AUGUSTO CÉSAR SANDINO: NICARAGUAN HERO*

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In his excellent account of The Sandino Affair (1967), Dr. Neill Macaulay warned that "More than the International Communist Conspiracy, the ghost of Sandino confronts the United States in Latin America" and "like Banquo's [ghost] it can provoke the beholder to self-destructive reaction." Today, while the world is generally well aware of the Reagan Administration's interventionism against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, the originator of the Sandinista movement is hardly remembered.

Augusto Calderón (later César), the natural son of a small landowner, Don Gregorio Sandino, and a young Indian servant, was born on May 18, 1895 in Niquinihomo, a provincial town near the Nicaraguan city of Granada. His father acknowledged Augusto as his son and raised him with his legitimate son, Sócrates. Sandino experienced a comfortable childhood in an enlightened household in which Don Gregorio encouraged his sons to read widely in his extensive library. Following primary schooling in Niquinihomo, Sandino attended a commercial high school, but abandoned his course of study to assist his father in managing the farm and to begin work as a grain merchant. In 1920, following a brawl and gunfight in which he wounded his assailant, Sandino fled to León and thence to Honduras where he worked his way to the Honduran port of La Ceiba. Here, in the vicinity of the port, he worked as a mechanic in a sugar mill owned by an American fruit company specializing in banana production. But as a result of another shooting incident he was soon compelled to move on to Guatemala where he obtained employment, again as a mechanic, with the American-owned United Fruit Company. However, Mexico, "the symbol of nascent nationalism" and defiance of the North American colossus, attracted Sandino. During early 1923 he travelled to the oil boom town of Tampico and easily secured work as a skilled mechanic with the American South Penn and Huasteca Petroleum Companies.

Working in and near Tampico, Sandino encountered socialist, syndicalist, anarchist, and Comintern activists, but was especially impressed by Mexican nationalists and Central American emigres who, as he later recalled, often chided him on "the subservience of Nicaraguans to American imperialism." As he subsequently told a friend: "I began to reflect and realize, they were right." He became a Mason and, under the influence of intellectual associates, read widely on social problems, theosophy, spiritualism, and trade union leaders. But, as Macaulay asserts, "in the end it was Latin American nationalism that became his creed." It was a nationalism based on pride in the Indo-Iberian heritage of Latin America and on the work and ideals of his hero, Simon Bolívar. More specifically, he developed a political and social outlook which was basically a blend of Nicaraguan nationalism and

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Eds. note: *Dr. Baylen asked that the journal publish this paper without footnotes, but with sources listed at the end. We are including it because of its timeliness and as a tribute to Dr. Baylen's many years of service to the profession.

mysticism. Gradually he became convinced that "it was his destiny to resurrect and defend a concept of sovereignty and social justice...[in Nicaragua where]...honor had...disappeared" under the rule of self-serving Liberal and Conservative Party caudillos subservient to "yanqui imperialism."

In mid-May 1926, after three years in Mexico, Sandino responded to his fathers's requests to return home and, resigning as manager of the Huasteca Petroleum Company's petrol sales section, returned to Nicaragua via Guatemala and Honduras. But not long after his arrival, he left Niquinihomo to take employment as assistant paymaster in the American-owned San Albino gold mine in the northern mountain department of Nueva Segovia. While securing the confidence of his employers, he agitated the mine workers to seek improvements in their conditions and in the process became aware of his ability to attract a following. Emphasizing the need for social and political reform and the achievements of the Mexican Revolution in preventing the exploitation of the working class, he urged the miners to join him in the struggle to achieve social justice and political power for the dispossessed in Nicaragua. At this point, Sandino seems to have thought of establishing a popular movement independent of the recent Liberal "Constitutionalist" revolt on the east coast against the repressive regime of the Conservative Party President Emiliano Chamorro.

Utilizing what remained of the money he had saved in Mexico, Sandino purchased arms to equip a band of twenty-nine men and in October 1926 launched the Sandinista "Independent" revolution. However, the failure of his first operation against a government garrison near the San Albino mine in early November convinced Sandino that he could not succeed alone. With what remained of his band, he marched to Puerto Cabezas to offer his services to the leader of the Constitutionalists, Dr. Juan Bautista Sacasa, and his military chief, General José Maria Moncada, hoping to obtain sufficient arms to equip a strong rebel force in the mountains of northern Nicaragua. But neither Sacasa nor Moncada were impressed by the unprepossessing mestizo and his ragged band of peasants. Moncada's cavalier dismissal of Sandino with the advice that he and his men join a force being dispatched to the Segovia mountains was an affront which Sandino never forgot. Indeed, it was the beginning of a relationship between the two men which was marked by mutual suspicion and bitter hatred. "Moncada," Sandino told a friend, "will at the very first opportunity sell out to the Americans...we must save [the revolution.]"

Sandino refused to cavil and, after the United States marines forced Sacasa and Moncada out of Puerto Cabezas and dumped much of their supply of arms in the harbor, Sandino retrieved (with the help of some prostitutes --remaining in the port at the request of the marines) sufficient rifles and ammunition to increase his following. Sandino nevertheless persisted in his efforts to obtain support from the Constitutionalists, but he was appalled by "the ambition and confusion" surrounding Sacasa and by the reluctance of Sacasa and Moncada to resist American intervention in the conflict. "It was then," he later wrote, "that I realized that...[the revolution]...needed new leaders." Yet necessity required that he associate himself with the Constitutionalists against the government. When Sandino again asked Moncada for assistance,

Moncada demanded that he surrender the war material he had salvaged and return to Nueva Segovia. Fortunately, Sacasa intervened and Moncada was persuaded to accept Sandino's assistance and render a token supply of arms. With his increased following, Sandino journeyed to San Rafael del Norte in the Department of Jinotega to begin operations against government troops in that area. He had left the Constitutionalits' headquarters not only with an increased animus against Moncada, but confirmed in his dislike of Nicaragua's traditional political parties and their subservience to the United States. In this respect, Sandino was well versed in the history of his country since the beginning of the twentieth century.

It was during Sandino's school years that the Liberal Party President José Santos Zelaya offended the United States by his trouble-making among Nicaragua's neighbors and by his attempts to check American economic hegemony in Nicaragua. The result was Zelaya's ouster in 1909 by a Conservative Party revolt supported by an American marine force. Although the marines were soon withdrawn, Washington assumed control of Nicaragua's major railway and banking system in a blatant exercise of "Dollar Diplomacy." In 1912, when the Liberals rose in revolt against the conservative Party President Adolfo Díaz, he obtained the return of the marines who, following the defeat of the rebels, maintained a hundred-man "Legation Guard" in the capital. This marine garrison remained until August 1925, when it was withdrawn following the American supervised election of a bipartisan government led by the moderate conservative Carlos Solórzano as President and the Liberal politician Dr. Juan Bautista Sacasa as Vice-President. By this time, Washington's control had been strengthened not only by well secured loans, but by the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1915 which accorded to the United States the sole right to construct a second inter-oceanic canal through Nicaragua and an option for a naval base on the Gulf of Fonesca in the Pacific.

Within two months of the marines' departure, the reactionary caudillo and veteran putschist, General Emiliano Chamorro, who held the presidency during 1917-21, engineered a coup which ousted Solórzano and Sacasa and had a rump Congress declare him President. A civil war now ensued in which the American trained Nicaraguan Constabulary supported Chamorro even though Washington had refused to approve the Chamorro regime. As the fighting spread to the east (Miskito) coast ports, marines and sailors were landed at Bluefields allegedly to protect American property and were, in part, responsible for the defeats incurred by the Constitutionalist rebels in May 1926. But the civil war intensified as General Moncada assumed the offensive on behalf of his chief, Sacasa, and the war spread from east to west. As Nicaragua lapsed into disorder, Washington returned the marines and naval units to Bluefields in late August, again to protect the lives of American and foreign nationals. However, there were more compelling reasons for this American intervention; the Coolidge administration would neither accept the corrupt Chamorro nor Sacasa (who following the withdrawal of Solorzano claimed the presidency) because Sacasa was supported with arms and funds by the "left-leaning" Mexican government. As Macaulay asserts, "The United States government feared that the Mexican revolutionary virus might infect Central America and lead to...a bloc of revolutionary states directed by Mexico opposed to American

interests in the Caribbean." Indeed, for Washington, the real issue in Nicaragua was "the supremacy of the...United States in Central America." Its solution to the Nicaraguan problem was to exclude both Chamorro and Sacasa by persuading them to withdraw and by establishing a provisional government which would last until an American supervised election was held in 1928. Following the imposition of a thirty day truce on the combatants, an American sponsored conference was arranged on a U.S. Navy ship in the west coast port of Corinto on October 1, 1926. Here the Chamorrists agreed to withdraw in favor of the American choice, Adolfo Díaz, as Provisional President, and the Constitutionalists, refusing to accept Díaz, proposed a provisional government of "neutrals."

Upon the failure of the Corinto conference, Chamorro was persuaded to resign and, following the infusion of pliant Liberal deputies, the Nicaraguan Congress duly elected Díaz as Provisional President. As Washington quickly recognized the Díaz regime, Mexico acknowledged Sacasa as the legal President and facilitated his return to Nicaragua where he proclaimed himself the "constitutional" chief executive of the country with Moncada as his Minister of War. For Washington the situation became critical as Constitutionalist forces inflicted defeats on government troops and it seemed as if the Díaz government would collapse without American support.

Marines and naval units were now on the east and west coasts, the major ports were declared "neutral zones" closed to the belligerents, and a strong marine force was dispatched to Managua as a "Legation Guard." When the Constitutionalists attempted to cut the rail link between Corinto and the capital, the commander of American forces proclaimed the entire railway a neutral zone. At this point, in early March 1927, there were two thousand marines in Nicaragua under the command of Brigadier General Logan Feland. As Moncada's forces moved towards Matagalpa in central Nicaragua, it seemed as if the Americans were on a collision course with the Constitutionalists. Conflict appeared imminent when in Mid-April Feland proclaimed Matagalpa a neutral zone, even though Moncada and his chieftains, Francisco Parajón and Sandino, carefully avoided any confrontation with the marines. In fact, in their contacts with Sandino, marine officers were quite impressed by his cooperation and the strength of his force. By this time he had also earned the respect of the rebel chieftains, much to the distaste of their lider Moncada.

Since his advance into the interior during January 1927, Moncada had sought to force a decision on the Díaz government and thus enhance his ambition to replace Sacasa and to succeed Díaz as President in 1928. While Parajón captured Chinandega in the west, Moncada threatened Matagalpa, but found himself in trouble when government forces defeated Parajón and the marines declared Matagalpa a neutral zone. Then the defeat of another force under Lopez Irías left Sandino leading the only undefeated organized force in north-central Nicaragua. As Moncada now avoided Matagalpa and moved towards Managua in early April, he turned to Sandino for support. Following his capture of Jinotega, Sandino joined with Parajón and Irías in forming a force of two thousand which marched south to assist Moncada, whose movement had been checked by government troops. While welcoming Sandino, Moncada concealed that he had begun negotiations with Díaz and his American protectors. Moncada sought to get rid of Sandino by directing him to occupy a

government-held position at Boaco with assurances of support. When Sandino, finding government forces strongly entrenched, called upon Moncada for assistance, he was blandly informed that Moncada had moved on and could not help. But, in spite of his irritation with Moncada's perfidy, Sandino followed Moncada to Boaquito. Here Moncada again sought to rid himself of Sandino by ordering the Sandinistas to take El Comun. Meanwhile, Moncada and Diaz continued to negotiate with and awaited the arrival of Colonel Henry L. Stimson, a "mediator" dispatched from Washington on April 9, 1927.

By now it was quite apparent to the State Department that Díaz's troops could neither match nor completely halt Constitutionalist forces. Rather than risk an ignominious American withdrawal or warfare against the Constitutionalists, U. S. officials decided to arrange a settlement between Sacasa, Moncada, and Díaz. It was a decision also predicated on the fact that neither the U.S. Congress nor the American public approved of the Coolidge administration's interventionist policies in Central America and would not countenance a military adventure in Nicaragua. The task of settling the Nicaraguan problem was entrusted to Stimson, a prominent Republican corporation lawyer, who was the personal representative of President Coolidge in Nicaragua. Almost immediately after his arrival, Stimson secured the ever pliant Díaz's assent to (1) continue in office until after the presidential election in 1928, (2) proclaim a general amnesty with all forces surrendering their weapons to the marines, (3) include Constitutionalists in his government, (4) replace the existing Constabulary with a non-partisan Guardia Nacional trained by American personnel, and (5) accept the retention of a marine brigade in the country to enforce the agreement and to ensure an honest presidential election in November 1928.

Since Sacasa had spurned Stimson's invitation to discuss a peace plan, Stimson dealt with the more cooperative Moncada. At a meeting at Tipitapa on May 4, it was not difficult to persuade the ambitious jefe (with a hint that Washington might approve of him as Díaz's successor in 1928) to accept the agreement. Stimson ignored Sacasa (who had left for exile in Costa Rica) and acknowledged Moncada as the leader of the Constitutionalists. Moncada now proceeded to secure the acceptance of the Tipitapa Agreement by his chieftains, especially with the lure of appointments to lucrative positions in the government. To Sandino, Moncada offered the position of jefe politico in Jinotega and ample financial compensation for past services. But Sandino demurred, even to the point of defying the United States, although he did intimate that he would cooperate in restoring peace in the nation. Nevertheless, when Moncada informed Stimson of his generals' acceptance of the agreement on May 12, Sandino's name was the only one not listed in the communication.

Three days earlier, on May 9, Sandino had secured Moncada's permission to assemble and disarm his force in Jinotega, thus removing himself to a position from which he could prepare to defy Moncada and the marines. Meanwhile, Moncada, still hoping that Sandino would cooperate, did not inform Stimson that he had permitted Sandino to withdraw before disarming his force. It was not until May 12 that he denounced Sandino for reneging on the terms of the settlement. As Stimson proclaimed the end of the civil war and prepared to depart for the United States, Moncada and the marines

dispatched Don Gregorio to persuade his son to disarm. In spite of the fact that by now his force was greatly diminished, Sandino remained defiant and retreated to Yalí near the Honduran border. When he met Don Gregorio on May 23, Sandino made it clear that he deemed Moncada as great an enemy to Nicaragua as the Americans and accused Moncada of facilitating American interference in Nicaraguan affairs. For their part, Moncada and Washington officials now denounced Sandino variously as a bandit, outlaw, and Communist, especially after the Sandinistas raided his former employer's mine in late June and attacked the marine garrison at Ocotal in mid-July. Such bold moves -- and the prospect of loot -- soon attracted former soldiers and adventurers to join Sandino at his headquarters in El Chipote.

Clearly, the State Department's denunciations of Sandino as a "bandit" were part of an attempt to convince public opinion in the United States and Latin America that the objective of American intervention in Nicaragua was not to suppress a revolutionary movement, but to rescue the nation from the depredations of an outlaw. The result was that the United States was soon involved in an embarrassing guerilla war with the Sandinistas and at odds with most of Latin America. In large part, this involvement resulted from an underestimation of the strength of Sandino's resistance and the appeal of his movement. Thus American naval authorities dismissed him as a mere "adventurer" and the American Legation in Managua, while admitting in July 1927 that Sandino showed "unexpected" strength, confidently predicted that he would be quickly "annihilated." General Feland described Sandino as a dangerous "bandit" and called for an increase in the marine force to deal with the "insurgency." But neither Feland nor the State Department could convince the American press and public that Sandino was a bandit. Worse yet, in mid-October, American officials in Managua admitted that the "bandits" controlled most of northern Nicaragua, that "recent events" had increased the popularity of the Sandinista movement, and that local authorities were unwilling to "punish" the Sandinistas. Plainly, Sandino's skill in outmaneuvering the marines was the result of his adept exploitation of the rugged terrain of northern Nicaragua and information provided by a sympathetic peasantry on the movements of the marines and Guardia Nacional units.

By early 1928, the State Department was encountering severe criticism in Congress and, at the Pan-American Conference in Havana, was bitterly assailed for intervention in Nicaraguan affairs. Reclassifying Sandino as a "guerilla," Washington instructed the commander of American naval forces in Nicaragua, Admiral David F. Sellers, to persuade Sandino to accept a "peaceful settlement." But Sandino remained defiant and informed Sellers that peace could be restored only by the complete withdrawal of all American forces, the immediate replacement of Díaz by a person other than Moncada, and the supervision of the forthcoming presidential election by representatives of the Latin American republics. To further impress Sellers, the Sandinistas raided an American mine and maneuvered into positions which threatened American interests in the east coast ports.

Following the failure of Washington's overture, a "war of attrition" was launched against the Sandinistas from March until November 1928, with 5,840 marines aided by the marine-

trained (and often led) Guardia Nacional. The campaign failed as Sandino, operating in almost impassible areas and with cover provided by rural folk, not only eluded his pursuers but raided American plantations and mines. Then, with the advent of the rainy season in June and July, Sandino disappeared and with the defection of some Sandinistas, the American Legation assured the State Department that the Sandinista phenomenon was fading away. But an attack on a marine patrol during August indicated that the movement was very much alive. Indeed, by now Sandino had been able to present his case to the American people through a series of interviews with American journalists. Carleton Beals and other American and Latin American publicists portrayed him as a Robin Hood or a William Tell defending his homeland against domestic tyranny and foreign oppression.

Following the predictable election of Moncada to the presidency in November 1928, Admiral Sellers again sought to induce Sandino to cease hostilities. Again these initiatives were rejected by several encounters with the marines during January and February 1929. Nor did Sandino's absence in Mexico from February 1929 to May 1930 weaken the Sandinista movement; it continued to function under such deputies as Pedro Altamirano. Meanwhile, the new American President, Herbert Hoover, and his Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, reacted to widespread domestic and foreign criticism of the American involvement in the Nicaraguan "affair." In May 1929 they declared that the "Sandino situation" had ceased to exist and, in spite of the dissents of President Moncada and the American Legation, began to reduce marine strength in Nicaragua and announced that the maintenance of order was to be the responsibility of the Guardia. But, because of the friendly press which Sandino had achieved in the United States, it was impossible for Washington to convince the American public that the marines had suppressed the "lawless" Sandinista movement. To many Americans he was now the epitome of the little man fighting for justice and national self-determination.

The moral and material support which Sandino and his partisans evoked in Mexico, Central and South America, and the United States enabled him to renew his war against Moncada and the marines following his return to Nicaragua in June 1930. Yet he shrewdly kept clear of the Comintern's embrace. To a great extent he did so because the State Department had at first attributed Sandino's defiance to the "wild Communist ideas" which he had allegedly acquired in Mexico -- a line which inspired Latin American and North American Communist parties to support his cause. The fact that Sandino called for social and economic reform and that Sandinismo was popular with the rural and urban working class in Nicaragua strengthened the conviction of Washington and many Communists that he was indeed a Marxist. But in spite of the blandishments and exhortations of such Communist stalwarts as the Salvadorian Augustín Farabundo Marti, the Venezuelan Gustavo Machado, and his fellow-traveler brother, Sócrates, Sandino steadfastly rejected the Communists. "Neither extreme right, nor extreme left," he told his agent in Guatemala, "but the United Front is our motto." As a result, by December 1929, the Communists turned against him with the accusation that he had accepted funds from them on false pretenses and that the Americans had bribed him to leave Nicaragua. While Sandino vehemently denied the charge that he had been bribed by Washington, he averred that

accepting small sums from the Communists did not commit him to follow the Comintern line. Finally, although the Communists somewhat toned down their campaign against Sandino, they continued to allege that he had betrayed their trust. If anything, the hostility of the Communists enabled Sandino to refute Washington's assertions and to enhance his image with the American public.

Moncada and the marines did not officially acknowledge Sandino's return until mid-1930, when they admitted that the northern areas of the country were virtually controlled by the Sandinistas. But as the reduced marine force and the Guardia Nacional launched another offensive in the north, President Hoover and Stimson admitted that Sandino had the support of the Nicaraguan peasantry and that the "situation" had not improved since 1927. Moncada and American property-owners were now notified that the marines would be completely withdrawn by November 1932 because public opinion in the United States would not countenance a policy of intervention "which undermines the capacity of the Nicaraguan government to maintain law and order."

By early 1931, it was quite apparent that the offensive against the Sandinistas had failed and that the marine-trained Guardia, which had begun to assume the responsibility for terminating Sandinista "banditry," had proved unequal to the task. But although Sandino seemed stronger than ever before, he was more conciliatory. In reply to Washington's announcement of the decision to end its armed intervention in Nicaragua, Sandino proposed an armistice and pledged to cease hostilities as soon as American forces withdrew from the country. When the State Department rejected his proposal, Sandino, taking advantage of a severe earthquake in Managua and labor unrest on the east coast, threatened the east coast ports again in mid-April. Although Washington quickly dispatched naval units to protect the ports and joined Moncada in denouncing Sandino as a "cold-blooded bandit," Stimson again warned Moncada that the Guardia must assume the entire responsibility for dealing with the Sandinista "rebellion" in order to facilitate the rapid withdrawal of the marines.

As Sandino withdrew from the east coast and the marines began in April to entrust the task of "pacifying" the northern departments to the Guardia, Sandino prepared for a drive into the north-central and western parts of the country and threatened the marines' lines of communication to the port of Corinto on the Pacific. While the diminished marine force frustrated Sandino's attempt to cut the vital rail link, the American Legation was constrained to concede that the Sandinista movement had increased in strength and had "assumed a revolutionary character." Sandino's strength was even more reason for President Hoover to inform Congress in December that he would endeavor to have the marines out of Nicaragua by November 1932.

The accelerated American withdrawal and the increasing unpopularity of the Moncada regime inspired Sandino to become even more aggressive. In a well-publicized letter to Hoover, Sandino demanded the immediate departure of the marines and refused to accept American supervision of the forthcoming presidential election in 1932. In April 1932, he launched a highly publicized "victory" offensive toward the major cities in central Nicaragua; the marine-led Guardia did not halt the offensive until June. By now it was apparent that Moncada was

deliberately hindering the operations of the Guardia in an attempt to delay the departure of the marines. Indeed, the Legation was fast becoming aware of the verity of Sandino's charges that (1) Moncada was hoping to perpetuate himself in the presidency after 1932 and (2) the majority of the Liberal Party had repudiated him. Washington now began to press the Conservative and Liberal parties to seek a joint agreement with Sandino to end his "rebellion." Accordingly, on June 30, 1932, a Conservative and Liberal coalition, the Grupo Patiético, was formed to seek a political settlement with Sandino. A week later, he responded to this development with the offer to cease hostilities if a "neutral" presidential candidate was accepted by both parties and the marines were withdrawn before the presidential election on November 6. Although negotiations were stalled by the parties' refusal to accept Sandino's insistence that American supervision of the election be cancelled, he continued his contacts with the Grupo while (to emphasize his strength) carrying on his "offensive" against the Guardia during July and September. At one point he alarmed Moncada by striking at a Guardia post within twenty miles of Managua.

In early October, the Grupo finally secured both presidential candidates' acceptance of a system of proportional respresentation for "minority parties" (i.e. the Sandinistas) in the post-election government. The candidates, Sacasa and Chamorro, pledged to seek "the best solution" to Sandino's "rebellion." Meanwhile, despite the secret objections of the presidential candidates and Moncada, the United States proceeded with its plan to have the marines out of the country by not later than early January 1933. Washington was determined to terminate what was now acknowledged to be "a futile and needless business."

Sandino continued his operations throughout October and November, until the new president, Sacasa, personally persuaded him that with Moncada out of the way and the marines departing there was no reason to continue hostilities against the government. But an equally important motive was Sacasa and Sandino's mutual fear of the new (American sponsored) Jefe Director of the "non-partisan" Guardia Nacional, Moncada's kinsman, Anastasio Somoza. Indeed, hardly a month after the election, a Sandinista spokesman, Solomón de la Selva, warned that only an agreement between Sandino and President Sacasa which eliminated American influence and accomplished a drastic reorganization of the Guardia could prevent Somoza from eventually seizing power. Negotiations between Sacasa and Sandino now progressed throughout November and December until, on January 6, 1933, four days after the departure of the last marine unit, Sandino informed Sacasa that he was prepared to end his war.

Sandino's emissaries continued negotiations with Sacasa and his advisors throughout January, in spite of the opposition of Somoza and the Guardia and Sandino's insistence on the reorganization of the Guardia Nacional. Finally, on January 25, Sandino publicly declared his desire for a peaceful settlement and came to Managua on February 2 to conclude his pact with the government. Refusing any financial preferments for himself, Sandino accepted (1) a general amnesty for all Sandinistas; (2) land in the Coco River valley for the establishment of an agricultural colony; (3) the assurance of employment preference for Sandinista veterans in public works

projects; (4) the surrender of all Sandinista arms by February 23, 1933, in return for the retention (for one year) of a 100 man personal guard of "Emergency Auxiliaries"; and (5) his temporary appointment as jefe politico in San Rafael del Norte. As the 1,800 Sandinistas disarmed, Sandino told the New York Times: "I have nothing against North Americans. Let them come to Nicaragua -- as workers, not [as] bosses." Such conciliatory remarks inspired large sectors of the American press to praise Sandino as a true patriot. As Neill Macaulay remarks, "Sandino's peacemaking was applauded by almost everyone -- except the Communists who regarded it as confirmation of their earlier charges of treason against the general."

Yet all was not well for Sandino. During most of 1933, he devoted himself to the Coco River project and, while reaffirming his loyalty to and trust in President Sacasa, he began to indicate that he might stand for the presidency at the close of Sacasa's term. Then tragedy struck when, in early June, his devoted wife Blanca died while giving birth to their daughter.

Meanwhile, Sacasa was becoming ever more aware of the validity of Sandino's misgivings (also expressed by the American minister in Managua) concerning the Guardia and especially its commander, Somoza. While Sacasa suspected Somoza of plotting a coup, Sandino's fears were accentuated by Guardia assaults on members of the Coco River project. Thus in November, he conferred with the President and Somoza in Managua on his difficulties with the Guardia. These complaints seemed to have been resolved by a joint Somoza-Sandino declaration of amity and cooperation on December 5. But hardly a month later, friction again occurred when Sandino requested additional arms for his "Auxiliaries" and Somoza responded by not only opposing the request, but by demanding the complete disarmament of the Sandinistas by the end of February. Sacasa now faced a serious dilemma: if he refused Somoza's demands, he risked a Guardia coup; but if he rejected Sandino's request, he faced the danger of a Sandinista revolt and civil war. The crisis was exacerbated on January 26, 1934, when Sandino urged Sacasa to stand firm against Somoza and the "illegal" Guardia. In view of the Guardia's threat, Sandino refused to surrender his arms and munitions stores. Under pressure from Somoza, however, the President rejected Sandino's demands but requested him to return to Managua for a discussion and resolution of all outstanding differences.

Accompanied by his close advisors, Sandino came to Managua on February 16, and immediately irritated Somoza and his officers by publicly declaring that neither he nor his comrades would surrender their arms to the "illegal" Guardia Nacional. Nor was the dispute resolved when Sandino and Somoza met with the President on February 18 and Sandino continued to insist that the Guardia was "unconstitutional." By February 21, Sacasa and Sandino seem to have agreed on the necessity to "reorganize" the Guardia, much to the annoyance of Somoza and his staff. At this point, the American Minister, Arthur Bliss Lane, attempted to restrain Somoza, who had decided to liquidate Sandino and his lieutenants and end the Sandinista movement. Despite a promise to Lane not to act without prior consultation with him, Somoza told his staff that Lane had assured him that Washington desired and recommended the "elimination" of Sandino.

Somoza and his officers hurriedly developed plans to arrest Sandino, his entourage, and other important Sandinistas in the capital during the night of February 21, and to execute Sandino and his major lieutenants in American gangland style. As Sandino and Generals Francisco Estrada and Juan Pablo Umanzor left the presidential palace at 10:00 p.m., they were seized by Guardia personnel, and driven in a lorry to the Managua airfield (where they were joined by Sócrates Sandino). In the glare of the lorry's headlights the four men were dispatched by machine gun fire.

Sandino's demise augured the end of Sacasa's regime; within two years Somoza and the Guardia deposed Sacasa and began the long reign (1936-79) of the Somoza dynasty. As Macaulay states, although the United States was not directly involved in the assassination of Sandino, it provided "the murder weapon -- the American-trained and equipped National Guard." Sandino died, but his spirit lived on to triumph over the dynasty of his nemesis and to haunt his North American adversary.

For Further Reading: By far the best study of Sandino is Neill Macaulay's well-balanced and highly informative The Sandino Affair (Chicago, 1967). Other works on his life and career include the pioneer work of Lejeune Cummins, Quijote on a Burro: Sandino and the Marines...(Mexico, D.F., 1958); Gregorio Selser's Sandino, General de Hombres Libres (Buenos Aires, 1959), 2 vols., and his more recent articles: "Augusto C. Sandino, cincuenta años después, sigue vivo," Cuarderno Americana, 252 (Jan./Feb. 1984), and "Augusto C. Sandino, su vigencia cincuenta años después," ibid., 253 (Mar./Apr. 1981); G. Alemán Bolaños' partisan Sandino, el Liberatador (Mexico, D.F., 1952); Ramón Romero, Somoza, asesino de Sandino (Mexico, D.F., 1960); Sofonías Salvatierra, Sandino, o la tragedia un pueblo (Madrid, 1934); Anastasio Somoza's ghost-written apologia, El verdadero Sandino...(Managua, 1936); and J. O. Baylen's "Sandino: Patriot or Bandit?" Hispanic American Historical Review, 31 (Aug. 1951); "Sandino: Death and Aftermath," Mid-America, 36 (April 1954); and "American Intervention in Nicaragua, 1909-33: an Appraisal of Objectives and Results," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, 35 (Sept. 1954). An interesting example of the Soviet effort to rehabilitate and re-adopt Sandino is Semen A. Gonionsky's Sandino (Moscow, 1965).