Failed Buyout

Land Rights for Contra Veterans in Postwar Nicaragua

by
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Since all postwar settlements involve compromises, injustices, and ironies, reconciliation, like revolution, has its losers. The Central American peace agreements of the 1990s included many forward-looking provisions, including constitutional and electoral reforms, restructuring of the armed forces, and land distribution to war veterans and/or their civilian supporters, but the accords in El Salvador and Guatemala were not negotiated revolutions, nor was the 1990 electoral defeat of the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua a counterrevolutionary victory (Abu-Lughod, 1992; Dye et al., 1995; Vickers and Spence, 1992; Vilas, 1987; 1992). The parties to the peace agreements publicly answered the "Who won?" question in uniformly brief terms—"peace," "all of us," or "democracy"—that masked the enduring sources of social and political tension. This article examines one component of the peace agreement in Nicaragua—land rights for demobilized Contra combatants (or ex-RN, for Resistencia Nicaragüense, or Nicaraguan Resistance)—to offer a more nuanced answer.

The study of postwar settlements and reconstruction should help us understand the conditions that prevent renewals of conflict (Licklider, 1993; Zartman, 1995). Treatment of war veterans merits particular attention given their potential for protest, as evidenced in their post–World War I mobilizations in Russia and in Italy and in Portugal in 1974. In the United States, elites

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LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 112, Vol. 27 No. 3, May 2000 32-62
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feared this capacity and sought to channel and control veterans' organizations (Campbell, 1998). The Nicaraguan case is especially complicated because it involved the demobilization of two armies whose number—22,000 demobilized Contras, 72,000 discharged members of the Sandinista Popular Army (ex-EPS, for Ejército Popular Nicaragüense, or Nicaraguan Popular Army), and 5,100 members of the Ministry of the Interior—exceeded that of all Nicaraguans formally employed in agriculture, industry, and commerce (Saldomando, 1996: 91). Because of the veterans' military experience, the general availability of arms in postwar Nicaragua (Ministerio de Gobernación, 1991), and the reliance of political parties on groups of rearmed combatants to reinforce their bargaining positions (Cajina, 1996), the failure to accommodate veterans had important consequences.

This article, which is based on field research conducted in 1994 and 1995,[1] claims that the Nicaraguan proposal to provide land to former combatants failed to achieve its purported aim of rehabilitating them. While it succeeded in the short run in taking guns away from armed persons, it created expectations that could not be fulfilled and consequently fomented and prolonged postwar conflict. Failure was predictable given the existence of competing and mutually exclusive property claims (confiscated landowners demanding restitution and Sandinista agrarian reform beneficiaries demanding protection), but the plan also undermined the prospects for longer-term pacification and democratic consolidation in three ways.

First, linking land rights to a veterans' program rewarded insurgent activity and marginalized nonpartisans, making the poor civilian majority the real losers. The Nicaraguan agrarian reform in the 1990s practically ignored demands from noncombatant landless peasants, while efforts to pacify the rearmed groups that multiplied quickly in the postwar period relied on extending additional and unrealistic promises of land distribution.[2] Postwar agrarian policy, which privileged violent action, undermined the credibility of democratic processes, discouraged civic struggle, attracted noncombatants to armed protest, and extended the utility of wartime identities.

Second, the use of privatization of state-owned enterprises as a way to satisfy the land demand of former combatants divided the elites from the bases within both the rebel and the official armies, as real or perceived inequalities in distribution shattered their esprit de corps and solidarity. This had the paradoxical effect of tactically realigning the upper strata of former antagonists in defense of their new material interests against the bottom strata who had been excluded from the process, refashioning the terms of struggle and prolonging postwar conflict.

Third, while resources to accomplish the economic reintegration of the former combatants were unavailable, the elimination of protectionist barriers

in the agricultural economy, the reduction of war activity, and tenure insecurity accelerated the development of a free market in land. The class interests of agrarian reform beneficiaries from both the Sandinista and the postwar period—who already feared future policy reversals—were undermined by market liberalization. Under these circumstances, relative peace offered opportunities for new capitalists associated with the ruling elite to engage in speculative land purchases.

LAND DISTRIBUTION IN PEACE SETTLEMENTS

In both the Salvadoran and the Nicaraguan peace settlement, demobilization was partially premised on land distribution. The promise served two purposes. It prevented the rebel leaders from having to face their bases empty-handed and thus averted the threat of rebellion from within the ranks that could derail the demobilization process. It also guaranteed former rebel combatants a measure of physical and economic security.[3] Although the land transfer program in El Salvador was consistent with the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional's (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front—FMLN) long-standing demands for socioeconomic equity, it is ironic that land was promised to the demobilizing members of the Nicaraguan Resistance, since they had fought against the Sandinista government, which had made agrarian reform a keystone of its revolutionary program. In both countries, governments offered discharged officers from the official army land as well. The Chamorro government planned to recognize land rights for only 700 retired officers of the Nicaraguan Army (INRA, 1991),[4] but veterans' benefits were not provided to the hundreds of thousands of conscripts.[5] Similarly, in El Salvador, members of the regular armed forces were offered land, but the paramilitary squads and army conscripts were not.

While the Salvadoran land transfer program received international support—funds were provided by the European Union, for example, to compensate landowners whose properties would be transferred to ex-combatants—and the program was implemented in a more orderly fashion because of the FMLN's greater institutional integrity or "discipline" (Wood, 1998), several factors in Nicaragua could have compensated for the absence of these elements.[6] First, the Contras demobilized under a government to whose victory they contributed, so there should have been greater state cooperation with implementation. Second, given its support for the Contras during the 1980s, we might have expected the United States to advocate for the Contras' land rights. Instead, it has pressured for restitution of confiscated properties to

their owners. Third, had the Chamorro government recognized the legitimacy of the Sandinistas' transformations in property rights, the institutional experience acquired during the revolution might have offered greater logistical and political capacity to distribute land. Finally, relatively sparsely populated Nicaragua offered objectively favorable conditions for redistribution.

THE DEVELOPMENT POLES: LAND FOR PEACE

The idea of providing land to veterans is not unique to these postwar settlements. In the United States, land grants had been linked to military service and were important for state and nation building.[7] Land grants in Nicaragua had been linked to military service as well and for similar reasons in the past. Under both the Somoza and the Sandinista regime, such grants served the twin purposes of rewarding partisans and establishing sympathetic social bases in territories recently subjected to central state penetration. The 1963 agrarian reform law instituted under the Somoza regime gave priority to former National Guardsmen when ranking the citizens eligible for the land grants. Under its aegis, the country's inhospitable interior was colonized by a population that considered itself part of the Nicaraguan (mestizo, Pacific) "nation."[8] The preamble to the Sandinistas' 1981 agrarian reform law, in a statement that resembled Somoza's ranking of citizens, professed that priority would be given to the combatants of the war of liberation (although in practice this was not the case and, indeed, party supporters were often the last to get attention).[9] However, when individual land grants were finally offered, these tended to be located in the nation's war-afflicted interior.[10]

The 1990 postwar settlement in Nicaragua retained the general logic of previous land transfer programs by proposing to relocate land claimants in remote areas. In March 1990, between Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's election and her April inauguration as president, Nicaraguan officials signed the Toncontín Accords with the Contra leadership, providing for the disarming of the Nicaraguan Resistance in return for their "freedom, security, and physical and moral integrity." From April to June 1990, more than 22,000 Contras marched overland from Honduras to nine separate security zones established in the Nicaraguan interior. They turned in their guns to the observer missions of United Nations and Organization of American States and received civilian clothes, $50 in cash, and a promise of land. The ex-RNs uniformly report that they were promised "50 manzanas" (about 86 acres; 1 manzana = .67 hectares). Some asserted that Jaime Cuadra, who expected to be appointed minister of defense by President Chamorro (and did serve as defense minister under her successor, Arnoldo Alemán), had visited their camps in Honduras in March 1990 and announced this commitment to secure

their demobilization. However, the Toncontín Accords did not mention land, and the Managua Declaration of May 4, 1990, did not specify plot size, although it did call for giving priority to ex-Contras in the return of confiscated properties and for establishing "development-poles"—that is, "units of production defined for the benefit of the community and the country"—to satisfy the ex-Contras' material needs. The poles would include municipal areas, schools, warehouses, potable water, electricity, hospitals, streets, residential areas, individual parcels of land, and communal areas for productive projects—conditions far superior to those of much of the rural population.

The May 4 accord emphasized that the development poles would guarantee the physical protection of the ex-Contras, mistakenly anticipating Sandinista retribution, and that the provision of a means of livelihood was simply an externality. Ignoring that the utility of his troops had been exhausted, former RN commander Rubén described the promise of land as the "bait" that had "tricked" them into disarming. It is more accurate to say that this promise transformed the obsolete and dispensable ex-Contras into war heroes who deserved benefits in recognition of their service to the cause of "democracy." It was in this way that the land demand of the Contras, who had never claimed to be fighting for land, was invented. Most sources (Bendaña, 1991; Castillo Rivas, 1993; FSLN, 1990; Mendoza, 1990; Miranda and Ratliff, 1992; Nuñez, 1992) and my own interviews suggest that the Contras most objected to Sandinista prohibitions on free marketing of agricultural produce and roadside confiscations or harbored unrealistic fears of confiscation, in addition to a plethora of reasons unrelated to land demand such as the Sandinistas' alleged communist ideology, alienation of the Catholic Church hierarchy, and violation of personal liberty and abuse of power or ties of kinship and patronage with the confiscated landowners.

The development poles were planned hastily, with deep pessimism regarding the prospects for Contra-Sandinista reconciliation and little consideration of the nation's geography, population, or recent history. First, the idea of the development poles was based on the erroneous assumption of irreconcilability, conflating the Sandinistas' objection to the Contras as proxies of U.S. imperialism with the Contras as individuals.[11] The plan also overlooked the physical, ecological, and financial constraints. The promise of 50 manzanas per combatant was simply unrealistic: satisfaction would require finding nearly 900,000 manzanas of land, more than *all* the land expropriated under the Sandinista agrarian reform between 1981 and 1988 (see CIERA, 1989, vol. 9). Finally, the plan was designed without consultation with the combatants and therefore ignored their desires and inclinations. For these reasons, it appears that the development-poles plan aimed not to rehabilitate the Contras but to buy peace.

It was, however, a solution on which the Sandinistas, the ex-RN, and the United Nations Organization (UNO) government could agree, albeit for different motives. The Sandinista leadership acceded to the establishment of the development poles provided that the Contras disarmed and the developments would not negatively affect territories that were bases of Sandinista support. The ex-RN leadership hoped that these would allow them to preserve their authority in the postwar period. The right wing of the UNO led by Vice President Virgilio Godoy favored the poles as a state-within-a-state from which they could preserve the ex-RN's mobilizational capacity and exercise extra-constitutional veto power over President Chamorro's policy. President Chamorro, representing the center of the UNO coalition, similarly constructed the Contras as alien to Nicaraguan society but hoped that the proposal would allow her to muddle through a solution that could keep the fragile peace intact or at least postpone a resurgence of conflict.

A PEASANT ARMY

Given the social origins of the counterrevolution, it was logical to promise the former combatants land and to locate this land in the nation's interior. The Contra base was composed of landed and landless peasants from the nation's interior, and they intended to resume their agrarian vocations after the war. The CIAV-OEA (Comisión Internacional de Verificación de la Organización de Estados Americanos—the Organization of American States's International Verification Commission), which oversaw the disarmament, collected data on the combatants as they entered the enclaves in 1990. Tables 1 through 4 summarize these data to provide a statistical portrait.[12] Table 1 reveals the Contras' territorial origin. The departments of the interior, which extend over 85 percent of the nation's territory, are characterized by extremely low population density, ranging from 4 to 27 inhabitants per km^2 compared with 62 to 277 inhabitants per km^2 in the departments of the Pacific (Ministerio de Acción Social, 1992). Although only a third of the population lives in the interior, more than 80 percent of the Contras came from there. The Contra population was also very young and uneducated: they averaged about 26 years of age at the time of demobilization and had received less than two years of schooling. More than 60 percent had no education at all. Regrettably, the CIAV-OEA survey did not include a category for gender, so it was impossible to determine what proportion of the demobilized combatants were women (although presumably at least the 3 percent in Table 2 who worked "at home" were women).

Table 2 reveals that fully 83 percent had been involved in agriculture or cattle ranching before joining the counterrevolution, and the overwhelming

TABLE 1
Nicaraguan Resistance: Territorial Origins of Combatants

Region	*Number*
Pacific[a]	1,269
Interior[b]	17,085
Las Segovias[c]	2,944
Total	21,298

Source: Calculated on the basis of CIAV-OEA (1990).
a. Managua, León, Chinandega, Granada, Carazo, Masaya, Rivas. For ease of statistical analysis, the 71 cases (0.3 percent) in which birthplace could not be determined have been subsumed in this category.
b. Matagalpa, Jinotega, Chontales, Boaco, Río San Juan, and north, south, and central Zelaya.
c. Estelí, Madríz, and Nueva Segovia.

majority intended to return to such activities after demobilization. They could therefore be considered to need land. Thirty-two percent of these admitted that they or their families owned land. However, it is difficult to assert from these figures that the rest were necessarily landless. The CIAV-OEA survey results probably underestimate the rates of property ownership of the RN before they mobilized for war in the 1980s. First, the survey asked whether the *individual* owned property, not his or her family. Thus, some claiming to be property-less may have come from landed *families* but because of their youth had not yet acquired property themselves. This is plausible given the four-year age difference between the landed and the landless and their higher rates of bachelorhood. While this is not to say that they did not *need* land (especially since land is customarily subdivided among siblings, resulting in plots that are often insufficient to sustain a household), it is a different matter to assert, as some have, that they were landless peasants who were either neglected by or rejected the Sandinista agrarian reform (implying that had the agrarian reform been more liberal, the rebellion might have been averted—a theory explored but unsubstantiated in numerous interviews).[13] Second, ex-combatants may have denied owning property for fear that this would undercut their chances of receiving land from the government.

In many cases, whether they possessed land was immaterial, since they would need to resettle elsewhere. As the migratory data in Table 3 reveal, more than a third of the ex-combatants did not intend to return to their places of origin. Most of these were originally from areas of strong Sandinista support in Las Segovias and the Pacific and may have feared reprisals or were already aware that few economic opportunities existed there (the decline in international cotton prices, for example, contributed to massive unemploy-

TABLE 2

Nicaraguan Resistance: Occupational Characteristics in 1990

Prewar Occupation	N	*Percentage*	*Average Age*	*Average Years Education*	*Expected Occupation*		*Percentage Without Property*
Agriculture and ranching (does not possess land)	10,904	51	24.7	1.0 (65% none)	90% same		99
Agriculture and ranching (possesses land)	6,807	32	28.5	0.9 (68% none)	93% same		0
Student	883	4	21.9	3.0 (14% none)	48% same	17% agro	81
Not determined	626	4	23.4	.8 (67% none)	47% agro	35% n/a	83
Artisans, self-employed, skilled labor	533	3	28.7	2.3 (31% none)	73% n/a	14% agro	76
At home	511	3	25.9	1.2 (60% none)	60% same	24% n/a	77
Unskilled labor	478	2	30.1	2.5 (30% none)	72% n/a	16% agro	77
Commerce	252	1	30.1	2.0 (40% none)	69% same	15% agro	68
White collar	198	<1	30.0	2.8 (22% none)	75% n/a	10% study	75
Unspecified work	58	<1	24.0	n/a	60% n/a		76
Military	47	<1	33.4	2.2 (34% none)	57% n/a	25% agro	72
Total	21,297	100	26.1	1.2 (60% none)			64

Source: Calculated on the basis of 1990 CIAV-OEA survey data.

TABLE 3
Nicaraguan Resistance: Migratory Status in 1990

Status	*Percentage*
Born, mobilized from, and expected to return to same place	33.1
Born and mobilized from same place, to resettle elsewhere	35.4
Migrated before mobilizing, to return to migrant home	22.9
Migrated before mobilizing, to resettle elsewhere	4.1
Unable to determine	4.5

Source: Calculated on the basis of 1990 CIAV-OEA survey data.

TABLE 4
Nicaraguan Resistance: Landowning Status in 1990

Status	*Percentage*
No personal property	64.2
Landed property (personal)	18.0
Landed property (family)	11.2
Untitled landed property	1.5
Abandoned property	1.8
Confiscated/expropriated	1.2
Burned property	1.2
House (personal or family)	0.6
House destroyed	0.2

Source: Calculated on the basis of 1990 CIAV-OEA survey data.

ment in León and Chinandega in the 1990s). In any case, a needs-based justification was unnecessary: Chamorro's promise of land was a blanket policy, and the 1991 Strategic Framework for Agrarian Reform anticipated distributing land to 17,449 ex-RNs, who accounted for about 25 percent of estimated national land demand (Matus Lazo, 1992; INRA, 1991).

Table 4 reveals some rather surprising findings about land tenure status that suggest a stark class division between the Contra army's poor peasant base and its Somocista and bourgeois political patrons. According to the CIAV-OEA survey, less than 3 percent of the ex-Contra combatants claimed to have suffered any sort of confiscation or expropriation or destruction of property under Sandinista rule. While the ex-RNs had several motives for

underreporting their rates of property ownership, we could expect an *over-reporting* of property confiscation, since such information might make them more deserving in the eyes of the already sympathetic CIAV-OEA officials. These figures reveal that allegations that Sandinistas confiscated property as punishment for Contra collaboration were exaggerated (and, indeed, that fears of confiscation were unrealistic). This class division is important for understanding the failure of the development-poles plan and the nature of property conflict in postwar Nicaragua more generally. While both groups opposed the Sandinistas in the 1980s, in the 1990s the demands for land of the largely landless ex-Contra combatants clashed with the demands of the confiscated landowners—former Contra supporters—for property restitution (Dye et al., 1995). Consequently, the ex-Contras lacked loyal civilian allies in the government or existing political parties, and as a body of land claimants they could rely only on the support of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional), which advocated their property rights throughout the 1990s.

MULTIFACETED FAILURE

Several factors conspired against the success of the land grant program. The first problem was conceptual; it envisioned isolating the ex-Contras in remote development poles. The ex-Contra leadership proposed establishing seven of these poles in an area of nearly 20,000 km^2, or roughly 15 percent of the country, which would be protected by a new "rural guard" made up of ex-Contras.[14] The Sandinista Army objected to this spatial and military arrangement. It claimed that these "citadels," as they were described by the late Contra comandante Franklin, threatened national unity and sovereignty because they authorized the creation of a parallel army. Some ex-Contras feared that these poles would be a type of reservation or concentration camp. The Chamorro government answered both by clarifying that they did not "represent an attempt to establish an autonomous or independent sector in national territory" and "should promote the integration of the members of the Resistance with the rest of society." It added that the ex-Contras' decision to reside in the development poles was voluntary and that the government would consider other options in keeping with the spirit of the accords.

The plan not only reflected the biases of the Pacific-based politicians but also privileged the desires of the Contra leadership over those of the rank and file. While the leadership was concerned with maintaining organizational cohesion, the ex-combatants had a different vision of postwar life. The plans ignored the crucial importance of family ties and networks. Such networks had long been recognized by the Sandinistas, religious leaders, academics, and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as being central to the structuring

and recruiting of the counterrevolution (Bendaña, 1991; FSLN, 1990; Marchetti, 1985; Nuñez, 1992). That being the case, it is not clear why it was assumed that the Contras would want to live in isolated poles. Consultation with the ex-RNs or consideration of the CIAV-OEA's data might have prevented this error. As Table 3 reveals, even at that highly uncertain moment of turning in their guns, more than 60 percent of the ex-RNs stated that they expected to return to their place of birth or last place of residence. The promise of 50 manzanas in the development poles, as we shall see, was insufficient to prevent this.

The areas available for distribution were neither large enough nor good enough to meet the demand, and the nine areas finally designated were considerably smaller than the ex-Contras had expected. The reduction in size was a response to both the concerns for territorial autonomy and the Institute of National Resources' ruling of much of the area—tropical rainforest—uninhabitable (IRENA-INRA, 1990). Even in the areas finally approved, soil fertility was fragile and could not sustain prolonged agricultural exploitation. Moreover, because these were not empty territories, problems arose. The ex-RNs quickly came into conflict with the resident population, which included both Sandinista and Contra sympathizers as well as some indigenous groups. Having anticipated exclusive ownership, the ex-RNs initially terrorized these alleged "squatters" and only later reluctantly accepted their presence (CENPAP, 1992).

Finally, funds for reconstruction were not forthcoming. Whereas foreign powers supported each side generously during the war, they became tightfisted once the peace process began. Referring to the United States's indifference to the land demand of the ex-Contras, an embassy official blithely remarked that "those responsible for creating the problem [i.e., the Sandinistas] should take responsibility for resolving it" (interview with Carlos García, Managua, April 1994). Consequently, the ex-Contras languished in soggy camps, huddling in black plastic huts, as their sense of desperation, hopelessness, demoralization, and betrayal consumed them.

THE LOSERS IN RECONCILIATION

The failure to establish the development poles displaced land demand from the agrarian frontier in east-central Nicaragua to more populated areas in the center-west and northern areas of Boaco, Chontales, Matagalpa, Jinotega, and Las Segovias, making the consequences of the promise of land distribution palpable for the entire rural population. To begin with, the development-poles plan implicitly discriminated against law-abiding

Nicaraguans of all political persuasions. It marginalized not only Sandinistas but also the poorer civilian detractors of the Sandinistas and the general population that had borne the shortages, hardship, and suffering caused by the Contra war. It was not immediately evident that there would be no financing for the development poles, so the irony of the project was not lost on those excluded from this type of veterans' benefit. Those who had voted for Violeta de Chamorro for peace, not counterrevolution, watched bitterly as those who had inflicted billions of dollars' worth of war damages were to be rewarded with trophies of war.

Second, when the development poles as originally envisioned did not materialize, frustrated ex-RNs turned against their superiors. The areas around El Almendro, Río Blanco, Waslala, and Bocay were finally designated as "poles" reconfigured as simply agricultural development zones. The CIAV-OEA financed a number of projects and hired higher-ranking ex-Contras as project coordinators. Turnover among the coordinators was rapid. In part, this happened because they were war-weary, but they also received special treatment from the government; they were able to recover their own properties or obtain substitute farms or were offered opportunities or assets to establish business ventures that promised a more attractive lifestyle. However, even the most committed coordinators had little incentive to stay: unable to deliver the goods, they quickly lost credibility among the bases. By 1992 the second generation of rearmed Contras, or *recontras*, branded them as "traitors" and "government collaborators" and issued credible death threats against them, causing these middle-ranking leaders to relocate in more secure urban areas.

Third, within just two months of the demobilization, realizing that fears of Sandinista vengeance were overblown, the ex-RNs began pouring out of the poles and returning to their places of origin or concentrations of sympathizers farther west. There, on instructions from their former leaders and encouraged by some new appointees of the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) and right-wing members of the UNO coalition, they began to invade farms. Convinced of the justice of the promise of 50 manzanas and anticipating unconditional support from the UNO, the ex-RNs assaulted Sandinista cooperativists and other agrarian reform beneficiaries and, in the mistaken belief that these were also "Sandinista" properties, state farms. After meeting with armed resistance by the occupants and being persuaded by FSLN and activists of the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG) that such actions against their class counterparts would be counterproductive, they began to take over private farms. Between 1990 and 1994, ex-Contras invaded nearly 800 farms, only 130 of which belonged to agrarian reform beneficiaries. The frequency and location of these invasions and their "success"

rates depended on a number of factors, including the local correlation of political forces, the intensity of the land tenure transformations effected under the Sandinista agrarian reform, and the commercial potential of the land (Abu-Lughod, n.d.). These invasions determined the rate and pace of land redistribution under the Chamorro government: roughly half of the farms titled to the ex-RNs had been previously invaded by them. In other words, agrarian reform titling was a response by the Chamorro government to a de jure situation and not a coherent resettlement plan. The extralegal pressure exercised by the ex-RNs led to their becoming the favored group in agrarian reform titling, as evidenced in Table 5.

Table 5 requires some discussion because of the many discrepancies in sources on postwar land distribution and the ways in which INRA presents its data. The table refers to the exact number of names on titles rather than total "beneficiaries," a concept that includes family members and that INRA obtains by multiplying the number of titles by a factor of 5.2 to account for average family size. In addition, INRA's references to land *assignments* and land *titles* can be confusing. *Constancias de asignación* were widely distributed between 1990 and June 1992, before the formal titling program began. In 1992 INRA reported the *entrega* (distribution) of 509,887 manzanas to 17,442 families by 1991, but as Table 5 indicates, the recipients of titles by 1994 were significantly fewer. In the case of ex-RN combatants, land was distributed to 11,385 ex-RN families, but only about 3,000 members of this priority category had received titles by 1994. Since then, according to numerous testimonies and site visits, many have abandoned or sold their assigned lands or been forced (or "persuaded") by the government to evacuate the farms in order to restore them to their former owners.

Official INRA figures also inflate the number of individuals receiving fresh allocations of land. According to field technicians, most of the *colonos* possessed documents from the Sandinista agrarian reform and received only ratification under Chamorro. In addition, when Sandinista cooperatives decided to parcel out their collective holdings, INRA reissued individual titles that classified them as colonos. Traditional claimants (i.e., landless peasants who did not benefit under the Sandinista agrarian reform) were clearly marginalized. INRA estimated that there were 25,000 traditional claimants in 1991 but had delivered land (though not title) to only 5,241 (INRA, 1991). Because these appear as both *precaristas* (squatters) and colonos, it is impossible to tell exactly how many actually received title. To its credit, the Chamorro government preserved the practice of providing land free of cost, but the modest fees for inscribing titles in the property registries were still beyond the means of many beneficiaries.

TABLE 5
Distribution of Privatized Farms, 1995

Beneficiary	*Number of Farms*	*Percentage*	*Area (Hectares)*	*Percentage*
Former owners	279	56	101,137	40
Workers	122	24	77,577	31
Ex-EPS	61	12	36,156	14
Ex-Contras	37	07	38,054	15
Total	499	100	252,935	100

Note: EPS = Ejército Popular Nicaragüense—Nicaraguan Popular Army.
Source: Calculated from CORNAP (1995) data.

The evident privileging of ex-RN combatants induced noncombatants to adopt ex-RN identities in the belief that this would facilitate their access to land. On occasion, their efforts were successful. A group of traditionally landless peasants who invaded a farm near Muy Muy appears as "Ex-RN" in INRA titling records (although this situation is usually avoided by requiring presentation of CIAV-OEA-issued IDs). More troubling is that wartime identities are still being reproduced to justify claims to land. On August 10, 1998, the Associated Press reported that "200 Sandinistas attacked a group of former Contras who invaded their land. . . . Four former Contras were killed and six were wounded in the shootout." One of the dead, Freddy Delgadillo, was identified as "a former member of the Nicaraguan Resistance." However, Delgadillo was only 17 years old and would therefore have been only 9 years old at the time of the demobilization. Delgadillo had assumed a "Resistance" identity to legitimize a claim to land that would have been denied him as an ordinary citizen.[15]

The inability of the Chamorro government to make good on its promise of land also justified the rearming of thousands of ex-Contras. Pacification of these rearmed movements diminished the credibility of democratic procedures and encouraged violent means of struggle. Throughout the Chamorro period, the government engaged in repeated attempts to buy out the rearmed groups that multiplied hydra-fashion with cash-for-guns programs, amnesties, empty promises of land, and emptier threats (MIGOB, 1991; Cajina, 1996; Saldomando, 1996). At the same time, policies of structural adjustment unraveled the social safety net and set back the standards of living of the general population so much that "a social explosion" was frequently pronounced imminent by the FSLN and other observers. The choice of placating the rearmed groups was the lesser of two immediate evils: the government

urgently needed to disarticulate armed opposition to prevent more broadly organized social protest. Nevertheless, this choice sent a message that peaceful methods of struggle were ineffective and therefore undermined the credibility of civil politics.

RIFTS BETWEEN ELITES AND BASES

The failed project of the development poles undermined pacification and democratization in yet another way. While it increased the pressure for land on the Pacific and in the western parts of the interior, where the state farms were concentrated, it was accompanied by policies that directly threatened the livelihoods of the mass of rural workers employed there. In trying to accommodate these new sources of tension, the government unintentionally realigned different strata of former antagonists along class and regional lines and refashioned the social composition of the groups in conflict.

Concurrent with the attempts to establish development poles for the ex-RN in the interior, the Chamorro government issued two presidential decrees in May 1990 that threatened to undo the legacy of the Sandinista revolution. The decrees violated the spirit of the transitional protocol, a type of elite pact, that had been signed in March 1990 by delegates of the outgoing and incoming governments, which committed the Chamorro government to respecting the transformations in land tenure effected under the Sandinista agrarian reform and the institutional integrity of the Sandinista Popular Army. In return, the Sandinistas were to cooperate with the transfer of power, the first peaceful such transfer since independence.[16] Decree 10-90 provided for the rental of state-owned enterprises as a first step toward their eventual privatization. Decree 11-90 established the Comisión Nacional para la Revisión de las Confiscaciones (National Confiscations Review Commission—CNRC) to pass judgment on the Sandinistas' property holdings and order restitution of holdings found unjustly seized. Together, these decrees represented the imminent reversal of the agrarian reform and the dissolution of the basis of Sandinista farmworker power.

The CNRC issued legal notices that farmland should be returned to its "rightful" owners, starting with the state-owned farms. While the Chamorro government was aware that expulsion of cooperativists would create social unrest, it did not anticipate protest from state farmworkers. Attempts by former owners to enforce the orders met with confrontation and incidents of violence. By June 1990, two nationwide strikes had paralyzed the country, and farmworkers had taken over hundreds of farms slated for restitution. Faced with widening protests, the Chamorro government convoked a broad

range of social forces in a national debate that culminated in a social pact known as the Concertación. Among other issues, they addressed the question of property rights. A compromise was reached that would partially satisfy the demands of all four land-claiming parties: the former owners, the ex-Contras, the farmworkers on state-owned enterprises, and the retired members of the Nicaraguan Army. The estimated 10 percent of the land held by state-owned enterprises would be denationalized by restoring part to a sector of former owners and (re)privatizing the remainder to ex-Contras, discharged army officers, and workers. The executive recognized each land-claiming group as legitimate. Preelectoral promises committed President Chamorro to returning "wrongly" confiscated properties to their former owners. The demobilization accords with the ex-Contras and the transitional protocol signed with the departing Sandinistas committed her to providing land to facilitate their reintegration into society. It was, however, the threat that worker mobilization represented for the operation of the export economy, private-sector confidence, and governability more generally that had forced the new government to negotiate this unusual accord.

Although the Concertación participants had understood that distribution would be in four roughly equal parts, it was clear by 1995 that this would not be the case. The share of farms and areas returned to their former owners increased while the areas to be privatized to the three other groups of claimants diminished significantly.[17] Preliminary figures for 1992 provided by the director of Hatonic (which controlled 60 percent of the total area in state-owned farms), Edgar Lacayo, indicated that of Hatonic's estimated 252,000 manzanas to be privatized, the workers would have access to 120,000 manzanas, the ex-EPS to 56,000, and the ex-RN to approximately 75,000 manzanas (see also, CORNAP, 1993). However, after "measuring" of the farms, the area had been reduced by two-thirds, to only 89,000 manzanas. Of these, 74,000 would be privatized to the workers, 39,000 to the ex-EPS, and only 11,000 to the ex-RN. Table 6 reveals the distribution of privatized (or denationalized) farms as reported by the Corporaciones Nacionales del Sector Público (National Public-Sector Corporations—CORNAP) in 1995. That year's figures indicated that former owners had received 56 percent of all the formerly state-owned farms and 40 percent of the total area that was denationalized. Workers constituted the second-largest group of participants, receiving nearly a quarter of the farms and more than 30 percent of the area. Retired Sandinista Army officers received about half of the portion reprivatized to the workers, and the ex-RN received only 7 percent of the farms and 15 percent of the total area. However, the number and area of state farms received by ex-Contras is actually larger because, in view of the limited economic means of the demobilized combatants (and some workers), a number

TABLE 6
Agrarian Reform Titling, 1992-1994

Group	*Area (Manzanas)*	*Percentage of Area*	*Number of Grantees*	*Percentage of Grantees*	*Land/Man Ratio*
Colonos	104,200	49	7,768	62	19.2
Ex-RN	70,524	33	3,023	24	33.5
Squatters (*precaristas*)	18,620	9	702	6	37.9
Ex-EPS	11,615	5	455	4	39.7
Repatriated refugees	9,123	4	509	4	25.2
Total	214,122	100	13,931	100	21.6

Note: RN = Resistencia Nicaragüense—Nicaraguan Resistance; EPS = Ejército Popular Nicaragüense—Nicaraguan Popular Army.
Source: Calculated from INRA (1994b) data.

of farms initially slated for privatization to the ex-RN, such as Las Brisas, La Lucha, El Silencio, and La Lima, were transferred to INRA for distribution free of cost (see INRA, 1994b).

CORNAP's 1998 figures indicate further erosion in the total number of farms to be privatized. While its 1995 report indicated that these three groups would purchase 220 farms, in 1998 CORNAP revealed that only 153 were to be privatized (*La Tribuna*, December 10, 1998). The report did not specify whether some farms had been entirely paid for or how many had since been transferred to INRA for titling. However, worker, ex-RN, and ex-EPS representatives alike affirm that they have been pressured by the government to return farms to their former owners (generally, Nicaraguans who had acquired U.S. citizenship), since U.S. aid has been conditioned on the advance of restitution to U.S. citizens.

This unique process of denationalization was not simply a case of a weak state mediating conflicting interests. First of all, this key policy decision was enacted by executive decree, largely to the exclusion of the legislature, which bargained in the Concertación forum on an equal footing with other social forces that had no parliamentary representation. Chamorro, who lacked an organized social base, consolidated her power vis-à-vis the UNO-dominated Assembly, where she faced rightist challenges to her authority, by neutralizing some of the protest on the left, relying increasingly on support from the Sandinista Army, and giving the Contra leadership a stake in her administration. At the same time, Chamorro consolidated her power vis-à-vis the nonparliamentary social forces. The process of determining the internal distribution of the farms congealed existing hierarchies and provoked organizational

rifts. In effect, denationalization co-opted the elites of the sectoral claimants. By engaging the leaderships of the new land-claiming groups in struggles to defend their particular rights to property, denationalization fostered internal divisions and diminished the prospects for unified antigovernment protest.

The government determined which group would receive which farm—leaving ample room to satisfy claims for restitution from its most ardent supporters—but did not interfere with how each sectoral claimant distributed its quota. In every case, only a minority of ex-RNs, discharged army officers, and workers could actually accede to participating in privatization, and this sowed divisions between the haves and have-nots. The highest-ranking ex-Contras, including comandantes Rubén, Franklin, Denis, Arcangel, Jimmy Leo, Wilmer, Omaro, Richard, Cain II, Dumas, Mack, and Rigoberto, claimed sole possession of the best farms in the ex-RN's quota while poorer-quality farms, such as La Lima, described as good "only for rocks and snakes," were handed over to ex-RNs of lesser rank. The army offered the best farms of its quota to its highest-ranking retiring officers, but at least some of those officers questioned whether participation was really a "benefit." One former captain suggested that most officers were selected as part of General Humberto Ortega's transparent attempt to "rid himself of the old foxes" who objected to the compromises forced on the Nicaraguan Army after 1990 and surround himself with yes-men. Similarly, although this process was largely the outcome of worker mobilization, not all workers managed to acquire the farms they had taken over, leading some excluded workers to accuse the leadership of the Asociación de los Trabajadores del Campo (ATC, the [Sandinista] Farmworkers Association) of betrayal.

That these new owners had to pay for the complicated and uncertain legal procedures to clear title to the land, for the land itself, and for capital investments and accumulated debts and that they had to make the enterprises viable without government subsidy or access to credit mattered little to the marginalized rank and file. Moreover, because the new owners had to respect the job security of the existing and often supernumerary labor force, these farms could not be used to accommodate more of their former comrades-in-arms. Unless a broadly cooperative structure had been adopted, doing so would have translated the military hierarchy directly into a class hierarchy on the farm—a situation that did occur on a privatized portion of El Laurel, in Matagalpa. There, ex-RN commander Dimas Narizón employed his former subordinates as peons. Dimas claimed to have formed a ten-member cooperative to facilitate approval for a US$240,000 bank loan negotiated with the help of the Matagalpan INRA delegate and the INRA minister in 1994. These workers, who had known Dimas in Par Par, Jinotega, where he had been a medium-sized farmer and commercial middleman before taking up arms, knew

nothing of such a cooperative and explained that they were working for him temporarily while they waited for their patron to use his good offices with INRA to help them acquire land nearby. The workers left empty-handed after Dimas sold his land in 1998.

As a result of this unequal distribution, the bases of both the Contra and the Sandinista army came to regard their former superiors with deep suspicion and envy and divided along new class lines. The tactical alliance of the bases began as an unintended consequence of the demobilization of the first generation of recontras (rearmed ex-Contras) and *recompas* (rearmed Sandinistas) in early 1992. As part of the agreement, the organizations were to receive office space, and they were thrown together in the same building in Sébaco, the nation's strategic crossroads. In their uneasy proximity, they shared their experience of marginalization both from society and from the military hierarchies they had served. For a brief moment in 1992, they mobilized as the *revueltos* (the scrambled) to defend their rights as veterans and undertook joint military operations, especially in Jinotega. The complaints on the two sides were similar. Ex-RN combatants accused their former leaders of "ingratiating" themselves with Chamorro to acquire properties and consequently abandoning their "ideals." Comandante Jimmy Leo, who acquired Mil Bosques through privatization, said he had to abandon his farm "to restore his credibility" before departing for Miami on a fundraising mission for the recontras in 1992. Discharged EPS officers took over several farms they claimed the army had allocated to active (rather than retired) officers, and recipients of privatized farms were subjected to pressures from lower-ranking officers who occupied the farms intermittently between 1992 and 1994 to call attention to their plight and exclusion. As one recompa leader explained, "Those farms all belong to Popo [Colonel Adolfo Chamorro, who oversaw the distribution], and he rubs shoulders daily with [President Violeta] Chamorro so he can make our complaints known." Beyond those mobilizations, however, former combatants from both sides have found common ground, and numerous ex-RN adopted expressions of class conflict that were nearly identical to those used by Sandinistas in the 1980s.

The elites, on the other hand, were obliged to come together to defend their rights to property, understanding that the elimination of rights of one corporate group would erode the rights of the others. These ex-RN and ex-EPS (and Nicaraguan Army) verbally supported Chamorro to prevent her from backpedaling under U.S. pressure to return the confiscated properties to their original owners. While workers remained more belligerent, the FSLN alternately supported and opposed Chamorro. This phenomenon is part of a larger process of the reconstruction of property rights in postwar Nicaragua that is still unresolved and in which accusations of back-room deals, elite

compromises to protect the *piñateros* (Sandinista functionaries who divided up some state properties after the 1990 elections) in return for political support, and other suggestions of influence-peddling have tarnished the negotiating environment.

MARKET RECOVERY

The distribution of land to ex-Contra veterans was not conceived comprehensively and lacked attendant technical and financial support and legal safeguards against resale. Consequently the operation of the free market undermined their gains. By exerting military pressure, the ex-Contras obtained recognition of their rights to land, but land is only a partial and not even an indispensable condition for becoming an agriculturalist. The complementary needs of small farmers, especially inexperienced ones such as the ex-Contras, received insufficient government support.

During the first two years following demobilization, the repatriation institute INIRE (Instituto Nicaragüense de Repatriación) issued loans of roughly $50, which barely covered the costs of the seeds and other inputs, and repayment (only 10 percent repaid their loans) under depressed market conditions left them no better off than before and essentially in the same condition as neighboring sharecroppers and renters. In addition, the contraction of the credit market and elimination of credit for basic grain production cut the ex-RN and other small farmers off from production financing. National banking policy was perhaps a greater obstacle to their consolidation as new farmers than the lack of legal title cited by Merlet et al. (1993) and Stanfield (1992; 1994). Moreover, economic rehabilitation was difficult because most of the land they obtained was more appropriate for livestock grazing, which has higher start-up and maintenance costs than self-provisioning agriculture. Finally, new economic policies eliminated the Sandinistas' protectionist barriers—such as guaranteed purchase prices, subsidized inputs, inflation-produced negative real interest rates, and debt pardoning—and led to the impoverishment of small farmers nationwide (see Clemens, 1993; de Groot and Spoor, 1994; Jonakin, 1997).

While the ex-Contras faced these difficulties in production, peace had profound effects on the land market. Sales by impoverished Sandinista agrarian reform cooperativists in León, Rivas, and Jinotega, often to businessmen associated with the Chamorro government, have been documented by Jonakin (1995; 1997), Matus (1994), and Ribbink (1993), respectively. The Matagalpan property registry indicated that 70 percent of registered cooperatives had engaged in at least partial sales (often to cancel debts and so prevent

foreclosure). In addition, a 1995 survey by Nitlapán confirmed the existence of an active land market in the interior.[18] It was not until 1998, however, that government officials expressed concern. That year, the vice minister of agrarian reform denounced as "unethical" and "immoral" the purchase of reformed land by Central American buyers and former officials of the Sandinista, Chamorro, and Alemán governments (*El Nuevo Diario*, October 22, 1998).

Noneconomic factors also contributed to the land market's postwar recovery. First, the reduction of war activity reopened former war zones to entrepreneurial ventures. Ironically, evidence from El Cuá suggests that postwar violence and especially the actions of recompa groups have protected smallholders of both Sandinista and ex-Contra genealogy by dissuading potential land speculators (Abu-Lughod, 1998), but better-protected areas are in high demand. Legal constraints on the sale of agrarian reform land were removed when the lame-duck Sandinista-dominated National Assembly passed Law 88, allowing for the transfer of land-reform titles. This precedent was aggravated by the position of the World Bank, which has financed the titling program. Presciently, before titling began in 1992, INRA proposed a three-year moratorium on sales of agrarian reform land and titles given to the ex-Contras, but because the World Bank objected to this "interference" with the market, the measure was not enacted.[19] In 1995, however, INRA introduced a new policy that it hoped would stem the tide. Its field technicians observed that the wives of agrarian reform beneficiaries generally opposed their husbands' unilateral decisions to sell the land, so INRA began to include the spouse on the title so that sales would require both signatures. Despite some claims to the contrary, women had until then largely been excluded from access to agrarian reform titles. A 10 percent random sample drawn from the list of 3,023 ex-Contras that received agrarian reform titles between 1992 and 1994 (INRA, 1994a) revealed that less than 5 percent of the grantees were women, including women who held joint titles with their spouses.

Tenure insecurity, a complex issue that has been amply examined by others (Stanfield, 1992; 1994; Strasma, 1996), played a role in fueling the market. Recipients of denationalized state farms fell victim to the free market and tenure insecurity, and many of the farms to be privatized to the ex-RN were sold to third parties under arrangements of dubious legality. Among the farms visited in 1995 that had already been sold were San Rafael, in Boaco, El Triunfo, in La Paz Centro, La Esperanza, in Matiguás, El Bosque, in Sébaco, and Las Camelias, in Jinotega. The ex-RN sellers claimed that they had become too severely indebted, that the legal procedures for clearing title were too cumbersome, or that neighboring landowners would not allow them to work in peace. Farms composing the Area de Propiedad de los Trabajadores (Area

of Workers' Property—APT) had remained more intact because of the greater organizational coherence of the primary worker organization, the ATC, although at least one "maverick" in León had sold an APT farm to an aspiring sugar producer from Miami, Armando Tellez.[20] Similarly, the patrimony of the retired army officers was better protected than that of the ex-RN because the army simply replaced those who abandoned their rights to privatized farms with other retired army officers or, in some cases such as La Florida, in Matagalpa, with demobilized recompas.

Even more affected by tenure insecurity were the holders of agrarian reform land, including the ex-Contra grantees. The ex-RN deeply feared policy reversals as the confiscated landowners made more concerted efforts to recover their land. Many believed that any post-Chamorro government would not be bound by the same demobilization commitment to grant them land. Ironically, these same ex-Contras supported the candidacy of current President Arnoldo Alemán even though they suspected that Alemán would give preference to the interests of the confiscated landowners. As a result, small farmers, agrarian reform beneficiaries, and ex-Contras alike abandoned their lands at below-market rates, although not as low as the property registries or press reports based on registry research would suggest. Because transfer taxes are based on a percentage of the declared price, the price is always underreported. While the most enterprising purchased their "own" land farther in the interior (Nicaraguan farmers feel that the exchange of cash for land makes ownership claims more legitimate), others pursued occupational changes, migrated, or simply spent the money. There has been rapid turnover in the population on farms delivered to the ex-RN. For example, only 3 of the more than 80 ex-Contras who invaded the farm La Bocana de Bul Bul, in Matiguás, Matagalpa, in 1990 remained on the farm in 1993, when a list of 27 ex-Contras was submitted to INRA with a request for title. By mid-1995, 12 of the 27 had sold their *constancias* or titles to local ranchers and other ex-Contras, and most of the rest wanted to sell but could find no buyers. By July 1999, only 2 families remained.

At the nearby farms Rancherías, El Laurel, and Rica Fama, nearly a quarter of the 8,000 manzanas titled to ex-Contras had been bought up by capitalists from outside the area, including a former administrator of the state-owned enterprise and Hilario Saenz, the owner of a Managua-based trucking company and locally regarded as a front man (*prestanombre*) for Antonio Lacayo, Chamorro's presidential minister and son-in-law. Although this particular connection could not be confirmed, Saenz's dairy was conspicuously well-financed, boasting a superior breed of cattle and Arabian show horses. The workers, mostly ex-RN combatants, received wages that were double the going rate in Matiguás, and they expressed satisfaction with their working

conditions, especially with the beer that flowed liberally at Saenz's parties. The purchases of land from ex-RN combatants seemed to be part of a larger private development project with some relevant precedents. In 1990, Japanese investors allegedly offered to purchase that area, where the Sandinistas had established the strategic Heroes and Martyrs of Pancasán Dairy, and local informers attributed the frequent intra-Contra conflicts over possession that continued at least until 1995 to the machinations of Managua-based politicians-cum-businessmen. The property registries of Matagalpa and Boaco indicated that Saenz had purchased several thousand nearly contiguous manzanas of pasture from multiple sellers, and some local private ranchers admitted to holding out until they received more attractive offers. In 1995 a highway, with a gate protected by an armed sentry set 3 kilometers off the Muy Muy-Matiguás highway, was under construction through this swath. Since completion, it has reduced transit time to Managua by half and quickly enhanced the value of all that land.

The case of Saenz is not unique, and the appearance of similar operations suggests that this reconcentration of land is part of a larger trend. An important example is NicaFrance, a company formed by the Frenchman Clemente Ponçon, a friend of Antonio Lacayo, in association with a former regional director of the Sandinista agrarian reform ministry, Francisco Lacayo, and one for which sizable bank loans are guaranteed by Col. Osvaldo Lacayo, number three in the Nicaraguan Army. This company purchased La Cumplida from its restored landowner, Alejandro Salazar, who had been unable to subdue worker protest, and a number of agrarian reform beneficiaries whom it harassed until they too sold their land. The Jinotegan coffee venture Agrícola Cris, formed by members of the Cuadra family associated with both the Sandinista Army and the party, similarly purchased land from agrarian reform beneficiaries, as well as from ex-Contra commander El Indio, and was in litigation with a Conservative party leader from Jinotega, Sergio Torres, whose land had been usurped by the former state-owned enterprise in that area.[21] These buyers have enjoyed a relatively privileged position in postwar Nicaragua. They possessed initial capital, knowledge of the commercial and productive potential of the land, technical expertise, access to bank credit, trade connections, immunity from future restitution, and the ability to protect their properties from takeovers by the workers, bandits, or other armed groups. The similarities in their ownership structure—all are composed of businesspeople who are closely associated through ties of kin and friendship to former President Chamorro, several high-ranking army officers, and former Sandinista agrarian reform officials—seem to confirm the further evolution of patterns noted by Vilas (1992), Spaulding (1994), and Edelman (1997). These are the new fractions of capital that were best able to capitalize

on the misfortunes of the poorer agriculturists, who, in the era of neoliberal individualism, blame their own shortcomings for their losses.

CONCLUSION

Although reconciliation has an undeniable intrinsic human value, we need to examine how the costs of reconciliation are distributed. The case of postwar Nicaragua suggests that for governments guiding postwar settlements, the primary concern is the short-term reduction of bloodshed. The Chamorro government pursued several policies to pacify the country, including promises of land, brokering separate agreements with contending groups, and vainly attempting to buy off the ever-multiplying and subdividing opposition. The horizon of the peace settlement was set quite close: the Chamorro government issued unrealizable promises to the ex-Contras until they disarmed; it then abandoned them in relative isolation. At the same time, the requirements of reconstruction worked in contradiction to the requirements of structural adjustment and the unleashing of the market economy.

As a formula for buying peace, land grants can serve little purpose if the state cannot adjudicate clearly the multiple claims to the same land. In this sense, then, the land grants of the U.S. frontier were slightly more successful, since the priorities were clear: they helped build a white nation, albeit at the cost of excluding the racially and culturally distinct indigenous peoples. In Nicaragua, no such grants could be offered without aggravating class and political differences within a nation in which the racial and cultural cleavages were less pronounced. In other words, all land redistribution must be discriminatory, but the criteria for exclusion in more homogeneous societies are perhaps more difficult to identify with any certainty. In Nicaragua, the land grant program encouraged the reproduction of wartime identities while discouraging civil protest and divided the contenders for land among themselves. Combined with the free market and the absence of countervailing pressures, the land grant program undid itself in ways that presage a resurgence of rebellion.

NOTES

1. Two hundred and seventy interviews were conducted in this period and in earlier visits to Nicaragua. The specific sources of information obtained from these interviews are not cited in the text to protect the respondents' identities. This is simply my own precaution, since none of the informants insisted on anonymity.

2. Rearmed movements began to appear within 200 days of the ex-RN (Resistencia Nicaragüense—Nicaraguan Resistance) demobilization. Between December 1990 and January 1992, more than 25,000 ex-RN and former Sandinista combatants and collaborators and even some former nonpartisans formed bands to "collect debts" (reprisals) and for self-protection, vigilantism, antigovernment protest, and banditry. These groups, known as *recontras* and *recompas*, operated primarily in the former war zones, where police and army presence was minimal. Although these combatants demobilized between January and March of 1992, in the summer of 1992 the army estimated that an additional 22,000 had subsequently remobilized or mobilized for the first time as recontras, recompas, *revueltos* (both groups together), and *rejuntos* (also including noncombatants). Police records indicate that confrontations between the army and these irregular groups went from nearly 300 in 1991 to more than 700 in 1993, declining to 240 in 1994 and 132 in 1995.

3. While part of this physical security would derive from the structural reform of the government's armed forces, including troop reduction and limited incorporation of former rebels into the police apparatus, it was supplemented by a *geography* of national reconciliation that reinforced the rebels' territorial separation. Rebels would enjoy some degree of territorial hegemony in their former zones of operation or control, allowing them organizational continuity and hence, at least theoretically, collective security. Finally, economic security would derive primarily from a return of veterans to agriculture.

4. According to a document published by former Nicaraguan Popular Army (Ejército Popular Nicaragüense—EPS) officers titled "Situación actual y perspectivas de las propiedades agrícolas de retirados del EPS" (Clemens, 1993), 805 former officers were offered opportunities to acquire properties through privatization. Data from the Nicaraguan Institute of Agrarian Reform's (INRA) Legal Division report that 455 former officers had received agrarian reform titles to about 11,600 manzanas of land by 1994, and the titling plans for subsequent years indicated that fewer than 100 additional former EPS members would receive title. Between 1990 and 1992, the army shrank from 92,000 to about 18,000 (see Cajina, 1996), suggesting that the overwhelming majority of discharged soldiers were not provided with land. In part, this is because the army was composed mainly of urban residents and therefore did not press for benefits in land.

5. The impact of the devaluation of these conscripts who received no veterans' benefits merits further study, as most work has focused on the ex-Contra combatants and the discharged army officers (Cajina, 1996; CENPAP, 1992; Ortega, 1996; Saldomando, 1996). Similarly, in El Salvador, the peace settlement ignored the reinsertion of the members of the paramilitary squads, mainly of peasant origin, who expected to return to agriculture and feared reprisals. In January 1995, these peasants, their faces hidden behind bandanas, marched in protest and took over the National Assembly building for several days.

6. The mention of these two demobilizations does not imply any symmetry between the leftist guerrillas of El Salvador and the Nicaraguan Resistance or between the armed forces of El Salvador and the Sandinista Popular Army (now known as the Nicaraguan Army).

7. In the cash-scarce conditions of the Revolutionary War, land grants were used to attract and retain a sympathetic social base. After independence, land rights were linked to military participation and helped combatants resume their civilian identities in the still primarily agrarian economy. The practice continued after the War of 1812 and the Civil War, when public lands were granted to Yankee veterans to reward the opponents of secession and advance and defend the territorial expansion of the nascent American state under white hegemony. More generally, state recognition of squatters' rights in frontier areas served to expand citizenship and foster national loyalty (Jensen, 1998). As late as World War I the U.S. government still considered providing land grants to returning veterans (U.S. Congress, 1956).

8. This objective was buttressed by another rationale: the settlement project undercut class struggle on the Pacific, where the concentration of land in the hands of a few agro-exporters had led to increasing proletarianization and social unrest by displacing the rural poor to the interior (Enríquez, 1991).

9. Although political criteria were not used overtly to select beneficiaries, members of non-Sandinista farmworkers' associations such as Sitracam (Sindicato de Trabajadores del Campo de Matagalpa) and Sitracaj (Sindicato de Trabajadores del Campo de Jinotega) frequently complained that membership in the Sandinista-associated UNAG (Union of Farmers and Ranchers) was a condition for receiving agrarian reform titles (see *Avance*, nos. 77 [March 15, 1984], 85 [May 16, 1984], and 103 [October 10, 1984]).

10. The Sandinista agrarian reform (1981-1989) affected almost a third of the nation's land with confiscation, expropriation, or titling actions and significantly advanced tenure equality (Carter Center, 1995; CIERA, 1989; Stanfield, 1992; Wheelock Roman, 1992; World Bank, 1993). It sought to transform the model of development to allow better redistribution of agro-export profits and to promote associative forms of production among the rural poor (Abu-Lughod, 1992; CIERA, 1989; Baumeister, 1984; Blokland, 1995; Deere, 1987; Enríquez, 1991; Harris and Vilas, 1986). During the first five years, the reform concentrated on establishing state-owned enterprises and cooperatives, providing individual titles only in recognition of squatters' rights. Later, when individual grants were offered, as under Somoza's reform, these were allocated in the nation's interior. In 1985, for example, a number of state-owned farms whose costs of protection exceeded the value of their production were parceled out (MIDINRA, 1985). There, land could be distributed without jeopardizing the integrity of state-owned farms in the better-protected Pacific or further alienating the Pacific's agrarian bourgeoisie with additional confiscations. In part, a military rationale guided such redistribution: Sandinista officials believed that those individual proprietors would be more motivated to combat the Nicaraguan Resistance.

11. Before the cease-fire negotiations began between the Contras and the Nicaraguan government in Sapoá in 1988, President Daniel Ortega declared, "We don't want to talk to the clowns. We want to talk to the owners of the circus." The actual implementation of these cease-fire agreements, however, did allow field commanders from both armies to build some degree of mutual trust and understanding.

12. This section is based on information collected by the CIAV-OEA (Comisión Internacional de Verificación de la Organización de Estados Americanos—the Organization of American States's International Verification Commission) in 1990 on 22,431 demobilized members of the Nicaraguan Resistance. Its database contained the name, alias, CIAV-OEA identification number, date of birth, date of demobilization, current location, place of birth, place of former residence, place of expected resettlement, past occupation, expected occupation, legal status of property ownership, years of schooling, and civil status of each ex-Contra. The Asociación Nicaraguense para la Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (Nicaraguan Association for the Promotion of Human Rights—ANPDH) provided me with the database after all identifying fields (names, aliases, and ID numbers) had been purged to ensure confidentiality. Because the places of birth, residence, and future residence were provided in the form of community name, the nearly 65,000 entries were reclassified into their respective regions, departments, and municipalities in accordance with more than 6,500 community names provided by the Ministerio de Acción Social (Ministry of Social Action—MAS). About 12 percent of the communities could not be identified because communities of the same name can appear in up to 20 municipalities, and if no municipal or departmental reference was indicated these remained unclassified. For analytic purposes, some new categories, such as migration status, were computed from existing

information, and discrete categories were created for occupational and land tenure status. The database lacked most information for 1,133 individuals demobilized in the North Atlantic, probably members of the Miskito ethnic groups. The following account describes the distribution of the 21,298 cases for which most data were available. The reclassification of data and the exclusion of the cases with missing data may account for slight discrepancies between my information and other published accounts.

13. One scholar, after noting that it was "significant" that 68.88 percent of the demobilized had no property, went on to assert that "these data clearly reveal that the majority of the demobilized RN were landless peasants who were ignored by the Sandinista agrarian reform or did not wish to acquire land on the conditions under which it was being distributed" (Saldomando, 1996: 3). Similarly, an earlier study explained the Contra insurgency as an expression of "a type of frustration over the fact that the agrarian policy was not applied in the way that they had 'dreamed.' For them the revolution would finally parcel out the haciendas of the large *terratenientes* and distribute them amongst the *colonos* and *parceleros*" (CIERA, 1989, vol. 6: 263). The war did in fact cause a "type of frustration," but it worked in quite a different way. None of the more than 70 ex-Contras interviewed between 1994 and 1995 expressed dissatisfaction with the ways the Sandinistas' *redistributed* land, and they repeatedly stressed, "We never fought for land." However, war activity foreclosed possibilities to penetrate the agrarian frontier. This indeed frustrated the small farmers of the interior, who, when squeezed out by larger landowners, had historically sought to reestablish themselves on new farms created by colonizing national lands in frontier areas farther east, a practice confirmed by numerous landowners in Río Blanco and in the raw survey data obtained from Nitlapán (1995).

14. The ex-RN requested an area of 900 km^2 in Nueva Segovia, 4,000 in Jinotega, 1,050 in Matagalpa, 3,800 in Chontales, 4,780 in Río San Juan, 3,500 in Zelaya Norte, and 1,500 around Prinzapolka, in Zelaya Central. These areas overlapped with the Bosawás, Sí-a-Paz, and Miskito Keys reserves. The sites eventually approved were located in Bulún, Tapalwás, Nawawás (in eastern Chontales/Rama), Copalar, Ubu, San Pedro del Norte, Wilike, Lisawe (in the area of Río Blanco, in eastern Matagalpa), Iyas, Yaosca, Kubalí (in Waslala), and El Almendro (between Chontales and Río San Juan).

15. The incident occurred in Las Plazuelas, a cattle ranch in Acoyapa that the Sandinista regime had confiscated from the Montiel brothers, one of whom had served as Somoza's foreign minister. Las Plazuelas and two other farms, El Jobo and San José de los Gómez, were privatized to 120 former workers from the Carlos Roberto Huembes state-owned enterprise. CORNAP (Corporaciones Nacionales del Sector Público—National Public-Sector Corporations) signed documents authorizing the workers' possession, but government foot-dragging prevented the issue of free title. A so-called Committee of Colonos, Resistance, and Demobilized—composed of 365 former members of the Nicaraguan Resistance, 120 colonos (i.e., landless peasants, some of whom had probably once worked on the state-owned enterprise), and 65 members of the Asociación de Retirados del Ejército (Association of Retired Army Officers) took over the farm in June 1998, claiming that INRA had authorized their possession. The invaders claimed that 200 "heavily armed" men, "with every type of rifle, shotgun, pistol, and hand grenades" attacked them. The alleged attackers said that they were simply out rounding up their cattle and that they were armed to protect themselves against "delinquents" but did not explain what provoked the shootout. This incident also revealed the erosion of partisan solidarities. Portraying the incident in terms of "Sandinistas" versus "Contras" was misleading because the invaders included former Sandinista soldiers—evidence of the divisive process of privatization discussed later in this article. It also revealed that interinstitutional conflict underlies many bloody postwar encounters. The conflict resulted from contradictions between governmental authorities—INRA and CORNAP—that administer land rights.

16. For detailed examinations of this transition and its implications, see Díaz Lacayo (1994), Dye et al. (1995), Spence and Vickers (1994), Spaulding (1994), Stahler-Sholk (1995), and Walker (1997).

17. Figures published in Stanfield (1992), which suggest more generous distribution to workers and former combatants than those indicated here, reflect the preliminary figures from CORNAP. An English version of this paper appeared in 1995.

18. The study, conducted in seven interior departments, found that 21 percent of the 551 producers surveyed had purchased lands between 1990 and 1995. Only 7 percent could be considered "large landowners" (with more than 200 manzanas), but they purchased 45 percent of the area sold. Most buyers were smallholders (with less than 50 manzanas), who collectively purchased less than 19 percent of the land. It is significant that the smaller buyers were not afraid to purchase lands that had agrarian reform titles, as 33 percent of the land they purchased was protected only by agrarian reform titles and 60 percent of this amount had not even been inscribed in the property registry. Large and medium-sized landholders, by contrast, appeared reluctant to buy lands of dubious legal status. More than half of the sellers of land were small landholders (see Nitlapán, 1995: 29-30).

19. In interviews in July 1992, Mario Herrera of CIERA (Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios de la Reforma Agraria) and Jose Boanerges Matus, Minister of Agrarian Reform, claimed that this was discussed in a side letter. Miguel Gomez of the World Bank office in Managua would not comment on their version during a 1994 interview.

20. An example of the distrust between the workers and the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberacíon Nacional) leadership is that workers on El Triunfo mistakenly believed that Tellez was the brother of FSLN assemblyperson Dora María Tellez and claimed that the purchase was evidence that "high-level Sandinistas" were getting rich at their expense.

21. Although this material may appear anecdotal, it is difficult to document these transactions because of their sensitive political nature. Evidence was collected from the property registries in Matagalpa, Jinotega, and León following leads from local informants. A preliminary account of the events at La Cumplida was published in 1995 under the pseudonym Digna Hernández in a newsletter "Farmer's View," and full accounts will appear in Abu-Lughod (n.d.).

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