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Why We Joined the Movement to Rescue Sandinismo

*Mónica Baltodano**

Part 2 of 2

The FSLN's only Conflict with the Current Government

Neoliberalism has succeeded in dismantling almost all social transformations achieved by the revolution and has instituted a voracious, inhuman capitalism: it has privatized public services, providing opportunities to strengthen transnational control of our economy; it has handed out national territory in mining and forestry concessions; it has promoted the privatization of water for all kinds of purposes, including huge dams. Businesses with foreign capital and gas stations have cropped up everywhere, while the only options left to the vast majority of the population are the precarious jobs offered by the *maquilas*, emigration to Costa Rica or other countries or the most absolute poverty.

The current economic policy has favored only a group of oligarchs. Today's government is a complete sell-out, in the strict sense of the word: the best land, the youngest and best workers, the economic legislation, energy, communications, the mines, the best coasts, the exportables, water ... everything is earmarked for foreign capital. And because it has thrown its lot in with the pact, the FSLN has come into conflict with the government over divvying up public posts, not over questioning its policies in any depth—beyond the rhetoric—because its leaders also participate in the above-mentioned businesses.

“Better to Lose with Daniel Than Win with Anyone Else”

In early 2005, a sizable group of Sandinistas initiated a political process aimed at putting Herty Lewites forward as an FSLN presidential pre-candidate in the internal primary elections established in the party statutes. The official leadership responded by expelling Lewites and his campaign chief Víctor Hugo Tinoco from the party ranks without recurring to any legitimate statutory proceeding, eliminating the primaries themselves and again confirming Daniel Ortega as the FSLN's arbitrary presidential candidate. They launched all manner of disqualifiers against Lewites' supporters, the most common being that they were agents of imperialism, rightwing infiltrators and betrayers of the popular interests.

As the Democratic Left, we came out immediately in favor of the militancy's right to primary elections and of a political debate that would permit informed and mature candidate selection. We were aware that Herty Lewites represents centrist positions and that we don't share his discourse on various issues, but we did share his concern for a renovation within Sandinismo, and above all a break with the pact-fed official line.

We rejected the disqualifiers because they were also inconsistent: over the years Lewites has been one of the people Daniel Ortega himself most trusted, until he dared challenge his presidential candidacy. This dual discourse, this double standard, has become the pro-Daniel crowd's *modus operandi*.

We also charged that Daniel's stubborn insistence on the presidential candidacy despite the repeatedly demonstrated solid and broad vote against him can only be understood through the explicitly declared logic that it's "preferable to lose with Daniel than to win with anyone else," which expresses the pragmatism and aims of the power group around him. For them the status quo will be maintained whether he wins or loses the elections. Their only goal is to defend their interests, and seen from the logic of the pact, having a pro-Alemán PLC in office poses no risk to them, while a pro-Alemán PLC out of office would only mean more of the same.

It's Not Only About Winning Elections

We have declared repeatedly that the changes Nicaragua needs require modifications in the social correlation of forces. It's a question not just of winning elections but doing so based on an attractive program of changes that enjoys the backing of an aware public. To that end, we've put our bets on grassroots work, the construction of autonomous and belligerent social movements, the organization of the citizenry itself around its own interests and the development of civic consciousness.

Our conviction has been nourished by innumerable Latin American examples. It's not enough for a party that declares itself leftist to come to power. It must do so with a program involving real breaks with the prevailing economic model based on the Washington Consensus. Declared desire isn't enough; also required is a grassroots correlation rooted in the formation of a critical consciousness, grassroots organization and an autonomous social movement able to pressure even that leftist government for social changes.

We thus advocate organizational efforts and an articulation of Sandinismo that goes beyond electoral expectations and overcomes the tendency to create movements that revolve around individual caudillos. This is what we've worked for all these years, independent of the electoral processes.

We Can't Stay on the Sidelines; What Happened Isn't Acceptable

We can't, however, stay on the sidelines of the real political processes taking place in the country. If we coldly analyze what we see in the opinion polls, in the population's direct participation in the media and in our own direct contacts with grassroots Sandinistas, thousands believe we can't go into the presidential elections with Sandinismo again straightjacketed by the logic that it doesn't matter what the leaders do, what interests they favor, how questionable their conduct is because Sandinistas will supposedly end up "closing ranks," eternally voting for the candidates that the upper echelons loyal to Daniel have imposed without respect for any democratic procedure.

This is no longer acceptable to us. In the November 5 national elections, Sandinistas in the broadest sense of the term must be allowed other options. It's an elemental democratic right. Daniel Ortega's continuism is a form of authoritarianism that limits the most elemental political rights, particularly those of Sandinistas, and contradicts the longed-for freedom and democracy for which we've fought all our lives and for which so many gave their life.

Herty Lewites is a Sandinista option

Herty Lewites is a Sandinista figure and the backing and sympathy he's receiving from a wide range of people—not just Sandinistas—must be seen as an opportunity for Sandinismo as a whole. If the pro-Ortega upper echelons were really thinking about people's interests and the importance of winning presidential office to modify the prevailing model, they would have taken advantage of Lewites' appeal as a candidate and thrown their efforts behind the FSLN's formation of a belligerent, organized grassroots social correlation that would ensure people maximum social advantages from a Sandinista government.

It's not acceptable for other options linked to Sandinismo to be barred from electoral participation based on exclusionary or rigged processes using the levers of the electoral branch of government. We believe that this time the electoral gamut must be expanded to surmount the effects of the pact we Nicaraguans are suffering and allow voters to choose from among truly different options, without the kind of polarization that has favored the current situation.

They're Trying to Sink Us In Polarization

The polarization into which the two party elite blocs want to submerge us only serves to keep us subjected. They fake contradictions to the death, but it's almost all words. They push the base into the "closing ranks" to be consistent with their old-time banners, but in reality they eat from the same plate in the parliament, the Supreme Court, the Supreme Electoral Council, the Comptroller General's Office, the Human Rights Defense Attorney's Office and their own corporations. Everything is divvied up between them, while their rank and file are supposed to believe that they're different.

We believe FSLN militants have a legitimate right to support other Sandinista candidates, even if this time they aren't running on the official ballot, which has been sequestered by a minority that controls the party apparatus. For the vast majority of Sandinistas, internal democracy has been castrated and restricted to unacceptable limits, excluding them from participation and decision-making.

Beyond Elections and For a More Just Nicaragua

From our militancy in the FSLN, we've decided to back the efforts the Movement to Rescue Sandinismo has been making since 2005 to construct an option that unites all Sandinistas who don't agree with the official policies pushed by the pro-Ortega elite, which have led Nicaragua into a blind alley. In particular, we back the effort to pull together all Sandinistas who disagree with Daniel Ortega's eternal presidential candidacy, which would undoubtedly end in yet another Sandinista electoral defeat.

In expressing its support for this movement, the Left of the FSLN is aware that so far the emphasis has been on promoting a Sandinista electoral alternative. This doesn't mean unconditional agreement with all the proposals and postulates put forward by Herty Lewites and other founders of the Movement to Rescue Sandinismo.

As leftists, we defend the right to come together around common points, based on respect for the differences we obviously have. We don't believe that absolute unanimity of the broad spectrum of

Sandinistas is possible, but it is urgent to build consensus based on tolerance, considering that the priority for Nicaragua today is to break the pact's logic, which has only deepened the lack of genuine alternatives to Nicaragua's major problems.

An Opportunity to Build Agreement

As Sandinista militants, we consider it legitimate to call for more than the creation of an electoral consensus. Better still is to see this movement as an opportunity to build common agreements that enable us to join together more permanently around a comprehensive national program, based on a Sandinismo that insists on the need to build a more just, equitable, humane, democratic and honest Nicaragua.

There is a need to bring together those who have not renounced the dream of a world of greater solidarity, a Sandinismo loyal to the values and postulates of our heroes and martyrs, faithful to the ethics of the common good, which doesn't seek perks or posts and whose function is to enforce the interests of the excluded. This mission requires mystique, self-sacrifice, abnegation and daily work with the people, not with caudillo ambitions but with the goal of developing the only subject capable of taking on the greatest tasks. That subject is the people itself, which has appropriated its own destiny aware of the causes of its precarious situation and thus endowed with the tools for its own emancipation.

We're joining the Movement for the Rescue of Sandinismo from our leftist tendency and our organizational militancy in the FSLN. We do so safe in the knowledge that following the elections the efforts to reunite the broad array of Sandinistas, which have been dispersed up to now, will allow new efforts to be made on behalf of genuine grassroots interests either from government, if it is won, or from the opposition.

Rebuild Sandinismo with the Banners of Yesterday and Today

The only possibility of reforging Sandinismo as a transforming Leftist force is to construct an historical project of emancipation and end the Danielista monopoly aimed at co-opting the people's history of struggle, its symbols, commemorative events and even its dead. We have joined the Movement to Rescue Sandinismo with our own banners, those we've always defended because they've inspired each rebellion against the status quo:

- The struggle for peace and life and the creation of a just, humane, peaceful world in which conflicts are decided by negotiations and by treating all parties as equals.
- The creation of a new economy that ends the exclusion of the great majorities from their right to access progress, well-being, education and a more human life.
- Equality for all citizens and nations and the struggle against discrimination, marginalization and backwardness.
- Liberty, national independence, sovereignty and the struggle against oppression and dictatorship.
- In addition to these traditional banners, we assume those courageously raised by thousands of men and women on the planet who are organized in the new social movements and civil organizations:
- Honesty and transparency in public administration and the fight against corruption.

- Full equality of rights between the sexes, dialogue, the democratization of family relations and the struggle against the dictatorship of men over women and parents over children.
- Tolerance and coexistence among races, respect for differences and the struggle against double standards and discrimination.
- Integrity and sincerity, the struggle against opportunism and lies.
- Defense of nature and the environment, the struggle against the squandering of resources and abuse of other species.
- Regional and municipal autonomy, the struggle against “capital-centrism.”

This Isn't Just an Electoral Gamble

We consider it urgently important to build a new democracy in our Nicaragua that is committed to social equity and liberates citizens from the schizophrenia of formal and real democracy in which the laws say one thing and quite another ends up being done, the parties promise one thing and actually do something quite different and the actions of courts and judges have nothing to do with justice.

We want to build a new democracy that resolves the growing disassociation between law and reality; harmonizes the doctrine and practice of democracy; eradicates the crisis of legality and institutionality, of representation and legitimacy; levels the playing field between those represented and those who represent; and ends the hateful imposition of the pact's majority electoral delegates over those of the minorities with no debate. It will be a new democracy that promotes security and offers new values and hopes to the majority of Nicaraguans.

We're convinced that our main adversary in the efforts to construct “another possible world” is the world-dominating imperialism practiced by the US government and all those who support globalization and the imposition of the capitalist model, now in its neoliberal form. They organize measures to protect the interests of the great corporations, propagate and defend their common interests, conquer new markets and re-colonize entire nations. They then impose this domination on our countries through multiple means, of which the conditions of the IMF and World Bank programs are the ones best known by our people.

But we also know that the subordination to this model in each of our countries takes place with the complicity of docile governments that are in turn subordinated to economic groups that benefit from these exclusionary policies. It is therefore urgent to develop alternative national proposals that build popular power and another social correlation, and that place their faith in independent, sovereign governments.

We're not just gambling on another electoral alternative, but on the creation of a truly alternative political movement, identified with the ideology of social change. Of course we need an alternative electoral victory, but it is even more important to build a social majority for change beyond the coming elections.

**FSLN guerrilla comandante Monica Baltodano* has been an elected Managua Municipal Council member and National Assembly representative for the FSLN as well as a member of the party's national Directorate.

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