Matias Señorán Villalba
The Role of Nicaraguan Protest Music in the Insurrection of 1979
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Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to my family who encouraged me to undertake this adventure. Also I would like to express my appreciation to Wan Ting Chiang for always being caring and supportive, no matter what. Furthermore, I would also want to thank everyone at the Centre of Cultural Studies, especially Dr. Oliver Bennett for his permanent support and advice.

The present project couldn’t have been done without the openness and invaluable support of the ex-combatants at the Fundación de Veteranos de Guerra del Servicio Militar Patriótico (Foundation of War Veterans of the Patriotic Military Service). A special thanks to Jorge Gaitán and Ramón de Jesús López García for their commitment.

Carlos Mejia Godoy, Luis Enrique Mejia Godoy, Francisco Cedeño (father and son), Augusto Mejía and the Mejia Godoy Foundation thank you for the time, patience, talent and dedication.

Special thanks to Laura Dickens, Cat Turhan, Issac Leigh and Rob Ankcorn for their energy and wisdom.

This work is entirely dedicated to Alice, my mother. She knows why, wherever she is.
Introduction

The objective of this paper is to study the impact of ‘revolutionary’ songs on the Nicaraguan insurrectionist process in the 70’s and analyze both their role and their influence in the struggle. I will seek to explore how these musical works developed over the years of social agitation, what inspired them, what they sought to communicate and how they influenced the people. While it is true that the central period under analysis is the end of the 70’s when the insurrectionist process was already underway, the first part of this investigation will make reference to historical events of previous decades so as to better understand how things came to be the way they were, and if the symbolic aspects promoted by the songs (and indeed the songs themselves) would have a certain degree of influence upon the people.

This work is divided into three parts as detailed below. The first chapter reviews various historic events which began with Somoza García taking the power, which occurred in parallel with the struggle of General Sandino. The latter was a protagonist in Nicaraguan history due to being the figure who somehow came to crystalize a symbol of armed struggle over the years. Progressively, the path towards the insurrection of ‘79 wound its way over forty-three years of the dictatorial Somoza regime, with different forces arising in response to this, both political and social, but also artistic in nature. This chapter summarizes that process and identifies the first social players appearing as a consequence of it, such as the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista Front for National Liberation, FSLN), and how these identified the need to persuade the people and generate social consciousness as a central element if there was to be a chance of victory in the struggle against Somoza.

The second chapter focuses on how the songs appear to play a relevant role in the development of insurrectional events and what messages they communicated to contribute to the generation of social consciousness. Together with the composers, I analyze the lyrics of a selection of songs in an effort to understand how these illustrate part of the social context at the same time as
generating reactions in the people. I also seek to demonstrate the evolution of the lyrics which seem to increase their critical tone and intensity in parallel with the events and the progress of the struggle. It is shown how they responded to a need to develop from at first being descriptive to becoming protest songs at a second stage, to finally directly call on the people to participate in the armed struggle. For this reason, the songs were -in a way- the first narrators of the modern history, as singer-songwriter Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy was to describe; “In Nicaragua, history was first sung and then told.”¹

The third chapter analyzes the results of a survey which I conducted in Managua, Nicaragua, with the objective of identifying the possible impact of the songs at the end of the 70’s and what perceptions these may have generated for different protagonists in the insurrection. To this purpose, I performed a survey of 37 people who directly participated in the uprising, seeking to analyze aspects such as the ‘importance’ and ‘influence’ of the songs upon it, as well as the weight these had in generating social consciousness and motivation for the incorporation of volunteers into the movement.

A large part of the literature as well as investigations made with regards to the Sandinista insurrectional process mainly focus on historic, political and social analysis of events without exploring in depth the functions of protest music in it. The approach taken in this paper is to investigate the role played by the ‘protest’ or ‘revolutionary’ song and its influence in the overthrowing of Somoza. This could shed new light on discussion of how the insurrectional processes were constructed and which components served to mobilize the people, which in this case could have been something greater than strictly ideological factors, as I will explore in chapter two.

The analysis made focuses mainly on the songs of the brothers Carlos and Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, considered key figures to the music of the period and the main force behind revolutionary

¹ See transcription of the interview with Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy in Appendix 2
Nicaraguan music. Of their vast musical output, I will elaborate on the material released between 1970 and 1979, with a more detailed analysis in particular made of the album ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar). This album has the peculiarity of acting as a type of sung military instruction manual which taught people how to use the different types of guns as well as, among other things, providing a ‘sung formula’ for the preparation of homemade explosives. I chose this work as I considered that it might best represent the intensity of those years and because it includes some of the most remembered songs of the period. Similarly, it is a highly illustrative sample of the type of broadcasts made by the Sandinista vanguard through the clandestine Radio Sandino, one of the means of communication deemed fundamental to the process.²

Research questions

The main aspect I will study in this paper is the role and impact that the protest songs may have had in the process towards and during the insurrection of 1979. I will attempt to expose elements which permit a better understanding of the question: ‘To what extent did the “songs of the revolution” influence the people towards the “final offensive” against Somoza?’ The exploration of this question is made in Chapter 3, together with the results of the survey made to understand issues such as the importance, influence and kind of impact generated by the songs on those who participated in the uprising.

In chapter 2, I undertake a discussion of the question: ‘What were the messages conveyed by the lyrics of the songs and what were their objectives?’ In this part of the work, I analyze what I consider to be some of the more representative musical works as previously mentioned. In the interests of increased understanding, examination is made of the background context and the way in which the songs acted as a parallel mechanism accompanying events potentially contributing towards their transformation. I also explore in depth some of the aspects referred to the discourse

chosen by the artists which is built through Nicaraguan popular sayings, clear references to the national traditions and rural slang in order to sensitize the people.

Similarly, I consider it relevant to grasp the origins of the songs within the situation of the imperative need to generate social consciousness with increasingly persuasive messages as was proposed by the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN) and which I will mention later in this paper. Were these lyrics part of a policy and a planned strategy, or were they just the reflections of the peoples' sentiments which inspired the artists? With regards to this question, it is remarkable that the songs followed a path of complete independence and creative freedom, never being obliged to conform to the needs of the vanguard. Nonetheless, without being part of any strategic effort, they apparently came to make a ‘strategic’ contribution to the insurrection in the vanguard’s favor. This aspect is also analyzed in Chapter 2, and further developed in Chapter 3 through the declarations of Sandinista ex-combatants including one of the organization’s leading strategists.

**Methodology**

In order to better explore the impact of the songs and the role they played during the process of the insurrection the methodological approach of this paper is a mixed one which can be divided into three parts. The first has to do with the use of a base bibliography of publications presenting historical facts as well as different interpretations of these events. There exist almost no significant allusions in this bibliography to the central theme of this work in relation to the music, and therefore I will also make reference to some articles and brief essays on Latin American music to provide general details. The second methodological element is that of three interviews held with the most representative musicians of that time, these being Carlos Mejía Godoy, Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy and Francisco Cedeño of the band *Grupo Pancasán*. The weight and relevance of these artists in referring to this issue provides invaluable information for the purposes of this investigation, helping to understand what the encoded messages were, the intentions and the objectives of each of the songs from that time. The third element is a survey. To this end, I conducted 37 short interviews,
utilizing a root questionnaire, with Nicaraguans who participated in the insurrectional process, whether having undertaken military roles or other roles in society. From these, 27 were ex-combatants at different times of the insurrectional process, reason for which I consider them to represent another primary source of first-hand information. Their stories permit a better comprehension of how the songs were able to take root, what they felt and what the real role played by the music was in terms of factors such as the generation of social consciousness, a sense of belonging, motivation and the idea of national sovereignty. The remaining interviewees came from different sectors of civil society who participated in events on a non-military basis, as members of families, from various types of organizations, from rural areas or from private businesses.
Chapter 1

Brief history of the Somoza ‘Dynasty’

The first chapter of this work will attempt to summarize aspects of Nicaraguan political history around the ‘Somoza Dynasty’, a family which held power in the country for more than 43 years. From 1936 to July 17, 1979, it can be said that Nicaragua ‘belonged’ to Anastasio Somoza García, his children and his circle of relations and collaborators\(^3\). The creator of this dynasty, Anastasio emerged as a young General after the Presidency of José Santos Zelaya. He attempted to build an interoceanic canal with the assistance of Japan and Germany, and the geopolitical self-interest of the United States led this country to support a coup d’état against Zelaya\(^4\). This generated an environment of instability, and in an attempt to resolve the crisis in its favour, the American government sent a representative to Nicaragua who would assist Somoza by acting as a translator thanks to his bilingual academic education.

Augusto C. Sandino, at the same time, was a promising young man who had joined the *Ejército Liberal Constitucionalista* (Liberal Constitutionalist Army) and who was opposed to negotiations with the United States. Sandino, fearful that his troops would be economically tempted by the Americans, headed with 29 rebels for the mountains in the North. From there, he announced his decision to reject any peace agreements and stated that he would fight for what he believed was correct for Nicaraguan sovereignty.\(^5\) This meant facing the American Marines. For 5 years as of 1928, the Marines and the National Guard (trained by the Americans) attempted to hunt down Sandino. Over the course of time and confrontations, the figure of Sandino grew in popularity, winning over national and international admiration thanks to the support of the journalist Froilán Turcios\(^6\).

\(^3\) Christian, S.: *La Revolución en la Familia* [The Revolution in the family], (Barcelona: Planeta, 1985), p.31
\(^5\) *Ibid*, 3, p.17
\(^6\) *Ibid*, p.20
American intervention grew unpopular and forced the reduction of the presence of the Marines in the face of the 1932 elections which were won by Juan Bautista Sacasa under US supervision. Somoza, who by this time had already held the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs, took on the role of Director-in-Chief of the National Guard with the support of the USA and the President. Meanwhile, Sandino questioned the constitutionality of the new force due the enormous influence imposed on this by the American government, who not only trained it but also financed it. From the dawn of February 21, 1934, General Somoza García, now the Chief of the National Guard, consolidated his command of real power after soldiers under his orders assassinated General Sandino in an ambush after a dinner in the Presidential Palace.

Two years after the execution of Sandino, General Somoza García was to make a new coup d’état, this time against President Sacasa, thus initiating a long dictatorship which was to last almost half a century, first under his command, then under that of his son Luis, and finally that of his younger son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle. Electoral frauds, coup d’états, ‘puppet’ Presidents imposed by themselves, pacts with the opposition, and a savage repression of all those opposing any form of the tyranny were the ‘mechanisms’ used to perpetuate the regime. During this period (from 1924 to 1979), ten general elections took place, always far from what could be considered democratic. Somoza García was assassinated during a party in a suicide attack carried out by the young poet Rigoberto López Pérez. The succession plan was that Luis Somoza should take control of the national government and Anastasio, the youngest Somoza, was to take control of the National Guard, the historical instrument of Somoza regime’s repression. Luis complied with his promise to be President for only one term and later pushed the rise of a candidate (René Schick) whom the general public classified as a ‘puppet’ and, the election, a farce. Luis Somoza was to die of a heart attack in 1967 leaving the field clear for his brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the youngest of the saga, who was to assume control of a country submerged in crisis and repression.

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8 Cardenal, F.: *Junto a mi pueblo, o con su revolución* [Together with my or it’s Revolution], (Madrid: Trotta,2009), p.33
9 Ibid.
10 Martí i Puig, S.: *La Revolución Enredada* [The Tangled Revolution], (Barcelona: Libros de la Catarata, 2012), p.38
11 Ferrero Blanco; *La Nicaragua de los Somoza 1936-1979* [The Nicaragua of the Somoza 1936-1979], (Universidad de Huelva, 2010), p.105
with a dictatorship consolidated over the years together with a close alliance with the United States as its main sponsor\textsuperscript{12}.

**The path to Insurrection**

There most certainly existed a wide variety of elements which lead to the Nicaraguan insurrection in 1979. Nevertheless, two of these general aspects are particularly emphasized by various theorists in the bibliography consulted. On the one hand, the conditions in the country after more than 25 years (by that time) of dictatorship where poverty and inequality which made a dramatic situation of emergency rarely seen in the world. In the article ‘Hora Cero’ (‘Zero Hour’) written by Carlos Fonseca, one of the founders of the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN), he explained some of the reasons why power had to be taken by force in search of the change urgently necessary to the country. Among other things, Fonseca detailed some descriptive indexes of Nicaraguan reality at that time\textsuperscript{13}:

- Only 1.1% of the Nicaraguan population had completed primary school
- Illiteracy affected more than 50% of the population
- In poor neighborhoods 1/3 of all children died before age one
- 50% of the deaths in the country occurred among persons under 14 years of age
- Life expectancy was only 50 years of age
- 80% of the population of the capital Managua lacked running water
- Only 10% of houses had decent roofs
- Half the sick received no medical care at all
- 6 out of 10 deaths were caused by infectious (but curable) diseases
- 9.28% of population reacted positively to tests for Malaria, while in Costa Rica (the neighboring

\textsuperscript{12} Christian op. cit., p.32
\textsuperscript{13} Marcus, B.; *Saninistas Speak: Speeches, Writings, and Interviews with Leaders of Nicaragua's Revolution*, (USA: Pathfinder, 2013), pp.9-29
country) this figure was 0.96%.

- 50% of all farmland was owned by less than 2% of the landowners

On the other hand, in the historical context, the triumph of Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution in 1959 acted as a great inspiration to Marxist-Leninist sectors in the Central American and Caribbean region, above all for countries under dictatorships such as that of Somoza. The Nicaraguan people saw and felt that revolution was a realizable dream. In 1961, a group of young intellectuals sympathetic to this ideology founded the Sandinista National Liberation Front, the FSLN, invoking the patriotic, symbolic, and even ‘mythological’ figure of General Sandino. Motivated by the Cuban experience, they proposed the initiation of armed political actions through guerilla groups in the rural areas of the country with the objective of raising consciousness and persuading the people, giving them hope and optimism in the face of the dictatorship, to later win power, assuming a class struggle as the central axis of their actions. Maybe ‘hope’ and ‘optimism’ as “positive expectation” and “a mode of viewing the future”, respectively, in Bennett’s terms.17

Once the FSLN was formed, its guerilla activity and popular consciousness-raising actions sought to generate influence through political education of the people as well as popular agitation. At that time there were also other aspects that are generally less studied, according to the literature reviewed for this work, such as the protest or revolutionary music, which I will focus in the coming chapters. Apparently, this type of music played a major role in building consciousness and persuading the people to participate in the insurrection to the extent that it was considered a weapon during the whole process.

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14 Christian, op. cit., p.34
16 Ortega, op. cit., p.57
For the majority of its history, the Sandinista guerilla force was composed of small groups of no more than 15 to 20 youths each operating in the mountains. From the beginnings of the struggle, the National Guard held the greater firepower, a more experienced army and financial support from the American government. However, through visible guerilla interventions, consciousness-raising work and the increasing popularity of the Sandinistas, a compelling “mythology” referring to the action in the Northern mountains began to be generated. The so-called ‘mountain mysticism’ was invoked, as described by Commander Omar Cabezas in his guerilla autobiography:

“[...] I went up there with the idea that the mountain was power, because there was the myth of the mountain comrades, of mystery, the unknown, Commander Modesto, up there above… And in the city those undercover and the legal spoke about the mountain as something mythical, where the force was and even arms, the best men, indestructability”.

The mountain began to represent a realizable dream, the path to defeating Somoza and his powerful National Guard. This motivated young people from different social classes to join up as volunteers to the Sandinista vanguard and enable participation from Nicaraguans all over the nation. But which were the elements that helped to shape the mysticism and engage participation? Which aspects generated optimism and hope in the ‘masses’? Were they contextual, political, social or ‘cultural’? Is it possible to determine? Following I will analyze and connect various of these aspects bringing new angles of discussion that could help better understand some of the main forces intervening upon the people during this process.

As proposed by Commander Carlos Fonseca, the generation of class consciousness should be promoted through different methods of persuasion and indoctrination. In this sense, before joining the command forces, the aspiring guerillas learned “to love those who had nothing and accept the commitment to renounce everything to give themselves over to the struggle whose most urgent
objective was the taking of power with the popular classes, under Marxist terms”, as written by Sergio Ramírez19. In order to achieve this, the construction of consciousness, which would be considered ‘class consciousness’, but also that of ‘nationalism’ and ‘national sovereignty’, became somewhat pivotal. What was doing the FSLN to attain this? Was it enough in a context where the media was completely controlled by Somoza?

Since its power was not the military, the vanguard had the necessity to raise ‘other forces’ such as effective means of persuasion and communication. In the midst of the guerilla actions, which were characterized by being largely undertaken by commands small in number, the FSLN published what it called The Historic Program of the FSLN 1969, emphasizing one aspect: “to inspire and stimulate the people of Nicaragua to march forward with the resolve to fight until the dictatorship is overthrown and to resist the intervention of Yankee imperialism, in order to forge a free, prosperous, and revolutionary homeland”20. The Sandinista movement was beginning to be considered a decisive factor for development and progress21. In this text, the FSLN additionally summarized the type of government, as well as the areas of action, which it proposed implementing in Nicaragua after taking power, achievable through popular insurrection22.

**Convincing the people to insurrection**

“Our insurrectional strategy was centered on the masses not on military considerations”, declared Humberto Ortega, one of the Sandinista Generals and strategist23. Along these lines, Debray argued that “the guerilla struggle should either depend on the support of the masses or disappear”24. Both theses proposed a ‘working of the masses’ where the objective was to convince

19 Ramírez, S.; Adiós Muchachos [Farewell, Fellas], (Madrid: Santillana Ediciones, 2011), p.60
20 FSLN: ‘The Historic Program of the FSLN (1969)’ http://www.pathfinderpress.com/core/media/media.nl?id=15173&c=ACCT136348&h=db7095d92bf092a22b4e
22 Marcus, op. cit., p.14
23 Ibid., p.95
the people of their ‘good reasons’ through speeches, messages, and explanations in order to convert the struggle into “the people’s war”. The Sandinistas proposed a creative combination of all forms of struggle in the country, the city, in towns, neighborhoods and in the mountains, based on the notion that mass movement was the central point of the struggle. This made sense given the disparity between the correlation of forces between the Sandinistas and Somoza. The context appeared to demand the necessity of new ‘voices’ and ‘fresh’ messages in order to favour the process towards the final offensive. At that moment some songwriters that had begun to emerge in the late sixties, progressively seemed to acquire a significance never seen in the country's history. The protest song seemed to become a relevant mechanism, of which I will address below.

The events which began to occur as of the second half of 1977, as well as the troubled 1978, can be understood as the definitive path to the insurrection, which began to materialise progressively. The Sandinistas demonstrated that it was possible to think about general insurrection and their growing popularity permitted them greater support from the different sectors of the country as well as more international.25 The FSLN showed itself to be a revolutionary group in the process of reaching its goals and the success of some of its operations motivated the people, increased international backing and lead strategically towards the final offensive. Additionally, by the end of that year, pushed by international and media pressure, the American government under the administration of President Carter suspended support to Somoza, leaving him without his main ally and considerably weakened26. The general insurrection was on and the Sandinista guerilla attacks continued intensifying throughout the first months of 1979 at the same time that an intricate phase of negotiations was entered into to determine how the transfer of power would be carried out from the now totally decimated Somoza regime. As Ramírez declared: “the struggle was taking new, daring and novel paths”27.

25 Cardenal, op. cit., p.186
27 Ramírez, op. cit., p.11
Over the years of guerilla actions, the movement had learned that the commands were not enough to defeat the National Guard. The guerilla had to support the people in its insurrectional struggle rather than the other way around. For this reason, the challenge was to convince the ‘masses’ to participate actively in the struggle, generating consciousness as to the reasons behind this fight. “There was a need for riper political conditions and there was a need for more agitation, for better means of propaganda, such as a clandestine radio station”, argued Ortega. Radio Sandino played a vital role in the persuasion of the people through the emission of news and the revolutionary songs of the Mejía Godoy brothers. As Ortega explained: “[...] without the Radio it would have been impossible to win the war”. The following chapters will discuss the revolutionary music broadcasted through the radio and its probable effects on the people. Having taken into account that more than 50% of the population was illiterate and that most of the means of communication were taken by Somoza, was music an effective tool to build popular consciousness and enable participation? Can we consider this music part of the Sandinistas’ strategy? Why is the music of this period described as ‘a weapon’ within the country? 

On May 29, 1979, Radio Sandino called for the general insurrection giving rise to the activation of attacks and uprisings on the four fronts of the country. “With these attacks occurring in so many places at the same time, each of the commands needed reinforcements which we simply did not have. The only troops available were those still in basic training. From a military point of view, it was not possible to maneuver,” Anastasio Somoza was to declare some years afterwards. The popular insurrection finally triumphed on July 17, with Somoza and his circle quitting the country.

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28 Marcus, op. cit, 95
29 Ibid, p.89
31 Ibid 27, p.249
32 Cox, J., Somoza Debayle, A.; Nicaragua Traicionada [Nicaragua Betrayed], (Indiana: Western Islands, 1980), pp.226-229
Chapter 2

The Construction of a ‘Cultural’ Consciousness?

Carlos Fonseca, one of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN)’s intellectual ideologists wrote about how the ideological obscurantism inherited from colonial times had continued influence, preventing the Nicaraguan people from taking up the struggle for social change with “full consciousness”. According to Fonseca, the people struggled more as a matter of instinct than of consciousness. It is possible that due to this, part of the historical conditions necessary for the Sandinista ‘revolutionary’ process was the construction of consciousness in the people as mentioned in the previous chapter. But what kind of consciousness should be built up for such a process? Was this successfully established in Nicaragua in the face of the uprising? If so, how can this consciousness be described? Is this even possible? We are probably facing a profoundly philosophical crossroads which is impossible to conclusively demonstrate. However, in what follows I will review some aspects which can contribute to the development of this discussion.

Jean Pierre Reed has described the Sandinista movement as “the continuity of an ‘historical thread’” which acted as a formative agent and a transmitter of notions of national sovereignty, commitment to the people, common culture and a sense of belonging to the struggle for a generation of young people who grew up under the system of a dynastic dictatorship lasting for several decades. Along the same line, Reed believed that the majority of the participants in the movement were capable of transforming their political-social reality not through Marxist ideology but rather “through the radical use of pre-existing idiomatic currencies, with Christian idioms and folkloric Sandinismo as the central vocabularies that helped embody revolutionary subjecthoods.”

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33 Marcus, op. cit, p.38
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid 34, p.235
This brings Reed to challenge the notion that revolutionary mobilizations are ‘ideological’ by nature, taking up the study of the disruptive potential of ‘culture’ in the Nicaraguan process. He asserts that while it is true that the Sandinista vanguard was capable of channeling insurrectionist energy towards its objective in 1979, this did not occur through purely ‘ideological’ processes.\textsuperscript{37} For him, ‘ideological’ refers to a consciousness basically founded on socio-political realities such as those represented in manifestos of political parties, pamphlets or theses which postulate a path with generally structured objectives. That is to say, a model through which revolutionary vanguards attempt to have the collective consciousness adhere to their ‘ideological’ beliefs and so lead the people towards their objective. On the other hand, ‘cultural’ consciousness has a broader significance. It represents “structures of feeling” where the experiences of everyday life provide social meaning, where the group shares understanding, conventions and a way of life\textsuperscript{38}. Elements such as ‘common culture’, ‘feeling of belonging’, ‘sense of national sovereignty’ in practical and contextual terms and which can be found in the musical compositions of the period. Specially in the work of the brothers Carlos and Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy.

\textbf{A ‘descriptive’ approach of the protest songs}

Carlos and Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy are pointed out to be the key figures of the socially committed song or “new song” movement.\textsuperscript{39} “That historical period bears the mark of their song,” wrote the Nicaraguan journalist Guillermo Rothschuh\textsuperscript{40}, and the poet Julio Valle declared that “Carlos Mejía doesn’t sing for the people but rather the people sing through him and with him.”\textsuperscript{41} For practical and methodological reasons, I will focus primarily on the work of these artists, with a central emphasis on the songs from the album ‘\textit{Guitarra Armada}’ (Loaded Guitar), released in March, 1979. However, before coming to this, it is essential to make a brief mention of some of the prior compositions which appeared throughout the time leading up to the final offensive. In this

\textsuperscript{37} Scruggs, op. cit., p.235
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid} 37, p.240
\textsuperscript{40} Rothschuh, G., El Son nuestro de cada día [Our Everyday ‘Son’], El Confidencial, 4/5/2008
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid} 37, p.51
sense, the songs carried the mark of each epoc in which they were composed, with their language and tone being adjusted in accordance with the progress of the struggle.

The Mejía Godoy brothers described the images of the country and the rural landscape of their hometown, Somoto, in Nicaragua’s north, as part of their initial inspiration. Their first songs written at the end of the 60’s and the start of the 70’s responded to their context, maintaining a mainly descriptive character. Carlos Mejía told how their music at first drew on European influences, such as that of the German coffee producers as well as some immigrants from Mexico and the USA. The result was a mixture of polka, mazurka and waltz.42 “I am nourished by the lifeblood of the people,” he reflected, adding, “we would never have gone into social music if we first hadn’t fallen in love with our homeland.”43 For this reason, the lyrics and sound of the songs of that period are filled with imagery and stories from this context, as can be appreciated in ‘Alforja Campesina’ (Campesino Saddlebag)44:

“Proletarian campesino saddlebags
smelling of wheat grain and streams
I love you for being daughter to my hard work
and little sister to the pumpkin harvest”

Mejía explained that putting the spotlight on this type of folklore was a way of reaffirming Nicaraguan ‘cultural’ identity. This is a song with a very clear aesthetic when it comes to describing what that context was like although Luis Enrique Mejía described these lyrics as “the first protest songs, similar to those of other Latin American singers, but maintaining a descriptive tone.”45 Along the same lines, Carlos Mejía stated that these compositions “did not tell you what to do with that reality, but they presented it to you, they put it in front of you, and that was already something

42 See transcription of the interview with Carlos Mejía Godoy in Appendix 1
43 Ibid.
45 See transcription of the interview with Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy in Appendix 2
important.” Later songs written and presented at the beginning of the 70’s progressively included more ‘direct’ and provocative elements, as can be seen in the poem turned song called ‘Primero de enero’ (First of January), written by Luis Enrique Mejía:

“The boss goes into mass
disguised as a lamb
He beats his breast
but that leather is so tough”

This is where more literal protest arguments begin to be seen, highlighting class differences and the figure of a boss who goes to mass ‘disguised as a lamb’, illustrating this figure very graphically and critically for the understanding of both for the rural and the urban Nicaraguan. In the context of an illiteracy rate of more than 50%, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the songs probably started to contribute to the construction of a social consciousness, need which was pointed out by Carlos Fonseca in order to achieve a victorious insurrection. In that sense, for Luis Enrique it is not possible to begin a revolutionary process or one of social change without first building up social consciousness: “Until the people are no longer ignorant and know who they are, where they come from and where they want to go; there can be no revolution or even struggle.”

In 1975 a group of religious activists asked Carlos Mejía to write a new type of mass directed at the campesinos given “the existence of a need to create an anthem identifying them as a class,” according to the priest Fernando Cardenal. Mejía, together with other musicians, wrote one of his masterworks, The ‘Misa Campesina Nicaragüense’ (Nicaraguan Campesino Mass), inspired by Liberation Theology in search of continuing to create social consciousness. Due to limitations of space, I will not explore this work in greater depth although it is certainly worth at least a mention. The ‘Misa Campesina Nicaragüense’ speaks of a Christ figure born in the rural areas of the

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46 Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 1
48 Ibid 47
49 Cardenal, op. cit., p.109
50 Scruggs, op. cit., p.62
country, closely identified with the local campesino who proposes participation in an armed struggle as guerillas which can be appreciated in these verses from ‘El Cristo de Palacagüina’ (The Christ from Palacagüina), one of the songs included in this ‘mass’:\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{quote}
Christ is here and now, born in Palacagüina!
To a fellow named Joseph
and a village-girl named Mary

Mary dreams that the child,
like his father, will go into woodcraft;
but already the little one’s thinking:
“Tomorrow I’ll fight with the guerrilla!”
\end{quote}

As can be seen, the compositions increasingly developed a greater tone of protest, invoking issues of even more depth and complexity. As it was expected, works such as this also generated censorship of all kinds, no longer just that of the Somoza regime but also the criticism of various sectors of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{52} It is worth mentioning that the protest messages which arose from all these songs and which seemed to progressively help to construct a collective consciousness were not proposed by an ‘ideological’ vanguard. During the interviews the musicians sought to make it clear that their creative processes and their messages were always independent, never being linked to any institution nor being guided by anyone. Their work was a spontaneous process which arose from the very nucleus of society “like a need to bring out what we have inside ourselves”, as Carlos Mejía was to describe it.\textsuperscript{53} For that matter, these songs were not conceived as part of a strategy, although they seemed to progressively support and, thus, influence the development of an insurrectionist process through the spreading of all sorts of ‘revolutionary’ messages in a completely novel way.

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\textsuperscript{51} Carlos Mejía Godoy, The Nicaraguan Peasant’s Mass, 1979, CBS
\textsuperscript{52} Ureña, J.C.; ‘The Mockingbird Still Calls for Arlen’, Song and Social Change in Latin America, (United Kingdom: Edited by Lauren Shaw, Lexington Books, 2013), p.54
\textsuperscript{53} Carlos Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 1
\end{flushright}
While it is true that their ideas largely coincided with what the Sandinistas proposed, the messages included in the songs result from the artistry of the authors, or, as Carlos Mejía Godoy would say, they are a ‘cultural’ phenomenon: “All that influence, which I am not going to call ideological but rather cultural, seeps into your pores. Like when you read in the newspapers that the campesinos in the banana plantations are rising up in protest, when you speak to people and you begin to read the first social novels. […] a series of things that start to give form to the song.” As suggested by these artists, their music and lyrics were inspired by the context and the feelings provoked by it, as Luis Enrique Mejía summarized in paraphrasing Carlos Fonseca: “If he said that the Sandinista Front was born first out of shame and then out of consciousness, we say that the revolutionary Nicaraguan song was born first out of shame and then out of consciousness.” Aligned with this, the songwriter added that “at the same time that we were writing songs with a profoundly social content, already with a social commitment and which say ‘guerilla’, ‘guerilla warrior’, ‘abuse’ and ‘torture’, we were also creating love songs, lyrics about characters, more from the need to talk about important elements in popular culture than for pleasure.”

Carlos Mejía pointed that the context made it progressively necessary to go further than the descriptive form of their lyrics in order to contribute to the build up of a social consciousness in the face of an eventual uprising. To a certain extent, the descriptive was no longer enough and it became imperative to ask new questions and begin to include elements of what was to be done because, as he argues, “it is very nice to talk about campesino saddlebags, carts, and huts. But what happens inside the hut? What happens in that reality? What is that campesino like? Who pays him? How does he dress? Do his children go to school? What is going on?” From this point the protagonists of the ‘musical vanguard’ began to realize that, through their song, they were playing a central role in the armed struggle, forming part of the movement which generated an effect upwards from the grassroots of society.

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54 Ibid 53
55 Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 2
56 Ibid
57 Ibid 53
“Guitars also shoot”

As of 1974, a series of high-impact guerilla actions were developed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, giving the Sandinista Front greater public recognition at every level. This increase in intensity of action also began to be reflected in the musical compositions and lyrics of the time. In this context, Luis Enrique Mejía wrote ‘La Venancia’⁵⁸, a song dedicated to a campesino woman who also acts as a messenger for the guerillas:

“Be careful Venancia,
if they catch you they’ll torture you
and they’ll leave
on your mother’s cotton dress
the mark of the commander”

Their first direct accusations against the National Guard of raping, killing and torturing campesino women appear in this song, together with other compositions which seek to reflect an ever more violent and conflicted reality, as Carlos Mejía described: “at that time I start to go to the university, I participate in political rallies, I listen to Carlos Fonseca and I see 20 year old guerillas die. How could my songs not take on a new path?”⁵⁹ Around 1976, Nicaraguan protest music transformed into a channel for the making of denouncements and social agitation. It successfully incorporated ‘Nicaraguan language’ from the very essence of its popular culture and it ceased to be a simply descriptive music to become totally combative. Francisco Cedeño, who fought as a guerilla as well as a songwriter for Grupo Pancásán, defined the songs of that period as “one of the ‘triggers’ of popular rage against Somoza, motivating the people to join the armed struggle.”⁶⁰ Tomás Borge, the intellectual and Sandinista commander, referred to this as ‘cultural activism’, claiming that the triumph of the insurrection “was made with guitars and poems, and with bullets”.

⁵⁸ Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, Canto Para Mi Pueblo en Lucha [Songs For My People in Struggle], San Francisco CA, 1978
⁵⁹ Carlos Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 1
⁶⁰ See transcription of the interview with Francisco Cedeño in Appendix 3
In the course of 1978 the Somoza regime began to fall apart with public uprisings developing with greater intensity at the same time the Mejia brothers’ music was becoming a ‘war cry’. In this period the songs which would later make up the album ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar), represented the most combative and literal musical work in Nicaraguan history. Through these songs, the Mejia Brothers emitted brief military instructions together with evocative verse inspired by the guerilla struggle. By this time, the final uprising was “unstoppable” and these songs tied in with the movement and seemed to pushed it ahead, providing tactical information to facilitate popular participation. “For me, the songs from ‘Guitarra Armada’ are the songs of the insurrection. That is the essence. We had already been through the social song, the guerilla song, the heroic song, but these songs say ‘…everyone, take up arms!’”, reflected Luis Enrique Mejía.

“[…]The inspiration for the name of that album arose when Gaspar García, a priest and guerilla paid homage to in the songs, said to me: ‘Don’t stop playing because the guitar also shoots.’

One of the peculiarities of these songs is the didactic information they provide using Nicaraguan street slang to explain how to load, disarm and shoot different types of weapons, how to prepare homemade explosives and differentiate between the different kind of ammunition that was available. This could be interpreted as a response to the massive popular uprising which saw large quantities of people leaving their houses to fight with machetes, picks, shovels, homemade bombs and weapons stolen from the National Guard, with only basic or nonexistent knowledge of how to work these. ‘Guitarra Armada’ was made up of eleven songs, seven of which give military lessons, three are tributes to fallen heroes and one proclaims itself as an ‘Anthem for the Unity of the Sandinista Front’:

1. The Garand (4:07)

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61 Ramírez, op. cit., p.211
62 Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 2
63 Ibid.
64 Ortega, op. cit., p.103
65 Los Mejía Godoy (The Mejía Godoy Bros.), Guitarra Armada [Loaded Guitar], 1979, FSLN-MC
2. What’s the F.A.L? (4:12)
3. The Ammunition (5:15)
4. The M-1 Carabine (4:44)
5. The Explosives (3:55)
6. Military memorandum 1-79 (3:29)
7. A shot from 22 (1:58)
8. To Gaspar Garcia (3:25)
9. The Mockingbird asks about Arlen (3:22)
10. Commander Carlos Fonseca (4:57)
11. Anthem for the United Sandinista Front (2:56)

As asserted by Carlos Mejía, “the songs have the verbal lifeblood of everyday language and none of that would have been possible without a language with which to speak to the masses.”

Similarly, he explained that through these songs they sought to quell people’s fear of taking up arms and using them in the final offensive. On the one hand they sought to motivate them, but on the other, to give them military instruction taking into account the volunteers’ lack of knowledge on the use of these weapons, some of which had previously belonged to the National Guard. For example, ‘What’s the F.A.L.?’ explains how to use a Fusil Automático Ligero (lightweight automatic rifle), a long-range high-powered weapon used in the uprising. Although the translation into English loses the rhythm and slang used in the song, the essence and the clarity of the message can still be understood:

What’s the F.A.L?

This animal will shoot it all

If you learn the way real well

You can make it go rata-tat-tat!

66 Carlos Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 1
67 Ibid 65
From the very beginning
the FAL has the mark of a great rifle,
it shoots full-auto beautifully,
with 20 shots in its magazine,
if I squeeze the trigger it barks,
and it has a range of four blocks,
and at a range of five full blocks
you can knock down a small airplane.

Another of the more illustrative examples is the song ‘The Explosives’68, which provides a ‘musical recipe’ for the preparation of homemade bombs. It was composed as a set of traditional Nicaraguan couplets very much in the style heard in popular celebrations with the difference that it invited the listener to gather the materials necessary to make three different types of explosives, the R1, R2 and R3:

When the moment draws near for the final offensive
Let the whole town be on the street to add their grain of sand
In your houses we want to see for the fabrication of bombs
charcoal and lard, sugar and sawdust

We’re speaking of a bomb efficient like none other
I refer to that known as formula R1
It contains 85% ammonium nitrate

Francisco Cedeño, stated that this group of songs along with others served as motivation and raising morale for participants in the struggle. “Its impact was such that people went looking for

68 Ibid 64
speakers with which to play the songs during combat”, he said. For his part, Luis Enrique Mejia considered that this music “raised morale no just for the combatants, but also of the population in general by being a blow against Somoza, because you heard right there in the album the shouting of children and women, as if the people themselves were there inside the recording.” The style of these songs and their messages continued accompany the intensity of the armed struggle as well as the growth of popular support throughout the 70's. To what extent did these songs encourage the people to participate? Were the songs effective mechanisms for the construction of consciousness? Could that be measured? The next chapter brings up new elements for the discussion based on the results of a survey and more interviews who can help to understand better the impact, its influence and the role of the protest songs during the process of insurrection in Nicaragua.

69 Francisco Cedeño, op. cit., Appendix 3
70 Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 2
Chapter 3

The Impact of Protest Songs in Nicaragua

The following chapter summarizes, in case-study form, the results of fieldwork undertaken in Managua, Nicaragua in July, 2015, in which I surveyed 37 people who had participated actively in the events of the Nicaraguan insurrection of 1979. The objective of this is to infer through the opinions of these direct witnesses of the events whether the impact of the protest and revolutionary songs was similar to that commented on by some previously mentioned scholars. I shall attempt to study this impact through very subjective aspects manifested by the individuals from the sample, without going into great depth in terms of the total scope of all audiences given the limitations in attaining this information at the present time. Additionally, I will seek to determine some of the factors which were most influential in terms of the construction of consciousness and up to what point those interviewed consider that the songs may have influenced this process.

We need to have into account that the songs were developed in a context of great social agitation, occurring alongside a great number of messages and happenings which very likely also contributed to generate certain levels of impact on the individuals making up the sample. For this reason and for the purposes of this analysis it is necessary to take into account Merton’s arguments who argued that “the process of persuasion does not consist of atomistic responses to a limited number of readily detectible stimuli.”71

Additionally, since the insurrection finally materialized, 36 years have passed and it is likely that the memories of the participants have been influenced by subsequent historic processes as well as the current situation in Nicaragua. However, the richness of the composition of this sample can provide a valuable contribution and starting point for later investigation seeking to further develop the aspects mentioned above. From the total sample, 27 out of the 37 people interviewed were Sandinista guerilla combatants in different periods between 1975 and 1986. Although some

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participated in the period after '79 (the 'Contra' period), I consider their testimony to be equally valid given that they were first-hand witnesses of the same process of revolutionary gestation. Included in the remaining people interviewed are families of combatants, a journalist, two traders, a campesino and two musicians, which is to say, people who participated from different areas of society, with different political ideas and from different social classes.

Survey Results

The survey aims to study the impact of the musical work of the Mejía Godoy brothers including some specific questions about the ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Armed Guitar) album. Thanks to the comments of those surveyed, I noticed that the perception of songs influential to the insurrectional process may extend somewhat beyond this repertoire. That is to say, there exists an idea of ‘songs of the revolution’ which covers a wider group of songs than those chosen for this investigation. Nonetheless, the peculiarities of ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Armed Guitar), such as the moment at which it was released (March, 1979) and its apparent impact upon the people appear to me to be very representative and brought me to choose this pieces above all others.

The results indicate that 100% of those surveyed are familiar with the musical works of the Mejia Godoy brothers, both now and during the insurrectional process of 1979. Although not everyone stated they were familiar with the album ‘Guitarra Armada’ during the insurrection (67% remembered the album), 100% recognized the names of songs such as ‘Qué es el FAL?’ (What is the FAL?), ‘Comandante Carlos Fonseca’ (Commander Carlos Fonseca) and ‘Himno a la Unidad del Frente Sandinista’ (Anthem to Sandinista Front Unity). It is probable that the difference between familiarity with the album and the songs is due to the fact that the songs began to be played over the clandestine Radio Sandino some months before the album was released in March of that year, as mentioned before. In short, it is apparent that the songs attained a higher ‘positioning’ (in marketing terms) and a level of retention in peoples’ memories greater than that of the album itself.
During the study, the subjects were asked to rate between 1 and 10 the level of 'importance' these songs had had in the process of rebellion, with 1 representing the minimum and 10 the maximum level to describe this indicator. Through their responses, the participants rated the importance of the songs to the achievement of the insurrection at 9.2, which is to say, almost all of those surveyed considered these songs have played a role of maximum relevance in that period. Similarly, the level of 'influence' the songs had in furthering the insurrection was rated at an average of 9.0 points. That is, 90.02% of the sample considered these works to be highly influential and generating a positive impact towards the achievement of the final insurrection. The remaining 10% was divided between those who thought the songs to be complimentary to other types of mobilizing forces such as the social situation and the dictatorship, and those who thought they were not influential.

“For us, they provided a fundamental tool to raise consciousness and a better understanding of the struggle which could no longer be won with weapons alone”, commented the ex-combatant José Antonio Palma.72 Similarly, the veteran Jorge Marenco stated that the songs influenced the people by opening a path towards ‘the truth”; “because we didn’t know the truth and these songs gave it to us”73, he said, referring to how the songs contributed to the construction of a vision of justice and national sovereignty by helping people to understand what they were fighting for and what it was that was happening. This was as for over 30 years the Somoza regime had controlled the majority of the means of communication and had a significant censorship apparatus in place against any show of opposition or ‘revolutionary’ ideas.74 In other words, both indicators of the ‘importance’ and the ‘influence’ of the songs were almost unanimously rated with the highest possible scores. Although these concepts could be considered to be ambiguous or tend to have different meanings for each person, the forcefulness of the results as well as the legitimacy of the subjects making up the sample could lead to the conclusion that the songs effectively did play a decisive role in generating – at the very least – a certain degree of influence on the people.

72 See Appendix 4 - survey and veterans’ quotes
73 Ibid
74 Ramírez, op. cit., p. 214
The question ‘To what point do you believe these songs motivated the people to incorporate themselves into the insurrectionist movement?’ was answered by 86.4% of those surveyed as a big source of motivation in supporting the recruitment of volunteers to the armed struggle. The surveyed were asked to rate this aspect from 1 to 10, with 10 representing the maximum level of ‘motivation’. The average rating assigned to this factor was 9.0 points, so maintaining a level of coherence with the ratings assigned to the previous indicators. With respect to the rating given to motivation, some of those interviewed described the songs as “driving forces” behind a “spirit of struggle”, “courage” and “unity”75, with these being some of the terms mentioned. Along these lines, it is worth noting that the songs were described with the word ‘unity’ by 16.2% of the subjects when asked to describe the songs with a brief phrase, idea or word.

On the other hand, 83.7% of those surveyed strongly agreed (51.3%) or agreed (32.4%) with the idea that the songs in ‘Guitarra Armada’ provided strategic information in benefit of the insurrection. However, the songs on this album are considered to be strategic for making “a call to arms rather than for including instructions on how to use these,” as Luis Enrique Mejía commented. “The songs helped to bring about the declaration of the final offensive so scaring the National Guard,” recalled the veteran guerilla Ronaldo Caldera76. Similarly, Juan Ramos, another of the ex-combatants surveyed, defined them as the “spark that ignited the insurrection, since the media said nothing about all this and both the songs and the assassination of the journalist Pedro Joaquín Chamorro woke us up and helped us to understand the importance of taking up arms.”77 On the other hand, 16.2% partially agreed (10.8%) or disagreed (5.4%) with this strategic conceptualization and conceived the songs in terms of motivation or raising morale rather than as ‘strategy’.

75 Appendix 4, op. cit
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
With respect to the influence of the songs in building up ‘class consciousness’, the rating given by participants was almost as high as those for other factors. However, there was some variation in opinions given that the concept can be interpreted in various ways. The proposed question was, “To what point do you believe that these songs generated class consciousness?” The average rating assigned was of 8.7 points, with 1 representing the minimum degree of consciousness and 10 the maximum. With respect to this question, the ex-guerrilla María José Cardenal Blanco stated that “the songs strengthened us because they spoke about us, the proletariat, who built the revolution”.78 Meanwhile, Vladimir López, another ex-combatant, pointed that “they represented the unification of the working class to defeat the dictatorship”.79 Along the similar lines of thought, his comrade Eduardo Barea admitted to feel identified with the songs “because they spoke of campesinos, the working class, the proletariat”.80 In contrast to the majority of interpretations made with respect to this question, an ex-combatant who asked to remain anonymous suggested that the songs “were inclusive of the different social classes.” This veteran asserted that it was more than generating consciousness as to ‘what is my social class?’, they promoted a message which bought you to think that “your social class didn’t matter because it was everyone’s struggle.”81 It is apparent from the comments and results of the survey that the songs served, among other things, as a symbol of national unity and motivation occurring in a context of common sentiments which may have managed to transcend the idea of class.

Although the musicians were totally independent from the Sandinista vanguard and wrote their songs with total creative freedom, the songs appear to have contributed to the Sandinista strategy of calling on the people to join the popular struggle. For this reason, the survey also aimed to investigate to what extent the songs served as transmitters of messages that contributed to propagate of the Sandinista vanguard’s ideas. In this regard, 75.6% of those surveyed strongly agreed (43.2%) or agreed (32.4%) that the Mejía Godoy Brothers’ songs helped increase awareness of some of the FSLN’s ideas. Similarly, several of those surveyed admitted that this

78 Appendix 4, op. cit
music inspired concepts and sensations which went further than the vanguard’s ideological proposal. When asked to summarize the impact of the songs in one word, concepts such as ‘hope’, ‘unity’, ‘motivation’, ‘conviction’ and ‘consciousness’\textsuperscript{82} were repeatedly mentioned.

To what extent did the music influence the provocation of feelings such as ‘unity’, ‘hope’, ‘motivation’, ‘conviction’ and ‘commitment’? What level of influence was additionally generated by other factors such as lifestyle and historical context? How is it possible to determine what agents intervened in the whole persuasion process, and to what degree these were effective? Could the context of the interviews have modified the conduct and answers of those interviewed? It is necessary to take into account the fact that, as Morley noted, we are consumers who experience a great multiplicity of narratives “and the space in which we exist is crossed by a number of different discourses, some of which support each other, are in alignment with each other, some of which contradict each other, some of which we relate to positively, some negatively.”\textsuperscript{83} That is, in the course of the processes of decoding and interpretation of messages which reach the audience through different means of communication, diverse discourses and narratives intervene, even if the public is conscious of this dynamic or not. On the other hand, if apart from the songs there existed a variety of other ‘forces’ acting to persuade those participating in the general insurrection against Somoza, why did the subjects surveyed assign such high ratings to the ‘importance’ and ‘influence’ of the Nicaraguan protest songs of those years? Could it be that due to the situation they lived through, everything to do with the insurrectional process would be evaluated or understood to be ‘important’ and ‘influential’? It is very probable that the situation in which they lived generated a high level of predisposition in the general public to be persuaded by the songs, and therefore, they only required a low level of persuasion to be influenced in a significant fashion. It may be that what the songs really did was to reinforce feelings and ideas conceived from way before the insurrectionary process. This began to grow after the mythification of Sandino, the assassination of the first Somoza by a poet, and the effects of the Cuban revolution in parallel with other armed

\textsuperscript{82} Appendix 4, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{83} Morley, D.; Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies, (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 71
struggles underway in the region. Along these lines, Morley stated that “persuasive communications function far more as an agent of reinforcement than as an agent of change.”

Music: An Effective Form of Persuasion?

The songs were never regulated under any institutional framework but from the results of the survey, it can be asserted that they served the Sandinista Front in propagating some of its ideas as well as calling on the people to participate in the struggle. That is, they were not ‘propaganda’ nor part of a strategy, but they seemed to be, nonetheless, significantly persuasive. Could this be related to what Merton would considered “an essay on persuasion rather than propaganda”\(^{85}\) For him, both of these seek “influence in action, beliefs and attitude”, but persuasion differs from ‘propaganda’ in two fundamental aspects.\(^{86}\) Firstly, the dynamics of persuasion require a high degree of interaction between the ‘persuader’ and the ‘persuadee’. Here it could be indicated that the Mejia Godoy brothers’ songs interacted with the people and their reality in the form of public performances, concerts all over the country and Radio Sandino broadcasts generated immediate feedback for them. On the other hand, as outlined by Merton, the second difference is that in the dynamics of persuasion, the ‘persuader’ can adapt its arguments in accordance with the reactions of the people it seeks to influence. Along these lines, it is worth recalling that the Mejia brothers were acquainted with the immediate feedback of the public as well as the censorship of the regime, and the messages in their lyrics evolved in parallel to the development of events occurring along the path towards the final insurrection. That is, the fundamental difference that exists with the tools of propaganda is the two-way communication process which can be observed when we speak of ‘an essay on persuasion’, and moreover where the ‘vehicle’ for its messages is music.

Why music? Is it thanks to the music that the messages contained in the songs (lyrics) have attained influence upon the people? Is music capable of making messages more effective and

\(^{84}\) Morley, op. Cit., p.44  
\(^{85}\) Merton, op. cit., p.38  
\(^{86}\) Ibid
persuasive? According to Kilpatrick, human beings tend to learn things more easily if these are explained using a rhythm or as part of a song. Regarding to his investigations, this is something publicists are aware of and apply with great effectiveness to the point of having us memorize their jingles whether we are interested in them or not. He also mentioned the use of rhyme and song as a central part of teaching methodology for some language courses and asserted that this should be applied in all kinds of educational processes for the previously mentioned reasons. Similarly, Levitin argued that, apart from publicity, the power of music when applied to evoking and manipulating emotions has been used by the film industry, various armies along history, and, of course, mothers to help their children sleep. With respect to this, modern science is attempting to determine the real impact of music on the brain and mind and seeking to understand its supposed ‘power’ with respect to other communication tools.

Up to this point, we have considered and analyzed above all the lyrics of protest and ‘revolutionary’ songs without making further reference to their rhythmic forms or harmonic patterns. Do lyrics alone generate an impact, or could this also be achieved through rhythm and harmony? Can the way in which the songs are structured from a musical point of view also determine a greater or lesser degree of ‘effectiveness’? If Carlos Mejía’s ‘Cristo de Palacaguina’ (The Christ of Palacaguina) had been a pop ballad, would it have had the same effect? According to recent neuroscientific studies oriented towards understanding this kind of processes, the different ‘dimensions’ making up music should be taken into account in order to understand its effects both on a physical and a mental level. These ‘dimensions’ to which Levitin made reference are pitch, rhythm, tempo, timbre and loudness, which, when organized, produce music. Once these come into ‘operation’ and are successfully combined to superior levels of sophistication, they generate key, melody and harmony. Given the supposed effects these cause in us, science is working on deconstructing each of these elements to selectively study which regions of the brain are associated with their processing, so as to better understand the results they produce. This is given

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87 Kilpatrick, W.; Why Johnny can’t tell right from wrong?, (New York: Touchstone, 1993), p.172
88 Levitin, D.; This is your brain on music, (New York: Plume, 2007), p.9
89 Ibid, p. 19
that it was determined that music is capable of ‘affecting’ almost every known regions of the brain and almost all neural subsystems.\(^90\)

Mannes pointed that empirical measurements already exist which demonstrate that music is capable of generating effects both on a physical and an emotional level. “When we listen to music well, we allow music to happen to us. We don’t think consciously about what’s going on inside our heads,”\(^91\) she argued. For example, music is capable of accelerating the heartbeat, respiratory rhythm, and other bodily functions such as muscular tension, blood pressure, and hormones through pitch, tempo and loudness.\(^92\) “Our physical responses to music are rooted in the brain and the way it processes information”, she continued.\(^93\) It is probable that music utilizes more areas of the brain than any other function given the large variety of areas that are involved, such as those responsible for audition, motor activities, vision, emotion, and of course, memorization.\(^94\) Additionally, she argued that “musical structure plays a big role in affecting our emotions. But so do our memories of particular pieces of music. We have cultural associations and very individual associations.”\(^95\) Could this be the reason why Carlos Mejía Godoy wrote ‘Qué es el FAL?’, a song which gives instructions on how to shoot a rifle with tremendous firepower while using a very happy and danceable rhythmic and melodic base? In response to this question, his answer was decidedly affirmative: “I chose to write that song using Cuban Son as a base because we are a happy, voluble, singing people.”\(^96\) Mejía probably also sought to appeal to physical sensations known by all Nicaraguans, generating a kind of comfort and awakening that positive spirit of the people despite the circumstances. Could we consider how these same messages might have been received without music? Would the same impact be achieved by publishing songs like ‘Qué es el FAL?’ or ‘The Explosives’ in the form of poetry? According to Luis Enrique Mejía “there is no

\(^90\) Levitin, op. cit., p. 85
\(^92\) ibid, p. 20
\(^93\) ibid, p. 30
\(^94\) ibid, p. 33
\(^95\) ibid, p. 68
\(^96\) Carlos Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 1
revolution without song, which should rescue all kinds of values beyond the ‘ideological’, rather they should be those to do with rescuing identity."^97

Apparently, it appears to be numerous factors which can transform a song into a means of effective and persuasive communication, bringing it to play an important role in historic processes. A good combination of rhythm, melody, tempo, harmony and lyrics can “stick music in our heads” and generate a certain degree of influence over our thoughts. “That is the reason that many ancient myths, epics, and even the old testament were set to music in preparation for being passed down by oral tradition across generations”, argued Levitin. ^98 Along these lines, Plato also came to refer to the profound power that music can come to exert in societies, asserting through the Socrates dialogues that “musical innovation is full of danger to the State, for when modes of music change, the laws of the State always change with them.”^99

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^97 Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, op. cit., Appendix 2
^98 Levitin, op. cit., p. 267
Conclusion

The investigative work proposed in this paper seeks to achieve some first approximations of the rarely studied issue of the role of protest music in revolutionary processes, specifically in the case of the Nicaraguan experience of 1979. Through the analysis and the findings presented herein, it would be possible to think of attributing a major role throughout the entire process, especially during the years prior to the insurrection, and, of course, during the period of the final offensive itself. However, due to the lack of other studies specifically on this issue, it would be premature to arrive at conclusive results until new initiatives are developed which explore this issue in more depth and from new perspectives.

With respect to the degree of influence they seem to have exercised over the people on the path towards the insurrection, these songs were rated almost unanimously with the highest possible levels in terms of the indicators of ‘importance’ (9.2 points out of 10) and ‘influence’ (9.0 points out of 10). It is clear they were not the only nor the most important of all elements in the process but can they be contemplated to be a factor which should probably be taken more into account in the writing of history? If the songs were as important and influential as the people surveyed asserted them to be, the next aspect to attempt to understand is in what aspects this was the case and how this music could be of importance and influence in concrete terms. The information collected in the bibliography, the in-depth interviews and the surveys all coincide in suggesting that one of the great contributions of the protest songs was that of generating a singular wave of motivation. As we saw, the majority of those interviewed spoke in general terms about feelings such as hope, courage, unity, strength and conviction which were exacerbated through these songs. It is practically impossible to measure to what degree this was generated by this music given the influence of a huge variety of other factors arising from the agitated national circumstances. However, a remarkable degree of importance was almost unanimously attributed to the protest music by the sample in terms of its generation of those feelings which would later contribute to the participation of the people in the armed struggle.
Can it be asserted that the Mejía brothers’ music was ‘strategic’? While it is true that songs like those included in ‘Guitarra Armada’ made a ‘war cry’ to march towards the insurrection as well as providing detailed information on how to use the different types of weapons available, we have seen that, in principle, what these songs sought to do was to quell people’s fears about participating in the struggle. It is possible that this is the reason that 86.4% of the sample considered this music to be one of the factors driving the recruitment of volunteers as well as a source of inspiration and the raising of morale, above all in the process to the final offensive. As mentioned by some of those interviewed, the songs may not have had a strategic conception nor been part of a plan, but nonetheless, the fact that they -apparently- inspired participation and reinforced the morale of the people may have contributed to a spontaneous strategic benefit to the insurrection. For that, they had to take on various roles such as that of constructing and propagating messages. Narrator and actor. They were song and action, they told the story whilst playing the role of protagonists in it.

The protest songs also seemed to act as a shaper of ‘consciousness’, although the survey focused mainly in the class consciousness aspects. We saw that this is a concept which can be ambiguous and which can be understood in different ways due to this. Thus, those surveyed agreed almost unanimously that the songs built up ‘consciousness’ although opinions differed as to the type of consciousness they contributed towards generating. Class consciousness, consciousness of the struggle, of social responsibility and of national sovereignty were some of the elements highlighted during the investigation. This aspect could serve as a base for future investigation exploring this issue of the construction of consciousness in the insurrectional process in greater depth, seeking to establish which characteristics of this were most remarkable.

Carlos Fonseca had written in the 60’s about the importance of creating messages that would help to built up consciousness in order to promote the struggle in Nicaragua. Apparently during the 70’s this have been achieved through the songs among many other mechanisms. Why did the songs seem to become important and influential? This was probably due to being set in a context which demanded messages and feelings like those that the protest songs were able to generate. The
context may also have predisposed the people to have greater sensibility and receptivity to them, or, as we saw suggested by Morley, they may have served as a reinforcement mechanism for preexisting feelings inspired by the circumstances. If the Sandinista Front for National Liberation served to conduct insurrectionist forces towards the offensive, can we think of the songs as the catalysts of the feelings and emotions previously mentioned? If the insurrectional process was successful, this was because it was adopted and driven forward by the people, as we saw with Ortega and Debray. Possibly, a similar logic prevails when it comes to understanding why the songs were influential, generated impact. Along these lines, Luis Enrique Mejía stated that “if the songs transcend, it is because there is a people who sing them, it’s because there is a people who defend them, it’s because there is a people capable of making a song that does not turn to ashes, which is not erased from the memory.”\(^{100}\) That is, the songs did not have a life of their own. If they achieved what they achieved, it is because the people appropriated them and converted them into something more than songs, giving them a shape and even a purpose.

On the back cover of the album ‘Vamos haciendo historia’ (We Are Making History) by Grupo Pancasán\(^{101}\), Commander Núñez Téllez was to write:

**Brothers:**

*Revolutionary song in our Country has been nourishment, light and stimulus for us to remember our fallen brethren in difficult hours, and a stone with which to strike the enemy. It penetrated our people to enflame them in the bonfire of the insurrection, it aroused our youth in combat, it taught children to love the struggle of Sandinismo, and it helped to awaken revolutionary fervor at all levels of the populace. Revolutionary song sprang from the throats of the people to urge us on in the hours of defeat, it gave shape to the thought of fallen leaders, it brought out of anonymity the thought of a great multitude of combatants from the hills and fields of the land, and it opened wide the doors of history in order to teach our people the contents of their epic [deeds], their role as*

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\(^{100}\) Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, *op. cit.*, Appendix 2

\(^{101}\) Grupo Pancasán, *Vamos Haciendo Historia*, [We Are Making History], Nicaragua: Ocarina 1979
protagonists [both] in history and in the revolutionary transformations of the Country of Sandino and Carlos Fonseca.
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Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, Canto Para Mi Pueblo en Lucha [Songs For My People in Struggle], San Francisco CA, 1978
Appendix 1

Acknowledgement

Through these lines I want to express the reason I’m including the following extensive appendices which, in many cases, could be considered disproportionate in accordance to the rest of the work.

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 contain the best moments of the interviews with the Mejía Godoy brothers. They represent probably the most important musicians, not only during the period but through Nicaragua’s history. The opinions they shared during the interviews and the stories they told are quite unique and never published in any other publication.

Appendix 3 includes the interview with Francisco Cedeño which was the main composer of Pancasan Group, one of the most relevant bands in the period studied which, differently from the Mejía Brothers, they decided to leave the instruments in order to take the arms and join the Guerrilla in the Mountains of the North of Nicaragua. I think his testimony is also worth of including.

Appendix 4 incorporate survey’s questionnaire and some of the quotes from the ex combatants.

Appendix 5, and probably the longest one include the lyrics every song of ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar) album, in Spanish and English, referred to its YouTube link in order to make it easier for the reader. These translations have been done by myself.
Excerpt of the interview with Carlos Mejia Godoy, *Managua, Nicaragua – 7/14/2015*

**How did your commitment come about?**

Luis Enrique got his political formation in Costa Rica with the *Vanguardia Popular* (Political Vanguard) but I lived it from Nicaragua, with the advantage of coming from Somoto in the Department of Madriz, part of the Segovia mountain range, where the Sandino Theater was played out. Naturally, from when you’re a child you hear talk about Sandino and so you ask yourself, “Who is Sandino?”, and you’ll find two answers. The bandit and the guerrilla, hero, and martyr. The different versions of him. With Somoza the persecution began against anything that smelled like Sandino and we grew up in this environment.

One of the things that most impressed me was a symbol, a man. Miguel Ángel Ortéz was the youngest in Sandino's *Estado Mayor* (Greater State) and he must have joined the guerillas at around 16, a kid. And so I imagine Sandino looking at him, not disdainfully but realistically. “Ah, this is a young kid from Ocotal, daddy’s little blue-eyed boy, nothing like what’s needed to be here with me”. I imagine Sandino giving him these harsh tests to take his measure. And I comment on this as context to go on to the next figure.

From when he was very young he kept on standing out, and he came to be a General at 21 years old in the 30’s. After Sandino fell out with Moncada, who was the person who negotiated with the Americans, he withdrew to Cerro del Común and this is when the phrase arose “twenty-nine men and, with me, thirty”. They were thirty including him. Why was I impressed by the figure of Ortéz? Because I was told he died in Palacagüina. A town I liked down to the name. That is to say, phonetically, PA-LA-CA-GÜI-NA; I like it, and as the town is not by the side of the road, I’d never been there. And so it was necessary to go inland to get to Palacagüina.

“Dad, I want to go to Palacagüina.”
“And what is it about Palacagüina?”
“They tell me that that's where Miguel Ángel Ortéz died.”

And so, as soon as I could, I traveled so that I could tell people who he was. And so I met an entertaining man: Captain Rebrujo. He was not a brujo (witchdoctor), he was a Rebrujo (Superwitchdoctor)! A legend. "He died on that hill over there, that's where he's buried. Some call it the Cerro del Sapo (Hill of the Toad), others the Cerro de la Iguana (Hill of the Iguana),” he told me. At that time I didn't write songs, but I thought: "If one day I come to write a song, it will be about this man". And this I did, the *Cristo de Palacagüina* (Christ of Palacagüina). For me he is like the Resurrection of Christ in the ‘New Man’, the fighter.

What else is it that gets to me about the information about General Ortéz and impresses me? I'm impressed by his brother because this was a man who went mad. He arrived in the town dressed as a soldier, as the guerrilla war was fully underway at its peak. With a beard down to here and hair down to there. A strange figure. And so you ask yourself who this man is, and there are two versions. One that says he's a madman, and the other that says he's an ex-guerrilla, Miguel Ángel Ortéz's brother, who went mad because they started chasing him through the mountains after they killed Sandino. The person who had to chase him was my first father-in-law. The father of my first wife, who was from Somoto. Ariana Peralta Ríos. Captain Peralta, a sober man, who spoke haltingly, not the runaway soldier or of the classic Somoza-style military image. Since I'm his son-in-law, I ask the Captain:

“How was it that you had to hunt down those people?”
“I had the difficult job of hunting down the remnants of the Sandino forces. But the saddest thing was having to hunt down my own friend Alonso Ortéz.”
“And why did he go mad?”

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“Because this man is running and he is running alone. He has to face, alone, all kinds of adversities. Wild animals, cold, terror and sleeping in trees.”

Imagine how uncomfortable and what terror of falling! Apart from the wild animals and the wild Somoza soldiers. And so my father-in-law tells me he goes leaving him little notes: “Alonso, surrender, we will respect your life”. He didn’t surrender. When he came down from the mountain, he arrived telling where Sandino was and how they had beaten the Americans. There was now nothing to be done to him, they didn’t take him prisoner and they let him spend his whole life as a guerilla.

How did that inspire you?

I never wrote a song about him, but that was my way of seeing Miguel Ángel Ortéz alive. Together with the boys we caught hold of him.

“Commander, come here. Tell us what Sandino is like!”
“Can I confide in you? Give me a piece of paper. Look, we’re here and Sandino is here. He’s well protected by us. I’m responsible for guarding his life, because that man is worth his weight in gold, he is the dignity of Nicaragua.”

Sandino had already died, assassinated by Somoza. But through this madman, the knowledge of Sandino grew gigantically along with the myth. This knowledge I gained through Miguel Ángel’s brother and through some poems brought me closer to the mythical figure of the guerilla. And so we went with my cousin to the hill where supposedly Miguel Ángel’s remains were, who died there fighting and whose remains they buried right there.

How did you arrive at those songs which have such a special structure with the influence of the Latin American 6/8 beat and those epic choruses?

When I write the Cristo de Palacaguína, we were in the 70’s. Luis Enrique and I were precocious in our attempts to write songs. When we were living in the Cathedral, we had the influence of a great musician, a genius, Rafael Amaya. He was the organist in the cathedral and he had perfect ear for music. He could be playing the organ in the cathedral and hear a man going whistling down the street and right there play what the man was whistling. Sometimes he’d fall into drunken sleep over the keyboard because he worked in a Night Club that was next to the boardwalk where he was the pianist, and so he finished playing at 4:30 in the morning. With his suit jacket over his shoulder he’d cross from the boardwalk to the Cathedral, arriving well and truly drunk and he’d sleep over the organ. He’d ask me to wake him up the moment the priest started singing. He’d wake up as soon as the mass songs began, he’d open his eyes, put his hands on the keyboard and would fall perfectly into tune. A genius.

When I presented him with my first song, he said, “Look, brother, you should dedicate yourself to writing the lyrics of songs. As a musician you are really bad.” I continued and over time he started to say some part of my songs were salvageable, I asked him to explain to me why he considered some parts of my songs to be garbage. He asked me to find fresh, interesting melodies, but when I asked him to help me he said he was not going to write the songs for me. That man with that harshness began teaching me and to tell me I was improving. He said I had influences from South American singers. He was really hard on me and I am grateful to him for that.

Why did you compose and why did you sing?

It was a necessity. I tell you that from my heart. Imagine that in our family we have grandparents who were songwriters. Otto de la Rocha is one of our relations. On the Fajardo side there are songwriters. There is a line of songwriters in the family, it’s in our genes. Excepting my father who didn’t compose. He was too rigorous, pitiless on himself. I used to ask him why he didn’t compose a good tango and he’d say, “No, writing a good tango is a serious business. Don’t go there.” Luis
Enrique would write five or six songs a week since he was a small child. That was a very important exercise, because if you create and create and create, you start to loosen up. And so suddenly we were in the 70’s, with Luis Enrique in Costa Rica and me in Germany where I have like four or five songs. Possibly the most important from that era was ‘Alforja campesina’ (Peasant Saddlebag) because I wrote that when I was 18 years old. A song written with a great deal of sincerity, a lot of preoccupation that it not be a copy of some other song.

In those years, they were already speaking about the theme of campesinos (farmers, farm-workers or rural dwellers in Latin America). In reference to that, I was reading about the revolutions in Latin America and many authors related the theme of the proletariat struggle to an ideological point of view. But do you think that in the case of Nicaragua there is a cultural component more than an ideological one?

We fall in love with Nicaraguan music, in the middle of all this influence from bolero, mambo, Elvis Presley, rock and roll and other styles and even so, for no apparent reason we arrive at Nicaraguan music. There is a very important element. As we are from Segovia, I don’t remember that in Somoto we danced to the marimba, something which now is very normal. Maybe because we were very close to Honduras, border music had to do with mazurka, polka and the waltz. So our first reference is a campesino who every Sunday sits on a corner with some guitars with metal strings, playing some mazurkas. We didn’t have the slightest idea where this word mazurka came from, we only knew it was beautiful. We thought that man didn’t know how to read or write and how was it possible he could play with so much sensitivity. We were lucky to fall in love with this thing in an instinctual way, like when you fall in love with a girl without any intellectual analysis or knowing if she has any academic preparation. You like that girl! The way that sounded, well it was beautiful. We have never forgotten that character, Leandro Torres.

You put that into your song and at the same time this generates something in the people...

Of course. There is something very interesting. In the Pacific there is no mazurka, there is a ‘son’ with a 3/4 and 6/8 beat and some polka, and nothing else. There’s also a little waltz that the old people play with their mandolins and guitars and that gets to you too. When we had already grown up a bit, we asked ourselves, why is it called mazurka and why polka. Of course, it’s because of European immigration to Central America was made up of Anglo-Saxons, those that came from the United States with cowboy polkas, or Mexican polkas. They have like the same beat but it’s different. When we grow up and we listen to classical music and classical mazurka, then we realize where it comes from. The campesino imitated, for example, what the German coffee producers brought with them. All this is to tell you we would never have started with social music if we hadn’t fallen in love with our homeland music.

The fact of assuming consciousness that this was a cultural value, is a position, an attitude. Now its not only because it’s beautiful. It is Nicaraguan and it is our own.

The following quotes made me think about you a lot. Carlos Fonseca: “ideological obscurantism inherited from the colonial period always continued influencing the people, preventing them from marching out their struggles with total consciousness in search of social change...”

Fernando Cardenal: “the necessity existed to create a hymn which campesinos would identify with as a class.”

So are we speaking about the creation of consciousness and about telling Nicaraguans who they are and what their struggle is through these songs?

Nothing of what was done would have been possible if you do not have a language. What would have been the use of ‘Misa Campesina’ (Peasant Mass) having lyrics to do with the struggle of the times if they are not accompanied by, if they are not impregnated with, a rhythm of something the people feel to be their own? So my task, when I proposed Misa Campesina to myself, which was a
collective work, is to create some lyrics based on liberation theology, using the words of campesinos. Not inventing, not writing literature. But retaking the verbal lifeblood of everyday language. Because it’s no use if you grab documents from Medellín or Pope John XXIII’s Encyclical Letter and you transfer those phrases to here. No, it is the theology of the simple man in his own words that interested me.

There is an interesting coincidence, because it never occurred to us that we were going to be pioneers in anything. What we were doing was what we felt right and suddenly you find that social song has some minimum parameters which are already there. (Sings) “Campesino learn to read, campesino learn to write”, and this occurs before revolutionary song. Some social songs began to appear which didn’t tell you what to do with that reality, but they presented it to you, they put it in front of you, and to us that was important. How wonderful to talk about the campesino saddlebag, the road, the hut, right? And what’s inside? The reality inside? What is that campesino like? Who pays him? How does he dress? Do his children go to school?

This, plus the books and all the influence which I am not going to call ideological, but rather cultural, which gets into your very pores. You read in the newspapers that the campesinos in the banana plantations have had an uprising, and you begin to read the first social novels, both in Nicaragua and Latin America. Now you have a series of things which start giving form to the song.

**How did you come to realize that this working with songs was beginning to generate something concrete in the collective imagination?**

Well, that’s a dialectical question. When we see these little social critiques hurt the dictatorship and they begin to say that you are a communist that means the message is getting through. A song like ‘*Panchito Escombros*’ (Panchito Ruins), written about the earthquake, is not proposing revolution, but it says:

*Me puse contento*  
*cuando supe el cuento*  
*que iban a venir*  
*muchas toneladas*  
*de carne enlatada*  
*para mi país*  
*Pero siempre a la sardina*  
*se la come el tiburón*  
*y el que tiene más galíllo*  
*siempre traga más pinol*

I was happy  
when I heard the story  
that on the way  
were many tons  
of canned meat  
for my country  
But the sardine is always  
eaten by the shark  
and the person with the biggest mouth  
always swallows the most *pinol* (traditional  
drink made from toasted corn)
That was like the first song I wrote in which I touch it, in which I put my finger in the wound of reality. I begin to give it the color of the Left, of communism. At that time I was already going to university, I begin to participate in rallies, I listen to Carlos Fonseca, I see the guerillas who die at 20. How could the songs not go down the same path? It wasn’t the making of a big decision or the taking up of consciousness. As Carlos Fonseca says, “the Sandinista Front was born more through shame than consciousness.” What does that mean? That we also knew we had a quality song but that wasn’t enough. We had to reach the song being heard in Latin America. Mercedes Sosa, Carlos Puebla in Cuba, Bob Dylan. We peeked at those texts and we thought, “No way, here in Nicaragua we have to begin to say more”, because we are not organized as part of any cultural or political institution, or anything. We are patriots.

There is something I have to relate so you understand my leap towards a commitment. I don’t make a living from music, I work at the radio and if I hadn’t worked in the radio I probably would have followed some other path. The radio allowed me, due to the type of radio station I worked for, to get involved with a medium with programming directed towards a segment of the population with its own style. Radio Corporación spoke the language of its people. The programs we made, although they were satirical, they were tinged with social substance. So it occurred to me, almost out of survival, without believing that it was going to have the effect of being a bomb, to create a program called Corporito. So we did parodies with songs like tangos full of content. That continued making an impression until the point where the regime asked the radio to fire me. So feeling this apparently innocent program generated so much made me think.

**Did what you feel generate some change in the way you wrote songs and said what you said?**

Of course, because I had to deal with censorship. I was also thinking, “Why me?” Because the people were giving me the tools to do it. I couldn’t have made it on my own, because it would have come out wrong. The people gave me the materials to do it, the cultural heritage, the proverbs, all the quintessence of popular language. So if I have the tools which enable me to write, and besides that I’m a musician; am I going to remain silent? I can’t. Thanks to Corporito I make the leap to committed songs in ’73 and so the FSLN tells me, “We need you.”

**All those messages you put into your songs, as well as that energy, did well for the guerilla vanguard by generating an effect on the masses...**

We begin singing from the outside, in university rallies, we had no group affiliations, but little by little the songs started coming out. I bought out three albums, I sing ‘A flor de pueblo’ (Flower of the People), ‘La calle de en medio’ (The Street in the Middle), and when I come to do ‘La Misa Campesina’ (Campesino Mass), this is already a significant milestone because I begin to develop collective work where I’m nourished by the popular lifeblood. Priests, religious people and laypeople start to call me and say, “Let’s do something together”. And there I no longer say “Lord have mercy,” but I start saying, “Lord, identify with us!” and that is what hurts the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua. They rebuked me, “How are you going to tell God to identify with you?” So then, why does Jesus on the Mount of Olives say, “Lord, take this cup away from me”? This is where Christ shows his humanity, because he doesn’t know what to do. He has the cup of blood in front of him and he either drinks it or he knocks it over. Still further, when he is crucified on the cross, he says, “Lord, why have you abandoned me?” He doubts his father! That is Christ's humanity! That’s why in ‘La Misa Campesina’, if there is something I try to reflect it is Christ incarnated as a man with all his suffering, his worries and hardships. So a very rebellious Mass comes out which is prohibited by the State and the Church and yet it becomes a phenomenon. It triumphs. It begins to be played in Central America and Europe.
On this path, how do you interpret the role of these songs in society? Mónica Baltodano defined it as “an efficient weapon against the dictatorship”. They become tactical, ‘armament-like’?

Well, ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar) came out, but the instructions on how to set up a FAL, an M1, etcetera, is purely accidental. I am in Costa Rica and my brother-in-law Emmett Lang arrives to say goodbye to his sister, who is my wife, and he has a booklet on arming and disarming weapons with him and he accidently left it behind. That night, when I was about to go to bed, I realize what he's left. So I say to my wife, “How great a record with this on it would be!” Now I couldn’t control myself and in the morning I’m calling Luis Enrique. When we mentioned it to FSLN leaders they told us we had their support and that they would send people to speak with us to give us all the details of all that. It was an amazing experience.

A young man with no arms came to us to tell us how bombs were made in the silence of Monimbó. That was remarkable, because you’re not being told this by a theorist or a chemical expert, but a man who has left behind half his life on the path performing that. Or speaking to a child who survived the Xiloá massacre where they killed even the dogs. So we included that in the recording of the song ‘Los Explosivos’ (The Explosives) where it says the lines explaining how to make homemade bombs.

‘Las Municiones’ (The Munitions), ‘El M-1’(The M-1), ‘El FAL’ (The FAL), ‘El Garand’ (The Garand), ‘Un tiro 22’ (A .22 Rifle), etcetera, all this work is made up of accidental and anecdotal elements.

What is the objective of the record?

As soon as each song came out, we sent it to the clandestine Radio Sandino. We were thinking about the need to take away people’s fear of taking up gun, knowing how to arm and disarm it. It didn’t need to be someone with experience. Any person following the instructions could do it. We thought of it as something almost metaphorical, not that it would really come to motivate people to take up arms.

You didn’t mean it to be a true manual of instructions?

To be honest, no. Rather as a homage to those who were in hiding putting their lives at risk. But once it was sent to Radio Sandino it was a hit. So then an album was thought about. We didn’t make it just about arming and disarming. To speak about munitions we had four women talking about the personality of each one. We combined the pamphlet with more elaborate songs. The songs in tribute to the martyrs complimented those of arming and disarming.

Are you aware of some tactical use or tactical effect of the record?

We imagined so. My father taught me an ethical exercise when I was a child which is related to what you’re asking me about. He said, “When you’re on stage and you’re being applauded, think about the sweat, the tears, and the pain of each of the people that are there.” You ask what this has to do with the Revolution? My father was already aware that behind each song existed an accumulation of sensitivity because, for my father, each song was a piece of life. When those people applaud you, you are marking a parenthesis in their lives. That applause makes you think about your responsibility, about what remains to be done. How can I repay this accumulation of dignity existing in all these people?

Why do I tell you this, when you ask me about the effect? I think, what proportion is mine compared to the life given by another? This serves as a parameter to say, “How very much I still have to give!” What is the inspiration of the Mejía Godoy family? Life.

How do you imagine the insurrection would have been without music?
There would always have been music. The fact that it was us doesn’t mean that without us things wouldn’t have worked and the proof is that we were not the only ones. Song was necessary because we are a singing nation, a dancing people.

Why did I choose that rhythm for ‘Qué es el FAL?’ (What is the FAL?) based on Cuban Son. We are a happy people, irrepressible. That would have always come out! The proof is that in everyone country there was a singer or various singers.
Appendix 2
Excerpt of the interview with Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy, Managua, Nicaragua, 7/13/2015

What can we say those songs were like? With respect to the musical structure / harmonies and those big choruses. We see songs which are almost epic in many cases, ‘La Tumba del Guerrillero’ (The Tomb of the Guerilla). Did the musical structure of that time have different characteristics or patterns than other periods?

I lived in Costa Rica from 1967, and from there as of 1970 I begin to worry, as a musician, about traditional Rock and Roll and the origins of Latin American song thanks to my father. Atahualpa, Gardel, Lara, Los Matamoros, music from Cuba, Latin America and the Caribbean. But it was until 1970, for some reason I still can't explain, I was gripped by a little nostalgia for my country and my people, for Somoto, and I began to write songs about the reality lived by the campesino (farmers, farm-workers and rural dwellers in Latin America) in the country and particularly in Somoto. So the first thing I write as a song under the heading of ‘protest’ songs at that time was a song rooted in Nicaraguan and Latin American folklore. I don't do folklore, but I do a song based on folkloric music without being part of Nicaraguan regional song. So I break up the schema a little bit of what is known in Nicaragua as the ‘Nicaraguan regional song’ or ‘Nica Son’ or any of those other expressions, whether anonymous or with an author. But the lyrics are totally protest lyrics:

“How Hilachas de sol por el camino
malinche cargado de mañana
la tierra labrada, mal repartida”

“Loose threads of sun along the path
Malinche tree loaded with tomorrow
The earth worked, badly shared out”

This is a typical protest song which afterwards I find in Atahualpa (Yupanqui), in Violeta (Parra), in Víctor Jara, in Daniel Viglietti, in Zitarrosa, in Horacio Guarani, just to mention a few. But with a flourish and a song format which is totally free. Imagine, two stanzas and a chorus, which might be the conventional thing and the rhythm is mazurka mixed with son. The next song, almost immediately afterwards is ‘Primero de enero’ (The First of January), which is a more direct protest because it says:

“El patrón va entrando a misa
dirrazado de cordero
se da golpes en el pecho
pero es muy duro ese cuero”

“The boss is going into mass
disguised as a lamb
he strikes his breast
but that leathery skin is so hard”

Totally direct! So the people used to ask me why, being in Costa Rica, I went around singing these songs. I’m singing to Nicaragua while living in Costa Rica. That was pure guitar. I’d beat the guitar like a drum or a box: (He sings the beat) pá cutum pá cutum pá… like a bass drum. Like a bombo legüero (Argentine drum) which didn’t used to exist in Nicaragua, and which is like marimba-style too, and with the back of the guitar (He sings the beat): chí cutum chí cutum.

How do you think these songs came to influence the collective imagination in the 70's?

It think this phenomenon doesn’t just occur in Nicaragua, because Nicaragua isn’t an island. And Latin America has so many things in common, among other things, its struggles, dictatorships, the particular situations of long and extensive dictatorships like that of Stroessner in Paraguay, which is the most similar to that of Somoza, or in the Caribbean too. And so I think that before us, other peoples had had similar experiences. It is said, I don’t know by whom, that there is no revolution without song, without poetry. Without something to accompany it, like the troubadours chronicling what we live, what we suffer. But also rescuing other values which are not just ideological and
political, but the values of identity, which is music itself, the rescuing of the identity from back to our ancestors, the Nahuatl for example, and all this mixes together.

When we discover that on singing these songs the people become attached and learn them, and they are motivated, and it stays with them, and they sing them and they chant them, we know that something is happening and this is a song that has its risks. That is to say, the risk of singing these songs in Nicaragua during the dictatorship. This occurs before our being militarized or our having sympathy or empathy or admiration for the armed struggle of the Sandinista Front in 1973.

Given the elements that you mention that were incorporated into these compositions, somehow these songs come to contribute to the construction of a Nicaraguan consciousness, reinforcing national values and even sovereignty. Do you think these elements exacerbated nationalistic consciousness as never before in Nicaragua?

There were some early references but they didn't manage to create a consciousness. There is a song called 'Campesino aprender a leer' ('Campesino learn to read'):

“Campesino aprende a leer
campesino aprende a luchar
campesino si lees y luchas
será tuyo el suelo
donde has de sembrar”

“Campesino learn to read,
campesino learn to struggle,
campesino if you read and struggle
the earth will be yours
where you must sow”

In some way this is similar to my song 'Loose threads of sun' in that line, but curiously that song didn't generate anything. Why? Because it was alone. If you ask the older people, they probably don't know it or have it in their hearts and consciousness. Of course, we have to say those weren't the hardest times in Nicaragua. The hardest times were those of Somoza Debayle, not Somoza Garcia, who assassinated Sandino. So related to Sandino, when I write the first song about Sandino, which was in 1971, called 'Compañero César' (Comrade César), there was already an intention behind it. It is no longer a spontaneous song, no. I want to speak about Sandino. I want to tell them who Sandino is and why he went into the mountains and so the songs like 'Eran 30 con él' (They were 30 including him), 'Allá va el General' (There goes the General), etc. came out.

The name Sandino is prohibited in Nicaragua at that time and it's the first time I dare to sing about him. Carlos had already composed 'Cristo de Palacaguina' (Christ of Palacaguina) and 'La tumba del guerrillero' (The tomb of the Guerilla) and so we continue as if in parallel, two brothers writing these songs. I lived outside the country and every time I returned to Nicaragua and then left again, I went loaded down, as if filled up with ammunition to write everything I saw in the country, my country, which I don't live in, and which one day hope to return to. I want to tell all the people that don't live in Nicaragua, the people of the world, what Nicaragua is, who Sandino is, what that repression is like and that struggle. It was barely '71 or '72, after that came the earthquake which created some objective and subjective conditions because Somoza becomes an even bigger thief and more screwed up. But the Sandinista Front is recently in the process of forming itself back there in the mountains and has recently begun to develop the armed urban struggle and I write 'La Venancia' (Venancia), a song in which for the first time I directly accuse the National Guard of raping, killing and torturing campesino women.

“Venancia, pechos de cabra
pelo de noche, Venancia
por nacer en la montana
sos hija de la guerrilla”

“Venancia, teats of a goat
hair of night, Venancia
because you were born in the mountains
you're the daughter of the guerilla”

She is a messenger girl for the guerrilla. When I write this song it's clear to me that I could have problems in that country and so I acquire consciousness of the risk I am taking and the challenge I'm proposing myself. I am still not militant in the Sandinista Front, although I am militant in the Left
in Costa Rica which is very important to me because it is something which nourishes my ideas to propose changing structures, well, anywhere, even in Costa Rica itself.

All of this was in '71...

Yes, then in '72 and after the earthquake, I am now talking about much further abroad than Nicaragua, I'm speaking about Central America, Latin America, and I write songs that are very identified with solidarity in Chile, with the struggle in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, in all of Latin America. Of course, also anti-imperialist solidarity because we support the Vietnamese struggle for liberation. We also support the Cuban revolution. We are already inscribed in a taking-up of consciousness from a Leftist point of view. It doesn't matter if it's incipient, because who would say that seven years later a revolution in Nicaragua would triumph? You know what seven years are? A presidential period!

I was reading some authors where it says that often revolutionary mobilization is assumed from an ideological point of view. However in Nicaragua it appears there are cultural elements which lead to revolution. What is your opinion on that?

What happens is that at the same time we wrote these songs with profoundly social content, and also already with a commitment, which says 'guerilla', 'warrior', which says 'abuse' and 'torture', we also write love songs, songs about characters, not so much for pleasure but from the need to talk about some elements in popular culture. When I wrote:

"Volveré a mi pueblo por aquel camino
sembrado de ayeres, ranchos y dolor,
buscaré en los cerros y en los alambrados
los viejos dolores que el tiempo dejó"

"I will return to my people along that path
planted with yesterdays, huts and pain,
I will search in the hills and the wire fences
for the old pains left behind by time"

Here I am talking about almost domestic things. I miss my family, my father, my mother, the house. Afterwards this song takes on a new meaning and I want to return to Nicaragua with the hope of triumph, with my guitar and the revolution.

When Carlos Mejía Godoy plays ‘La Tula Cuecho’ (Tula the Gossip), he also lets some phrases fall which, as all good Nicaraguans say, make the dictatorship 'feel itchy'. Our songs were prohibited, our records were burned, radios were closed and there are people who were brutalized and thrown in jail for having our albums. But these songs like ‘La Tula Cuecho’ or ‘Clodomiro el Najo’ (Clodomiro the Runt) and others were sung by one and all. Why so? Because I think they were very strong in terms of the issue of identity. One, the rhythm. Two, the happiness of the song. Three, Nicaraguan language. Four, the instruments, although they were not utilized with the treatment of orthodox composers as we broke up the schema of previous Nicaraguan songwriters.

We are talking about the evident construction of Nicaraguan consciousness as well as class consciousness and so I have two quotes to do with this question:

Carlos Fonseca: “the ideological obscurantism from the colonial era always continued influencing the people, preventing them from taking up the struggle with total consciousness seeking social change...”
"Nina Simone “the problem with Afro-Americans is that we don’t know anything about ourselves”

Were you telling Nicaraguans who they are and what their struggle is through these songs?

Without our being politicians, nor political leaders, nor agitators we became a little bit of that when the people discover something new in our texts. We are telling them, “The poorest people, the campesinos, the marginalized are exploited here. Power is abused here from the top down to the bottom.” Military power and economic power joined together with one interest. And as was said at this time: “Somoza and his people manage the country as if it were a farm.”

That is why when I talk about the ‘campesino’s boss’; who is it? It's Somoza. When I say “The only public lighting is on the hacienda…”, the hacienda belongs to Somoza. The presidential palace is the manor house, etc. And so we discover a coded language which the people take to. What they didn’t say to the politicians, and at best they couldn’t say to the guerillas either… Carlos Fonseca Amador used to say, “…and also teach them to read”, which is one of Carlos's most important mottoes. Until the people escape from ignorance and not knowing who they are, where they are from and where they want to go, there can be no revolution or even struggle. I’ll tell you a Carlos Fonseca quote which is paraphrased by us: “the FSLN was first born out of shame and then out of consciousness,” and we said, “Revolutionary Nicaraguan song was first born out of shame and then out of consciousness.”

I remember that when I lived in Costa Rica, they would say to me there, “You’re from where Somoza rules.” This would generate a lot of anger and pain in me. I felt bad. So this shame I felt fed my conscience. But these are things we analyze as we grow, that the struggle grows and history develops. History doesn’t ask for your permission and you can get left behind. Either you move with history or you stay behind. So what we did is consistent with that.

When you saw what was happening, you saw the people’s response and you also saw that you were generating things on ‘the other side'; did you make a somewhat more conscious decision to go on and take up the stance of saying ‘these songs are instruments of transformation’?

That is given by militancy in the struggle of the Left. Because in Costa Rica, despite being a bourgeoisie democracy there was a great deal of inequality. There were big banana plantation strikes, student strikes and those against some companies. There did exist some kind of struggle. There I learned that my songs were useful in that struggle as well as the struggle in Nicaragua, in Guatemala…They transcended. That was really important to me. In the same way when I heard Vieglietti’s ‘A desalamar’ (To deactivate) or Victor Jara’s ‘Plegaria para un Labrador’ (Prayer for a Worker), just to mention two songs, I said, “We are not alone. We are part of a movement.” All those singers in that era started coming out. First they came out in Costa Rica, because in Nicaragua it was more difficult. At the same time the exiles from South America began to settle in Costa Rica and together we founded the ‘New Costa Rican Song’ movement in 1973.

By this time, I was already aware, as you say, of the usefulness of my songs. That my songs contribute, together with those of Carlos, and they make us known throughout Central America, adding to the movement of folklore, neo-folklore, new Latin American song, new trova, new Mexican song and so on. We realize that in each country there are singers and there is a common root. This music begins to be recognized, not just due to the political struggle and the ideological aspects, but for the human aspects, for the immense human content. As in the case of Violeta Parra when ‘Gracias a la vida’ (Thanks to Life) is converted into a hymn. But a hymn to whom? Since when? From what point of view? From below! Because ‘Gracias a la vida’ was not born in the record companies or in the Viña del Mar Song Festival. It is born in a neighborhood, in a tent. She was a woman who had the courage to go to France and sing what a campesino woman sings in a way that was profoundly human and profoundly sensitive. Something that didn’t work because of its aesthetic qualities, but its ethical qualities and its honesty.
At this time, what were you seeing happen with your songs? Because the Sandinista Front was being formed, the guerilla activity was growing, Somoza was already Somoza and they were conscious of the kind of weapon song was transforming into.

The FSLN recruited Carlos and they don’t just want Carlos to continue singing, but they give him some tasks of another kind. Such as the transporting of arms, and of comrades. So what does this have to do with art? What does it have to do with song? How far does your commitment go? As the poet-guerrilla Leonel Rugama said: “It is not just writing the song, but being committed to it up to the final consequences”. The armed struggle places you in a very harsh situation, very grim, because when we say ‘A free homeland or death!’, that’s what we meant. Or death! You knew you were going to do that task and that you could die doing it. We knew we were going to sing in the Public Squares and that the National Guard would be there. We weren’t in hiding, we were totally exposed and that served the objectives of the Sandinista Front.

In 1974, the taking of Chema Castillo’s house by the FSLN was a tremendous blow which caused international impact. Due to this, the response from the National Guard was terrible and I couldn’t return to Nicaragua for some time. That is when I write ‘Venancia’ and Carlos is taken prisoner. But the guy that took him prisoner, the Guard, knew that Carlos had written songs that were popular all over Nicaragua and it was possible that they asked him what the notes used in those songs were so they could later play them on the guitar. The music was so strong and had penetrated so deeply that the National Guard came to have a hidden sympathy for our songs. But Somoza had given the order to close radio stations, to close down programs and prohibit the albums. CBS, the record company came to do something surreal. They put classical music covers on our records because their sales were so profitable that they didn’t want to lose them. The people wanted to listen to those songs!

Music was what brought you to the Revolution and not the other way around... Just as the insurrection reached the point where it became unstoppable, did you and your brother’s music and your commitment also reach a similar point?

We couldn’t go back because we would cease to be ourselves. This also meant that we believed in ourselves before we believed in anything else. I can’t make another commitment without the commitment of my own conscience. To whom do I entrust my conscience? To my heart! My Christian sensitivity, my fundamental formation in my town with my teacher, my classmates. I couldn’t publish, but I continued writing.

...now in ’78, the FSLN has the backing of leftist governments and popular movements and populations which support us to do a tour of Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela and Mexico. On the way, we write the songs from ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar) which are to me the songs of the insurrection. That is the essence. We have already been through social songs, guerilla songs, the songs of heroes, but these songs say, “...everyone, take up arms!”

How do you link that to Mónica Baltodano’s phrase referring to this as “an efficient weapon against the dictatorship”?

Gabriel Celaya says that “poetry is a weapon loaded with the future”. We say that song “is a loaded guitar, a weapon.”

Does that have to do with what the guerilla priest Gaspar García Laviana said?

That’s right. He said to me, “Don’t stop playing because the guitar also shoots.” ‘Guitarra Armada’ has an element, independently of its contents like that manual for arming and disarming rifles, which we put into popular language, we added rhythm and music. Once a United States Consul sat
me down and with the record ‘Guitarra Armada’ on his table, accused us of being provokers of armed uprisings and instructors in war. I told him, “No, we are just popular singers”.

Did you make the record with a tactical objective?

Yes and no. It wasn’t a task assigned us. It was our own initiative. We took those songs to the Sandinista Front, but they were born along the way. The song for ‘Arlen Siu’ was born in Panama. ‘Himno de la unidad del Frente Sandinista’ (Hymn for Sandinista Front Unity) was born in Venezuela after receiving a phone call telling us the three FSLN factions had united. All these songs produce this work which we didn’t know was going to become an album, we had the songs so they could put them on Radio Sandino. Additionally, we used the resource of news recordings in the introduction to the songs. Such as, “Comrade, we just received the news that Gaspar García Laviana has just fallen in combat….” All of that is authentic and that makes the record have that something else. It converts the album into a document.

The album was born through a producer friend who proposed the idea to us when we went to make an act of solidarity in Mexico. So we sought out Amparo Ochoa, folklorists, other groups and Mexican singers and we made ‘Guitarra Armada’. The album songs were already playing on the radio because that was our objective. When the people began to hear it, it took off. When we wrote those songs, we thought about the force and the impact they would have. What we never imagined that was going to go all over Latin America and that all the movements would adopt those songs.

That’s where Somoza realizes that no one can stop this, like the insurrection. It goes on! It’s taking over the streets, the people, the trenches, the squares, the populations, and the repression.

What do you think the Somoza forces understood ‘Guitarra Armada’ to mean?

The Guard says to Somoza, “Look, we’re screwed because those guys are winning over the population.”

Do you think that ‘Guitarra Armada’ could have been given tactical uses?

I think that it raised morale a lot, not just of the combatants but of the population in general. It was a blow to Somoza. Because there in the record you hear the shouting of children and women, as if the people were right there in the recording. Additionally there’s the ‘Himno de la Unidad Sandinista’ (Hymn to Sandinista Unity) and the song in tribute to Commander ‘Carlos Fonseca Amador’. That’s to say, it’s loaded with amazing energy.

The record came out in March, 1979, but we didn’t know that the victory was to be in July. We were convinced that it was a matter of months not of years. So many people learned from that and I don’t know if the leaders gave out that task. What some combatants told me was that there were people who learned to arm and disarm weapons from the songs. It came to have a very practical, very concrete use in the insurrection. There was total dedication by the people in which everyone participated.

Why does song transcend? Because there is a people who sing. Because there is a people who defend it. Because there is a people who are capable of making song which does not turn to ashes, which does not fade from memory.

How do you imagine the insurrection without the songs?

I can’t imagine it. I can’t imagine it because it was necessary to me to make it and if I hadn’t done it, someone else would have. I can’t imagine any social struggle without music or song to accompany it to create consciousness.

In Nicaragua first history was sung, and later it was told.
Appendix 3
Excerpt of the interview with Francisco Cedeño, Grupo Pancasán, Managua, Nicaragua 7/9/2015

What were the central ideologies in composition in the 70's, on a musical and ideological level?

Not only revolutionary song existed as we knew it in the 70’s, such as the music of Carlos and Luis Enrique Mejía Godoy and Grupo Pancasán, but before that, there existed a lot of song. Over many songs, many of these very old, you see portraits of different moments of the country’s history. Since the middle of 19th Century up to the 90’s with the Guardabarranco Duet who close the cycle. If you read the lyrics, you will find historical elements written there and you see what was happening in Nicaragua when those songs were being sung.

This influence has to do both with Nicaragua’s internal and external situation. The immediate roots of the revolutionary song of the 70’s. One of these is our own folklore, Nica Son, by Camilo Zapata, by Erwin Krueger, by Jorge Isaac Carballo, by Otto de la Rocha which, apart from giving a Nicaraguan face to national song, did not leave out social issues. Above all issues to do with the holding of land. These songwriters who spoke about love or the landscape did not leave out songs which in their time were classified as ‘protest songs’. And they effectively protested against a situation happening in the country. That is one of the roots of the revolutionary songs of the 70’s. Another root is the revolutionary poetry of Ernesto Cardenal and Leonel Rugama, who was a guerilla poet.

The third root of revolutionary song in the 70’s is Latin American song, above all that from the South: Chile, Argentina, Uruguay; such as Quilapayún, Viglietti, Víctor Jara, Inti Illimani, Los Guaraguao (from Venezuela)... so all this movement of revolutionary song from the South extended towards Central America.

Ideologically, all these Southern songs are aligned with the current of Leftist thought. Because as well as singer-songwriters like those of Nicaragua, they were organically linked to social movements or guerrilla movements. In Nicaragua, revolutionary song was born under the FSLN umbrella which at that time was a guerrilla organization which was pushing armed struggle against Somoza.

What did the clandestine work and organizational tasks consist of from the point of view of the musician? Summarize the field of action a little.... in universities, in the country.

Musicians played the role of denouncing because many songs were means to protest where the repression of the Somoza dictatorship was denounced and, above all, they played the role of motivating participation in the struggle. Some of those musicians went around singing in neighborhoods, universities, at strikes, rallies in colleges; these were the scenarios of these songs also set within the framework of repression. Often after the second or third song it was necessary to go running out because the National Guard arrived, which came in shooting at people and setting off tear gas bombs. That was the framework.

Some of these singer-songwriters or musicians who went around singing were organically linked to the FSLN and even at some moments we ceased singing and integrated militarily with the insurrection, which was the final offensive. This was born linked and under the direct influence of the Sandinista Front.

Do you believe that part of the work of committed musicians was to speak to Nicaraguans about themselves?

These songs are speaking about things that are happening; North American intervention, our history, our heroes and martyrs which are recurring themes in revolutionary song and which has
been censured by the dictatorship. The Somoza dictatorship was not going to recognize that Sandino was a national hero, on the contrary there was a process of satanization of his image. Because it was not just political and economic domination but it was also ideological domination, which is the landscape on which the songs are situated. Which are counterposed not just so the people to become aware of their history, their process of struggle, their heroes and martyrs, or their more recent history, but also to displace commercial and uprooted superficial productions which were also being produced at this time, like some corny little love ballads of the day which contributed absolutely nothing, so song was also a way to oppose all this tackiness.

Musical inspiration occurs based on Nicaraguan folklore, roots and identity, and this was a way of reaffirming your nationalism through these same songs. I can say these songs were ‘triggers’ for the popular rage against Somoza, to the extent that people were motivated, were made conscious and became integrated to the struggle. They were a means of denouncing and a means of calling on the people. They played a role on the landscape that was both ideological and propagandistic and of very significant mobilization.

Do you think that testimonial and revolutionary music in those years generated some kind of cultural change and change in consciousness?

Revolutionary song generated changes in Nicaraguan culture more than at any other time in the history of our country. Although the term was not used, the singers at that time were public opinion leaders. If we said, “Come on, comrades, let's join the struggle!”, the people were influenced by that type of call that the songs made.

How did you realize this was happening?

Due to the immediate response of the people given that these songs were sung in the middle of the struggle, the barricades, in the mountains... and besides this, these songs were above all an urban phenomenon...

Do you consider that the music generated any direct impact on the face of the insurrection? Motivating participation, agitating, instructing?

Yes, and thanks to Radio Sandino which allowed the songs to be played in the middle of declarations, parts of the war... All this information alternated with our songs and this gave them an incredible impact. Additionally, at that time cassettes existed and the people of their own initiative taped the songs on their cassettes, not to sell them, but to propagate these songs. People even worked out how to get speakers set up and during battles you could hear the songs. A unique phenomenon in the history of the country. At that time I was 19 years old and today at 56 I still can't understand how we managed to have that enormous impact on the times. It was incredible. They became historic points of reference. They were the soundtrack to this piece of Nicaraguan history.

Mónica Baltodano said in her program that the music of the Mejía brothers as well as that of Grupo Pancasán “animated the combatants of the time”; do you agree with this idea? Do you believe that there was some type of tactical use of ‘Guitarra Armada’ (Loaded Guitar), for example, in the face of the insurrection?

That album was born at the start of ‘79, a little before the unity of the FSLN, when it was still divided into three factions. In fact the hymn that in the 80’s we knew as the ‘Himno del FSLN’ (FSLN Hymn) was really called the ‘Himno de la unidad sandinista’ (‘Hymn to Sandinista Unity’). And there are also some songs which speak of heroes and martyrs such as Arlen Siu and Gaspar García Laviana, and the majority of the songs on the album are military instructions born from guerilla military manuals. I would say that this album has two merits. One, the creative genius of
the Mejía Godoy brothers in taking these manuals and putting them to music. They found the right rhymes, anecdotes, history, characters, music, Nicaraguan rhythms like the mazurka and the Nica Son to describe, step by step, how to arm and disarm a rifle, how to shoot, how to make an explosive.

The other aspect is the broadcasting on the clandestine Radio Sandino, with the diffusion of these songs. When ‘Guitarra Armada’ begins to be played, in the process of insurrection there were not two or three guerillas harassing the National Guard with homemade weapons, there were now hundreds or thousands of guerillas with weapons of war. They also performed operations where suddenly twenty guards could fall and this meant twenty rifles recovered with their ammunition. So, what was to be done? For someone from the neighborhood who is joining up and is willing to fight, but doesn’t know how to handle a Garand, a Galil or a FAL. So these songs help because the songs describe, in an instructive fashion, step by step, how to handle the weapon, how to load it, how to disarm it, etc.

**Was it created for tactical purposes?**

Not as something preconceived or organized but it did have an influence. Because, for example, the people were listening to it in moments of combat. So I think it had an influence in this sense.

**Did the Sandinista vanguard ask you for some type of support or participation in this sense?**

Never. It was all spontaneous work and the FSLN didn’t have high levels of organizational development either. The Front was working on the conspiracy and on the armed activity level to overthrow Somoza. Obviously those of us who wrote revolutionary songs were organically linked to the FSLN but that was a spontaneous initiative. As was it totally spontaneous and voluntary to donate the royalties from the songs to the FSLN, intact. No one ever oriented us on how to write songs or the messages they should contain, there was complete creative liberty.

**But then… could we say that the songs had a tactical impact?**

Yes, of course, but in this case, this tactical use you refer to is part of the dynamic of social process. It is not that the FSLN found out there were songs and then decided to use them; no, the same social dynamic wrapped us all up. Because we are talking about the process of overthrowing the dictatorship and the triumph of July 19, that is the event which in Nicaragua called together the most people in social unity. There were businesspeople, professionals, the middle classes, workers, campesinos, people from neighborhoods, everyone coinciding and sharing the same opinion. So we are confronting a historic event of great social consensus. That is why the social dynamic swept us all up. Within that social dynamic, the only political force which had the capacity to put itself at the head and lead was the FSLN. Due to its thesis of struggle, its form of struggle, its political thesis. It was capable of putting itself at the front of this accumulation of forces which opposed the dictatorship.

**That was the reason the space from which the songs were broadcast was Radio Sandino… what other spaces would you highlight?**

Radio Sandino was a means, but the most suitable means and where the songs were broadcast above all was by the same mobilization of the people. When there was a rally in a neighborhood, protests or denouncement activities, we were right there letting the people know what was happening. It wasn’t just the speaker, who in a corner of a neighborhood would be denouncing at the top of his voice surrounded by guerillas, so the activity could go on in case the National Guard came to stop it. A kind of circular neighborhood defense and in the middle the activity. The songs were there too.
As well as bands like Grupo Pancasán or the Mejía Godoy brothers, there were spontaneous singers who half knew who to play or sing and who, in the moments of agitation, sang.

**How were these activities put together?**

It was all without audio equipment, just live voice or at the most the use of a loudspeaker, either in the street or within the neighborhood church, the squares, the community houses. Those were the stages. They were benefited by territorial structures that FSLN had put together where political work was done. In some ways we musicians were also parts of these structures.

**How do you imagine the insurrection without the songs?**

Perhaps it would have been a slower process. Possibly it would not have acquired so much strength as the songs were an amazing medium, not just for denouncement, not just for motivation, but there is also a very important phenomenon with these songs which is their becoming ‘mythicized’. How the songs built a myth and how they contributed to the guerilla becoming a myth, a symbol. Those fallen in combat were myths and symbols. The veneration, exaltation and conversion into mythical staus of the figures of the heroes and martyrs like Sandino, for example.

Song best contributes to this process of conversion into myth which has to do with very psychological factors for the people. At this time the people were tired of traditional politicians, both of Somoza and those that opposed him who were also traditional politicians and who, if they had gotten into power, would have been the same as Somoza. At that time, the FSLN became a kind of third path, with new proposals for struggle, new political theses, and it encounters the people with a need for their own heroes. So song contributes enormously to this need in the people.

What is a hero? A hero is another one of the people. An ordinary man doing extraordinary things. He is one of them. Someone who also gathers this collective rage, puts himself at the head and responds, counterattacks against power through his actions. Like Sandino. That is how the songs and poetry go about giving him this mythical profile of a mythical hero, which was a psychological need in the people. The people thought, “You have the Guard but we have the guerillas.” At the same time, they were part of the people because everyone had a relation, a friend, a neighbor in the guerillas and in the middle of this are the songs exalting the purity of their ideals. All this phenomena of conversion into myth was achieved through song. Without the songs, I don’t know if the Nicaraguan revolutionary process would have taken the same route. I think not.

**With respect to the musical structure and harmonies, those great choruses... we see songs with almost epic characteristics in many cases, such ‘La Tumba del Guerrillero’ (‘The Tomb of the Guerilla’) or ‘Vamos haciendo historia’ (‘Let’s Make History’), do you agree with this? Did the musical structure of that time have different characteristics or patterns from those of other periods?**

They had an aesthetic which described what was happening. The fall of Che Guevara, the North American intervention or the Latifundium; because all these were some of the themes approached in the songs. Musically the theme contributes a lot and the lyrics also influenced mainly by Nicaraguan folklore. For example, in the case of Pancasán, with those kinds of vocal arrangements where in all the songs we had choruses with various singers, sometimes even from the beginning to the end of the song, this is to do with the fact that there was no amplification in the streets and so one single voice would have sounded very lonely, but all the voices give you a greater volume. So a merely circumstantial issues determined our sound because our songs are street songs with a street sound. Even with many imperfections, musically speaking, but with an interpretive style where we translate the agitation of the rally to the song. This gives us a very particular interpretative quality. Also present was the Latin American 6/8 beat, like that of Inti Illimani, Quilapayun which made an impact on us all.
...Conversion into myth legitimizes and legitimizes the character too. People say, "We have to do this. This is good."
Appendix 4
Survey's questionnaire

Name:
Occupation:

Survey on the Impact of Guitarrá Armada - Mejía Godoy

1. Are you familiar with the Mejía Godoy brothers and their work?
   a. Yes    b. No

2. Are you familiar with the Mejía Godoy brothers’ album Guitarrá Armada?
   a. Yes    b. No

3. Do you recall having heard songs such as the Himno de unidad al FSLN (Anthem to FSLN Unity), Comandante Carlos Fonseca, or Qué es el FAL (What is the FAL)?
   a. Yes    b. No

4. Do you agree that the Mejía Godoy brothers’ work was influential in bringing about the insurrection of 1979?
   (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

5. Assign a number to the importance these songs had to the insurrection.
   (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

6. To what point do you believe that their music generated class consciousness?
   (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

7. To what point do you believe that their music motivated people to incorporate themselves into the insurrectionist movement?
   (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

8. Do you agree that between ’78/’79 Mejía Godoy’s songs provided strategic information benefitting the insurrection?
   (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Partially agree (d) Disagree (e) DK/NA

9. To what point do you believe the Himno de la unidad al FSLN called for insurrection?
   (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

10. Do you believe these songs contributed to the creation of Anti-Somoza sentiment?
    (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10)

11. Did these songs help you come to know the ideas of the FSLN?
    (a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Partially agree (d) Disagree (e) DK/NA
12. Do you think these songs helped Nicaragua to get to know FSLN ideas?

(a) Strongly agree (b) Agree (c) Partially agree (d) Disagree (e) DK/NA

12. What type of impact do you believe these songs had at the time?

In the survey on the impact of the songs in the context of the Nicaraguan insurrection of 1979, the final question was an open one in which each participant was asked to briefly define the impact of the songs in a word or a brief phrase. Below are the ex-combatants answers:

Ronald Corea
“They are a direct message of social consciousness, our credo, our faith, our idea of sovereignty. They gave us a vision of the future. They made us better.”

Juan Ramos,
“The spark that ignited the uprising. The media wasn’t saying anything about all that was going on, like the assassination of the journalist Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, and the songs woke us up. They also helped us to understand the importance of taking up arms.”

José Antonio Palma
“For us they were a fundamental tool for raising consciousness and better understanding that the struggle could no longer be won through weapons alone. They also formed part of a strategy.”

Dalia Mendoza
“They created consciousness and they united us.”

María José Cardenal Blanco
“The songs gave us strength because they talked about us, the proletariat, who built the revolution. They called on you to participate.”

Jorge Marenco
“A path towards ‘the truth’, “because we didn’t know the truth and those songs gave it to us.”

Carlos Cuevas
“It was very hard to face up to all of this for those who were 10 or 11 years old. For those of us who participated as children, they gave us courage and strength and made us realize that there were other children participating in the armed struggle.”

Ronaldo Caldera
“The songs helped process of declaring the final offensive and that’s why they scared the National Guard. They also motivated you, you knew you weren’t alone in hiding, they generated a sense of unity.”

William N.
“The songs told us what and why.”

María Mercedes Marenco
“They raised our morale and filled us with strength of spirit. They were a stimulant.”

Fernando García
“An injection of morale which still has impact. I listen to them now and I feel the same adrenaline as when I listened to them on the battlefield.”

Humberto A García
“The songs were one of the most important things for the guerilla struggle. They generated consciousness and unity, causing impact both in Nicaragua and for comrades abroad in struggles in neighboring countries.”

César Augusto Moreno
“They were an instructional guerilla message for everyone.”

Néstor Morales
“They motivated the young, transformed consciousness and helped us get to know the ideas of the Sandinista Front.”

Israel Gutiérrez
“They took off our blindfold, exposing the dictatorship.”

Anonymous102
“They were inclusive of the different social classes.”

Iván Uriarte
“An injection of enthusiasm.”

Otilio Bado Sánchez
“We didn’t know how to read but when you heard the songs you could analyze what you had and then think about something better.”

Vladimir López
“They were the unification of the working class to defeat the dictatorship.”

Miguel H.
“They were a metaphor for unity of the different insurrectionist factions.”

Francisco Cedeño
“They generated consciousness and helped generate revolutionary legends.”

Carlos M. Peña
“Insurrectional unity.”

Marlon Gutiérrez
“That music spoke. It awakened all of our spirits”.

Denis Martínez
“Encouragement”.

Carlos Leiva
“They helped to better understand the ideas and causes for which we were fighting.”

José P.
“They raise your spirit.”

102 Some ex-combatants prefer to use their guerilla pseudonyms or to remain anonymous
Eduardo Barea
“I identify with them because they speak about campesinos, the working class, the proletariat.”
Appendix 5
Translated lyrics from *Guitarra Armada* (Loaded Guitar)

1. The Garand (4:07)
2. What’s the FAL? (4:12)
3. The Ammunition (5:15)
4. The M-1 Carabine (4:44)
5. The Explosives (3:55)
6. Military memorandum 1-79 (3:29)
7. A shot from 22 (1:58)
8. To Gaspar Garcia (3:25)
9. The Mockingbird asks about Arlen (3:22)
10. Commander Carlos Fonseca (4:57)
11. Anthem for the United Sandinista Front (2:56)

### El Garand

**Coro:**
Entre todos los fusiles, este Garand es la ley
el cañón de su calibre tiene 30.06
si usted quiere desarmarlo
levante bien las dos cejas
pare las orejas y oiga esta canción.

Hasta cinco cuadras llega
su tremendo proyectil
pesa diez libras completas
ocho tiros tiene el clip
el Garand está compuesto
por tres piezas y estas son:
caja de los mecanismos, cilindro de gases y el mero cañón

Ante todo coloquemos
las piezas de este fusil
en alineación bien hecha
izquierda a derecha que es mejor así
quitemos primero el peine,
hagamos bien la inspección
porque a veces vale en boca
esto nos provoca la peor situación.

[Coro]

Tomamos el guardamonte, del gatillo sí señor
hacia abajo y atracito viene ‘chorreadito’ su disparador
separemos al instante la culata del cañón

### The Garand

**Chorus:**
Of all rifles, this Garand is the king
the caliber of its barrel is 30.06
If you want to disassemble it
follow these instructions to the letter
raise your two eyebrows
prick your ears, and listen to this song

Its powerful projectile
fires a distance up to five blocks
it weighs ten pounds exactly,
eight rounds to a clip
The Garand is made up of three pieces,
and these are: the mechanism section, the gas cylinder and the barrel itself

Before all else,
put the pieces of this rifle
into proper alignment
from left to right, that’s the best way
first remove the bloc clip, inspect it well
because sometimes there’s a bullet in the chamber
Which can cause the worst situation.

[Chorus]

Take the trigger guard from the trigger, Yes Sir!
Downward and a little to the back the trigger housing comes right out
Right away you can separate the stock from the barrel

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103 The Garand [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86cZXqDDaoQ&index=5&list=PL29M9-yqF0ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86cZXqDDaoQ&index=5&list=PL29M9-yqF0ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq)
| El guardamonte agarremos y desenrosquemos del gaje el tapón | Grab the handguard and unscrew the cover from the gauge |
| Desenchufemos ahora todo el obturador vamos al siguiente paso y el cilindro de gases quito de un envión sacamos seguidamente el guardamano inferior y empujando la barilla la aparto del brazo del elevador. | Now remove the entire receiver on to the next step and pull out the gas cylinder next take out the lower handguard and pushing on the rod, separate it from the operating spring. |
| [Coro] | [Coro] |
| El manubrio y el cerrojo tienen su separación y éste cerrojo bendito, sale talladito de su posición Y de este modo compitas se acaba la operación El fusil ahora armemos para que acabemos con el opresor | The handguard and the bolt are separated And that blessed bolt is worked out of its position And in this way, my friends, the operation is complete Now let’s assemble the rifle to finish off the oppressor |
| [Coro] | [Coro] |
| Quebramos el arma ahora, | What’s the FAL? (Lightweight Automatic Rifle) |
| Qué es el FAL¹⁰⁴? (Fusil Automático Ligero) | Pretty boy Juan asked once Gumercindo answered him in popular slang my buddy Juan this animal will shoot it all if you learn the way real well You can make it go rata-tat-tat! |
| Pregunto una vez Juan-Lindo le contestó Gumercindo con acento popular compa Juan este animal tira todo si le agarra bien el modo Con usted va a charchalear! | From the very beginning the FAL has the mark of a great rifle, it shoots full-auto beautifully, with 20 shots in its magazine, if I squeeze the trigger it barks, and it has a range of four blocks, and at a range of five full blocks you can knock down a small airplane. |
| El FAL ya desde la entrada tiene la estampa de un gran fusil, metralla de bello estilo, de 20 tiros su magazine, si aprieto el gatillo ladra, y a cuatro cuadras su alcance dá, y a cinco cuadras completas una avioneta se puede apear. | To start our task take out the magazine, and now check the chamber be sure there’s no cartridge left in it, we’ll never be Macho men! But we have to keep moving removing the male screw from the female one! |
| Para empezar la tarea va para afuera su magazín, y ahora lo cajonero que no se quede ni un proyectil, machistas nunca seremos! pero tendremos que proceder quitando el tornillo macho del otro que hace de la mujer. | (chorus) |
| [Coro] | Let’s break down the weapon now, |
| Quebramos el arma ahora, | |

¹⁰⁴ Qué es el FAL? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-vQuuLZ_FY&index=8&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq
llegó la hora de separar
la laminita del cierre
la masa viene saliendo ya
retiramos la cubierta
y así logramos de zopetón,
poner a un lado este asunto
y aparte el conjunto del cañón.

[Coro]

Cuando el tapón de los gases
fuera de base lo pongo yo,
la barila y su consorte
que es el resorte, sacando voy
separo el pistón de gases
de su resorte matrimonial
y así queda en puras piezas
esta belleza llamada FAL.

[Coro]

...Diálogo

Cuando en la parte de arriba
vemos escrita la letra «a»,
eso ya te esta indicado,
que estás buscando un tiro normal...
pero si en el mismo sitio
«GR» vemos con precisión,
el arma está preparada
para granadas al por mayor.

[Coro]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Las Municiones¹⁰⁵</th>
<th>The Ammunition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compañero, estas balas fueron recuperadas en las calles de Matagalpa. O sea, son balas que sirvieron al enemigo, pero ahora que las tenemos nosotros ya no son las mismas… Sabe por qué cumpleta? Porque estas balas nos están sirviendo ahora para conquistar la libertad.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comrade, these bullets were recovered from the streets of Matagalpa. That is, they were the enemy’s bullets but now we have them and they are no longer the same… Do you know why, friend comrade? Because these bullets serve us now to win freedom.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echele borona, cumpleta Venancio de las municiones écheme un sermón yo prefiero hermano, que por separado haga cada bala su presentación.</td>
<td>Tell me all about it, friend Venancio, Give me a sermon about ammunition, brother I prefer that each bullet seperately introduces itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Vamos a ver qué nos dice la bala ordinaria”</td>
<td>“Let’s see what the ordinary bullet says…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo por ser la común y ordinaria me siento en un nivel muy inferior Soy la bala certera endemoniada henchida de eficacia y de rigor cobriza como un indio americano corcel de furia voy a lo que voy desde que salgo al viento voy buscando el mero corazón del opresor.</td>
<td>Because I’m common and ordinary, I feel myself to be very inferior I’m the straight-shooting demonic bullet swollen with efficiency and rigor copper-colored like an American Indian furious steed, I do what I go to do from the moment I head out into the wind, I go in search of the very heart of the oppressor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Coro]</td>
<td>[Chorus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…ahora le toca el turno a la perforante incendiaria! A ver compañera, de un paso al frente!”</td>
<td>“…now is the turn of the piercing incendiary bullet! Comrade, a step forward!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo soy la munición por excelencia sin despreciar a nadie en esta lid mis posibilidades en la guerra expican el porque yo estoy aquí como incendiaria grito siempre lista! y como perforante rauda voy yo soy la rojinegra sandinista yo soy por vocación la munición.</td>
<td>I am the superior quality ammunition without looking down on anyone in this battle my capacity in the war explain why I’m here like a firebrand I shout “Always ready!” and like a piercing I am swift I am the red and black Sandinista I am ammunition by vocation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Coro]</td>
<td>[Chorus]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Je! Miren quién viene por aquí… nada menos que la trazadora, la que le asustó los frijoles al chiguín, al hijo del dictador…”</td>
<td>“Ja! Look who’s here… nothing less than the tracer bullet, the one who frightened the son of the dictator…!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo soy la trazadora combativa anaranjado vivo mi color no tengo propiedades expansivas pero hago lo que puedo en mi fulgor yo soy la quiebra placa soy la guía, baqueana de la noche siempre fui</td>
<td>I am the tracer bullet bright orange in color I don’t have expansive properties But I do what I can in my own incandescence I am the trailblazer, I am the guide, night scout I have always been happy firefly of the guerilla,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁰⁵ Las Municiones [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cYQrJnCzM&index=9&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cYQrJnCzM&index=9&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lucífernaga feliz de la guerrilla</th>
<th>I am a compass of a fierce projectile.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>soy brújula del recio proyectil.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Coro]

“Aquí viene la última, la de fogueo, la que lanza las granadas. Pero cómo es este asunto si esta compa solo es la pura cápsula?”

Yo que puedo decir de mis valores si ni siquiera tengo proyectil, es como sin tener mecha ni llama quisiera ser antorcha, ser candil en medio de esta cápsula vacía va el alma del hermano que cayó, lanzando en el umbral de su partida una granada de fragmentación.

[Coro]

What can I tell you of my qualities? though I don’t even have a projectile, it’s like having neither fuse nor flame I’d like to be a torch, to be a lantern in the middle of this empty capsule is the soul of the brother who fell, throwing on the threshold of his leaving a fragmentation grenade.

### Carabina M1

| Las fuerzas vivas del enemigo no son difíciles de derrotar si usted acurrucha una carabina La M1 le va a hablar alcanza hasta los 300 metros con bayoneta se puede usar |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| En la montaña y guerrilla urbana es hoy lenguaje insurreccional |
| Para desarmarla no hay que ser letrado pero en cada paso hay que tener cuidado cada mazurquita que aprenda cantando será una lección sencilla y al grano cada mazurquita que aprenda le digo será un hombre menos para el enemigo |
| Lo mismo que en toditas las armas tenemos siempre que hacerle inspección para salir de todas las dudas es de rutina el disparo en control en el cañote de la carabina apretadita la anilla está si la quitamos separaremos el guardamanos de cedro real |

[coro]

El paso ahora es separar la caja

---

106 Carabina M1 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4Rn6U7X4Ec&index=7&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4Rn6U7X4Ec&index=7&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The M1 Carbine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The living forces of the enemy are not difficult to defeat if you cradle a carbine the M1 will promise you to fire up to 300 meters with a bayonet you can use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the mountains and the urban guerilla war it is today the language of the insurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In order to disassemble it you don’t need to be a scholar but in each step you need to be careful each little Mazurka that you learn singing will be a lesson, simple and to the point each little Mazurka that you learn, I tell you will mean one less man for the enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As for each and every of the weapons, we must always perform an inspection to do away with all doubts that’s the routine for controlled fire on the great barrel of the carbine, this ring is held tight if we remove it, we can separate the handguard from the cedar wood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Chorus]

---
[coro]

Siguiendo ahora sobre la brecha
de izquierda a derecha voy a empujar
este pincito que es suave	sin mucho esfuerzo resbalará
solo hace falta sacar del punto
todo el conjunto del disparador
y hemos logrado con esta rima
la carabina conocer mejor.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Los Explosivos&lt;sup&gt;107&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>The Explosives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Para vencer al tirano y su guardia nacional hay que meterse al fogueo, no retroceder jamás!</td>
<td>In order to defeat the tyrant and his National Guard You have to jump into the fire, never turn back!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hay que conocer amigos, la receta musical de todos los explosivos en la lucha popular</td>
<td>Friends you must meet the musical recipe for all the explosives in the popular struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estas son las coplas, coplas libertarias de la gigantona revolucionaria que con su comparsa de liberación va de calle en calle llamando a las masas a la insurrección</td>
<td>These are the couplets, the couplets of freedom for the gigantic revolution that with its troupe of liberation goes out on the street calling the masses to join the insurrection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuáles son los ingredientes del detonante casero? Está el nitrato de amonio y está el aluminio negro el percorato, el nitrato y el clorato de potasio y otros muchos materiales como asfalto, goma y caucho</td>
<td>What are the ingredients of the homemade bomb? there is ammonium nitrate and black aluminum perchlorate, nitrate and potassium chloride and many other substances like asphalt, gum and rubber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuando se acerque el momento de la ofensiva final a la calle todo el pueblo a poner su grano de maíz queremos ver en tu casa para las bombas construir carbón vegetal y grasa, azúcar y aserrín</td>
<td>Once the moment of the final offensive draws near let the whole town go out on the street to add their grain of sand we want to see in your houses for the purpose of making bombs charcoal and lard, sugar and sawdust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>107</sup> Los Explosivos [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olQw6kcrBbw&index=2&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olQw6kcrBbw&index=2&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq)
Si el tal nitrato de amonio
te cuesta mucho encontrar
en la fábrica de abono lo podés recuperar
si es el aluminio negro,
lo consigo por quintales
en las fábricas y centros de pinturas comerciales

Hablemos de un explosivo eficaz como ninguno
me refiero al conocido por fórmula R1
lleva nitrato de amonio 85%
Un 10 de aserrín le pongo
y un 5 aluminio negro

Para que el R2 se sienta,
este porcentaje pongo
nitrato amonio 60
y una onza de asfalto en polvo
de perchlorato de potasio
un 20 le agrego yo
aluminio del negrito, un 9 de proporción

Para seguir la tarea
entramos al R3
nitrato de amonio 80,
asfalto sólido 10
para llegar al final
de este explosivo tremendo
le meto al nacatamal aluminio 10%

[Chorus]
If you find ammonium nitrate
very difficult to get
in fertilizer factories you can collect it
if it is black aluminum,
you can get it in sacks
in factories and at commercial paint sellers

We’re speaking of an explosive
efficient like no other
I refer to that known by Formula R1
it has 85% ammonium nitrate
10% sawdust and I add 5% of black aluminum

To make the noisy R2,
in these proportions I add
60% ammonium nitrate
and an ounce of powdered asphalt
I add 20% potassium perchlorate
black aluminum a 9% in proportion

To continue with the task
let’s take on R3
Ammonium nitrate: 80%,
solid asphalt: 10%
to finally arrive
at this tremendous explosive
I add to this mixture,
aluminum: 10%

Memorandum militar 1-79

Con los primeritos rayos de la aurora
nuestro munición debemos sacar
y bien distribuidos poner en la alforja
un cien tiros por hombre sería lo ideal

Nuestra militancia revolucionaria
nos exige a todos a diario estudiar
y con la limpieza reglamentaria
en el arme y desarme el fusil aceitar

Memorandum Militar 1-79 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xLuHVkJjaFE&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq&index=11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nunca afloje el chopo, que es la garantía de su propia vida, compita Ramón donde ponga el ojo coloque la bala pensando en la patria y su liberación</th>
<th>Nunca olvide el uso de los parapetos del desplazamiento y saber camuflar la utilización de sectores de fuego y la posición correcta de tirar. Es indispensable queridos hermanos coordinar las fuerzas contra el opresor solo así podremos vencer la maniobra la furia del yankee que es su protector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[coro]</td>
<td>[coro]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nunca hay que hacer justicia por su propia mano”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Implacables en el combate, generosos en la victoria”</td>
<td>“Implacables en el combate, generosos en la victoria”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Con el responsable inmediato tenemos que hacer efectiva comunicación Ellos nos dirán en el caso concreto dónde hay medicinas, dónde hay un buzón. Con los prisioneros respeto tendremos, en todos los casos justicia se hará, pero en combate muy firmes seremos juramos vencer y rendirnos jamás.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>[coro]</td>
<td>[coro]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Justice should never be done through your own hands”</td>
<td>“Justice should never be done through your own hands”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Implacable in combat, generous in victory”</td>
<td>“Implacable in combat, generous in victory”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With the immediate superior we must make effective communication they will direct us in each particular case; where there is medicine, where there is a mailbox we will show respect to the prisoners, in every case justice will be done, but in combat we will be very firm we swear to win and never surrender.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Un Tiro 22</th>
<th>A 22 caliber</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Compa, fíjese que en ese momento, cuando estalló la cuestión, no pude conseguir una ametralladora. No tuve más remedio que fajarme con este riflito 22. Pero viera usted, compa. Así como lo ve, todo humildito…efectivo el rifle! Enemigo que se asomaba, enemigo que me volaba”</td>
<td>“Comrade, imagine that at that moment, when the situation came to a head, I couldn’t get hold of a machine gun. The only option I had was to work hard with this little .22 rifle. But you should have seen it, comrade! It’s just as you see it, meek and humble… but the rifle’s effective! Each enemy that peeked out was an enemy blown away.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un tiro 22, que sale desde el primer corazón torturado da en el blanco,</td>
<td>A 22 caliber, which comes out from the first tortured heart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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109 Un Tiro 22 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-udQDefd28&index=10&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-udQDefd28&index=10&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrg)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **es más certero que las balas disparadas sin amor sin odio**<br>**hits the target, it is more accurate than bullets shot without love, without hate**<br>**A Gaspar García**<br>**To Gaspar García**<br>**El Zenzontle pregunta por Arlen**<br>**The Mockingbird asks about Arlen**<br><br>**Un buen día nos llegó a tiempo completo, Gaspar de Asturias el misionero que araba sobre la mar**<br>**Logró cambiar la parroquia, sotana y confesionario por montaña y evangelio, fusil revolucionario**<br>**Su voz por Tola se oyó por Rivas Gaspar pasó y Ángel, Martín y Miguel cayeron los tres con él**<br>**Agarrá bien la guitarra, ‘jodido’, decía Gaspar su corazón guerrillero nunca dejó de cantar**<br>**Sabía que llegaría la muerte sin avisar pero la muerte se mira cuando hay un pueblo detrás.**<br><br>**One fine day he came to us full time, Gaspar from Asturias, the missionary who ploughed over the sea**<br>**He managed to exchange his parish, robes and confession booth for the mountains and evangelizing, revolutionary rifle**<br>**His voice was heard all over Tola, over Rivas Gaspar went and Angel, Martin and Miguel, all three fell with him**<br>**Hold your guitar tight, ‘damn it’, Gaspar would say his guerilla heart never stopped singing**<br>**He knew that death would come with no warning but death just looks on when the people are behind you.**<br><br>**Comrade Guardabarranco [Nicaragua’s national bird, meaning ‘Ravine guard’] brother to the wind, song and light tell me if in your travels you have seen a girl named Arlen Siu**<br>**Zenzontle, my friend, I saw a sweet star in the cane field**<br><br>**El Zenzontle Pregunta por Arlen**<br>**The Mockingbird asks about Arlen**

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110 A Gaspar García https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymFzbjrNfaY&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq&index=6<br>111 El Zenzontle Pregunta por Arlen https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kOq1or72tl&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq&index=12
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dentro de los rumores del pajonal</th>
<th>a dart of a thousand colors within the rumors of the scrublands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entero en el hueco de su guitarra</td>
<td>Whole in the hole of your guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>el lucero limpio de su corazón</td>
<td>the clean morning star of her heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se fue río arriba pa’ la sabana</td>
<td>she went upstream to the grasslands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>como un río de agua serenito</td>
<td>like a river with calm waters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dice Martiniano que en la montaña</td>
<td>Martiniano says that everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revolucionario todo es allí</td>
<td>revolutionary is in the Mountains,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que anda clandestina una mariposa</td>
<td>that a butterfly goes about in hiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y su responsable es un colibrí</td>
<td>and her superior is a hummingbird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compadre Guardabarranco</td>
<td>Comrade Guardabarranco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ay usted perdón mi curiosidad</td>
<td>Oh, please forgive my curiosity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cómo era la guerrillera</td>
<td>What was the guerilla girl like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que según sus señas pasó por allá</td>
<td>Who according to your clues passed through there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le cuento zenzontle amigo</td>
<td>I tell you, Zenzontle my friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que la chinita peleó hasta el final</td>
<td>that the girl fought up to the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nació un manantial</td>
<td>a freshwater spring formed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que a cada ratito le viene a cantar.</td>
<td>to which she continually comes to sing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[coro]  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comandante Carlos Fonseca112</th>
<th>Commander Carlos Fonseca</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poseídas por el Dios de la furia</td>
<td>Possessed by the God of Fury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y el demonio de la ternura</td>
<td>and the demon of tenderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>salen de la cárcel mis palabras</td>
<td>my words come out of jail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hacia la lluvia</td>
<td>towards the rain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y sediento de luz te nombre hermano</td>
<td>And thirsty for light, I call your name brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>en mis horas de aislamiento</td>
<td>in my hour of isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vienes derribando los muros de la noche</td>
<td>you come knocking down the walls of the night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nítido, inmenso</td>
<td>clear, immense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comandante Carlos, Carlos Fonseca, tayacán vencedor de la muerte, novio de la patria rojinegra</td>
<td>Commander Carlos, Carlos Fonseca, guide, defeater of death,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua entera te grita: ¡presente!</td>
<td>groom to the red and black homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuando apareciste llegaste a nosotros con tus ojos miopes azules intensos, fuiste desde entonces el hermano terco, indeclinable, sempiterno</td>
<td>the whole of Nicaragua shouts: here you are!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuiste mecanógrafo, hormiga, martillo y al día siguiente de nuestro encuentro vimos tus letreros subversivos en todos los muros de nuestro pueblo</td>
<td>When you appeared you came to us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with your intensely blue-eyed myopic gaze,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>since then you have been the brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>most stubborn, unavoidable, eternal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You were a typist, ant, hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and on the day after our encounter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>we saw your subversive posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>over all the walls in our town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

112 Comandante Carlos Fonseca [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4U_TMiy6EM&index=3&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4U_TMiy6EM&index=3&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFm6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[coro]</th>
<th>[Chorus]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Una bala en la selva de Zinica penetró en tu recio corazón de santo y estalló tu sangre en nuestras vidas como una gigante bomba de contacto.</td>
<td>A bullet in the jungle of Zinica penetrated your sturdy saint's heart and your blood exploded into our lives like a giant contact bomb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desbordante de amor hacia los hombres, trinitaria roja tu pecho desnudo, tus ojos azules generosos apuntando firmes hacia el futuro.</td>
<td>Running over with love for your fellow man, bougainvillea red your naked breast, your generous blue eyes, looking firmly towards the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuando los afiches del tirano sean inseputas huellas de la escoria; cuando los traidores y cobardes sean referencias de una vieja historia.</td>
<td>When the tyrant’s posters are unburied footprints in the dross; when the traitors and the cowards are just figures in an old story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las generaciones venideras de la Nicaragua libre y luminosa van a recordarte eternamente con tu carabina disparando auroras.</td>
<td>The generations to come of a Nicaragua free and bright will remember you eternally with your carbine shooting dawns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Himno de la Unidad del Frente Sandinista

| Adelante marchemos compañeros avancemos a la revolución nuestro pueblo es el dueño de su historia arquitecto de su liberación. | March onwards comrades we are moving the revolution ahead our people are the owners of their history architects to their own liberation. |
| Combatientes del Frente Sandinista adelante que es nuestro el porvenir rojinegra bandera nos cobija ¡Patria libre vencer o morir! | Combatants of the Sandinista Front, our future lies ahead! red and black flag covers us a free homeland, victory or death! |
| Los hijos de Sandino ni se venden ni se rinden luchamos contra el yankee enemigo de la humanidad. | The children of Sandino neither sell out nor surrender, we fight against the Yankee enemy of humanity. |
| Hoy el amanecer dejó de ser una tentación mañana algún día surgirá un nuevo sol que habrá de iluminar toda la tierra. | Today dawn ceased to be a temptation, some tomorrow a new sun will emerge which will light up the entire land. |

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113 Himno de la Unidad del Frente Sandinista
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOYRYiEY14U&index=4&list=PL29M9-yqF7ogaOHFr6K-wQ9hMa7S6bmrq
| que nos legaron los mártires y héroes con caudalosos ríos de leche y miel | left us as legacy by the martyrs and heroes with rivers overflowing milk and honey. |
| [coro] | [Chorus] |