Political Perspectives in Encyclopedias: Portrayal of the Nicaraguan Revolution

Brian B. Smith
Western Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses

Part of the Latin American Studies Commons, Library and Information Science Commons, and the Sociology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/masters_theses/1014

This Masters Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master’s Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact maira.bundza@wmich.edu.
POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN ENCYCLOPEDIAS:
PORTRAYAL OF THE NICARAGUAN
REVOLUTION

by

Brian B. Smith

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 1991
Encyclopedia text is most often presented as objective, factual, authoritatively documented truth. To examine this knowledge claim, this thesis analyzes the portrayal of the 1979 Nicaraguan revolution in editions of the four major U.S. encyclopedias. A qualitative content analysis is employed to determine the political perspectives present in encyclopedia coverage of the Nicaraguan revolution and the subsequent changes in Nicaraguan political economy brought about by that revolution.

The findings indicate that significant differences among and within the encyclopedias existed in the text analyzed. A variety of political perspectives were found to have influenced the content of the text, and to be linked to the significant differences present in the text. It is concluded that political perspective in encyclopedia text, as in all historical text, is unavoidable. This inevitable lack of objectivity should be acknowledged rather than hidden.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express a special acknowledgment and sincere appreciation to my advisor and committee chairperson, Dr. Gerald Markle, for his encouragement, assistance, direction, and support throughout my course of study; and to my committee members, Dr. Ronald Kramer and Dr. Donald Cooney for their advice, guidance, and assistance.

Thanks are also due to the friends I have encountered during my years at Western Michigan University: Brad, Marc, Jim, Jeff, Joanna, Kim, Jess, Kate, Cheryl, Scott, Jeff, Tanis, Adam, Annette, Michele, Jenny, Maureen, Brian, Steve, Eric, Lesta, Dave, Sandy, Kathy, Sue and Courtney. A life filled with only books is an empty life.

Finally, my deepest gratitude, thanks, and appreciation are extended to my parents, Jan and Barney, and to my sister, Jennifer. Home is always where the heart is.

Brian B. Smith
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
Political perspectives in encyclopedias: Portrayal of the Nicaraguan revolution

Smith, Brian Barnham, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1991
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** .......................................................... ii

**CHAPTER**

I. **INTRODUCTION** .................................................. 1
   - The Claim to Truth ........................................ 2
   - Testing the Claim ...................................... 7
   - Methods ..................................................... 11

II. **ANALYSIS** .......................................................... 15
   - Portrayal of the Somozas ............................. 15
   - Portrayal of the National Guard ..................... 32
   - Portrayal of the United States ....................... 37
   - Portrayal of the Soviet Union and Cuba .......... 56
   - Portrayal of the Sandinistas ......................... 61
   - Portrayal of the Contras ............................. 79
   - Portrayal of the Changes in Nicaragua's Political Economy .................. 83

III. **DISCUSSION** ..................................................... 109
   - The Presence of Political Perspectives .......... 109
   - The Interpretation of Historical Text .......... 123

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** .......................................................... 129
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

U.S. involvement in Nicaragua was one of the most heavily debated foreign policy issues in the United States during the 1980s. Conservatives claimed that the revolutionary Sandinista government was becoming a Soviet satellite and a base for Communist aggression in the Western Hemisphere, and that the Contras—who President Reagan equated with the founding fathers of the United States—were fighting against a totalitarian dictatorship. Liberals disagreed with conservatives on the extent to which the Sandinistas were a part of Soviet goals; they were also critical of the Contras. Leftists argued that Nicaragua had historically been a victim of U.S. aggression, and that the Contras' attempts to sabotage Nicaragua's recovering economy were but the most recent attempt by the United States to deny self-determination for Nicaraguans. Which perspective contains the "truth" about Nicaragua? For answers to such questions, many people often turn to encyclopedias.

This thesis examines how major U.S. encyclopedias have portrayed the Nicaraguan revolution and the changes in Nicaragua's political economy which resulted from the revolution. In a general sense, this thesis examines how
political beliefs are presented as generally accepted political knowledge and how history is depicted as factual.

The Claim to Truth

Generations of families and schools have used encyclopedias as a major reference tool. According to Sader's General Reference Books for Adults (1988), "Encyclopedias are found in approximately one out of every four homes in the United States" (p. 17). Bailey (1985) wrote that the encyclopedia's "presence in all types of libraries at all levels is taken for granted" (p. 218). In his study of encyclopedia use in small academic libraries, Bailey found that "the library, no matter how small, that fails to offer its patrons access to reasonably current editions of at least two or three encyclopedias will likely be considered seriously deficient" (p. 218). This extensive use and reliance on encyclopedias has led to a situation where "the sale of encyclopedias and the materials that supplement them generates some $500 million in revenues each year" (Sader, 1988, p. 17).

Encyclopedias are widely accepted as authoritative presenters of objective, factual history; scholarly and popular reviews of encyclopedias frequently accept their text as such. "For factual answers encyclopedias are treated as authoritative," stated Engle and Futas (1983, pp. 29-30), who added that reference books are the "items
we most depend on for accuracy" (p. 29). Referring to the senior U.S. encyclopedia, Einbinder (1964) stated that "The Britannica is more than a reference work. Over the years, it has become an institution in American life that is constantly consulted in setting factual questions" (p. 6). Sader's General Reference Books for Adults (1988), a "buying guide" intended to help librarians select reference books, stated about the objective, factual nature of encyclopedias that:

In general, publishers have elected to avoid polemical articles in favor of ones that codify knowledge in an impartial way. Whenever sensitive and controversial topics are included, reputable publishers go to great lengths to present all sides of the question. (p. 7)

In a book which chronicled the history of encyclopedias, Collison (1966) portrayed encyclopedia editors as being free of bias, and as having the role of ensuring that writers of encyclopedia articles do not include their own opinions: "Unprejudiced himself, the editor must be cognizant of prejudices in others, and temper his contributors' opinions" (pp. 13-14).

Reviews of encyclopedias reflect the view of the encyclopedia as an objective, authoritative document. In a review of an edition of Collier's, Sader (1988) concluded that "the articles ... are consistently accurate in reporting information," and that Collier's has a "high standard of reliability" (p. 77). Sader added that "like
its major competitors [Americana and Britannica] "Collier's is in the main an objective well-balanced encyclopedia.... In areas where controversy exists, it is usually mentioned" (p. 78). Sader made similar claims about the objectivity and accuracy of other encyclopedias:

On the whole, World Book remains a remarkably accurate and informative source of information. In nearly every respect, World Book adheres to high standards of objectivity. The encyclopedia does not avoid dealing frankly with controversy. ... In articles dealing with controversial or potentially controversial issues, the writers are careful to maintain an impartial tone. (p. 144)

Sader's strongest praise for an encyclopedia's objectivity was for The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: "In presenting differing points of view of sensitive issues, New Britannica is impeccably objective" (p. 123). Sader added: "Britannica encyclopedias have long been venerated as impeccable sources of truth and wisdom" (p. 123).

In cases where Sader found an encyclopedia's objectivity lacking, it was minimized. Sader stated that the Encyclopedia Americana "is dotted with many instances of obvious factual errors that ... could and should have been prevented"; it added, however, that these "obvious factual errors" were "relatively minor" (p. 95). On Britannica, Sader stated: "While our content experts have noted occasional errors, omissions, and instances of bias in New Britannica, they have found all the entries they have examined to be of exceptional quality" (p. 123). On World
"Our reviewers found few factual errors, and those mostly insignificant" (p. 144).

Kister's (1986) guide to encyclopedias, intended for a broader audience than Sader's, also reflected the view of encyclopedias as objective, authoritative documents. "Information in the Americana," Kister wrote, "is normally accurate and unbiased" (p. 72). Kister made a similar statement praising the objectivity of Collier's (p. 46). On World Book, Kister wrote: "Information in World Book is accurately and objectively presented. Articles dealing with controversial issues almost always discuss the pros and cons in an evenhanded manner" (p. 202-203). Britannica, Kister wrote, also presented "controversial subjects" objectively, and contained both sides of the issue (p. 145).

Underlying the view of encyclopedias as authoritative and objective presenters of history is the positivist view of written history. The positivist view assumes that a single, correct portrayal of a historical event or actor can be attained. Reflective of the positivist view is Gorman's (1982) claim that "every statement about the past is either true or false" (p. 8). Zinn (1990) quotes two well-known historians to illustrate the positivist view. Samuel Eliot Morison stated that the aim of historical writing is "to simply explain the event as it happened" (p. xvii). J.D. Hexter claimed that the "essential function"
of history relates to "its capacity to convey knowledge of the past as it actually was" (p. 302).

Central to the positivist view is the attempt to merge the method of science with the subject matter of history. The positivist, Slaate (1979) explains, "relies on the total sufficiency of the scientific method and its criteria of logic and sense perception for arriving at meaning and truth" (p. 21). Gorman (1982) came up with a set of principles and standards which, he claimed, ensured objectivity in the recreation of historical events. Criticisms of historical objectivity, he wrote, have:

to do with the selection of evidence, or with the selection of the events, states of affairs, and the rest, which historical statements are about.... Selection does take place here, of course, but there is nothing subjective about it, beyond whatever is problematic in the selection of historical statements. Evidence is selected in so far as it has a place in the construction of historical facts in accordance with proper historical method.... While mistakes may be made, and there may be areas of doubt, the deductive standards ... leave no room for the subjective selection of premisses. (p. 91)

In the positivist view, encyclopedias are important recorders of this objective history. Collison (1966) wrote that the encyclopedia "has a part to play in the recording of essential information and in the instruction of mankind" (p. 20). Twenty years later, professional reference book critic Ken Kister upheld this view of encyclopedias as important recorders of objective, factual history:

Perhaps Henry David Thoreau put it most simply in his classic Walden when he referred to an
encyclopedia as "an abstract of human knowledge." More precisely, an encyclopedia is a reference source ... that summarizes basic knowledge and information on all important subjects or, in the case of a specialized encyclopedia, a particular subject. An encyclopedia is an attempt to encompass, or encircle, that knowledge and information deemed essential or universally worth knowing. (1986, p. 1)

Considered to contain objective, factual knowledge documented by authoritative scholars, encyclopedias are directed towards the general public. Emphasizing the importance of encyclopedias to the general public in a world of specialized knowledge, Einbinder (1964) wrote that although an encyclopedia is "written primarily by scholars, the work is intended for laymen ... [it is] designed as a source of reference and a major instrument of popular education" (pp. 5-6). Kister (1986) repeated this claim, writing that "our best encyclopedias stand as small bulwarks against the onrushing tide of ever-increasing knowledge and information" (p. 3).

Testing the Claim

Few studies have been published which examine the notion of encyclopedias as objective, factual, authoritative chronicles of essential information, despite the presence of numerous studies which have challenged the claim to objectivity of other educational sources such as textbooks, newspapers or television programs. As Engle and Putas (1983) state:

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
For the past ten years or so, the effects of textbooks, readers, career materials, picture books, and other literature on children's perception, attitudes, and behavior related to both sexism and racism have been studied. There is a trend to study racial stereotyping in materials over time to see if changes are occurring. Researchers seldom have considered what reference books are saying to children concerning the role of women in society. (p. 29)

Similarly, numerous studies have examined the political perspectives of history textbooks, newspapers and magazines (see Holsti, 1968). Despite the wealth of research on news media and history texts, few studies have focused on the political perspectives of encyclopedias. As Engle and Futas (1983) explain, the question of objectivity "in this format is rarely discussed" (p. 29).

At least three published studies contained findings which challenge the claim to truth of encyclopedias. Each involved a different topic covered in encyclopedias and sought to illuminate different aspects of encyclopedias' false claims of objectivity. All found encyclopedia articles to reflect certain viewpoints and perspectives.

Smith's (1988) study, "Missing & Wanted: Black Women in Encyclopedias," was intended as a follow-up to a study published in 1976 by Beryl Graham. Graham's concern about the coverage of black women in encyclopedias being "less than adequate" stemmed from her work as a librarian, in which she became "well aware of the students' dependency on encyclopedias as their first choice for fulfilling a
research assignment," wrote Smith (p. 26). Among Graham's findings, stated Smith (p. 26), were that "encyclopedia editorial staffs show biases by the omission of women whom the black community consider heroic, but whose positions may not be acceptable to the non-black community." Smith's follow-up study found that the presentation of black women in encyclopedias to be, for the most part, similar to what Graham found. Smith "discovered that the data on black women is [sic] still limited" and that "for the most part entries were not revised and/or updated in the ten-year interim" between the two studies (p. 27).

Engle and Futas' (1983) study, "Sexism in Adult Encyclopedias" was initiated because of the acceptance of encyclopedias as factual authority, and because encyclopedias are "frequently used by older children and by adolescents at a time when sexual identity is at its most confusing" (p. 29). "The disparate inclusion rates for women and men," wrote Engle and Futas in their findings, "clearly convey the idea that women have been of lesser value and usefulness than men in the history and growth of civilization" (p. 36). Engle and Futas concluded that "the encyclopedia should perhaps be regarded as an important factor in perpetuating sexism in our society" (p. 37).

Franklin's (1982) study examined a significant change in the presentation of colonialism in two editions of the "most respected Anglo-American reference work" (p. 42),
Encyclopedia Britannica. In the first edition Franklin analyzed, the section in the article on "Colonialism" covering the period 1763-1970 was written by radical historian Harry Magdoff. In the second edition, Magdoff's text covering 1763-1914 was retained, but the text covering 1914 to the time of authorship (1976) was replaced by text written by Richard Webster. Franklin wrote Britannica and asked why and when the author of the text covering the period from 1914 to the 1970s had changed.

Britannica responded with two reasons. First, that Magdoff's text was dated. Second, that Magdoff's "article had been criticized in the press for bias," and that it "was subsequently reviewed by our own advisers and judged to be not up to the standard of Britannica objectivity; it was thus recommissioned" (p. 41). In reaction to Britannica's letter, Franklin decided that a "detailed comparison of the two articles should provide a laboratory test" of Britannica's objectivity, and that this comparison would be "useful in comprehending the ideological content" of Britannica (p. 41).

Franklin's comparison found that "Webster has actually rewritten Magdoff's article, leaving in many of the main facts, while liquidating the analysis, expunging almost every reference to U.S. colonialism and neocolonialism, and cleverly inserting his own partially concealed anti-Communist thesis" (p. 42). In reference to the first
reason given in Britannica's letter for the rewriting, Franklin found that there were "very few examples of updating in Webster's piece, although this was ostensibly the main reason the article was rewritten" (pp. 42-43). Franklin concluded from his analysis that the changes in Britannica's article on Colonialism constituted a "blatant rewriting of history" (p. 47).

Methods


Kister (1978) surveyed "100 public libraries of varying sizes in all parts of the country" to ascertain encyclopedia use and popularity in libraries (p. 890). He found the four encyclopedias which will be analyzed in this study to be the considered the most useful and most effective, as well as the most frequently owned. The findings of Bailey's (1985) study of "small academic libraries" were congruent with Kister's findings. Americana, Britannica and Collier's were found to be
present in at least 98 percent of libraries which responded to the survey, Bailey found (p. 219). World Book was found to be the fourth most popular (p. 219). Sader (1988) stated that four firms "dominate" the encyclopedia market in the United States: Britannica, Grolier, Macmillan and World Book. The main encyclopedias published by these four firms are the encyclopedias selected for analysis.

**Qualitative Content Analysis**

Holsti (1968) defined content analysis as "any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p. 601). Weber (1985) described content analysis as "a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (p. 9). Following Weber's (1985) suggestion that "each investigator must judge what methods are appropriate for her or his substantive problems" (p. 13), this thesis will undertake a qualitative content analysis to best fit the goal of determining the political and ideological views present in the encyclopedia text.

Findahl and Hoijer (1981) defined qualitative content analysis as a method that:

sets out to characterize, to condense and elucidate the content, to bring out the essentials or point out certain typical characteristics. It is a matter of describing the content not by itemizing all the words and
clauses, but by revealing features that are not immediately apparent to readers, listeners, or viewers. (p. 111)

The features to be revealed in this thesis are the political perspectives present in the text. Larson's (1988) study of the statements of leading post-World War II U.S. officials "recorded and categorized themes" present in the text (p. 243). Larson's method of explaining the themes in this text was to present the key sentences, phrases and words that illustrated the themes present. It is this method of analysis and presentation which is used in this thesis. Selected sentences, phrases, and words from the encyclopedia text will be highlighted in order to reflect and illustrate the existence of particular themes and their corresponding political perspectives.

Research Questions

To best answer the research questions, analysis will focus on each encyclopedia's coverage of six actors in Nicaraguan political economy: The Somozas, the National Guard, the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba, the Sandinistas and the Contras. The main question posed in Humphries' (1981) study of ideological perspectives in crime stories concerned "the mode of explanation used to link crime, offenders, and victims into a coherent story about crime" (p. 194). In the same manner, I will determine what is the "mode of explanation"--the political
perspective used to interpret the Nicaraguan revolution—used to link the six actors. The research questions are:

1. What are the claims made about Nicaragua's revolution and political economy by Collier's Encyclopedia, Encyclopedia Americana, Encyclopedia Britannica and World Book Encyclopedia?

2. What are the changes, over time, in claims made about Nicaragua's revolution and political economy in the four encyclopedias?

3. Are political perspectives present in the claims made about Nicaragua's revolution and political economy? If so, do they affect the text, and to what extent?
Analysis of the encyclopedias' portrayal of the Nicaraguan revolution and the subsequent changes in Nicaragua's political economy will be divided into seven sections. The first six sections will focus on the portrayal of the six actors commonly associated with the revolution and Nicaragua's political economy. The seventh section will focus on the portrayal of the changes in Nicaragua's political economy and the method of explanation used by the encyclopedias to link the six actors.

Portrayal of the Somozas

Portrayal of the three members of the Somoza family who were president of Nicaragua varied among and within the encyclopedias. There was little agreement among the encyclopedias on even basic questions such as whether the Somozas were "dictators," or whether their successive rule constituted a family "dynasty." Differences also existed among the encyclopedias as to whether the Somoza family rule was beneficial to Nicaragua.

To facilitate analysis, the portrayal of the Somozas is divided into four sections, each relating to a certain
event or period of the Somoza rule. The sections cover: (1) the beginnings of Somoza rule, (2) the rule of Anastasio Somoza Garcia, (3) the rule of Luis Anastasio Somoza, and (4) the rule and overthrow of Anastasio Somoza Debayle. The overall interpretations given to Somoza rule will be presented in the final section of this chapter, in which they will be contrasted with the overall interpretations given to Sandinista rule.

The Beginnings of Somoza Rule

The encyclopedias differed in their presentations of the beginnings of Somoza rule. Some editions stated that the first Somoza, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, became powerful through the presidency and that he gained office justly, some placed the beginnings of his control of Nicaragua at the point where he gained control of the National Guard, and some stated that he gained the presidency unjustly.

The 1977 edition of Encyclopedia Americana portrayed Anastasio Somoza Garcia as having gained the presidency fairly. According to the 1977 Americana, the president who held office before Somoza, Juan Sacasa, "was forced to resign ... and was succeeded ... by Gen. Anastasio Somoza, commandant of the National Guard" (vol. 20, p. 319a). The 1977 Americana article on Somoza mentioned that "a revolution deposed" Sacasa, after which "Somoza was elected president" (vol. 25, p. 218). This edition did not state
who led the revolution. No mention was made of this revolution in the 1977 *Americana* article on Nicaragua. Unlike other encyclopedias analyzed, the 1977 *Americana* made no statement about the legitimacy of the election Somoza won.

The 1977 *Americana* Somoza article attributed Anastasio Somoza's rise to his own political ability, explaining:

> From his inauguration ... until his death, he dominated the political life of Nicaragua by combining great political talent with the judicious use of force. His opponents accused him of being a dictator. He became one of the richest men in Central America, with an annual income estimated at one million dollars. (vol. 25, p. 218)

Along with having emphasized positive attributes of the first Somoza, this section presented as fact Somoza's having "great political talent," but presented as accusation his "being a dictator." Although the 1977 *Americana* mentioned that "family connections" helped Somoza's career, these factors were placed after his personal ability in another explanation of his rise to power:

> His ability, energy, and family connections won him ever higher positions until, in 1933, he became head of the National Guard, Nicaragua's only armed force. After a revolution deposed President Juan Bautista Sacasa in 1936, Somoza was elected president. (vol. 25, p. 218)

The 1983 *Americana* had far less text covering Anastasio Somoza Garcia's rise to power, but like the 1977 *Americana*, it presented his rise to power uncritically. The 1983 *Americana* cautiously explained former President Sacasa's
demise by stating that he "was experiencing difficulties with the National Guard commander and finally resigned after three years in office. In the ensuing elections Somoza, who ran without opposition, became president" (vol. 20, p. 306). In the previous paragraph the 1983 Americana had mentioned that the National Guard commander was Anastasio Somoza Garcia, the person who Sacasa was "experiencing difficulties with," but did not directly link the two statements.

In contrast to the 1977 and 1983 editions of Americana, the 1990 Americana presented Somoza's beginnings critically, having stated that Somoza "gained office when he was made commander of the National Guard, Nicaragua's army," and that "by 1937 he had ... pushed the republic's president ... from office" (vol. 20, p. 307).

Like the 1977 and 1983 editions of Americana, the editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica portrayed the rise to power of Anastasio Somoza Garcia as without reason for criticism. "Against Sacasa's wishes," the 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica stated, "Somoza decided he would next have the presidency" (1969, vol. 16, p. 474; 1977, vol. 3, p. 1114). Although, as the 1969 Britannica explained, Somoza was constitutionally prohibited from becoming the next president, these "Constitutional problems were 'solved' by the deposition of Sacasa" (vol. 16, p. 474). The 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica also stated
that Somoza "deposed" Sacasa, but added that he did so "with the support of factions of both Liberals and Conservatives" (1984, vol. 3, p. 1114; 1989, vol. 15, p. 721). These editions of Britannica thus stated that Somoza "deposed" Sacasa with popular support.

Collier's Encyclopedia was consistently the most critical of the Somozas. The 1967 and 1977 editions, however, did not mention Sacasa and did not refer to how Somoza became president. These editions did state that "with the permanent withdrawal of the U.S. Marines in 1933, the national guard under Anastasio Somoza soon gained firm control of the country," and therefore tied Somoza's power not to his presidential election victory, but to his position as leader of the National Guard (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 523). The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's also emphasized Somoza's position as leader of the National Guard, but also mentioned the first election Somoza won, having critically stated that "in 1937, with the national guard counting the ballots, he was elected president" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525).

All four editions of World Book portrayed the beginnings of Somoza's rule critically. Each mentioned that Somoza either "drove" Sacasa from power or "forced" him "to resign." The 1966 edition also mentioned that Somoza's first election was "controlled by his own troops"; the 1977, 1984 and 1990 editions mentioned that Somoza "was the

The Rule of Anastasio Somoza Garcia

The encyclopedias differed in their presentations of the
rule of the first Somoza. Some editions referred to him
as a dictator who caused suffering among Nicaraguans, some
as a dictator who nonetheless bettered their way of life,
others as a strong leader who made Nicaragua economically
prosperous.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's reflected the
first view, that of Somoza as a dictator whose rule
benefitted the elite of Nicaragua, but not the people at
large. According to the 1984 and 1989 editions of
Collier's, Somoza "ran the country like a personal estate,
amassing a fortune estimated at $60 million" (1984, 1989,
vol. 17, p. 525).

The 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's were, in some
sections, as critical of the first Somoza as the 1984 and
1989 editions. The 1967 and 1977 editions stated that
"Political opposition ... was largely suppressed, labor
movements were banned, social welfare received no impetus,
and economic development, except in a few categories,
remained stagnant" (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 525). In the
1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's, this statement was
preceded, however, by a sentence which stated that from
1937 to 1947, the first decade of Somoza rule, "order was maintained and the country's finances, under American supervision, were generally stable" (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 525). Both the 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's stated that Somoza's "antiliberalism led him to crush the Nicaraguan press, and for a long period he imposed a state of martial law" (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 526). The 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's also stated that "Nicaraguans who voted for Somoza received cards attesting to that fact. These cards were later required for all government, and many nongovernment, jobs" (1967, vol. 17, p. 525; 1977, vol. 17, p. 526).

The 1977 Americana stated that Somoza was "in complete control of Nicaragua ... for almost two decades" (vol. 20, p. 319a), but did not refer to him as a dictator. The 1977, 1983 and 1990 Americana articles on Somoza portrayed the rule of Anastasio Somoza Garcia as beneficial to Nicaragua, and therefore differed greatly from all editions of Collier's. The Americana articles on Somoza (1977, 1983, 1990, vol. 25, p. 218) stated that "his opponents accused him of being a dictator." These articles attributed Somoza's personal success to the fact that "From his inauguration ... until his death he dominated the political life of Nicaragua by combining great political talent with the judicious use of force." The 1983 Americana article on Nicaragua, however, referred to Somoza
as a "dictator," who in 1946, "decided to name a puppet president" (vol. 20, p. 306). The 1983 Americana article on Nicaragua, therefore, directly contradicted the 1983 Americana Somoza article on the question of whether Somoza was a dictator. The 1990 Americana, however, was far more critical of Somoza, having referred to him as a "traditional caudillo, or Latin American strongman," and having added that "politically, this meant staying in power by changing the constitution, rigging elections, using graft, and employing the National Guard as a coercive force" (vol. 20, p. 307).

Where the 1990 Americana related the Spanish caudillo to the English "Latin American strongman," the 1969 Britannica equated caudillo with "leader," referring to Somoza as "the most distinguished caudillo or leader of the 20th century" (vol. 16, p. 475). The 1969 Britannica did not refer to Somoza as a "dictator," having stated instead that "One man ... controlled Nicaragua for 20 years" (vol. 16, p. 474), and that Somoza "dominated government from the 1930s until his assassination" (vol. 16, p. 475). The 1977 Britannica described the first Somoza's rule in a similar manner, having stated that "Somoza controlled Nicaragua for the next 20 years" (vol. 3, p. 1114). The 1977 Britannica article on Somoza, however, referred to Somoza as the "dictator of Nicaragua for 20 years," but followed this negative label with an emphasis on his diplomatic
abilities, having stated that he "preferred the use of patronage and bribery to violence" (vol. 20, pp. 347-8). The 1984 Britannica returned to the previous 1969 non-usage of "dictator," having stated that "Somoza controlled Nicaragua for the next two decades" (vol. 3, p. 1114). In the most critical description of Somoza's rule in any edition of Britannica, the 1989 edition used the image of an "iron hand" to describe Somoza's rule, and followed that image with analysis of the effect Somoza had on Nicaragua's economy and people: "Somoza ruled Nicaragua with an iron hand for 20 years, and, though considerable economic development took place during that time, the benefits were inequitably distributed in favour of the Somoza family and its supporters" (vol. 8, p. 676).

The 1966 World Book article on Nicaragua stated that "after an election controlled by his own troops," Somoza "assumed dictatorial power and proceeded to stabilize the currency, balance the budget, introduce easier credit for farmers, and build new highways, railroads, homes and schools" (vol. 14, p. 317).

While Somoza's "dictatorial power" received a positive portrayal in the 1966 World Book, the 1977 and 1984 World Book articles on Somoza stated that with his dictatorship:

He crushed all opposition and did not allow freedom of expression. He also used his power to become rich... In 1934, Somoza gained a reputation as a feared and ruthless man when he ordered Augusto Sandino, a popular guerrilla...
fighter, killed by the National Guard... Somoza resigned as president in 1947, but he forced his successors to rule as he wished. (1977, 1984, vol. 18, p. 480)

In both of these editions, following this negative portrayal of Somoza was a positive paragraph about Somoza's effect on Nicaragua's economy, similar to the positive paragraph from the 1966 World Book (vol. 14, p. 317) Nicaragua article: "Somoza improved Nicaragua's agriculture, cattle raising, and mining. He balanced the budget and introduced easier credit for farmers. He also expanded port facilities and built new highways, houses, hospitals, power plants, railroads, and schools" (1977, 1984, vol. 18, p. 480).

The Rule of Luis Somoza Garcia

The second Somoza to become president of Nicaragua received little mention in any of the encyclopedias. Luis Anastasio Somoza was president from 1957 to 1963; this section will also include cover the portrayal of his predecessor, Rene' Schick Gutierrez, who was president from 1963 to 1966.

The 1977 Americana presented Luis' election as fair, having stated that "Reforms of 1962 ... provided for a secret ballot" (vol. 20, p. 317). When Luis became president, according to the 1977 Americana, "charges were made by opponents that the 'family dynasty' was in this way
continued" (vol. 20, p. 319b). Both Luis' election and the
election of his successor were thus presented in the 1977
Americana as without reason for criticism.

Most encyclopedias presented the rule of Luis Somoza and
of Rene Schick Gutierrez as less repressive than that of
Luis' father, Anastasio Somoza Garcia. The 1983 Americana
stated that during Luis' rule, "the rigors of the family
dictatorship were somewhat relaxed," and that, afterward,
"Schick's administration was the most tolerant and
respectful of civil liberties of any during the long Somoza
dictatorship" (vol. 20, p. 306). The 1990 Americana
referred to Luis as "politically astute," and stated that
he "wanted the family out of the spotlight of government"
(vol. 20, p. 307).

Editions of Britannica also presented Luis' rule in a
positive manner; and as with the 1977 edition of Americana,
the 1977 edition of Britannica denied that Luis' becoming
president meant that the Somozas constituted a family
dynasty. The 1969 Britannica described Luis' ascension to
the presidency:

All the constitutional prohibitions having been
repealed by the Nationalist Liberal majority in
congress, 34-year-old Luis Somoza Debayle was
given his father's position at once, and then was
nominated in his father's stead and chosen
president for the term 1957-63. (vol. 16, p. 474)

While the 1989 Britannica stated that Luis "ruled more
gently than his father," it critically added that he was
elected "dubiously" (vol. 15, p. 721).

Collier's was critical of Luis' rule, but, like editions of Americana and Britannica, portrayed his rule as being less repressive than his father's. Collier's 1967 article on Nicaragua stated that Luis "was far more liberal than his father in tolerating criticism," but that his becoming president "was almost automatic since the congress was controlled by the Somoza family" (vol. 17, p. 525). The 1977 Collier's Nicaragua article took a similar position. The 1984 and 1989 Collier's articles on Nicaragua made no judgments about Luis' becoming president, simply mentioning the fact. Gutierrez, however, is referred to in both editions as Luis' "hand-picked successor" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525).

The 1966 World Book article on Nicaragua was similarly non-judgmental about Luis' becoming president, having stated that after his father's assassination, Luis "then became president, and was re-elected in 1957" (vol. 14, p. 317). But as with all other articles analyzed, the 1977 and 1984 World Book articles on the Somozas presented Luis' rule positively, both having stated that Luis "tried to bring about social reforms and loosen the tight military control of Nicaragua" (1977, 1984, vol. 18, p. 480). On Gutierrez, these editions stated, "the Somoza family hand-picked the man who was elected to succeed him" (1977, 1984, vol. 18, p. 480). The 1990 World Book did not make any
judgments about Luis' becoming president.

The Rule and Overthrow of Anastasio Somoza Debayle

With few exceptions, the encyclopedias presented the end of Somoza rule as the result of popular actions against a dictatorship.

The 1977 Americana contained few statements about the rule of the last Somoza who was president of Nicaragua, Anastasio Somoza Debayle; the edition preceded the end of his rule, which occurred in 1979. The 1983 Americana referred to the overthrow of Somoza as an "insurrection" (vol. 20, p. 306) in which Somoza "fled" (vol. 20, p. 308). The 1983 Americana presented the end of Somoza's rule as an event brought about by much of Nicaragua's population, having stated that the "uprising against the Somoza regime" was "supported by virtually all elements of the population" (vol. 20, p. 302), and that "public opinion in all levels of society turned into opposition to the Somoza dictatorship" (p. 307). The 1983 Americana also stated that "elements of the old aristocracy participated in the struggle against the Somozas" (vol. 20, p. 304). As did editions of other encyclopedias, the 1983 Americana portrayed Somoza's use of international aid sent to help
victims of a 1972 earthquake as crucial to his downfall, and especially to his loss of support in the business community:

He and his associates exploited the disaster for their own monetary gain. The Somozas unabashedly used the millions of dollars of international aid for earthquake relief for their own purposes ... reconstructing the capital was the occasion for large-scale profiteering by Somoza, his family, and his colleagues. Most of the business community was excluded from the rebuilding process, a major factor in its turning almost unanimously against the regime. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The 1990 Americana not only stated that Somoza's use of the earthquake aid led to his downfall, but implied that, if not for this action, the Somoza dynasty would perhaps still be in power:

[Somoza] probably would have succeeded in handing power on to his son but for the devastating Managua earthquake of 1972. In rebuilding the city, Somoza could not resist the temptation to enrich himself. His doing so alienated the elite, who had been his supporter, and paved the way for his fall ... By September of 1978, Somoza faced a general insurrection involving all sectors of the society ... Within a year Somoza was out. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The 1983 and 1990 Americana articles on Somoza were essentially the same as the 1977 article; only one sentence was added in 1983 and 1990. The new sentence reflected the

1 Related to Somoza's downfall, some encyclopedia articles also noted the importance of the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, publisher of Nicaragua's main newspaper, La Prensa. The 1983 edition of Americana, however, questioned who was responsible for Chamorro's death, writing that it "was widely attributed, rightly or wrongly, to the Somoza regime" (vol. 20, p. 307).
view of Somoza's overthrow as a popular action, having stated that "after he had alienated large segments of the population, he was forced to resign and flee into exile" (vol. 25, p. 218).

The 1969 Britannica, like the 1977 Americana, contained few statements about the rule of Anastasio Somoza Garcia. The 1977 Britannica also contained little about his rule. In the 'Administrative and Social Conditions' section of Britannica's 1977 article on Nicaragua, Somoza's strong presidential rule is portrayed as having ended in May of 1972, with the enactment of "an agreement reached in 1971" (vol. 13, p. 62). The 1977 Britannica explained:

Under the 1950 constitution, which remained in effect until 1972, the national government was headed by a strong president, who was elected to a one-time, five-year term. Given extensive executive powers, he could detain persons, suspend constitutional guarantees, and enact laws when the legislature was not in session... The legislature acted as a rubber stamp of executive authority.

Under an agreement reached in 1971 between Nicaragua's two major political parties, the president was succeeded on May 1, 1972 by a triumvirate of party leaders. The legislature was replaced with a 100-member Constituent Assembly that had been elected in 1971 and charged with the task of producing a new constitution by 1974. The triumvirate was to retain executive authority until a president was elected under the new constitution. (vol. 13, p. 62)

The 1984 Britannica contradicted the 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica and all editions of Americana on several points. The 1984 Britannica article on the Central
American States stated that Somoza "resigned," as did the article on the Somoza Family, which also contradicted other encyclopedias' presentation of Somoza's rule as "oppressive": "Violent insurrection against the alleged oppression of Somoza's rule, as well as foreign accusations of violations of human rights, led to his resignation" (vol. 20, p. 348).

Both before and after the end of Anastasio Somoza Garcia's rule, Collier's was consistently the most critical of the last Somoza. In a section which covered the legal power of the Nicaraguan president, the 1967 Collier's stated that the Nicaraguan constitution:

> guarantees many individual liberties, but in practice these are often overlooked, for the president is so empowered as to be able to dictate the government. He is commander of the armed forces and has control over many political appointments. When congress is not in session he may issue decrees under powers delegated to him, and in case of public urgency or national emergency, he may issue decrees outside the scope of those delegated powers or restrict or suspend certain constitutional guarantees. (vol. 17, p. 525)

The 1977 Collier's article on Nicaragua repeated the same statements in a condensed manner and prefaced them with the statement that Somoza was "a virtual dictator" (vol. 17, p. 523). The 1977 Collier's also made a statement about the 1967 election of the last Somoza, that "the opposition claimed widespread election rigging and intimidation" (vol. 17, p. 526). "Election rigging and intimidation" in the
1967 election was presented here not as fact, but as a claim made by Somoza's opposition.

The 1984 Collier's repeated the 1977 edition's statement that the last Somoza to rule was "a virtual dictator" (vol. 17, p. 522), and included the statements about Somoza's legal powers. The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's also mentioned Somoza's use of the earthquake aid, and, unlike editions of Americana and Britannica, directly addressed Somoza's economic influence on Nicaragua, having stated that "banking, construction, and other industries were swallowed up by the Somozas" (vol. 17, p. 525). Not addressed, directly or indirectly, in any editions of Americana or Britannica was the 1984 Collier's statement, repeated in 1989 Collier's, that during the Sandinistas' final offensive "Somoza used tanks and planes to kill more than 2,000 people" (vol. 17, p. 525).

The 1989 Collier's article on Central America stated that Somoza's use of the earthquake aid initiated the end of his rule:

The fall of the Somoza dynasty began with a severe earthquake.... President Anastasio Somoza stole so much of the money given by foreigners for disaster relief that middle-class Nicaraguans turned against his regime, enabling leftists to begin guerilla resistance. (vol. 5, p. 647)

The 1966 World Book Nicaragua article did not mention Anastasio Somoza Garcia. The 1977 World Book article on the Somozas stated that he "ruled as a dictator,
controlling the military services and the economy as his father did" (vol. 18, p. 480). The 1984 and 1990 World Book articles on Nicaragua portrayed the 1979 revolution as a popular and as supported by all sectors of society:


The 1984 and 1990 World Book articles stated that after the "rebels won the war... They forced President Somoza to resign and leave the country" (vol. 14, p. 317 and vol. N, p. 405). According to the 1990 World Book Nicaragua article, "the Sandinistas led a revolution that overthrew the government of the Somoza family" (vol. N, p. 400). The 1984 and 1989 World Book articles on the Somozas stated that the last Somoza "ruled as a dictator controlling the government, the military, and the economy as his father did" (vol. 18, p. 480).

Portrayal of the National Guard

Portrayal of Nicaragua's army during the Somoza years, the National Guard, varied among the encyclopedias. Most encyclopedias portrayed the National Guard as having kept order in Nicaragua. Some, however, portrayed the Guard as a cause of disorder, others as the political power in
Somoza's Nicaragua.

According to the 1977 Encyclopedia Americana article on Nicaragua, the nation's defense:

is chiefly in the hands of the National Guard, successor to the Nicaraguan Army that was disbanded under an agreement reached with conflicting political factions in 1927 by Henry L. Stimson, United States emissary. Over the years, the National Guard has been developed into an efficient military organization. For a time it was trained by United States officers. (vol. 20, p. 318)

The 1983 Americana article on Nicaragua referred to the Guard as "a force the marines had organized as a new national army" (vol. 20, p. 306). When a president Arguello of Nicaragua "sought to remove Somoza as commander" of the Guard, the 1983 Americana stated that "the Guard, under Somoza's orders deposed Arguello after less than a month in office" (vol. 20, p. 306). The 1990 Americana stated that the first Somoza used the Guard "as a coercive force" to stay in power" (vol. 20, p. 307). According to the 1990 Americana, the "counterrevolutionary army" which was "organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency" to fight a "war of attrition against the Sandinista government" was "founded on the remnants of Somoza's National Guard" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1969 edition of Britannica directly contradicted editions of Americana, Collier's and World Book in its portrayal of the National Guard by having stated that Nicaragua did not have an army, and by having compared
Nicaragua to Costa Rica, the Central American country with
the strongest democratic traditions: "Although Nicaragua,
like Costa Rica, does not have an army, it does have a
national guard of about 7,500 men, originally trained by
the United States marines" (vol. 16, p. 474).

Unlike the 1969 edition of Britannica, the 1977 edition
of Britannica concurred with the other encyclopedias that
the National Guard was Nicaragua's army, stating that it:

serves as both the army and the police force. Originally
trained by the U.S. Marines, it is composed of about 5,400
active and 4,000 reserve personnel.... Service can be
made compulsory at any time. The Guard is politically
important and has been the power behind the government
since the 1930s. (vol. 13, p. 63)

This 1977 Britannica section directly contradicted the 1969
Britannica by having referred to the Guard as Nicaragua's
army. The 1977 edition of Britannica also put importance
on the Guard, having stated that it "has been the power
behind the government since the 1930s" (vol. 13, p. 63).
The editions of Americana portrayed the Guard as less
influential. The 1984 Britannica repeated the claims made
in the 1977 Britannica, and added several others. The 1984
Britannica stated that after the U.S. Marines left
Nicaragua, "a Nicaraguan National Guard ... became
responsible for maintaining order" (vol. 3, p. 1114). The
1984 Britannica thus stated that the Guard's duty was to
maintain order. The 1989 Britannica also stated that the
Guard's duty was to "keep order" (vol. 8, p. 676). The
1989 *Britannica* stated that "Many noncombatants were the victims of atrocities in clashes between Sandinistas and the National Guard" (vol. 15, p. 721). In this sentence the 1989 *Britannica* implicitly put equal blame for "atrocities" during the revolution against Somoza on the Sandinistas and the National Guard. The 1989 *Britannica* also stated that "a widespread popular insurrection overwhelmed the National Guard" (vol. 8, p. 676).

The 1967 *Collier's* contradicted statements made in editions of *Britannica* which portrayed the National Guard's goal as maintaining order. According to the 1967 *Collier's*:

> Throughout most of Nicaragua's history the army has been one of the principal causes of internal disorder. After the U.S. Marines occupied Managua in 1912, the Nicaraguan army was disbanded and in its place a national guard was created whose members were trained by the U.S. Marines. With the permanent withdrawal of the U.S. Marines in 1933, the national guard under Anastasio Somoza soon gained firm control of the country. (vol. 17, p. 522)

The 1984 and 1989 editions of *Collier's* stated that in Nicaraguan politics, "formal constitutions have been less important than control of the military" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 522). The 1984 edition of *Collier's* stated that "With the overthrow of Somoza in 1979, the national guard was dissolved and replaced by the Sandinist Popular Army" (vol. 17, p. 522). The 1984 and 1989 editions of *Collier's* contradicted editions of *Britannica* by having stated that
the initial reason for the creation of the guard was not, as Britannica stated, to keep order, but to oppose Sandino, an opponent of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua: "Sandino's determined guerrilla warfare ... prompted the United States to create an indigenous force, the national guard, to oppose Sandino" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525).

The 1966 edition of World Book never directly mentioned the National Guard. It stated that in the 1930s "Somoza was elected president in an election controlled by his own troops" (vol. 14, p. 317). The 1977 World Book stated that opposition to the Somozas was "ineffective" because of the National Guard: "Opposition to the Somozas has been continuous, but it has been ineffective against their economic strength and government troops" (vol. 14, p. 314). The 1984 edition of World Book repeated the statement made in the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's that the Guard was created to fight Sandino: "The United States trained a new Nicaraguan army, called the National Guard, to help the marines fight Sandino" (vol. 14, p. 316b). According to the 1984 World Book, in 1981, "former members of Somoza's National Guard and others stepped up attacks from bases over the border in Honduras" (vol. 14, p. 317). Both of these statements were repeated in the 1990 World Book.
Portrayal of the United States varied among the encyclopedias. Encyclopedias differed as to whether United States involvement in Nicaragua was beneficial or harmful to the Central American nation. To facilitate analysis, the portrayal of United States involvement in Nicaragua is divided into three sections, each focusing on a different period of the U.S.-Nicaragua relations. The sections cover: (1) early U.S. relations with Nicaragua, covering the early 1900s to 1933; (2) U.S. relations with the Somozas, covering 1933 to 1979; and (3) U.S. relations with the Sandinistas, covering 1979 to the present.

Early U.S. Involvement in Nicaragua

With few exceptions, early U.S. involvement in Nicaragua was portrayed as beneficial to Nicaragua. The 1977, 1983 and 1990 editions of Encyclopedia Americana portrayed early U.S. involvement in Nicaragua as beneficial to Nicaragua. The 1977 edition stated that in 1907 the United States and Mexico "sponsored ... a Central American peace conference" because of "troubled political conditions in Central America early in the 20th century" (vol. 20, p. 319). These conditions, according to the 1977 Americana, were "especially due to [Nicaraguan President] Zelaya's attempts to dominate the other [Central American] countries" (vol. 20, p. 319).
20, p. 319). The United States' relationship with Nicaragua worsened, the 1977 Americana stated, because of the execution of two U.S. citizens: "After executing two United States citizens, probably to be classified as adventurers, in 1909 [sic], an action which caused the United States to sever diplomatic relations, Zelaya was forced out by revolution" (vol. 20, p. 319). This paragraph presented the revolution that "forced out" Zelaya as related to the execution of the U.S. "adventurers." Even after Zelaya "was forced out by revolution," the 1977 Americana stated, the United States was still working to help a "troubled" Nicaragua: "Conditions remained troubled in Nicaragua for the next two or three years. That country and the United States tried to work out better financial relations with a view to improving Nicaragua's economic conditions" (vol. 20, p. 319-319a). The 1977 Americana also portrayed the initial U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua as having the goal of, and succeeding at, bettering the country:

A legation guard of about 100 United States Marines was stationed in Nicaragua beginning in 1912 and proved a stabilizing influence, though giving rise to the charge of violating Nicaraguan sovereignty. Nicaragua during this period could be characterized as a protectorate of the United States. (vol. 20, p. 319a)

The Marines as a "stabilizing influence" in Nicaragua was presented as fact, while the Marine presence in Nicaragua as "violating Nicaraguan sovereignty" was presented as a
"charge."

Withdrawal of the Marines in 1925 was presented in the 1977 Americana as having negative consequences which warranted the return of the Marines:

The United States legation guard was withdrawn from Managua in August 1925, but soon afterward a Conservative ex-President ... made himself virtually dictator.... This brought about highly confused and critical political conditions, and also the return of United States Marines. Civil war prevailed during much of 1926, with the United States establishing neutral zones at Bluefields and Corinto. The United States actively intervened in Nicaraguan affairs during this period ... [and] for some years maintained several thousand marines in Nicaragua. (vol. 20, p. 319a)

The 1983 Americana stated that Liberal-party member Zelaya's rule ended "largely as a result of antagonizing the government of the United States" (vol. 20, p. 306). After Zelaya "resigned," the 1983 Americana stated, "the United States refused to accept another Liberal, and the conservatives returned to power. It was under the Conservative regime that the United States first sent an 'embassy guard' of 100 Marines ... They stayed for 13 years" (vol. 20, p. 306). On the withdrawal of the marines in 1925, the 1983 Americana stated: "Soon after the 'embassy guard' was withdrawn in August 1925, civil war broke out. Several thousand U.S. Marines then returned and virtually controlled the coastal cities of Corinto and Bluefields" (vol. 20, p. 306).

The 1990 Americana, like the 1977 and 1983 editions,
presented the initial U.S. military intervention, as resulting from Nicaraguan domestic problems: "A revolution in 1910 ushered in a quarter century of unrest, which prompted the United States to send Marines to Nicaragua." (vol. 20, p. 302) The 1990 Americana attributed the end of Zelaya's rule to his relations with other Central American countries and his role in the Nicaraguan canal project:

Zelaya's downfall resulted from his interference in the affairs of neighboring countries and, even more, his insistence on planning a Nicaraguan canal with German and Japanese aid to rival the U.S. project in Panama. In 1909, U.S. military forces supported a successful Conservative rebellion. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The marine force was presented in the 1990 Americana as having the goal of peace in Nicaragua:

[Nicaraguan President] Diaz asked the United States to send troops to help him restore peace. The Marines landed in 1912, stayed until 1925, left for nine months, then returned and remained until 1933. But even they could not keep order. (vol. 20, p. 307)

All editions of Encyclopedia Britannica also portrayed early U.S. involvement as beneficial to Nicaragua. According to the 1969 Britannica, "A new era in Nicaraguan history involved intervention by forces of the United States government" (vol. 16, p. 473). As did the 1977 Americana, the 1969 Britannica presented the initial U.S. intervention in Nicaragua as the result of the "execution" of two U.S. citizens: "It may have said to begun when
Philander C. Knox, secretary of state for President Taft, became angered at the execution of two U.S. citizens who had participated in a revolution against Zelaya" (vol. 16, p. 473). But where the 1977 Americana stated that the two U.S. citizens "executed" were "probably to be classified as adventurers," the 1969 Britannica stated that they "had participated in a revolution" against the Nicaraguan government.

The 1969 Britannica portrayed the United States as having taken a very active role against Zelaya: "In 1910 its naval forces prevented [Nicaraguan] government occupation of Bluefields, the revolutionary headquarters, an act leading directly to the success of the revolution" (vol. 16, p. 473). The United States was portrayed here as preventing the Nicaraguan government from occupying part of Nicaragua.

Like all editions of Americana analyzed, the 1969 Britannica presented the U.S. Marines sent to Nicaragua as having the goal of peace:

When a new civil war broke out in 1912 U.S. forces took a direct hand in support of Adolfo Diaz, president from 1911 to 1917. A hundred U.S. Marines stationed at the U.S. embassy also helped to maintain the peace under Emiliano Chamorro Vargas (1917-20) and his nephew successor. (vol. 16, p. 473-4)

Other aspects of the U.S.-Nicaragua relationship were also presented as benefitting Nicaragua. According to the 1969 Britannica, "United States bankers ... managed the
Nicaraguan customs collections, the national banks and the railway" (vol. 16, p. 474).

Like editions of Americana analyzed, the 1969 Britannica portrayed withdrawal of the U.S. Marines from Nicaragua in 1925 as having a negative effect on prospects for peace, having stated that "withdrawal of the marine guard ... led to new complications" (vol. 16, p. 474). Before the marines withdrew, the 1969 Britannica stated, they "carefully trained" the Nicaraguan National Guard (vol. 16, p. 474). In the 1969 Britannica article on Central America, U.S. involvement in the region was also presented as resulting from instability and war: "For over a century, following the winning of independence, the republics were highly unstable, and wars between them were common--these conditions were factors in U.S. intervention in the area" (vol. 5, p. 184). The 1977 Britannica reprinted much of the same text on Nicaragua used in the 1969 Britannica; i.e., U.S. actions in Nicaragua were portrayed as beneficial to Nicaragua. The 1984 Britannica also portrays the United States' early intervention in the same manner as the 1969 Britannica.

The 1989 Britannica, as with all other Britannica editions analyzed, portrayed the initial presence of U.S. Marines in Nicaragua as resulting from the "execution" of two U.S. citizens, having written that after the execution "United States Marines landed at Bluefields" (vol. 15, p.
721). The 1989 Britannica also portrayed the initial military intervention of the United States as having positive effects on Nicaragua:

The Liberals held power until 1909, at which time pressure from the United States led to the installation of a Conservative government. To back up its support of the new government, the United States sent a small detachment of Marines into the country. The withdrawal of the Marine detachment in 1925 was followed by the eruption of a new civil war ... and in response the United States sent several thousand marines in to suppress a Liberal-led insurrection in 1927 ... The Marines withdrew from Nicaragua in 1933 after having carefully trained the Nicaraguan National Guard to keep order in the country. (vol. 8, p. 676)

All the editions of Collier's analyzed presented a different picture of the initial U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua, each having referred to it as an occupation. Editions of Collier's also presented a vastly different picture of the reason for the end of Zelaya's rule. The 1967 Collier's stated: "Disliking Zelaya's tactics and concerned lest his financial negotiations with Great Britain should lead to his granting that nation a canal concession, agents of the United States encouraged a revolutionary movement which in 1909 forced Zelaya into exile" (1967; vol. 17, p. 524-5; 1977, vol. 17, p. 525).

Like Americana and Britannica, the 1967 and 1977 Collier's presented U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua as having positive effects:
Disorders continued and in 1912 the United States Marines were landed. By 1913, under the presidency of Adolfo Diaz, order had been restored and Nicaragua's finances placed in charge of American experts. The Marines took over the training of the Nicaraguan national guard and remained in Managua until 1925. After their withdrawal, new outbreaks occurred. (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 525)

The 1967 and 1977 Collier's articles on Central America also presented U.S. involvement in Central America as having positive effects. A statement about the Panama Canal implied that U.S. economic interests in Central America had positive effects on the region: "This vital artery of trade intensified the interest of the United States in the stability of Central America and led to attempts to devise a system for the peaceful settlement of disputes" (1967, 1977, vol. 5, p. 650).

The 1984 and 1989 Collier's presented a greatly different view of U.S. initial military intervention in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan President Zelaya, the 1984 Collier's stated:

tried to check the growth of U.S. influence in Nicaragua.... As a result, in 1909, the United States moved to oust Zelaya. Diplomatic and eventually military support was shifted to the Conservative Party, which overthrew Zelaya and established a government more acceptable to U.S. interests.... Social and political unrest grew, and in 1912 the U.S. Marines arrived to impose order.... The Conservative government, headed by Adolfo Diaz, accepted the permanent presence of U.S. troops in the country and placed the economy under the control of New York banks. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525)

The 1984 and 1989 Collier's referred to this as "Nicaragua's transformation into a U.S. military and

Portrayal of early U.S. involvement in Nicaragua in the 1966 and 1977 editions of World Book was consistent with the portrayal in editions of Americana and Britannica. Zelaya was described as "harsh and brutal," and initial U.S. involvement was attributed to Zelaya's foreign policy. The 1966 World Book stated that "Zelaya interfered so much in the affairs of neighboring republics that Mexico and the United States intervened" (vol. 14, p. 317). As did editions of Americana and Britannica, the 1966 World Book presented U.S. military involvement in Nicaragua as positive:

Zelaya so mismanaged domestic affairs in Nicaragua that he was finally exiled in 1909. For twenty years after Zelaya was overthrown, the
United States influenced Nicaraguan affairs greatly. Conditions were so confused and unstable in 1912 that the provisional president ... asked for United States Marines to help maintain order. (vol. 14, p. 317)

Under a section titled "Order Restored," the 1966 World Book article on Nicaragua continued to portray early U.S. military involvement in Nicaragua positively, having stated that "by November, 1912, order was restored and most of the 2,000 Marines withdrew, but a small guard remained in Managua" (vol. 14, p. 317). U.S. non-military involvement was also portrayed positively. Several years later, according to the 1966 World Book, "An election was held under a new election law prepared by an expert from the United States" (vol. 14, p. 317).

Like editions of Britannica and Americana, the 1966 World Book stated that the withdrawal of the Marines in 1925 had negative consequences: "In September, 1925, the United States withdrew its Marines from Managua. A quarrel soon broke out in the coalition government ... Five thousand United States Marines and sailors were landed in 1926 ... The Marines supervised the 1928 election." (vol. 14, p. 317).

The 1977, 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book stated that "U.S. interests" played a role in early U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, but also portrayed that involvement as having positive effects on Nicaragua.
In 1909, a revolt broke out against Zelaya, a harsh ruler. He was driven from office after the United States sided with the rebels. In 1911, U.S. banks began to lend money to Nicaragua under agreements that gave them control over its finances until the debts were paid in 1925. At the request of the banks and President Adolfo Diaz, U.S. marines landed in Nicaragua in 1912 to put down forces that opposed American control. The marines remained there almost continuously until 1933 to protect U.S. interests and supervise elections. (1977, vol. 14, p. 317; 1984, vol. 14, p. 316b; 1990, vol. N, p. 404)

U.S. Relations with the Somozas

Editions of Americana, Britannica and World Book portrayed U.S. relations with the Somozas as close, and as benficial to Nicaragua. The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's also portrayed United States relations with the Somozas as close, but stated that they harmed Nicaragua.

Editions of Americana presented the United States as having close relations with the Somozas, but did provide details about those relations. The 1977 Americana stated that the Somozas' "collaborated very closely with the United States," and added that Somoza's Nicaragua "was one of the first Latin American states to declare war" after Pearl Harbor (vol. 20, p. 319a). The 1983 Americana stated that "the Somoza regime always professed friendship for the United States," and added that "when it became convenient, he proclaimed opposition to Communism" (vol. 20, p. 308). The 1983 Americana wrote that during the fighting that eventually ended Somoza rule:
Both sides had thousands of casualties. Negotiations ensued among the broad opposition coalition. President Somoza, and U.S. government intermediaries. Although it was clear that only the resignation and exile of Somoza and his family could resolve the situation, U.S. diplomats avoided taking (publicly at least) such a position against an "old friend." (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1990 Americana did not make any statements about relations between the United States and Somoza Nicaragua.

Editions of Britannica also presented the United States as having close relations with the Somozas, and stated that these relations centered around economic ties that were beneficial to Nicaragua. The 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica presented "co-operation" with the United States as beneficial to Nicaragua's economy: "Strict economic dictatorship was coupled after 1941 with wartime co-operation with the United States, which brought material benefits in its wake" (1969, vol. 16, p. 474; 1977, vol. 3, p. 1114). Apart from this sentence, nothing was mentioned in either the 1969 or 1977 editions of Britannica concerning U.S.-Somoza relations, with the exception of statements which mentioned economic ties, but did not make any judgments about those ties.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica reiterated the statement made in the 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica that "co-operation" with the United States materially benefitted Nicaragua, with a slight wording change. The 1984 Britannica stated that Somoza Nicaragua "cooperated
with the United States in the Bay of Pigs Invasion of Cuba" (vol. 3, p. 1114). The 1989 Britannica also mentioned this, but referred to the Bay of Pigs Invasion as "so-called" (vol. 15, p. 721). Like the 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica, the 1984 and 1989 editions included other statements concerning U.S.-Somoza Nicaragua economic ties, but the statements did not make any judgments about those ties.

The 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's portrayed United States involvement in Somoza Nicaragua as beneficial to Nicaragua. These editions stated that in Nicaragua from 1937 to 1947, "order was maintained and the country's finances, under American supervision, were generally stable" (1967, 1977, vol. 17, p. 525). Apart from statements concerning U.S.-Somoza Nicaragua economic relations, which like statements made in editions of Britannica, made no judgment about those relations, in the 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's nothing else was said about the U.S. relationship with Somoza Nicaragua.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's presented a view of United States relations with the Somozas which differed greatly from the portrayals in editions of Americana and Britannica. The 1984 Collier's implied that Nicaragua was economically dependent on the United States under Somoza, having stated that the government which replaced the Somozas "attempted to diversify Nicaragua's trading

Editions of World Book portrayed United States' relations with the Somozas in a manner consistent with editions of Americana and Britannica. The only statement in the 1966 World Book Nicaragua article which concerned relations between the United States and Somoza Nicaragua was: "About three-fourths of the country's imports are from the United States. The United States buys about four-fifths of Nicaragua's exports" (vol. 14, p. 316). The 1984 World Book
stated that "political stability" brought U.S. investment to Nicaragua, and that U.S. investment was beneficial to Nicaragua:

In general, the Somozas were eager to cooperate with the United States and had support from the U.S. government. Political stability under the Somoza family rule attracted U.S. investments, and Nicaragua's economy expanded. The 160-mile (257-kilometer) Rama Road was built between 1968 and 1980 with aid from the United States. It helped connect the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Nicaragua. (vol. 14, p. 317)

The 1977 and 1990 editions of World Book reiterated these statements, but with slight wording changes.

U.S. Relations with the Sandinistas

The 1983 Americana presented U.S. relations with the Sandinistas as friendly, having stated stated after the Sandinistas took over the Nicaraguan government, "the Carter administration rushed emergency aid to Nicaragua," and that the success of the new government was related to the following: "Important considerations included the direction of the economy, the attitudes adopted toward the regime by various foreign governments—particularly that of the United States—and the general evolution of the world political situation" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1990 Americana presented a different view of U.S. relations with the Sandinistas, having stated: "In 1981 a counterrevolutionary army (the 'contras'), founded on the remnants of Somoza's National Guard and organized by the
U.S. Central Intelligence Agency with Argentine and Israeli help, launched a war of attrition against the Sandinista government" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1984 Britannica article stated that the Sandinistas "met with tense foreign relations," and specifically stated that:

In 1981 Nicaragua accused the United States of harbouring Nicaraguan exiles training to invade their home country. The United States, in turn, accused Nicaragua of delivering arms to leftist guerrillas fighting against the government of El Salvador.... In April the United States suspended economic aid to Nicaragua, an act that seemed to threaten economic recovery. (vol. 3, p. 1115)

According to the 1989 Britannica article on Central America:

Although the Sandinista government retained ties with non-Communist nations, it also established close relations with Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations. The U.S. government interpreted this posture as an indication of further Communist expansion in the Western Hemisphere. In 1981 the United States suspended economic aid to Nicaragua. Relations with the United States continued to deteriorate throughout the 1980s. Local resistance to the Sandinista government developed in the form of guerilla warfare conducted by former supporters of Somoza and by other groups. They were supported by aid, some of it covert, from the U.S. government, despite strong protests from some quarters of Congress. (vol. 15, p. 721)

The 1990 Americana placed much greater emphasis than the 1989 Britannica on U.S. support for the contras, having stated that they were "organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency." The 1989 Britannica stated that "local resistance" was "supported by aid" from the United
States. The 1989 Britannica emphasized Sandinista relations with Communist countries as a main reason for the deterioration of Nicaraguan relations with the United States.

The 1989 Britannica article on Central America stated that the U.S. government "interpreted" close Sandinista relations with "Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations ... as an indication of further Communist expansion in the Western Hemisphere," not stating this as fact, but as a claim of the U.S. government. The 1989 Britannica micropaedia article on Nicaragua presented these close relations as having "caused its relations with the United States to worsen" (vol. 8, p. 676). Earlier in the Nicaragua micropaedia article, the 1989 Britannica stated that the United States "in 1982 began to actively attempt to destabilize Nicaragua's economy by funding antigovernment rebels and initiating various covert activities" (vol. 8, p. 676). "Economic difficulties" of Sandinista Nicaragua, according to the 1989 Britannica Central America article, "were compounded by a U.S. trade embargo, declared in 1985" (vol. 15, p. 722).

While editions of Britannica linked deteriorating U.S. relations with actions of the Sandinistas, editions of Collier's placed blame on the United States. On the economic problems in Sandinista Nicaragua, the 1984 Collier's stated that "the government had difficulty
obtaining badly needed international loans, because of U.S. opposition. Destructive raids across the Honduran border by U.S.-sponsored counter-revolutionaries further impeded attempts at recovery in 1982 and 1983"
(vol. 17, p. 523).

According to the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's:

The United States, claiming that the Sandinistas were allowing Cuban arms to be shipped through Nicaragua to insurgents in El Salvador, suspended economic aid to Nicaragua in 1981, and began to give direct military assistance to exiled units of the Somoza national guard. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 526)

These editions of Collier's stated that these "counter-revolutionary groups ... carried out economic sabotage and cross border raids from bases inside Honduras protected by the Honduran army" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 526).

The 1989 Collier's contained more critical statements about U.S. involvement in Sandinista Nicaraguan than any edition analyzed, and was one of two to mention that "in 1986 the International Court of Justice condemned the United States for its acts of aggression against Nicaragua" (vol. 17, p. 526). On the United States actions towards Sandinista attempts to better Nicaragua's economy, the 1989 Collier's stated:

All the Sandinista plans for economic and social development were effectively frustrated by actions of the U.S. government, which imposed a boycott of U.S. trade with Nicaragua; blocked development assistance from international lending agencies; and, most devastatingly, bankrolled, armed, and guided military action by a
counterrevolutionary army ('contras') based in Honduras. (vol. 17, p. 523)

The 1989 Collier's was the only edition analyzed that mentioned U.S. military maneuvers in Central America:

During 1984 the United States reinforced its military presence in Honduras and El Salvador. Intensified U.S. support enabled the contras to increase their attacks, which included air raids, and U.S. ships stationed offshore aided in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors. (vol. 17, p. 526)

The 1989 Collier's Nicaragua article on U.S.-Sandinista relations concluded:

In the succeeding years, as the contras were effective only as terrorists, the United States was condemned by the ICJ, and the U.S. Congress only went along with Reagan's policies most grudgingly, the U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua was increasingly resisted by Central Americans. (vol. 17, p. 526)

The 1989 Collier's Central America article was similarly critical of U.S. policies toward Nicaragua, and also referred to those actions as resulting in "war:"

During the 1980s, the U.S. government mounted a sustained effort to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. It imposed an economic boycott and recruited a counterrevolutionary army--the 'contras'--to invade Nicaragua from bases in Honduras ... The U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua was highly unpopular throughout the region. (vol. 5, p. 648)

According to the 1984 and 1990 World Book Nicaragua articles:

In 1981, the United States, charging that Nicaragua was providing weapons to rebels in other Central American countries, cut off aid to the country.... The United States gave financial aid to the anti-Sandinistas, and the government

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
forces received aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union. (vol. 14, p. 317)

According to the 1990 World Book Nicaragua article:

U.S. President Ronald Reagan charged that the Sandinistas had set up a Communist dictatorship and were providing aid to rebels in other Central American countries. In late 1983 and early 1984, the United States aided the contras in placing mines in Nicaraguan harbors. In 1985, Reagan ordered an embargo on U.S. trade with Nicaragua. Before the embargo, the United States had been Nicaragua's chief trading partner. (vol. 14, p. 317)

On the opinion others had about Nicaragua, the 1990 World Book stated:

Some people in the United States oppose U.S. financial aid to the contras.... In 1986, the International Court of Justice--after reviewing complaints from Nicaragua--concluded that the United States acted illegally in helping mine the Nicaraguan harbors and providing aid to the contras. U.S. officials rejected the conclusion. (vol. 14, p. 317)

"Factors that contributed to the economic problems" of Nicaragua, the 1990 World Book explained, "include the U.S. trade embargo, the cost of war against the contras." (vol. 17, p. 317).

Portrayal of the Soviet Union and Cuba

Portrayal of involvement of the Soviet Union and Cuba in Nicaragua varied among the encyclopedias. Some encyclopedias gave Soviet and Cuban involvement a significant role in Nicaragua, some deemphasized their role, while others did not mention the Soviet Union or
Cuba. Differences also existed as to the effect of the Cuban revolution on both Nicaragua and Central America.

The 1977 Encyclopedia Americana article on Nicaragua did not mention the Soviet Union or Cuba. The 1977 and 1984 Americana articles on Central America placed importance on the effect of the Cuban revolution of 1959 on the region, having stated that Central Americans, "on their own initiative since 1951 (though with help from the United States, especially since the rise of Cuba's Fidel Castro) have begun again the processes that will tend to make them one" (1977, 1984, vol. 6, p. 184).

The 1983 Americana Nicaragua article stated that Cubans worked with Sandinista Nicaragua's literacy campaign: "A massive literacy campaign was mounted, aided by teachers recruited from all sectors of the population as well as from other countries, such as Cuba" (vol. 20, p. 303). This sentence presented Cuban involvement in Nicaragua positively. Another sentence in the 1983 Americana presented Cuban involvement in Nicaragua negatively: "non-Sandinistas ... expressed grave doubts about the presence of Cuban advisers in various parts of the government and in the educational system in particular" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1983 Americana placed emphasis on Sandinista foreign policy ties with Cuban and the Soviet Union: "Diplomatic relations were established with Cuba, and Fidel Castro visited Nicaragua" (vol. 20, p. 308). Later, the 1983
Americana stated: "A delegation of the FSLN visited Moscow and signed a communique with officials of the Soviet Communist party proclaiming a community of outlook. Subsequently, the FSLN sought and obtained admission to the Socialist International." (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1983 Americana stated about Sandinista domestic policy: "The Sandinista regime proclaimed belief in a multiparty regime and a mixed economy, in spite of their simultaneous commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1990 Americana Nicaragua article stated that the Sandinistas' beginnings were strongly related to the Cuban revolution and that their ideological views were Marxist:

The FSLN was founded in 1961. Inspired by the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro, the Sandinistas at first sought to organize peasant support in Nicaragua's Central Highlands.... Only in 1977, after the death of their chief theoretician, Carlos Fonseca, and a subsequent breakup of the organization into three parts, did the FSLN revise its tactics. Two of the factions ... were dogmatic Marxists. (vol. 20, p. 307)

On Sandinista economic policy, the 1990 Americana stated: "Foreign trade, which was once heavily dependent on the United States, became more diversified as commercial relations were developed with the European Economic Community, the Socialist bloc, and the Central American Common Market" (vol. 20, p. 305). Where the 1983 Americana emphasized Sandinista ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union, this paragraph from the 1990 Americana stated that
the Sandinistas developed economic relations with the "Socialist bloc," but listed this group as only the second among three with which the Sandinistas developed economic relations.

The 1969 and 1977 editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica did not mention the Soviet Union or Cuba. The 1984 Britannica stated: "Although the Sandinistas government retained ties with the West, its relations with Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations seemed to indicate an increasing leaning toward the left" (vol. 3, p. 1115). Where the editions of Americana made no explicit judgement about Sandinista relations with "Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations," the 1984 Britannica stated that these relations "seemed to indicate an increasing leaning toward the left."

The 1989 Britannica stated that Nicaraguan ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba were to blame for Nicaragua's worsening relations with the United States: "The new government also cultivated closer ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba ... which caused its relations with the United States to worsen" (vol. 8, p. 676). The 1989 Britannica article on Central America stated that the Sandinistas' had a global effect: "The installation of the Marxist Sandinista government in Nicaragua ... lent global importance to the region's conflicts, as different factions received military help from the United States or
from the Soviet Union and Cuba" (vol. 3, p. 26).


The 1967 and 1977 Collier's editions stated that the Cuban revolution had an effect on Central America: "Alarmed by the 1959 Cuban revolution and fearing its spread to the isthmus, the Central American states introduced reforms long overdue" (1967, 1977, vol. 5, p. 650) As a result, the Central American States also "issued the Declaration of Central America," which, "pledged vigilance against the infiltration of revolutionaries from

The 1966 and 1977 editions of World Book Encyclopedia did not mention the Soviet Union or Cuba. The 1984 World Book mentioned the Soviet Union and Cuba only once, having stated that in the fighting between the "anti-Sandinistas" and the Sandinistas: "The United States gave financial aid to the anti-Sandinistas, and the government forces received aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union" (vol. 14, p. 317). The 1990 World Book expanded the list of governments which were the Sandinistas to "the Soviet Union, Cuba, Western European nations, and other countries" (vol. N, p. 405). The 1990 World Book listed the Soviet Union as second among Nicaragua's main trading partners. (vol. N, p. 404)

Portrayal of the Sandinistas

Portrayal of the Sandinistas varied among and within the encyclopedias. There was little agreement among the editions analyzed even on the basic question of whether Sandinista rule was beneficial or harmful to Nicaragua. To facilitate analysis, the portrayal of the Sandinistas is divided into four sections, each relating to a certain period or aspect of Sandinista rule. The sections cover: (1) the Sandinistas before they gained power in 1979, (2) the form of government they set up after taking power, (3) the Sandinista's domestic policies and their relations with other political parties and groups, and (4) the Sandinistas
foreign policy and their relations with other nations. The encyclopedias' overall interpretations of Sandinista rule, as well as their interpretations of changes in political economy brought about by the Sandinistas, will be given in a later section in which they will be contrasted with the overall interpretations of Somoza rule.

The Pre-Revolution Sandinista Party

Both before and after the 1979 revolution, the Sandinista Front for the Liberation of Nicaragua (FSLN), received little coverage in the encyclopedias. None of the seven editions analyzed which were published before 1979 mentioned the Sandinistas. Editions analyzed which were published after 1979 contained a small amount of text covering the FSLN's history up to the revolution.

The 1983 Encyclopedia Americana article on Nicaragua stated that after "public opinion in all levels of society turned into opposition to the Somoza dictatorship," the Sandinistas "became a real threat to the government" (vol. 20, p. 307). Before popular opinion turned against the Somozas, the 1983 Americana stated, the Sandinistas had "since the early 1960's ... been attempting to organize guerilla war against the regime, but its efforts had had little more than nuisance value" (vol. 20, p. 307). The 1983 Americana described the Sandinistas as a "radical Left group," and explained that their taking power left
Nicaragua with an uncertain future (vol. 20, p. 302).

The 1990 Americana article on Nicaragua also referred to the revolution, which was "led" by the FSLN, as "popular," and stated that "by September 1978, Somoza faced a general insurrection involving all sectors of society and led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Within a year, Somoza was out and the FSLN in" (vol 20, p. 307).

The 1990 Americana contained more information about the formation and development of the Sandinistas than any edition analyzed. Like the 1983 Americana, the 1990 explained that the Sandinistas' early efforts were unsuccessful:

The FSLN was founded in 1961. Inspired by the Cuban revolution of Fidel Castro, the Sandinistas at first sought to organize peasant support in Nicaragua's Central Highlands. In this and most of their early efforts, they were unsuccessful. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The 1990 Americana then explained, in surprising detail for an encyclopedia, the political changes that occurred in the Sandinistas which, according to Americana, played a role in their final victory:

Only in 1977, after the death of their chief theoretician, Carlos Fonseca, and a subsequent breakup of the organization into three parts, did the FSLN revise its tactics. Two of these factions ... were dogmatic Marxists.... After the reunification of the FSLN, the Third, or Insurrectionist, faction emerged as the dominant partner. Known for their ideological flexibility, the Insurrectionists built a broad, multi-interest alliance of all groups who were against Somoza: workers, peasants, and the poor,
but also politically active Christians and many middle-class people. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The 1969 and 1977 editions of Encyclopaedia Britannica did not mention the Sandinistas, even though the 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica stated that "before the end of the year (1974), two genuine opposition groups attracted wide attention," one of which was the Sandinistas (1989, vol. 15, p. 721; 1984, vol. 3, p. 1115). The 1989 Britannica article on Nicaragua referred to the Sandinistas as a "guerrilla movement opposed to the rule of the Somozas" (vol. 8, p. 676). The 1989 Britannica article on Central America stated that a "Marxist ... founded the guerrilla" FSLN (vol. 15, p. 721).

The 1989 Britannica portrayed the 1979 revolution as popular and explained that the revolution's popularity was related to Somoza's use of international earthquake aid sent to Nicaragua. The 1989 Britannica article on Nicaragua explained that after the earthquake aid was stolen: "The Sandinistas then joined with liberal and middle-class opponents of the government, and a widespread popular insurrection overwhelmed the National Guard and overthrew Somoza in 1979" (vol. 8, p. 676).

Both the 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica attributed equal responsibility for civilian deaths during the revolution against Somoza to the Sandinistas and the National Guard: "Many noncombatants were the victims of

The 1984 *Collier's Encyclopedia* article on Nicaragua first referred to the Sandinistas as "a group of radical peasants that had been waging guerilla war against the Somoza regime since the early 1960s" (vol. 17, p. 522). The 1989 edition of *Collier's* stated that the Sandinistas "had fought the Somoza family dictatorship for nearly 20 years before the revolutionary victory of 1979" (vol. 17, p. 522).

Unlike the 1984 and 1989 editions of *Britannica*, which implicitly put equal responsibility for civilian deaths during the revolution on the Sandinistas and the National Guard, the 1984 and 1989 editions of *Collier's* focused on deaths caused by Somoza:

In September (1978) the FSLN set off a massive popular uprising against the government. Somoza used tanks and planes to kill more than 2,000 people, but in June 1979 the FSLN mounted another offensive. On July 19, 1979, the FSLN entered Managua victorious. (1984, vol. 17, p. 526; 1989, vol. 17, p. 525)

Both the 1984 and 1989 *Collier's* portrayed the 1979 revolution as popular. According to the 1984 *Collier's* article on Central America: "Nicaragua's Somoza dynasty held out against middle-class efforts to remove it. Finally, in 1979 a popular revolution led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front forced the Somozas to flee" (vol. 5, p. 648). Similarly, the 1989 *Collier's* article on
Central America stated that "Nicaraguans turned against his [Somoza's] regime, enabling leftists to begin guerilla resistance" (vol. 5, p. 647).

While it did not explicitly refer to the 1979 revolution as "popular," the 1984 World Book Encyclopedia article on Nicaragua explained that the revolution had much support:

Widespread protests against President Somoza's rule began during the mid-1970's. Opponents of Somoza demanded his removal from office. Many of the opponents belonged to the Sandinista National Liberation Front, a guerrilla organization.... Many other political and economic groups joined with the Sandinistas against Somoza. (vol. N, p. 317)

With slight change in wording from the above paragraph, the 1990 World Book also implicitly portrayed the 1979 revolution as popular. The 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book referred to the Sandinista-Somoza war as a "civil war," a phrase not used in any other encyclopedia.

The Sandinista Government

Portrayal of the revolutionary government in Nicaragua ranged from editions which presented the government as just, to editions which questioned its basis for rule.

After "Somoza fled" the country, the 1983 Americana article on Nicaragua stated, "a coalition government assumed power. Formal power was held by a governing junta, including a Sandinista majority, and representatives of non-Sandinista forces" (vol. 20, p. 308). The 1990
Americana stated that "After taking power on July 19, 1979, the FSLN set up a Governing Junta of National Reconstruction ... an executive body with five (later three) members" (vol. 20, p. 307). The 1990 Americana explained the development of Nicaraguan government under the Sandinistas:

Overall, the original Sandinista machinery of government was well suited for carrying out rapid social change. These governmental institutions began to change by 1982 as more conventional instruments of rule were developed. Elections held in 1984 led to the replacement of the Council of State by a National Assembly.... A further step toward giving the new regime a permanent basis came in 1987 when a new constitution was adopted. (vol. 20, p. 307)

The 1990 Americana portrayed the 1987 Nicaraguan constitution as very progressive: "A mix of radical and conventional elements, it recognized Nicaragua's multiethnic nature and guaranteed political pluralism, a mixed economy, nonalignment in foreign affairs, civil liberties, and socioeconomic rights" (vol. 20, p. 307). Later, the 1990 Americana article on Nicaragua added that "the FSLN moved away from its original radical political structure, in which it monopolized power, toward one recognizing as legitimate the existence of other political interests" (vol. 20, p. 308).

In an edition published before the 1987 constitution was implemented, the 1984 Britannica stated that "The Statute of Rights and Guarantees, which acted as the country's new
constitution, assured basic individual rights and freedoms" (vol. 3, p. 1115). The 1989 Britannica did not mention the 1987 constitution, but repeated the statement from the 1984 Britannica about the Statute of Rights and Guarantees.

The 1984 Britannica stated that Somoza was "overthrown" by "revolutionaries" who "then installed a junta government" (vol. 2, p. 683). The "new government ... appointed a five-member Government Junta of National Reconstruction and a 47-member Council of State" (vol. 3, p. 1115). According to the 1989 Britannica Micropaedia article on Nicaragua: "Executive and legislative authority was centered in the Government of National Reconstruction ... Presidential and legislative elections were held in 1984, and a new administration, still largely dominated by the FSLN, replaced the junta government in 1985" (vol. 8, p. 676).

According to the 1984 edition of Collier's, after the FSLN "led" the revolution of 1979, "it quickly eclipsed all the traditional parties and became the predominant political organization in Nicaragua, although other parties were allowed to remain in existence" (vol. 17, p. 522). On the type of government in Nicaragua after 1979, the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's stated:

The FSLN set up a junta of national reconstruction.... Freedom of the press and other civil liberties were restored, but the junta refused to hold elections until 1985 at the earliest, ostensibly to allow time for recovery
from the fighting, during which an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 had died. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525)

According to the 1984 World Book, "The new government headed by the Sandinistas also includes representatives of other political parties" (vol. N, p. 317). Explaining Nicaragua's governmental structure, the 1990 World Book Nicaragua article stated: "The president, most of the Cabinet members, and the majority of the National Assembly members belong to a political party called the Sandinista National Liberation Front ... The president and National Assembly were elected in 1984" (vol. N, p. 400).

The 1984 and 1990 World Book articles on Central America contained a significant change and claim about democratic elections and constitutions. According to the 1984 edition of World Book, "the constitution of every Central American country except Nicaragua, which has no constitution, provides for the democratic election of representatives" (vol. 3, p. 266-7). Although the sentence which followed stated that "however, in many cases governments have disregarded their constitutions," Nicaragua was singled out as the only Central American country not having a constitution and not providing "for the democratic election of representatives." After the 1987 constitution was implemented, the World Book article on Central America changed this text to: "The constitution of every Central American country provides for the
democratic election of representatives" (vol. C, p. 354). The same sentence which appeared in the 1984 article and explained that "in many cases governments had disregarded their constitutions," appeared in the 1990 World Book (vol. C, p. 355).

**Sandinista Domestic Policies**

Portrayal of Sandinista domestic policies ranged from editions which presented Sandinistas policies as beneficial to Nicaragua to editions which presented them as causing harm. The 1983 Americana was critical of Sandinista domestic policies. This edition divided Nicaraguan politics into two categories, Sandinistas and "non-Sandinistas," and stated that a "coalition" existed between the two groups (vol. 20, p. 308). The 1983 Americana stated that "The coalition was uneasy," because "The Sandinistas proclaimed belief in a multiparty regime and a mixed economy, in spite of their simultaneous commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas" (vol. 20, p. 308). In a lengthy paragraph, the 1983 Americana emphasized that "non-Sandinistas were highly critical of the Sandinistas," and stated that the non-Sandinistas:

emphasized that both the armed forces--substantially larger than those of Somoza--and the national police were totally under Sandinista control. They severely criticized the Sandinista refusal to set a date for elections. They protested against the evident attempt of the Sandinistas to absorb all trade-union groups not
under their direct control. They were critical of violations by the regime of freedom of organization and of the press. Moreover, they expressed grave doubts about the presence of Cuban advisers in various parts of the government and in the education system in particular. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1990 Americana contained few statements about the relation between the Sandinistas and other political groups and parties, and was very positive towards FSLN domestic policies. Critical statements about the Sandinistas made in the 1983 Americana did not appear in the 1990 edition. The 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica also contained few statements about the relation between the Sandinistas and other political parties, although Britannica was critical of Sandinista domestic policies.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's, like the 1983 edition of Americana, stated that opposition to the Sandinistas developed in the years following the revolution. The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's were more specific, however, as to which groups made up the opposition to the Sandinistas, and both editions prefaced their description of the opposition by describing the groups from which the Sandinistas continued to receive support:

By 1983 the Sandinista government, though continuing to enjoy broad popular support, especially among the peasantry and the urban poor, had to confront opposition from diverse sectors of Nicaraguan society. Aspects of governmental policy had aroused dissent from the organized business community, the higher Catholic
clergy, social democratic and (pro-Peking) Communist trade unions, the Mosquito Indians, the English-speaking blacks of the Caribbean coast, and La Prensa, the country's leading newspaper. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 526)

The 1989 Collier's was also more specific than the 1983 Americana as to which parties opposed the Sandinistas:
"The FSLN is opposed by a variety of parties--on the left by the Nicaraguan Communist and Socialist parties plus some smaller "Marxist-Leninist" grouping; and on the right by Conservatives, Liberals, Social Christians, and Social Democrats" (vol. 17, p. 522).

In a contradiction of the 1983 Americana, which stated that "non-Sandinistas" were critical of violations of freedom of the press, the 1984 Collier's stated that "freedom of the press and other civil liberties were restored ... following the overthrow of the Somoza regime" (vol. 17, p. 526).

Where the 1984 Collier's stated that two of the groups opposed to the Sandinistas were the Mosquito Indians and blacks living on Nicaraguan's Eastern coast, the 1989 edition of Collier's stated that the 1987 constitution "includes provisions promising substantial cultural and administrative autonomy to the Indian and black communities of the Atlantic coast" (vol. 17, p. 522). Both the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's emphasized that the Nicaraguan business community split with the Sandinistas early in their rule: "Friction soon developed ... between

According to the 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book: "In the early 1980's, internal opposition to the Sandinistas developed concerning economic policy and the type of government to be established" (1990, vol. N, p. 405; 1984, vol. N, p. 317) The 1984 World Book stated that "Much fighting has since taken place between the new government and Nicaraguans who oppose the government" (vol. 3, p. 268). The 1990 World Book contained the same text, and added that the Nicaraguans who were fighting the Sandinista government were "called contras" (vol. C, p. 354).

Both the 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book stated that Mosquito Indians were involved with "former supporters of the Somoza family" in "antigovernment activities:"

During the 1980's, some ... Indians became involved in antigovernment activities with former supporters of the Somoza family based across the border in Honduras. Because of this activity, the government moved some Indian groups from their homes near the border to areas in the interior. (1990, vol. N, p. 400; 1984, vol. N, p. 315)

Sandinista Foreign Policy

Portrayal of Sandinista foreign policy ranged from editions which presented the Sandinistas as desiring
membership in the Soviet Bloc to editions which presented Nicaragua as a victim of U.S. intervention.

The 1983 edition of Americana was reflective of the view of the Sandinistas as eventual members of the Soviet Bloc. Statements about Sandinista foreign policy in the 1983 Americana emphasized ties to Communist-bloc nations:

The post-Somoza government sought officially to maintain friendly relations with virtually all other nations ... Diplomatic relations were established with Cuba, and Fidel Castro visited Nicaragua. Relatively close relations were established with Mexico. The Sandinista Front of National Liberation, as a party, adopted equivocal positions. A delegation of the FSLN visited Moscow and signed a communique with officials of the Soviet Communist party proclaiming a community of outlook. Subsequently, the FSLN sought and obtained admission to the Socialist International. (vol. 20, p. 308)

On Sandinista relations with the United States, the 1983 Americana stated that "the Carter administration rushed emergency aid to Nicaragua. It pushed through Congress an appropriation of $75 million for additional long-term aid, although the Reagan administration held up disbursal of the last $15 million of the appropriation" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The sentence that followed this chronicle of the Reagan administration's withholding of aid to Nicaragua stated that Nicaragua established diplomatic relations with Cuba and was visited by Fidel Castro, thus linking the cut in aid to Nicaragua's establishing relations with Cuba.

The 1990 Americana was reflective of the view of Nicaragua
being a victim of U.S. intervention. On Sandinista relations with the United States, the 1990 Americana stated:

In 1981 a counterrevolutionary army (the "contras"), founded on the remnants of Somoza's National Guard and organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency with Argentine and Israeli help, launched a war of attrition against the Sandinista government. To combat the insurgents, the government had to build a huge army and devote as much as half the national budget to defense. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1984 Britannica also presented a view of Sandinista-United States relations that differed from the view presented in the 1983 Americana. The 1984 Britannica stated:

As the Sandinistas struggled with domestic reconstruction, they met with tense foreign relations. In 1981 Nicaragua accused the United States of harbouring Nicaraguan exiles training to invade their home country. The United States, in turn, accused Nicaragua of delivering arms to leftist guerrillas fighting against the government of El Salvador. (vol. 3, p. 1115)

Note that the United States aid to fighters trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government was presented here as a Nicaraguan accusation, not as a fact. The 1989 Britannica presented this as fact: "Local resistance to the Sandinistas developed in the form of guerilla warfare conducted by former supporters of Somoza and by other groups. They were supported by aid, some of it covert, from the U.S. government" (vol. 15, p. 721). The 1989 Britannica statement that those conducting "guerrilla
"warfare" were "supported by aid ... from the U.S. government," gave the U.S. a far smaller role in the anti-Sandinista warfare than the 1990 Americana, which stated that they were "organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency." The 1989 Britannica article on Nicaragua also gave a lesser role to the United States than the 1990 Americana, the 1989 Britannica having stated that the "guerrilla groups" were receiving "some support from the United States" (vol. 8, p. 676).

The 1989 edition of Britannica linked U.S. support for the guerrillas to Nicaragua's ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba. In the sentence which preceded the statement that "some support" was given by the U.S. to the guerrillas, the 1989 Britannica stated that "the new government cultivated closer ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba," which along with its nationalization of some industries, "caused its relations with the United States to worsen" (vol. 8, p. 676).

The 1989 edition of Collier's portrayed Sandinista relations with the United States differently than editions of Britannica. The 1989 edition of Collier's put Sandinista relations with the United States into the historical context of consistent U.S. intervention in Nicaragua through the twentieth century:

For more than a century, Nicaragua's predominant foreign concern has been its relation to the
United States, which occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1934. During the 1980s Nicaragua was confronted with a continuous military struggle against a counterrevolutionary army financed and armed by the U.S. government. (vol. 17, p. 522)

The 1989 Collier's Central America article stated that the goal of the U.S. government was to "overthrow" the government of Nicaragua, and that it "mounted a sustained effort" to do so (vol. 5, p. 648). Among Central American countries, the article stated, "The U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua was highly unpopular throughout the region" (vol. 5, p. 648).

While heavily critical of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, the 1989 Collier's stated that of the weaponry owned by the Sandinista Popular Army, "Most ... has been obtained from Soviet bloc suppliers" (vol. 17, p. 522). Where some encyclopedias emphasized Sandinista ties to the Soviets, the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's also emphasized that the Sandinistas received support from other nations: "The Sandinista government, in addition to its internal support, received political and economic backing from democratic Latin American states, from European socialist parties and governments, and from Cuba and the Soviet bloc" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 526).

According to the 1984 World Book article on Nicaragua:

In 1981, the United States, charging that Nicaragua was providing weapons to rebels in other Central American countries, cut off aid to the country. In that year, former members of
Somoza's National Guard and others stepped up attacks from bases over the border in Honduras. In response, the Nicaraguan government declared a state of emergency and launched a campaign to build up its military forces. In 1983, several thousand anti-Sandinistas invaded northeastern Nicaragua. Fighting between the invaders and government forces took place, resulting in many deaths. The United States gave financial aid to the anti-Sandinistas, and the government forces received aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union. (vol. N, p.317)

The 1990 World Book Nicaragua article contained the same text, except for a sentence which stated that the "invaders" of Nicaragua were "called contras" (vol. N, p. 405).

The 1990 World Book stated that the United States took a more active role in helping the contras: "In late 1983 and early 1984, the United States aided the contras in placing mines in Nicaraguan harbors. In 1985, Reagan ordered an embargo on U.S. trade with Nicaragua. (vol. N, p. 405) These sentences were preceded by U.S. President Reagan's claim about the Sandinista government that "the Sandinistas had set up a Communist dictatorship and were providing aid to rebels in other Central American countries (vol. N, p. 405). The 1990 edition of World Book provided a rare third-party perspective on U.S.-Nicaragua relations, having stated that the World Court ruled on the issue of U.S. intervention in Nicaragua: "In 1986, the International Court of Justice--after reviewing complaints from Nicaragua--concluded that the United States acted
illegally in helping mine the Nicaraguan harbors and providing aid to the contras. U.S. officials rejected the conclusion" (vol. N, p. 405).

Portrayal of the Contras

Portrayal of the contras varied among the encyclopedias. Two encyclopedias, The Encyclopedia Americana and Collier's Encyclopedia, consistently portrayed the contras as an attempt by the U.S. government to harm or overthrow the government of Nicaragua. The other two encyclopedias, The New Encyclopaedia Britannica and World Book Encyclopedia, portrayed the contras as ineffective resistance and gave a smaller role to the United States.

The 1983 edition of Americana did not directly or indirectly mention the contras. The 1984 edition of Britannica did not mention the contras by name, but stated: "In 1981 Nicaragua accused the United States of harbouring Nicaraguan exiles training to invade their home country" (vol. 3, p. 1115). The contras thus only appeared in the 1984 Britannica as a claim made by the Nicaraguan government. In strong contrast, the 1984 edition of Collier's stated: "Destructive raids across the Honduran border by U.S.-sponsored counter-revolutionaries further impeded [Nicaraguan] attempts at [economic] recovery in 1982 and 1983" (vol. 17, p. 523). The 1984 Britannica presented the contras as an claim made by the Nicaraguan
government; the 1984 Collier's presented the contras as a fact, and as a fact that was harming Nicaragua's economy. The 1984 Collier's also implied that the contras were ex-National Guardsmen, having written that the United States "began to give direct military assistance to exiled units of the Somoza national guard" (vol. 17, p. 526). The 1984 Collier's stated that against the Sandinista government:

"Armed opposition came from U.S. financed counter-revolutionary groups, which carried out economic sabotage and cross border raids from bases inside Honduras protected by the Honduran army" (vol. 17, p. 526).

According to the 1990 Americana:

In 1981 a counterrevolutionary army (the "contras") founded on the remnants of Somoza's National Guard and organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency with Argentine and Israeli help, launched a war of attrition against the Sandinista government. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1990 Americana stated that the contras were "organized" by the United States and had a detrimental effect on Nicaragua, and attributed the size of the Sandinista army to necessary defense of the country from the contras:

To combat the insurgents, the government had to build a huge army and devote as much as half the national defense budget to defense. Unofficial estimates put the total cost of the war to the Nicaraguan government at over $2 billion, or more than the annual GDP, during the first five years alone. And this assessment ignored the human cost of the conflict: 20,000 dead, counting both sides, and total casualties of 40,000. Further, perhaps 250,000 refugees were created by the fighting. (vol. 20, p. 308)
A strongly different view of the contras was presented by the 1989 Britannica, which stated that the contras were mostly ineffective "local resistance" which received aid from the United States:

Local resistance to the Sandinista government developed in the form of guerilla warfare conducted by former supporters of Somoza and by other groups. They were supported by aid, some of it covert, from the U.S. government, despite protests from some members of Congress. The guerrillas, who came to be called Contras, established bases in the border areas of Honduras and Costa Rica. The Contras struck at economic targets in Nicaragua, hoping to weaken the country's production and demoralize the people. Their efforts, despite help from the United States, were blunted by Sandinista attacks. (vol. 15, p. 722)

The 1989 Collier's stated that "during the 1980's Nicaragua was confronted with a continuous military struggle against a counterrevolutionary army financed and armed by the U.S. government. (vol. 17, p. 522) The 1989 Collier's tied the beginnings of the contras to U.S. claims about Nicaraguan involvement in El Salvador:

The United States, claiming that Cuban arms were being shipped through Nicaragua to insurgents in El Salvador, suspended economic aid to Nicaragua in 1981 and began to give direct military assistance to exiled units of the Somoza national guard. (vol. 17, p. 526)

In a direct contradiction of the 1989 Britannica statement that the contras were "local resistance," the 1989 Collier's article on Central America stated that the United States "recruited" the contras" (vol. 5, p. 648). Like the 1984 edition, the 1989 Collier's stated that the contras
had a very detrimental effect on Nicaragua:

All the Sandinista plans for economic and social development were effectively frustrated by actions of the U.S. government... [which] most devastatingly, bankrolled, armed and guided military action by a counterrevolutionary army ("contras") based in Honduras. Although the contras were at no point able to hold their own in combat with the Nicaraguan army, they were able to disrupt the economy by frequent terrorist raids against cooperative farms; by sabotage of factories, mines, and power lines; and, in sum, by forcing all Nicaraguan society onto a war footing. As a result, in the late 1980's Nicaragua suffered rampant inflation and severe shortages of all sorts of consumer goods, factories and mills were operating far below capacity, and schools and hospitals were without books or medicines. (vol. 17, p. 523)

The 1989 Collier's conclusion about the contra war was equally critical of the contras:

In the succeeding years, as the contras were effective only as terrorists, the United States was condemned by the ICJ, and the U.S. Congress only went along with Reagan's policies most grudgingly, the U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua was increasingly resisted by Central Americans. (vol. 17, p. 525)

According to the 1990 World Book, in 1981:

former members of Somoza's National Guard and others stepped up attacks from bases over the border in Honduras.... In 1983, several thousand anti-Sandinistas invaded northeastern Nicaragua. Since then, fighting between the invaders--called contras--and government forces has taken place in Nicaragua, resulting in many deaths. The United States gave financial aid to the contras. (vol. 14, p. 317)

The 1990 World Book also portrayed U.S. support for the contras as going beyond financial aid, having stated: "In late 1983 and early 1984, the United States aided the
contras in placing mines in Nicaraguan harbors" (vol. 14, p. 317). The 1990 World Book also stated that some U.S. citizens were against giving aid to the contras and that the International Court of Justice declared U.S. support for the contras to be illegal:

Some people in the United States oppose U.S. financial aid to the contras. In the 1980's, the U.S. Congress sometimes voted for and sometimes voted against further aid to the rebels. In 1986, the International Court of Justice - after reviewing complaints from Nicaragua - concluded that the United States acted illegally in helping mine the Nicaraguan harbors and providing aid to the contras. U.S. officials rejected the conclusion. (vol. 14, p. 317)

Like Collier's, the 1990 World Book attributed Nicaraguan economic problems to the contras, but stated that their attacks were only one reason for Nicaragua's economic troubles:

Since the mid-1980's, Nicaragua has faced severe economic problems, including high inflation and a shortage of consumer goods. Factors that contributed to the economic problems include the U.S. trade embargo, the cost of war against the contras, and high government spending on health and education problems. (vol. 14, p. 317)

Portrayal of the Changes in Nicaragua's Political Economy

The most striking difference between encyclopedia coverage of the Somozas and the Sandinistas was in the amount of text devoted to matters concerning political economy. Little was written about Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas, especially in encyclopedias.
published while the Somozas were in power. Almost all of what was written about the Sandinistas centered around statements concerning changes in Nicaragua's political economy.

To facilitate analysis, the portrayal of changes in Nicaragua's political economy after the 1979 revolution is divided into three sections. The sections cover the portrayal of: (1) Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas in encyclopedias published before the revolution, (2) Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas in encyclopedias published after the revolution, and (3) Nicaragua's political economy under the Sandinistas.

Pre-1979 Portrayal of Somoza Nicaragua

Statements about Nicaragua's political economy made by encyclopedias published before the 1979 revolution were mostly non-judgmental, or portrayed Nicaragua's political economy positively. The 1977 Encyclopedia Americana, for example, stated that "Nicaragua's foreign trade reflects the fact that it is still basically a supplier of raw materials and must import finished products as well as some food" (vol. 20, p. 316). Like editions of most encyclopedias, the 1977 Americana stated that Nicaragua most frequently traded with the United States. Nicaragua's banking "is centered in the National Bank of Nicaragua, "which was "state-owned," according to the 1977 Americana
Although the 1977 *Americana* mentioned that Nicaragua's banking system under the Somoza family was state-owned, this edition did not make any judgments about this system. Most government expenditures went towards "administration, highways, national defense, and education" (vol. 20, p. 318). Health conditions, the 1977 *Americana* stated, "have varied widely from one department to another" (vol. 20, p. 318). Although health conditions "varied," the 1977 *Americana* portrayed health conditions in Nicaragua as improving, at least partly because of help from the United States:

Various United States agencies have cooperated with the Nicaraguan government in advancing sanitation and health programs. That considerable progress has been made is attested by the significantly increased birth rate and decreased general death rate ... The improvement in medical care is shown by the fact that in 1965 Nicaragua had 25 public and 14 private hospitals. A social-security law was enacted in 1957, which provides for the hazards of maternity, illness, occupational injury or disease, unemployment, and old age. (vol. 20, p. 318)

"The number of schools of all kinds," according to the 1977 *Americana*, "increased between 1949 and 1964," although Nicaraguan schools suffered from "lack of sufficient buildings, equipment, and teachers" (vol. 20, p. 319).

The 1969 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* also portrayed Somoza Nicaragua's political economy positively. On Nicaragua's educational system, the 1969 *Britannica* stated:

Although about 18% of the national budget is usually devoted to education, probably more than

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
65% of the people are illiterate. Schools are unavailable in many of the rural areas. Furthermore the average length of primary school enrollment is two or three years, a period of which is considered inadequate preparation for the duties of citizenship. (vol. 16, p. 475)

Illiteracy in Nicaragua was thus presented in the 1969 Britannica as being widespread, but not the result of government policies; it was presented as occurring despite government spending on education. On the state of workers, the 1969 Britannica stated that the Nicaraguan government had been attempting to better their condition:

Legislation limiting the total number of hours to be worked per year and establishing maximum daily and weekly working hours was introduced in 1945. The 1950 constitution contains many welfare guarantees, only some of which have been made effective. (vol. 16, p. 475)

Like the 1977 Americana, the 1969 Britannica mentioned that much of Nicaragua's trade was with the United States (vol. 16, p. 475). The 1969 Britannica stated that agriculture, Nicaragua's main activity, had potential for expansion: "There are possibilities for greater agricultural development since only about one-fifth of the arable land is used for crop production" (vol. 16, p. 475). Like the 1977 Americana, the 1969 Britannica stated that Nicaragua's banking system has been dominated by the state-owned National Bank of Nicaragua" (vol. 16, p. 475).

The United States was portrayed in the 1969 Britannica as having had a positive effect on Nicaragua's economy. The Somozas were portrayed as having a mixed effect:
Strict economic dictatorship was coupled after 1941 with wartime co-operation with the United States, which brought material benefits in its wake. After the war an aura of prosperity developed... but observers noted the extent to which Somoza family holdings bound the economy together, while the people at large benefited little from the rise in national income. (vol. 16, p. 474)

The 1977 Britannica questioned whether Nicaragua's export-oriented economy benefitted the nation:

Nicaragua can be characterized by its agricultural economy, its history of autocratic government, and its imbalance of regional development. Most of the population is engaged in subsistence farming, and the national economy is perhaps overdependent upon exports of cotton and coffee." (vol. 13, p. 58)

The 1977 Britannica stated that Nicaragua "is rich in natural resources, most of which have yet to be exploited on a large scale," and that "there is room for great expansion of agriculture, for only 30 percent of the arable land is exploited" (vol. 13, p. 59-60). Like the 1969 Britannica and the 1977 Americana, the 1977 Britannica stated that the "financial system is dominated by the government-owned Banco Nacional de Nicaragua" (vol. 13, p. 62). Unlike the 1969 Britannica and the 1977 Americana, the 1977 Britannica added that "branches of U.S., British, and Canadian commercial banks operate in Nicaragua" (vol. 13, p. 62). Similar to the 1969 edition, the 1977 Britannica stated that "Nicaragua's chief trading partners are the U.S., Japan, and West Germany" (vol. 13, p. 62). "Trade unions," according to the 1977 Britannica, "are
small," and "the independent union movement is growing, but most unions are still government controlled" (vol. 13, p. 62).

On Nicaragua's educational system, the 1977 Britannica stated:

The nation's facilities and teaching staff are inadequate ... and can accommodate only about 50 percent of the school-age children. Of those who attend school, most leave before completing the secondary level, and over 40 percent of the population is illiterate. (vol. 13, p. 63)

The 1969 Britannica stated that "probably more than 65% of the people are illiterate" (vol. 16, p. 475), while the 1977 Britannica stated that "over 40 percent ... is illiterate" (vol. 13, p. 63). No reason was given in the 1977 Britannica for this significantly lower illiteracy rate, nor was the drop in illiteracy emphasized.

"Health and welfare services," according to the 1977 Britannica, "are inadequate" (vol. 13, p. 63). The 1977 Britannica added that:

In the late 1960s there was one doctor for every 1,674 persons and one hospital bed for every 433. Welfare services are offered by the labour unions and the limited social security program is offered for inhabitants of Managua. The shortage of adequate housing in both urban and rural areas remains acute, despite the government's housing program that began in 1959. (vol. 13, p. 63)

The shortage of housing in Nicaragua was thus presented as occurring "despite" a governmental housing problem.

In a two paragraph sub-section titled "Social Conditions," the 1977 Britannica stated: "In response to
the nation's overall poverty, the government initiated minimum wages in 1963; agricultural workers receive food allowances and housing loans. These programs have had little effect" (vol. 13, p. 63). Again, social problems in Nicaragua were presented in the 1977 Britannica as having occurred despite a government program.

"The major causes of death," according to the 1977 Britannica, were "old age, infections of the digestive system, homicide, and war" (vol. 13, p. 63). Amazingly, war in Nicaragua was not mentioned anywhere else in the 1977 Britannica, even though it was listed as the fourth leading cause of death.

In a section titled "Prospects for the Future," the 1977 Britannica listed "uneven distribution" of land and dependence on exports as causes of social and economic problems:

Like many Latin American nations, Nicaragua faces problems of economic and social imbalance. The rising birth rate, combined with an uneven distribution of settlement on the land, and the concentration of economic control in the hands of relatively few while the majority of the population lives at the subsistence level, all constitute direct or indirect obstacles to rapid development. A further factor of particular importance--the country is dependent upon its agricultural exports ... and national income is thereby subject to fluctuations in the world market. (vol. 13, p. 63)

According to the 1977 Britannica, Nicaragua's economic and social problems were but the same problems many Latin American nations faced: high birth rate, unequal land
distribution and dependence on exports.

Like the 1969 and 1977 editions of Britannica, the 1967 Collier's portrayed the Somoza's as having had a positive effect on Nicaragua's political economy:

During the third of a century in which the Somoza family has controlled Nicaragua, considerable economic progress has occurred.... The Somoza family, during this period, has built a private fortune estimated at $60,000,000.... On the other hand, the people of Nicaragua have received virtually no training in the art of self-government under the Somoza regime. (vol. 17, p. 525)

According to the 1967 Collier's, Nicaragua made "considerable economic progress" under the Somoza family while the Somoza's "built" their "private fortune." "On the whole," according to this edition, "the republic's financial outlook is good, as shown by the high rate of economic growth in recent years" (vol. 17, p. 523). The negative side of this, stated the 1967 Collier's, was that Nicaraguans "received virtually no training in the art of self-government."

The 1967 and 1977 Collier's articles on Central America stated that "even with the vast health programs, infant mortality rates remain high" (1967, 1977, vol. 5, p. 645). High infant mortality rates were thus presented as having occurred despite "vast health programs." "Poverty," these articles stated, "is widespread, health and sanitation facilities few, and illiteracy rates very high in rural areas. As a result, life expectancy is low" (1967, 1977,
The 1977 Collier's portrayed Nicaragua's political economy under the Somoza's less positively than the 1967 edition: "During the third of a century in which the Somozas have controlled Nicaragua, considerable economic progress has occurred, but at the expense of democracy. Also, the Somoza family has built a large private fortune" (vol. 17, p. 526). Like the 1967 Collier's, the 1977 edition stated that Nicaragua made "considerable economic progress" under the Somozas and that the Somozas "built" a private fortune. The 1977 Collier's, however, stated that this occurred "at the expense of democracy;" the 1967 edition stated that this occurred at the expense of Nicaraguans learning the "art of self-government." The 1967 edition made no judgement about the Somozas' "private fortune," while the 1977 edition portrayed this negatively.


According to the 1977 Collier's:
A few very prominent families still dominate much of Nicaragua's economic and social life, but this group has absorbed new families that became wealthy during the 1950's. The division between the upper and the middle class is weaker than in many Latin American countries. Nevertheless, the poor have enjoyed less in the way of medical care, education, and wages. (vol. 17, p. 522)

The 1977 Collier's thus stated that class divisions in Nicaragua existed in Somoza's Nicaragua. But this section's emphasis on "new families" which entered the class which dominated "much of Nicaragua's economic and social life," and its comparison of Nicaragua's class division to greater divisions in "many Latin American countries" lessened the importance of class divisions in Nicaragua.

"Health conditions," according to the 1977 Collier's, "began to improve about 1940 with improved medicines and sanitary conditions" (vol. 17, p. 522). The 1977 Collier's added that "by 1966 the death rate had dropped to 7 per thousand inhabitants and the infant mortality rate to 55 per thousand live births" (vol. 17, p. 522). Overall, the paragraph on health in the 1977 Collier's portrayed conditions in Somoza Nicaragua as improving.

"Land is unequally distributed," stated the 1977 Collier's (vol. 17, p. 523). This edition added:

Large farms of more than 700 acres make up only 2 percent of the number of farms but use more than 40 percent of all agricultural land ... Large land owners are well organized into powerful cotton, coffee, and cattle associations. (vol. 17, p. 523)
"Led by the ranching Somoza family," stated the 1977 Collier's, the Nicaraguan government "did much to promote the expansion and improvement of cattle raising" (vol. 17, p. 523-4). "Three-fifths of the country consists of forests," according to the 1977 Collier's, and while "Much of the pine forest has been exploited ... little has been done with ebony, mahogany, and other hardwoods" (vol. 17, p. 524). As did editions of all encyclopedias analyzed which were published before 1979, the 1977 Collier's mentioned that "the United States is Nicaragua's principal trading partner" (vol. 17, p. 524).

The 1966 World Book stated that "most Nicaraguans live in small homes on farms or plantations" (vol. 14, p. 315). "Forests," this edition stated, "cover about four-fifths of the land" (vol. 14, p. 316). "Nicaraguan industries," according to the 1966 World Book, "are small, and produce goods chiefly for local use" (vol. 14, p. 316).

The first sentence in the 1966 World Book under the section titled "Social and Cultural Achievements" stated that "about half the people do not know how to read or write" (vol. 14, p. 316). Little was said about Nicaraguan education. Unlike editions of other encyclopedias, nothing was mentioned in the 1966 World Book about Nicaraguan health conditions.

The 1977 edition of World Book was the most critical of Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas. "Partly
by using terrorist methods," this edition stated, the first Somoza "achieved great political power and wealth" (vol. 14, p. 314). The 1977 World Book added that "Today, members of the Somoza family own all or part of almost every major economic operation in Nicaragua" (vol. 14, p. 314).

Post-1979 Portrayal of Somoza Nicaragua

Encyclopedias published after the revolution of 1979 portrayed Somoza Nicaragua's political economy far more critically than editions published while the Somozas were in power. For example, the 1983 Americana stated:

The Nicaraguan economy traditionally was controlled by an oligarchy that had its roots in the colonial period. The growing power of the Somoza family, however, challenged the economic position of this oligarchy. By the time of the 1979 revolution, the Somoza family owned agricultural estates throughout the country. The family also owned, in whole or in part, many of the most important manufacturing industries and essential parts of the infrastructure. (vol. 20, p. 305)

These sentences from the 1983 Americana portrayed Nicaragua's economy as having been dominated by the Somoza family to the extent that this domination "challenged the position" of the "oligarchy" that "traditionally" controlled Nicaragua's economy. Nothing had been said about the Somoza family's control of many sectors of Nicaragua's economy in the 1977 Americana, nor had any "oligarchy" been mentioned. The 1983 Americana included...
other critical statements about Nicaragua's political
economy under the Somozas, such as the following:

Most of the Somoza family enriched themselves
through control of the state. They became the
nation's largest landowners, major investors in
its industries, and holders of many other kinds
of wealth. When the revolutionary government in
1979 seized the Somoza family holdings, it took
over property worth approximately a half billion
dollars. (vol. 20, p. 307)

Health conditions under the Somozas were portrayed in
the 1977 Americana as improving; the 1983 Americana
contradicted that portrayal by having stated that under the
Somozas, "health care for much of the population was
woefully inadequate" (vol. 20, p. 304). The 1983 Americana
also stated that "The educational system was poorly
developed" and "the illiteracy rate was about 50%." (vol.
20, p. 304) According to the 1983 Americana, "those parts
of the economy under direct control of the Somoza family
had to be exempt from union organization" (vol. 20, p.
304). Nothing was said in the 1977 Americana concerning
Somoza's treatment of trade unions.

The 1990 Americana also directly contradicted the 1977
Americana concerning Nicaragua's political economy under
the Somozas. The 1990 edition stated that "historically,
opportunities for social mobility were limited unless a
person belonged to a dictator's coterie" (vol. 20, p. 305).
Nothing was mentioned concerning limited "social mobility"
in pre-revolutionary Nicaragua in the 1977 or 1983 editions.
of *Americana*. The 1990 *Americana* stated that "access to education in Nicaragua was long skewed in favor of the elite," but prefaced this by having stated that this was true "in many developing countries" (vol. 20, p. 305). The 1990 *Americana* implicitly stated that "the Somozas and their coterie" owned "one-fifth of Nicaragua's arable land" (vol. 20, p. 307). Nothing was mentioned in the 1977 *Americana* concerning the Somozas' vast wealth.

Most of the text in the 1984 *Britannica* was not revised since 1977. Little was said in the 1989 *Britannica* about Nicaragua's political economy during the Somoza years. According to the 1989 *Britannica*, under the first Somoza "the people at large benefitted little from the rise in national income," and during the 1960s the situation was the same: "The economy was prospering, though the poverty of the masses remained relatively unchanged" (vol. 15, p. 721). Unlike the 1983 and 1990 editions of *Americana*, little was mentioned about the Somoza family's ownings in the 1989 *Britannica*, except in the Nicaragua "Micropaedia" article which stated that Somoza family had "vast property holdings" (vol. 8, p. 676). The same article stated about the first Somoza's rule that "though considerable economic development took place during that time, the benefits were inequitably distributed in favour of the Somoza family and its supporters" (vol. 8, p. 676).

The 1984 and 1989 editions of *Collier's* portrayed
Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas in a manner which differed greatly from pre-1979 editions of Collier's and Americana and from all editions of Britannica: According to the 1984 Collier's: "Before the revolution that began in 1979, the export crops were grown mainly on large estates controlled by a small landowning elite, headed by the Somoza family" (1984; vol. 17, p. 523). The 1989 edition of Collier's made the same statement, but with a slight wording change. According to the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's: "Under the Somoza regime, Nicaragua obtained large loans from multilateral and private international banks, much of which was stolen by Somoza and his associates, and ran up an international debt of $1.6 billion" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 524). Both editions also stated that the first Somoza "ran the country like a personal estate, amassing a fortune estimated at $60 million" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 525). According to these editions, "During the Somoza regime trade union activities were severely restricted by the government" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 524). The 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's had stated that the Somozas "built ... a private fortune," but also stated that "considerable economic progress" had been achieved under the Somozas. The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's were the only two analyzed to have stated that economic growth in Somoza's Nicaragua hurt the majority of Nicaraguans: "Economic growth produced few
benefits for the Nicaraguan masses ... and often caused much suffering, especially for the peasantry" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 523).

Like the 1966 World Book, the 1984 and 1990 editions contained relatively few statements concerning Nicaragua's political economy under the Somozas. Unlike the 1966 edition, however, the statements that were present in the 1984 and 1990 editions were critical of the Somoza years. According to the 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book, "before 1980 ... Nicaragua did not have enough schools, and many rural areas had no schools at all" (1984; vol. 14, p. 315; 1990, vol. N, p. 401). The 1966 World Book stated that "About half" of Nicaraguans "do not know how to read or write," but did not mention the lack of schools. The 1984 and 1990 editions stated that "before 1979, foreign firms owned most of the mines and forests" (1984, vol. 14, p. 316; 1990, vol. N, 402).

The 1984 and 1990 World Book articles on the Somozas contradicted much of what the World Book Nicaragua articles stated, and of what the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's stated. The 1990 World Book article on the Somozas portrayed Somoza policies as being beneficial to Nicaragua: "Somoza improved Nicaragua's agriculture, cattle raising, and mining. He balanced the budget and introduced easier credit for farmers. He also expanded port facilities and built new highways, houses, hospitals, power plants,
railroads, and schools" (1984; vol. 18, p. 480). The 1990 World Book article on Somoza made the same statement, with slight wording changes.

**Portrayal of Sandinista Nicaragua**

Where text in encyclopedias which covered Somoza Nicaragua's political economy was limited, for the most part, to raw statistics or text which attempted to avoid making judgments, text which covered Sandinista Nicaragua's political economy was filled with sweeping, openly judgmental claims about Sandinista policies and actions. Portrayal of Sandinista Nicaragua's political economy ranged from editions which negatively portrayed the Sandinistas as Marxist-Leninists to editions which positively portrayed the Sandinistas as working to better the lives of all Nicaraguans.

According to the 1983 Americana, the revolution of 1979 left the political economy of Nicaragua with an uncertain future:

> The full impact of the 1979 revolution on the people and social structure of Nicaragua remains uncertain.... it is unclear whether the old economy and social regime will be totally swept away or whether a compromise ultimately will be struck between the entrepreneurial class and the young revolutionists of the FSLN. (vol. 20, p. 304)

Apart from this open-ended statement about Nicaragua's political economy, the 1983 Americana made many judgements
about the direction of Nicaragua's political economy under the Sandinistas; most were negative. The Nicaraguan government, according to the 1983 Americana, took over all Somoza-owned properties after the revolution (vol. 20, p. 305). Having divided "post-Somoza" Nicaragua into "Sandinistas" and "non-Sandinistas," the 1983 Americana stated that the "coalition" between these two groups "was uneasy" because of Sandinista economic policies:

The Sandinistas proclaimed belief in a multiparty regime and a mixed economy, in spite of their simultaneous commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas. They urged the private sector to provide large-scale investments for economic recovery. Although the government seized all property of the Somozas and their closest collaborators, the Sandinistas insisted that they did not intend to socialize the economy. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1983 Americana thus stated that the Sandinistas had a "commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas," which made their "proclaimed belief in a multiparty regime and a mixed economy" suspect. In this paragraph, the 1983 Americana also questioned Sandinista claims that they "did not intend to socialize the economy," because "the government seized all property of the Somozas and their closest collaborators."

While the 1983 Americana stated that the Sandinistas undertook a "major effort ... to expand education," the only proof of success given was a Nicaraguan government claim. After the revolution, according to the 1983 Americana, "trade unions ... have taken on an added
importance" (vol. 20, p. 304). This edition added, however, that "one of the bitterest subjects of political controversy has been the effort of the Sandinistas to merge all trade-union groups under its own control" (vol. 20, p. 304).

The 1990 Americana contradicted the 1983 edition on its portrayal of the direction of the changes in political economy brought about after the 1979 revolution. While the 1983 Americana stated that the Sandinistas had a "commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas" and indirectly stated that they intended to "socialize" Nicaragua's economy, the 1990 Americana stated:

From the beginning the government aimed at building a mixed economy that the public sector would lead, setting priorities for private enterprise. Although state ownership increased, the majority of enterprises--and also the largest ones--remained in private hands. (vol. 20, p. 308)

Problems in the Nicaraguan economy were attributed by the 1990 Americana to a variety of factors, and this edition emphasized Sandinista accomplishments:

Economic failures, however, could not be attributed to the government alone. For example, a global fall in the prices of primary commodities left the country with a chronic balance-of-payments deficit and a huge foreign debt. The goal of Sandinista social policy was to provide good health care, housing, and education to all Nicaraguans. Despite a promising start--for example, a literacy drive that taught 400,000 people to read--efforts in these areas slowed after 1982 as resources were diverted to fight a counterrevolutionary insurgency. (vol. 20, p. 308)
In a concluding paragraph, the 1990 Americana again contradicted statements made in the 1983 Americana that the Sandinistas had a "commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas:"

Overall, the changes wrought by the Sandinistas were less comprehensive than those flowing from most revolutions. The economy was not entirely reorganized, though resources were redistributed toward the poorer classes. The general structure of society was not greatly altered, even though the old elite lost much of its influence. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Britannica both reflected the view of the 1983 Americana that the Sandinistas intended to "socialize the economy" and that they had a "commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas." According to the 1984 Britannica:

In 1979-80 the government expropriated the property held by Anastasio Somoza Debayle, members of his government, and their supporters. Local banks and insurance companies and mineral and forest resources were nationalized, and the import of foodstuffs were placed under government control. (vol. 3, p. 1115)

According to the 1984 Britannica, the Sandinistas' "relations with Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations seemed to indicate an increasing leaning toward the left" (vol. 3, p. 1115).

The 1989 Britannica "Micopaedia" article on Nicaragua stated that under the Sandinistas, Nicaragua had a "centrally planned economy" (vol. 8, p. 676). The 1989 Britannica Micopaedia Nicaragua article added that "financial institutions, mines, fisheries, and forestry
were nationalized after 1979 ... extensive land reform was implemented after 1979" (vol. 8, p. 676).

Statements made in the 1989 Britannica which concerned health and education were crucial to this edition's portrayal of Nicaragua's political economy under the Sandinistas. According to the 1989 Britannica:

Health conditions are extremely poor and are aggravated by contaminated water, poor sanitation, and overcrowded housing. Diseases such as enteritis, tuberculosis, tetanus, and typhoid fever are common. There is a shortage of trained medical personnel and health-care facilities are poorly-equipped. Life expectancy is about 59 years for males and 61 years for females, which is low by Latin-American standards. (vol. 8, p. 676)

The 1984 Britannica had stated that under the Somozas "health and welfare services are inadequate" (vol. 13, p. 63). The 1989 stated that under the Sandinistas health conditions were "extremely poor," and followed this description with a list a what was specifically bad about Nicaragua's health conditions. Where the 1984 Britannica had described under the Somoza the number of doctors and hospital beds per thousand persons, the 1989 Britannica did not present these statistics for Sandinista Nicaragua. The 1984 Britannica portrayed Nicaragua's housing problem as having occurred in Somoza Nicaragua "despite" a government housing program; the 1989 Britannica made no statements about Sandinista housing policies.
Concerning education in Sandinista Nicaragua, the 1989 Britannica stated: "Education is free and compulsory between the ages of 6 and 13 years. About three-fourths of children aged 7 to 12 attend primary school, but only a small percentage of these advance to secondary school" (vol. 8, p. 676). This paragraph, with slight wording changes, repeated statements made in the 1984 Britannica about education in Somoza Nicaragua. The most noticeable change, however, was that while the 1984 Britannica stated that the illiteracy rate was 40 percent in Somoza Nicaragua, the 1989 Britannica did not mention Nicaragua's illiteracy rate. Recall that the 1983 Americana stated that the Sandinistas initiated a "massive literacy campaign" (vol. 20, p. 303), and the 1990 Americana stated that this campaign taught 400,000 Nicaraguans how to read (vol. 20, p. 308). This literacy program, which received emphasis as a major accomplishment of the Sandinistas in editions of Americana, was not mentioned in the 1989 Britannica.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's also placed emphasis on Sandinista Nicaragua's literacy program:

In 1979 the new government made primary and secondary education free and compulsory ... A nationwide literacy campaign, launched in 1980 with Cuban assistance, lowered the adult illiteracy rate to a claimed 12 percent. As a follow-up, an educational program was begun for adults who had just learned to read. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 524)
The 1989 *Collier's* article on Central America also recognized the change in Nicaragua's literacy rate, having stated that "illiteracy, except in Costa Rica, and in Nicaragua since the Sandinista revolution of 1979, is also high" (vol. 5, p. 642). The 1984 *Collier's* had made the same statement, but listed Costa Rica as the only nation not having a high illiteracy rate in Central America.

The 1984 and 1989 *Collier's*, like editions of *Americana* and the 1989 *Britannica*, emphasized Sandinista policies of nationalization and government planning:

> The revolution of 1979 brought fundamental changes in the structure of the economy. Expropriation of the agricultural, industrial, and commercial holdings of Somoza and his associates put a sizable portion of the economy under state control.... Economic planning was instituted, and the government claimed a central role in regulating prices, wages, credit allocation, and foreign exchange. About 40 percent of the country's total output was taken under state control. (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 523)

In stark contrast to the 1989 *Britannica* and the 1983 *Americana*, the 1984 and 1989 editions of *Collier's* put these Sandinista policies of nationalization and government planning in a positive light: "The new government's policies were designed to distribute the country's economic resources more equally. Government spending for social welfare, particularly in the areas of education and health, expanded significantly, as did overall public spending" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 523).
The 1984 and 1989 Collier's placed most of the blame for economic failures in Sandinista Nicaragua on policies of the United States. According to the 1984 Collier's:

> Although the national income grew by 20 percent between 1979 and 1981, following a severe decline in the two years before the revolution, it did not fully recover. Private investment fell because of business insecurity, and the government had difficulty obtaining badly needed international loans, because of U.S. opposition. Destructive raids across the Honduran border by U.S.-sponsored counter-revolutionaries further impeded attempts at recovery in 1982 and 1983. (vol. 17, p. 523)

According to the 1989 Collier's, the effect U.S. policies had on Nicaragua was:

> All Sandinista plans for economic and social development were effectively frustrated by actions of the U.S. government, which imposed a boycott of U.S. trade with Nicaragua, blocked development assistance from international lending agencies; and, most devastatingly, bankrolled, armed and guided military action by a counterrevolutionary army ... they were able to disrupt the economy by frequent terrorist raids against cooperative farms; by sabotage of factories, mines, and power lines; and, in sum, by forcing all Nicaraguan society onto a war footing. As a result, in the late 1980's Nicaragua suffered rampant inflation and severe shortages of all sorts of consumer goods, factories and mills were operating far below capacity, and schools and hospitals were without books or medicines. (vol. 17, p. 523)

Both the 1984 and 1989 Collier's portrayed changes in Nicaragua's political economy far more positively than editions of all other encyclopedias. Both the 1984 and 1989 Collier's contained statements critical of the Sandinistas, including: "Independent trade unions
continued to be tolerated, although strikes were outlawed and several of their leaders had been imprisoned by the government" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 524). The 1989 Collier's article on Central America made a statement which summarized the way in which the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's portrayed the changes in Nicaraguan political economy after the 1979 revolution: "Central American societies have typically been dominated by small groups of wealthy landowners ruling through military dictatorships. This pattern ... was broken in Nicaragua through a violent revolutionary struggle in the late 1970's" (vol. 5, p. 642).

Like the 1984 and 1989 Collier's, and, to a lesser extent, the 1990 Americana, the 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book portrayed the changes in Nicaragua's political economy in a positive way:

The government took over key parts of the economy, including agricultural exports, banking, insurance, and mining. But the economic system is a mixture of public and private ownership. The government adopted many policies designed to help the poor and improve the economy, which had been badly damaged during the civil war. (1984, vol. N, p. 317; 1990, vol. N, p. 405)

The 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book stated that Nicaragua's literacy campaign was "successful," and put this campaign in the context of other programs also designed to better education in Nicaragua:

Before 1980 ... Nicaragua did not have enough schools, and many rural areas had no schools at
all. But since then, the new government had built hundreds of rural schools. The government also conducted a successful literacy campaign headed mainly by young volunteer teachers. (1984; vol. N, p. 315; 1990; vol. N, p. 401)

The 1990 World Book listed three factors which contributed to Nicaragua's economic problems, two of which were directly related to policies of the United States:

"Since the mid-1980's, Nicaragua has faced severe economic problems, including high inflation and a shortage of consumer goods. Factors that contributed to the economic problems include the U.S. trade embargo, the cost of war against the contras, and high government spending on health and education programs. (vol. N, p. 405)

While the 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book presented Nicaragua's attempts to better education in a positive manner, this paragraph stated that they contributed to Nicaraguan economic problems.
CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first discusses the presence of political perspectives found in the encyclopedias analyzed. The second section concludes that the presence of perspective, whether political or other, is inherent and unavoidable in encyclopedia text and all historical text, and should therefore be acknowledged, instead of hidden.

The Presence of Political Perspectives

Editors of encyclopedias encourage the positivist view of their text as an objective, factual, authoritative presentation of knowledge and history. The editors of Americana (1977, 1983, 1990) stated:

In covering all areas the editors have sought to present information in an objective manner. As the Americana's first editor said in 1829: "My wish has been not to obtrude opinions, but to furnish facts. (vol. 1, p. iv)

The editors of World Book did not address objectivity as directly as the editors of Americana. The editors of World Book did, however, emphasize the authority of the "more than 3,000 scholars and experts" who contribute to World Book (1984, 1990, vol. 1, preface). All editions of
Collier's analyzed stated that if "controversies" existed around a subject, then all major points of view were represented: "To insure objectivity, articles involving key issues are submitted to authorities representing all major points of view" (1967, 1977, 1984, 1989, vol. 1, preface). Perhaps the strongest claim to objectivity and authority was made by the editors of Britannica, who, in most editions analyzed, did not include a preface. No statements, therefore, were made concerning objectivity or authority. Given Britannica's distinguished reputation among encyclopedias, this lack of justification of Britannica's authority and objectivity made a stronger claim to the truth than any claims made in prefaces of other encyclopedias.

Editors of encyclopedias also encouraged the positivist view of encyclopedias as attempts to catalogue all current, essential information. Editors of Americana stated: "This edition of The Encyclopedia Americana is published in the belief that it provides an accurate and comprehensive picture of past and present times" (1977, 1983, 1990, vol. 1, p. iv). "Collier's Encyclopedia," its editors claimed, "is a scholarly, systematic, continuously revised summary of the knowledge that is most significant to mankind" (1967, 1977, 1984, 1989, vol. 1, preface).

Far from being objective, authoritative presenters of Nicaraguan history and of the changes brought about by the
1979 revolution, the encyclopedias analyzed often contradicted each other and also contained internal contradictions. More importantly, these contradictions were frequently related to underlying political and ideological perspectives which strongly influenced the content of the articles.

Roughly half of the articles analyzed reflected a conservative political view of the Nicaraguan revolution. Seven of the fifteen editions analyzed (the 1977 and 1983 editions of *Americana*, the 1966 edition of *World Book* and all four editions of *Britannica*) were found to reflect a politically conservative perspective. Five of the fifteen (the 1967 and 1977 *Collier's* and the 1977, 1984 and 1990 editions of *World Book*) were found to reflect a politically liberal perspective. Three of the fifteen (the 1984 and 1989 *Collier's* and the 1990 *Americana*) were found to reflect a politically left perspective. Use of the labels conservative, liberal, or left, is not intended here as an exact description of the political content of encyclopedias. These commonly-used terms are employed here to provide insight into the content of the encyclopedias. Editions of encyclopedias labeled here as politically conservative were considered so based on six criteria: (1) neglect or lack of emphasis on negative aspects of Somoza rule, (2) emphasis on positive aspects of Somoza rule, (3) emphasis on negative aspects of Sandinista rule, (4)
neglect or lack of emphasis of positive aspects of Sandinista rule, (5) portrayal of United States involvement as benign or beneficial, and (6) emphasis on Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Nicaraguan revolution and/or Sandinista Nicaragua.

The 1977 edition of Americana was considered politically conservative because of its portrayal of the Somoza family, its portrayal of Nicaragua's political economy during Somoza rule, and its portrayal of United States involvement in Nicaragua. According to the 1977 Americana, the first Somoza was not a dictator, nor did his family's rule constitute a "dynasty." On the question of whether the first Somoza was a dictator, the 1977 Americana presented this as a "charge" that "was levied" (vol. 20, p. 319a). The Somozas as a family dynasty was presented by the 1977 Americana only as an accusation made "by opponents" (vol. 20, p. 319b). The government structure during which the Somozas ruled was presented in the 1977 Americana as just. Without any irony, the 1977 Americana stated: "The president ... may not succeed himself in any office nor may any close relative of his be a candidate for that office following his tenure" (vol. 20, p. 317).

Under the Somozas, Nicaragua's agriculture, health, sanitation and education situations were portrayed by the 1977 Americana as improving (p. 316-9). The United States was often stated to be a factor in these improvements. For
example, Nicaragua's shortage of electrical power was said to be improving, at least in part, because of U.S. supervisors involved in a electrification project (vol. 20, p. 316). Economically, the United States Export-Import Bank was helping Nicaragua by providing aid for "various financial and other economic projects" (vol. 20, p. 318). Equally important as what was mentioned in the 1977 Americana is what was not mentioned: Somoza's theft of aid sent to help the 1972 earthquake victims, the lack of civil rights and presence of censorship of the press, the Somoza family's wealth, and the National Guard's brutality.

The 1983 edition of Americana was slightly less conservative than the 1977 edition. In some text, the 1983 Americana portrayed the changes brought about by the 1979 revolution as having a still uncertain effect on Nicaragua's future, as illustrated by this statement from the introduction to the article on Nicaragua: "It was uncertain whether this phase would bring about the establishment of a stable democracy, a prosperous economy, and a relatively just society" (vol. 20, p. 302).

Other sections of the 1983 Americana article on Nicaragua, however, presented politically conservative answers to these questions about Nicaragua's future. The final section of the article on Nicaragua devoted much text to Sandinista ties with the Soviet Union and Cuba, provided a detailed list of "non-Sandinista" criticisms of the
Sandinistas, and stated that the Sandinistas had a "commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideas" (vol. 20, p. 308).

All editions of Britannica were politically conservative. The Somozas were consistently portrayed as having had positive effects on Nicaragua; criticisms of the family were often deemphasized and placed next to text praising their accomplishments. United States involvement in Nicaragua was, almost without exception, portrayed as having positive effects on Nicaragua. The Sandinistas were portrayed negatively; sections which mentioned their achievements deemphasized them and placed them next to or within critical statements.

The 1969 Britannica positively referred to the first Somoza as "the most distinguished caudillo or leader of the 20th century" (vol. 16, p. 475). Social problems in Nicaragua under the Somozas were presented as having occurred despite government programs designed to better the country. Involvement of the United States in Nicaragua, according to the 1969 Britannica, was said to have begun only after the execution of two U.S. citizens, and U.S. involvement was portrayed as having had positive economic and social effects on Nicaragua. As with the 1977 and 1983 editions of Americana, part of what made the 1969 Britannica coverage of Nicaragua politically conservative also centered around what was not stated in the edition's text. The extent of Nicaraguan health, education, sanitation and,
even its basic nutritional problems was given little mention. Where mentioned, these problems were portrayed as having occurred despite Somoza rule. Restrictions of basic civil liberties under Somoza and repressive actions of the National Guard were not mentioned, nor was the Somoza family's wealth mentioned. The 1977 edition of Britannica differed little in its portrayal of the effects of the Somozas and the United States on Nicaragua. In a typical understatement about Nicaragua's social conditions under the Somozas, the 1977 Britannica stated: "Health and welfare services were inadequate" (vol. 13, p. 63). A "shortage of housing" is portrayed, similar to portrayal of social problems by the 1969 Britannica, as having occurred despite a government program (vol. 13, p. 63). The phrase "Somoza dynasty" was put in quotes, therefore discrediting this claim, and was preceded by the phrase "so-called" (vol. 3, p. 1115). Although the 1977 Britannica article on the first Somoza referred to him as a "dictator" who "established a family dynasty," it deemphasized these claims by following them with the statement that Somoza preferred "the use of patronage and bribery to violence" (vol. 20, p. 348).

The politically conservative viewpoint of the 1984 Britannica was best reflected in its portrayal of the Sandinistas and its statements about the contras. The Sandinistas were founded in 1962 by a "Marxist," according
to the 1984 Britannica, and the statements this edition made about Sandinista' actions while in power confirmed this influence. The emphasis in a three paragraph section titled "The Sandinista regime" was on Sandinista policies of nationalization of resources and on Sandinista ties with "Cuba and other Communist-bloc nations" (vol. 3, p. 1115). Most important, the 1984 Britannica presented the Contras only as an allegation made by the Nicaraguan government: "Nicaragua accused the United States of harbouring Nicaraguan exiles training to invade their home country" (vol. 3, p. 1115).

The 1989 Britannica repeated the statements made in the 1984 edition, and added several other politically conservative claims. The contras were portrayed as "local resistance" who were only "supported by aid" from the United States. Although the 1989 Britannica stated that the Contras "struck at economic targets," it added that they were relatively ineffective in their efforts (vol. 15, p. 722). The Sandinistas continued to be negatively portrayed as Marxists, as the 1989 Britannica stated (vol. 8, p. 676) that Nicaragua had a "centrally planned economy," and again emphasized Sandinista policies of nationalization and ties with Cuba and the Soviet bloc. The 1989 Britannica made stronger statements concerning the legitimacy of the Sandinista government than any other encyclopedia analyzed, having stated that Daniel Ortega was "installed as presi-
dent in 1985" and referring to "the installation of the Marxist Sandinista government" (vol. 3, p. 26).

The 1966 *World Book* contained as little text as any encyclopedia analyzed; the text present reflected a conservative political viewpoint. The Somoza government was criticized—indirectly—only twice in the text. The second criticism was immediately followed by detailed praise for Somoza's accomplishments: "He assumed dictatorial power and proceeded to stabilize the currency, balance the budget, introduce easier credit for farmers, and build new highways, railroads, homes, and schools" (vol. 14, p. 317). The other criticism stated that only half of Nicaraguans "know how to read or write," but gave no explanation for this situation (vol. 14, p. 316).

Encyclopedias labeled as politically liberal were judged so because of a balance between supportive and critical statements about the Somozas, Sandinistas, Contras, and United States. Editions considered to reflect a politically liberal perspective were the 1967 and 1977 *Collier's* and the 1977, 1984 and 1989 editions of *World Book*.

The 1967 *Collier's* contained a balance of statements supportive and critical of the Somozas. This edition contained statements about overarching legal and constitutional powers of Nicaragua's president and political repression in Nicaragua, and implicitly referred to Somoza as a dictator (vol. 17, p. 522-5). The 1967 *Collier's* also

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
contained statements supportive of the Somozas, having stated that, under their rule, "considerable economic progress has occurred," and detailing that progress (vol. 17, p. 525). "On the whole," the 1967 Collier's stated, "the republic's financial outlook is good" (vol. 17, p. 523). The 1977 Collier's made statements similar to those contained in the 1967 edition.

Of the five encyclopedias with politically liberal views, the 1977 edition of World Book was the most critical of the Somozas. "Partly by using terrorist methods," this edition stated about the first Somoza, "he achieved great political power and wealth" (vol. 14, p. 317). The two sons of the first Somoza "tightened the family's control of the nation" to the extent where "today, members of the Somoza family own all or part of almost every major economic operation in Nicaragua" (vol. 14, p. 317). The 1977 World Book also stated, however, that under the Somozas "Nicaragua's economy is expanding faster per person than that of any other Central American country" (vol. 14, p. 317).

The 1984 and 1990 editions of World Book contained a balance of criticism and praise for the Somozas similar to that of the 1967 and 1977 editions of Collier's. These editions of World Book contained a similar balance of criticism and praise in statements made about the Sandinistas. Although the 1984 World Book stated (vol. N, p. 317) that the first Somoza "ruled as a dictator," it contained
no details concerning the political repression, censorship and worsening living conditions which resulted from the Somoza dictatorship. While having made statements about the Sandinista nationalization policies, the 1984 World Book also stated that the government "adopted many policies designed to help the poor and improve the economy," and that "the economic system is a mixture of public and private ownership" (vol. N, p. 317). The contras were not mentioned by name in the 1984 World Book, but were referred to as "anti-Sandinistas" (vol. N, p. 317). "The United States," according to the 1984 World Book, "gave financial aid to the anti-Sandinistas" (vol. N, p. 317). The 1984 World Book thus portrayed the United States as having limited involvement with the contras. The 1990 World Book repeated many of the claims present in the 1984 edition. Statements added to the 1990 edition kept to the politically liberal perspective present in the 1984 World Book. The 1990 World Book presented the politically conservative position on Nicaragua, having stated: "U.S. President Ronald Reagan charged that the Sandinistas had set up a Communist dictatorship" (vol. N, p. 405). Giving an alternative view on Nicaragua, the 1990 World Book stated: "The International Court of Justice ... concluded that the United States acted illegally in helping mine the Nicaraguan harbors and providing aid to the contras" (vol. N, p. 405).
The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's and the 1990 edition of Americana reflected a politically left view of Nicaragua. These editions were labeled politically left based on the presence of highly critical statements about the Somozas, the contras and the United States, and on the presence of extensive praise for the Sandinistas.

The 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's and the 1990 edition of Americana not only consistently referred to the Somozas as dictators, but also provided details about their dictatorship. The 1984 edition stated: "For almost half a century the Somoza family selected the presidents and rigged the elections" (vol. 17, p. 522). In a statement highly critical of the Somozas and the United States, the 1989 Collier's stated that Nicaragua's "political life was dominated ... for most of the 20th century by dictatorial regimes imposed and sustained by the United States" (vol. 17, p. 522). "Economic growth" in Somoza's Nicaragua, according to the 1984 and 1989 Collier's, "produced few benefits and often caused much suffering" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 523). The 1990 Americana stated that the first Somoza stayed in power "by changing the constitution, rigging elections, using graft, and employing the National Guard as a coercive force" (vol. 20, p. 307).

The contras "carried out economic sabotage," stated the 1984 Collier's (vol. 17, p. 526). The 1989 Collier's provided a more detailed criticism of contra actions,
having stated that "they were able to disrupt the economy by frequent terrorist raids against cooperative farms; by sabotage of factories, mines, and power lines; and, in sum, by forcing all Nicaraguan society onto a war footing" (vol. 17, p. 523). The 1990 Americana stated that the contras "launched a war of attrition against the Sandinista government," and blamed that war for massive social problems in Nicaragua:

To combat the insurgents, the government had to build a huge army and devote as much as half the national budget to defense. Unofficial estimates put the total cost of the war to the Nicaraguan government at over $2 billion, or more than the annual GDP, during the first five years alone. And this assessment ignored the human cost of the conflict: 20,000 dead, counting both sides, and total casualties of 40,000. Further, perhaps 250,000 refugees were created by the fighting. (vol. 20, p. 308)

The 1990 Americana was critical of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua, and stated that the Contras "were organized by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency" (vol. 20, p. 308).

The 1984 and 1989 Collier's were extremely critical of U.S. involvement in Nicaragua. In a statement reflective of the portrayal of U.S. intervention in these two editions, the 1989 Collier's stated:

For more than a century Nicaragua's predominant foreign concern has been its relation to the United States, which occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1934. During the 1980's Nicaragua was confronted with a continuous military struggle against a counterrevolutionary army financed and armed by the U.S. government. (vol. 17, p. 522)

Unlike the Somozas, Contras and the United States, the
Sandinistas received an extremely positive portrayal in the three editions considered politically left. According to the 1984 and 1989 editions of Collier's, "The new government's policies were designed to distribute the country's economic resources more equally" (1984, 1989, vol. 17, p. 523). Emphasis in these editions of Collier's was put on a positive portrayal of land redistribution and education programs enacted by the Sandinistas. In the 1990 Americana, the new Nicaraguan constitution received a positive portrayal: "A mix of radical and conventional elements, it recognized Nicaragua's multiethnic nature and guaranteed political pluralism, a mixed economy, nonalignment in foreign affairs, civil liberties, and socioeconomic rights" (vol. 20, p. 307).

The Interpretation of Historical Text

Encyclopedias present their coverage of subjects as objective, factual, authoritatively documented truth. Scholarly and popular reviews of encyclopedias reflect and promote this belief. However, what is considered true is often subject to debate. As this thesis demonstrated, different interpretations of the Nicaragua's revolution and the subsequent changes in its political economy existed in the four encyclopedias; political perspectives often accounted for these differences. A reading of all four by a person unfamiliar with the Nicaraguan revolution
would likely leave that person asking: Were the Sandinistas Marxist-Leninists trying to impose a totalitarian society on the people of Nicaragua? Were the contras fighting to save Nicaragua from membership in the Soviet Bloc? Or were the Sandinistas progressive revolutionaries working to improve the living conditions of all Nicaraguans while fighting against a U.S.-backed force? A reading of a single encyclopedia would give that person the impression that what she/he had read was the single, correct presentation of Nicaraguan history. By presenting their information as undeniably objective, factual, and authoritative, encyclopedias give their readers the impression that historical debates have one correct interpretation, and that the debate over a subject has been settled.

The findings of this thesis are congruent with the findings of the three recent studies (Engle & Putas, 1983; Franklin, 1982; Smith, 1988) that challenged the claim to truth of encyclopedias. All found the claim to truth put forward by encyclopedias to be misleading. Each of these studies, however, reinforced the positivist assumptions of the claim to truth by having implicitly suggested that a single, correct portrayal of their respective topics existed. Smith found that coverage of black women was "still limited" (p. 27), and thus implicitly assumed that a certain amount of coverage would have been adequate.
Engle and Futas studied "bias" (p. 29), a term which implies that a correct, unbiased presentation of a topic exists. While Franklin criticized the ideological content of a section on Colonialism, he did not, in his article, directly recognize that the section which was replaced also was reflective of a certain political perspective.

The presence of perspective in text about historical events and actors is unavoidable. History is text written to recreate a past. The writing of, or recreation of, history, is a process where ideological presuppositions and selected events combine to create a text of history. As Walsh (1968) explained, "Historical writing above all is an exercise in selection;... [the writer] must select a relatively few items which can be arranged in the fashion needed to tell a meaningful story" (p. 9). Because of the vast amount of data available, a historical writer must select what she/he considers to be the most important events, and the most insightful way in which to present them. "The historian," writes Zinn (1990), is "free to give one meaning or another to past events" (p. 275). The author of the encyclopedia article—with the important exception of cases of censorship, such as that examined by Franklin—is similarly free to give the Nicaraguan revolution "one meaning or another." As Zinn (1990) explains:

I can choose, by the way I tell the story, to make World War I seem a glorious battle between
good and evil, or I can make it seem a senseless massacre. There is no inherently true story of World War I if some absolute, objective past is sought. (p. 275)

Kogan wrote (1958) that historical writing "represents a complex kind of journalism," a journalism with a social structure and ideological presuppositions that determine its content (p. 283). Quoting an "eminent historian," Walsh (1968) wrote that "The history we read, ... though based on facts, is strictly speaking not factual at all, but a series of accepted judgments" (p. 4). Zinn (1980) argued that a historian's chosen emphasis of a series of accepted judgments, while not necessarily consciously reflective of a particular perspective, "supports ... some kind of interest, whether economic or political or racial or national or sexual" (p. 8). Numerous studies of newspapers and magazines, covering a broad variety of subjects, support Zinn's contention that interests, and the perspectives of which they are brethren, are reflected in text. Gerbner's (1964) study of newspaper coverage found that "all editorial choice patterns in what and what not to make public (and in what proportion, with what emphasis, etc.) have an ideological basis and a political dimension rooted in the structural characteristics of the medium" (p. 495). Gerbner also found that his analysis "tends to support the proposition that there is no fundamentally non-ideological, apolitical, non-partisan news
gathering and reporting system" (508).

Because authors of articles in encyclopedias have far less space than authors of textbooks to recount the history of a country, or to explain a revolution, the importance of theoretical (or political) perspective to the events selected, as well as to the overall context in which the events are placed, increases greatly. As Walsh (1968) stated, "the briefer the book, the more rigorous the selection of facts to be included" (p. 4). In the case of encyclopedias, the history of a country such as Nicaragua is often explained in ten pages, or less. Specific events such as the revolution are explained within that limited space.

Historical accounts, such as the accounts of the Nicaraguan revolution analyzed in encyclopedias, are thus influenced by political perspectives. Congruent with the central finding of this thesis is Zinn's (1990) statement: "Factual accounts of the past--since they involve selection and emphasis, turn out on inspection to be interpretations of the past" (p. 275). What were supposed to be factual accounts of the Nicaraguan revolution, turned out on inspection to be political interpretations of the revolution.

That interpretation through perspective is unavoidable in historical text does not, however, mean that objectivity is unobtainable. Instead, objectivity
becomes conceived differently than the positivist notion of objectivity as obtaining a single, correct reading of a historical event or actor through use of "scientific" methods. In the interpretive view of historical text, objectivity is conceived in two main ways. The first involves recognition of the ways in which perspective influences selection and emphasis in text. The editor of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Paul Edwards (quoted in Cranston, 1968), stated about objectivity:

No matter how fair and equitable an editor may try to be, his personal views and commitments are bound to affect the organisation of the work, the space allotted to the different subjects, and the criteria employed in judging the quality of the contributions. If this kind of bias cannot be eliminated, its influence can at least be restricted, and it also can and should be openly acknowledged. (p. 83)

The second main conception of objectivity in the interpretive view of history involves--for lack of a better term--honesty. Zinn (1990) describes this conception as being "scrupulously careful about reporting accurately what one sees" (p. 10).

Central to both conceptions of objectivity in the interpretive view of historical text is--again, for lack of a better term--honesty. The first conception involves honesty about perspective, the second, honesty about documentation. Encyclopedias' claim to truth constitutes a denial of both of these conceptions of objectivity, and of the view of historical writing as text interpreting
historical events and actors.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


129


Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.


