itself with a programme, strategy, ideology and organisational structure corresponding to that objective, cannot be defined as ‘petty-bourgeois’. This is true even if, as often happens, intellectuals of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois class origin form a large proportion of its ranks at the beginning of the revolutionary process.7

Given this, the origin and development of revolutionary movements cannot be treated as mere epiphenomena of structural determinants.

The spatial dimension of Sandinista praxis was broader than the Bolsheviks, who directed their energy more exclusively towards organising the urban workers and petty-bourgeois intelligentsia. Although Sandinista cadres were predominantly urban workers and petty-bourgeois in origin, the organisation supported (at least up until 1975 when the Frente split into three tendencies) the Guevarist premise that in Latin America the countryside was the terrain best suited for armed confrontation with dictatorships. Much greater effort was consequently invested in agitation among the peasantry and agricultural labour. Furthermore, this was the terrain upon which Sandino had successfully conducted his anti-imperialist guerrilla warfare. Thus while the Sandinistas never lost sight of the strategic significance of mass urban activity, the tactical requirements of rural armed struggle widened the spatial dimension of their praxis. The notion of urban recruits transforming themselves through encountering the conditions of peasant life, while simultaneously winning over the peasantry to the Sandinista cause, bears some similarity to the ‘to the people’ movement inspired by the Naradnik philosophy of Peter Lavrov in the mid-1870’s.8 The Sandinistas were undoubtedly more successful than their Russian counterparts, as the peasant guerrilla columns of Zinica and Bijao in the late-1960’s reveal. This was assisted by the roots implanted by the vernacular revolutionary tradition. Furthermore, by the late-1960’s sectors of the church had begun organising the peasantry in a manner which questioned the legitimacy of the structures of somocismo, and led to a more acute awareness on the part of the Nicaraguan peasantry concerning the nature of the state. During the 1870’s in Russia on the other hand, the Narodniks encountered indifference from the peasantry, and reverence towards the Tsar.

6.2.3. Clandestinity And Legality

Organisationally, both parties premised action upon a vanguard conception of their role in relation to the popular classes. Furthermore, due to the constraints of operating within a repressive political environment, both adopted, or were forced to adopt, underground measures in order to avoid state surveillance. The repressive political environments of Tsarism and *somocismo* created practical dilemmas for Bolshevik and Sandinista praxis, which were reflected in internal debates concerning their mode of insertion into the class struggle. In both cases, enforced clandestinity forced the leadership of the movements to spend prolonged periods of time in exile. This hindered the co-ordination of national activity. Furthermore, the publication and distribution of literature was problematic. These communication difficulties often exacerbated theoretical differences within the parties and hindered immediate tactical responses to conjunctural situations.

The extent to which ‘legal’ opportunities were to be exploited often provoked virulent debate within both movements, on questions such as the relationship between the vanguard organisation and the day-to-day activities of the popular classes. In the Russian case, the Marxist movement was divided at the turn of the century between ‘legal Marxists’ and ‘Economists’ on one hand and Iskraites on the other concerning the nature of the demands to be advanced. After the October 1905 Constitution had been proclaimed the legal versus underground debate resurfaced into a bitter polemic not only between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, but within Bolshevism itself. Menshevik calls to ‘liquidate’ the underground movement were opposed by Lenin, although his position on exploiting electoral channels was less abstentionist than many of his fellow Bolsheviks. The revived workers’ movement after 1911 was more receptive to the Bolsheviks than the more legalistic, union-oriented Mensheviks, although the Bolsheviks were unable to channel this radicalism which came to a head on the eve of the war. Organisationally, the Bolsheviks remained unco-ordinated after the darkest years of repression. It took the more democratic and open political climate of 1917 for the Bolsheviks to harness and channel popular discontent towards the revolutionary seizure of power.

One of the fundamental tenets of *Sandinismo* was the rejection of the parallelism of the traditional political spectrum, which was becoming increasingly delegitimised in the eyes of the popular classes due to its compromising and subservient relationship with the dictatorship. Consequently, from its inception the Sandinistas effectively placed themselves outside the parameters of legality. Their commitment to armed struggle sealed their illegal status. However, during the period between 1961 and 1967 debates centred upon the priority of urban mass work over armed struggle. After early military setbacks, the Frente concentrated upon strengthening its urban base through working in broad-based organisations in association with various left and centre-left anti-dictatorial parties. However, after 1967 the Frente began operating more clandestinely after experiencing the limitations of working within broad organisations, the electoral farce of 1967 and their ‘moral success’ at Pancasan. Between 1967 and 1974 the Frente attempted to ‘accumulate forces in silence’, and urban activists spent
prolonged periods living in exile, underground or in *la montana*. Once again these conditions affected the Sandinistas’ spatial dimension of praxis, making it broader than Bolshevik praxis.

6.2.4. The Party And Alternative Power Structures

Working within repressive political climates, both movements rejected the possibility of democratising the structure of the state through the existing channels of political representation or institutions, and were dedicated to the destruction of the state apparatus. This necessitated the existence of an underground, clandestine organisational structure. Bolshevik support was drawn primarily from the urban proletariat, although prior to the First World War the appeal of Bolshevik demands was unable to be translated into alternative channels of power. It was only during the upheavals of 1917, where two competing power structures coexisted, that the Bolsheviks were able to combine their organisational capacity with a popular alternative structure of power, demanding that all power be transferred to the Soviets. The Bolsheviks were able to harness a spontaneously created mass organisation to their conjunctural demands and convince a majority within the Soviets that their assumption to power was the only path open for Russia’s salvation. Had this alternative power structure not existed, the Bolsheviks may well have been faced with a repetition of the immediate pre-war situation where their growing mass appeal among the urban proletariat did not correspond with any organisational mechanism to advance their demands.

The Sandinistas on the other hand were never able to harness their activity to any pre-existing mass alternative power structure which threatened the existing state political institutions. Rejecting any political pact with the traditional opposition the Sandinistas began after 1967 to create ‘intermediate organisations’ as a preparatory condition for the assumption of power by the popular classes. Due to the wider spatial dimensions of Sandinista praxis, and this absence of any potential alternative power structure, conflict over prioritising activity was consequently more acute. During the mid-1970’s, as *somocista* repression intensified, the division of sectoral responsibilities led to a virtual split within the organisation concerning the relationship between the Frente and the various classes it drew upon, and over the tactics for overthrowing the dictatorship. The *proletarios* stressed the organisation of the urban proletariat, and their activity centred upon urban ‘intermediate organisations’. The G.G.P. stressed the politicisation of the peasantry as a pre-condition for prolonged armed confrontation in the countryside. The ‘insurrectionists’ stressed immediate confrontationary blows against the dictatorship as a ‘spark’ igniting mass insurrection.

Once it had become clear that the uprisings of February 1978 had gone beyond the demands of the bourgeoisie, and that further conflict between the delegitimised state and society was imminent, the Sandinistas acted promptly to regroup their unco-ordinated spheres of activity. The creation of the M.P.U. under the hegemony of the three tendencies represented the embryonic origins of an alternative structure of power. It unified a heterogeneous mixture of ‘intermediate organisations’ whose only common allegiance was their links with the various sections of the Frente. A variety of parties and unions on the left of the political spectrum also
participated, recognising the hegemony of the Frente. Significantly, in contrast to the Bolshevik case, the M.P.U. represented a much wider network of social groups based primarily upon neighbourhood and community, rather than the workplace. This, as suggested by the structural factors above, was the result of the specificity of capitalist development in Nicaragua, which created a more dispersed and heterogeneous popular class movement. On its own, the industrial proletariat could not have fulfilled the role of the Russian Soviets, and the heterogeneity of the popular classes necessitated a more general revolutionary centre than workplace-situated councils could have provided. In the months leading to, and during, the September 1978 uprising the M.P.U. performed an important role in civilian defence, creating committees which acted as alternative structures of popular power.

It was only after the Sandinistas had decisively consolidated their hegemony within the M.P.U., and with their political profile heightened from the September events, that they opened the doors of compromise to anti-Somoza sectors of the bourgeoisie and parties of the political centre. The creation in March 1979 of the F.P.N. signified a recognition on the part of the Frente that now its hegemony had been consolidated over the mass movement it was essential to accelerate the 'decomposition' of the enemy through fracturing any potential alliance between the bourgeois opposition and the Somoza state apparatus and create a broad-based 'negative coalition' under Frente hegemony. The weakness of the negotiating position of the U.S. and the bourgeoisie was not primarily due to the ideological confusion of the Carter administration (as many futuro 'hawks' maintained)9 but rather to the fact that the middle ground had subsided under the feet of the bourgeois alternative. The growing strength of the organised popular movement and Somoza's intransigence assured this.

Thus, in Russia, the crucial revolutionary class, the urban proletariat, was more homogenous, and with the assistance of discontented soldiers and sailors, was quickly able to construct organs of power representing their demands. These organs quickly emerged as alternative structures of state power due to the inability of the Provisional Government to deal decisively with issues affecting the subordinate classes. This provided the Bolsheviks with a 'ready-made' organ of workers' self-government which corresponded to their vision of post-revolutionary society. The Bolsheviks 'only' needed to convince the Soviets of transforming their de facto authority into state power. In Nicaragua, on the other hand, due to the peculiarities of capitalist development, the popular classes were more heterogeneous. Consequently, the emergence of an alternative power structure was more problematic. Without the intervention of a military-political organisation capable of providing unified direction to this heterogeneous anti-Somoza movement, and channelling it towards revolutionary transformation, the moderate solution of somozatism without Somoza would have been the most probable result. The Bolsheviks had to politically compete for hegemony over the organs of mass representation; the Sandinistas played a more active role in creating and consolidating the mass organisations. The political rationale behind the Sandinista organisation of the mass movement was its assumption of revolutionary power; the Bolsheviks had to convince the Soviets to seize power.

An additional complexity in the Nicaraguan case created by this heterogeneity was the role of the bourgeoisie. While the structure of Soviet power was more exclusive in the sense that franchise was determined by, and limited to, workplaces and the armed forces, the Sandinista-led coalitions were more open-ended. This allowed them to co-opt the bourgeois opposition parties as minor partners within the F.P.N. power structure. This multi-class issue did not surface in Russia, where the traditionally politically weak bourgeoisie was more committed to the existing Provisional Government and its goals. Furthermore, the structure of the Soviets excluded their political participation in any revolutionary alliance led by the Soviets. In Nicaragua, the ultimate inclusion of the bourgeoisie in the F.P.N. ensured the bourgeoisie legal opportunities for dissent and opposition in the post-revolutionary political representative structure. This opportunity was never presented to the Russian bourgeoisie, due to the structure of the alternative power and their role in the competing structure.

6.2.5. Conclusion

Despite these differences, the revolutionary outcome was dependent upon a revolutionary party assuming hegemony over an organised mass movement which had developed a potential alternative structure of power. This role of the revolutionary party was acknowledged by Trotsky in his reflections on the October Revolution. After outlining the 'organic' historical prerequisites necessary for the success of the revolution he pointed out that:

...all these conditions, which fully sufficed for the outbreak of the Revolution, were insufficient to assure the victory of the proletariat in the Revolution. For this victory one condition more was necessary...The Bolshevik Party.

To be able to take the power firmly and securely into its hands the proletariat needs a Party, which far surpasses other parties in the clarity of its thought and in its revolutionary determination.10

Similarly, in addition to the two structural factors contributing to the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, Vilas adds that there had to exist:

A vanguard organisation, forged in two decades of struggle, which was receptive to popular demands, articulated current struggles with the anti-imperialist tradition of the people, organised them and projected them to higher levels of consciousness and efficacy, and which knew how to capitalise on the internal contradictions of the dominant groups to the benefit of the popular project.11

It was the existence and praxis of these revolutionary organisations which determined that regime transformation would be led by the popular classes, that it would be fundamental, and also that future social transformation would be informed by a socialist project.

The reintroduction of the role of the revolutionary movement into a theory of twentieth century revolutions does not signify an antithetical response to Skocpol's structuralist approach. As the analysis above demonstrates, Skocpol is correct to emphasize that revolutionary crises are not caused by revolutionary movements. They are the result of deeper,


ongoing social processes which may escape the cognition of social agents. However, once a crisis is generated and manifests itself in the national consciousness, the profundity of social change is determined by the existence of a purposive movement capable of organising the subordinate classes, and instilling in them the consciousness that their discontent can only be transcended through breaking with the existing political and economic order. In both the Russian and Nicaraguan cases, the existence of such a movement was crucial for the success of the profound regime transformation led by a mobilised mass movement. This approach does not seek to glorify the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas. It is simply a recognition that the origins and development of the movements were problematic. Options were available, and alternative interpretations of the dynamics of social reality could have led to alternative forms of praxis. A specific response was required to the revolutionary crises, and these were provided by the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas.

6.3. CONCLUSION

There were two objectives in drawing this comparison. Firstly (to sum up the argument of this thesis) it demonstrates that in order to render intelligible the outcome of both the Bolshevik and Sandinista Revolutions it is necessary to explore variables on the purposive level, and also that the development of a revolutionary organisation and its role in leading a mobilised mass movement cannot be reduced to, and explained solely by, structural factors. The second objective of the comparison was to illustrate the fundamental similarity between the nature of the two revolutions. Both parties adopted a similar philosophy and praxis, and possessed a similar vision of post-revolutionary society. For both structural and purposive reasons, both revolutions must be classified as socialist. Both revolutions were generated by inherent structural contradictions within their respective models of capitalist development, and both the Bolsheviks and Sandinistas acted as vanguard organisations channelling the activities of an alternative power structure 'from below', representing formerly subordinate class interests.

As discussed in the theoretical introduction to this thesis, socialist revolutions do not achieve their objective on the morrow of the regime transformation. The assumption of socialist power secures the necessary instrument (the state) for moving towards the transformation of social relations. However, this does not guarantee the success of the socialist project, as the history of the twentieth century illustrates. As Ralph Miliband notes, the "exercise of socialist power remains the Achilles' heel of Marxism". In order to understand the development of post-revolutionary societies it is important to retain an awareness of the project which lies at the basis of revolutionary transformation. It is this project which informs (or should inform) the praxis of the post-revolutionary socialist state in its attempt to transcend existing structural constraints inhibiting the realisation of the transformation of social relations. These structural constraints have severely limited the options available to extant socialist states, yet they must be understood in terms of the "needle's eye" through which praxis must pass in order to pursue

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the socialist goal, rather than the fundamental determinants of the behaviour of socialist states.\textsuperscript{13} For this reason the sociological dilemma of structure and agency retains all its importance in analyses of post-revolutionary society. However, this engrossing subject goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{13}For an interesting discussion of structure and praxis in Bolshevik Russia, see J-P. Sartre, "Socialism in One Country", in \textit{New Left Review}, 100, 1975.
Chapter 7
CONCLUSION

Social development in the twentieth century, like its predecessors, has been punctuated by revolutionary crises. Few regions have been immune from the phenomenon of alternative loci of power challenging existing polities. These crises are overcome either through the polity undermining the threat of the power contender, or through the contender overthrowing the polity and establishing a new administrative monopoly over the state. One feature which has distinguished this century has been the emergence of socialist states from a number of revolutionary crises. Although this phenomenon has occurred only irregularly throughout the century, its consequence for world politics cannot be underestimated. The aim of this thesis has been to contribute to a greater understanding of the causes of these modern socialist revolutions. The method adopted has been a comparative historical analysis of two cases, the Russian and the Nicaraguan Revolutions.

The conclusion which has been drawn from the research is that any attempt to render socialist revolutions intelligible must include ‘bringing the party back in’. This conclusion must be understood in the light of the existing research literature on revolutions because the question immediately arises, who threw the party out in the first place?

Forest Colburn has lamented that the study of comparative politics tends to be "faddish and non-cumulative". The effort to differentiate academic products, he claims, often results in "professional amnesia". As a consequence, "What is novel for some is not novel for others." The study of revolutions cannot be absolved from this charge. Jack Goldstone has charted the development of the enormous scholarly inquiry of revolutions through three successive ‘generations’, the natural, the general and the structural. It is the structural paradigm which currently dominates the field.

The position adopted in this thesis is that structural analyses cannot adequately account for the success of the socialist revolutions which have emerged from various modern revolutionary crises. Their models are necessary in order to account for the factors which contributed to revolutionary crises of old regimes, and they are useful for explaining the coalitions of social forces necessary for overthrowing old regimes, yet this in itself does not explain how such a necessary correlation of forces was realised or actualised. In order to render intelligible the

process from necessity to possibility to realisation it is necessary to explore variables on the purposive level.

The most influential of the modern structuralist approaches to social revolutions, Theda Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions*, emerged as a response to purposive approaches within the 'general' category of theories of revolutions, such as Charles Tilly's *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Skocpol argues that the central problematic in the study of social revolutions is the emergence of a revolutionary situation, rather than its making. The framework of this controversy is the perennially knotty problem of the role of structure and agency in social change.

However, this thesis suggests that in relation to theories of revolutions, this problem is not as formidable as it first appears. Through taking one generational step backwards, it is possible to move forward and transcend the above-mentioned inadequacies of the dominant structural approaches. The apparent incompatibility between Skocpol's approach and Tilly's approach can be discovered in the questions which underlie their problems. While Skocpol's underlying research problem concerns the conditions which promote the crisis of old regimes and generate revolutionary situations, Tilly's underlying research problem is how contenders are able to mobilise and successfully challenge old regimes during revolutionary situations. As Tilly himself acknowledges, the answer to the problem of explaining revolutions depends much upon the time-scale adopted. In the long-run structural variables dominate, while in the short-to-medium-run purposive variables must receive greater attention. No understanding of socialist revolutions can be complete unless both research problems are addressed. It is this reading of the existing research literature which has informed the analysis of the Russian and Nicaraguan Revolutions throughout this thesis, and 'brought the party back in.'

The first problem which emerged was to discover the underlying dynamics of the two pre-revolutionary societies. Through such an analysis it is possible to determine whether a revolutionary situation was inherent within a social structure, or whether it was primarily precipitated by contingent factors external to the dynamics of the structure. In Chapter 2 this problem was examined in the case of pre-revolutionary Russia. It was observed that the inherent/contingent 'problemation' was dependent upon the level of abstraction adopted. Gerschenkron's analysis of the dynamics of Russian reality presented a picture of a society overcoming the problems of 'late-development' and gradually institutionalising class conflict. Had it not been for Russia's involvement in the First World War, he argues, revolution would have been avoided. This 'contingent' analysis of the Russian Revolution was criticized on both theoretical and empirical grounds, and an alternative interpretation of the structure and dynamics of Tsarist Russian society was advanced. The key structural variables analysed in this interpretation were Russia's position within the world capitalist system, the interventionist role of the state in promoting capitalist development, the level of conflict between the state and the urban proletariat, the stagnation and exploitation of agriculture, and the weakness of the bourgeoisie. The conclusion reached was that on the eve of the war Tsarist Russia remained a social system fraught with class tension and potential social revolution.
These variables were then applied to the Nicaraguan case, and a similar conclusion was reached. It was argued that the dictatorial *somocista* state performed a vital role in post-war Nicaraguan capitalist development. The avoidance of conflict between the state and the bourgeoisie demanded the securing of conditions for expanding capital accumulation, favourable commodity prices for Nicaragua's export products and the subservience and repression of the classes excluded from the benefits of *somocista* capitalist development. The inherent tension within the social structure periodically manifested itself during times when these conditions failed to be met. Furthermore, as in the Russian case, there were structural reasons why the revolutionary situation would be characterised by the twin phenomena of the inability of the bourgeoisie to mobilise the popular classes, and the rejection by the popular classes of the role of the state as arbiter of social conflict.

However, *inherency* does not imply *inevitability*, just as potential does not automatically imply realisation. As Skocpol states, revolutionaries do not *make* the revolutionary situations which they eventually exploit. Yet, it is impossible to understand the *socialist* regime transformations which have occurred without exploring the role performed by socialist parties during periods of multiple sovereignty. Without the purposive and conscious intervention of revolutionary organisations, the outcome of multiple sovereignty would not have led to socialist seizures of power. While structural factors circumscribed the range of possibilities inherent within the revolutionary situation, particular outcomes are dependent upon the political and military praxis of the revolutionary party, and the ideology which informed this praxis.

Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis were therefore devoted to explaining how the Bolshevik Party and the Sandinista National Liberation Front were able to mobilise the popular classes, and channel their energy towards the socialist seizure of power. It was argued that revolutionary parties, like revolutionary situations, do not 'fall from heaven'. The role performed by parties during revolutionary situations depends upon a preceding process of ideological and organisational development. In both the Bolshevik and the Sandinista cases, this process spanned two decades of political activity. In both this process was *problematic*, involving a series of political options at each historical conjuncture which influenced the relationship between the party and its class basis. In other words, the growth of the vanguard party was not simply a mechanical reflection of the development of class contradictions within the social structure.

This problem was illustrated through exploring not only the relationship between the party and the popular classes, but also the relationship between the vanguard party and other challengers to the polity. Neither the Bolsheviks nor the Sandinistas had a monopoly on the opposition, or even a monopoly claim over the Marxist challenge. Neither were they the only parties with an objective of organising and mobilising the classes 'from below'. In order to explain the successes and failures of the various alternatives it was necessary to explore the organisational and ideological distinctiveness of the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas. The role of ideology was crucial in transforming possibility or potentiality into actuality through praxis. The Bolshevik and Sandinista alternatives were distinct alternatives because their interpretation
of reality perceived possibilities which others rejected.2

Once the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas had transcended the initial phase of embedding themselves within their respective political cultures and opening space for themselves within the political spectrum, the next phase involved a prolonged process of agitation among the popular classes, and the establishment of the organisational relationship between the party structure and the mass movement. At each conjuncture the effectiveness of this relationship was tested and revised in the concrete practice of political and class conflict. Although neither the Bolsheviks nor the Sandinistas emerged as the hegemonic contender at the outset of the revolutionary situation, this prior process of development was decisive for their successful mobilisation of the popular classes, and for informing the direction in which it channelled the movement. Also, while fortuitous circumstances may have been important in providing both parties with the opportunity to mobilise, their ability to take advantage of these conditions was determined by this organisational and ideological development. It is at this moment that political and military variables assume decisive importance, and that the role or the revolutionary agent determines the possibility of the transcendence of existing social conditions. Every socialist revolution which has thus far occurred has been achieved through popular insurrection. The possibility of regime transformation has been determined by the ability of the hegemonic party within the mass movement to act decisively, treating the task as an art form to be applied with the maximum audacity.

Both the Bolsheviks and the Sandinistas premised the necessity of the insurrectionary seizure of power upon its desirability rather than on its inevitability. Both were fully aware that in the inherently unstable conditions of multiple sovereignty, failure to act decisively would be tantamount not only to a lost opportunity but to counter-revolution. Thus, both stressed that popular insurrection was the only means to safeguard the gains, and realise the aims, of the popular classes. If neither party had purposively intervened to lead the insurrection, and had waited for the social tension to ‘work itself out’, then neither outcome would have been a socialist revolution.

In conclusion, explanations of socialist revolution need to acknowledge that the development of revolutionary organisations are complex processes which must be given greater independence than most structural analyses allow. The evidence presented in this thesis demonstrates that the existence of a revolutionary agent, or a purposive revolutionary centre, decisively influenced the nature of regime transformation in Russia and Nicaragua.

2The relationship between ideology and praxis has been discussed in another context by Alec Nove who wrote that often “one or more alternatives may not be seen to be alternatives, because they conflict with strongly held beliefs or prejudices. Thus to eat a cheese sandwich or a ham sandwich represents alternative choices for most (people) but not for an orthodox rabbi.” A. Nove, “Some Observations on Criteria for the Study of the Soviet Union”, in Political Economy and Soviet Socialism, Allen & Unwin, London, 1979, p. 221.
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