

# Revolutionary Policing

A case study about the role of *la mística* and *el espíritu* in the Nicaraguan Police Institution and in the lives of its *fundadores*



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Brenda van de Velde | 3290476

E-mail: B.vd.Velde@hotmail.com  
Supervisor: Marie-Louise Glebbeek

Master Thesis Latin American and Caribbean Studies  
Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Cultural Anthropology  
Utrecht University

## Abstract

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Based on four months of anthropological fieldwork in Managua, Nicaragua, this thesis illustrates which role the *mística* and *espíritu* of the founders (*fundadores*) of the Nicaraguan police institution played in the establishment of the state's institution and how they still play a role in the current National Police institution (*Policía Nacional*, PN) after thirty years of policing. In analyzing the *mística* and *espíritu*, *la mística* can be seen as the mission or vision of the *fundadores* while *espíritu* can be explained as the *esprit de corps*, also called the moral of a group. Although the *fundadores* define the concepts differently, they refer to these concepts any time. Through personal life stories I have analyzed how the *fundadores* tried to establish an institution out of their ideals, values and principles and how they throughout the years have tried to maintain their *mística*. Starting out of a revolution the *fundadores* have played an impressive role in the relative success and positive recognition of the police organization. The question for the Nicaraguan police is however what will happen with the institution when the *fundadores* leave the police. Were they able to secure safely their contribution to the institution and did they manage to instil their *mística* into the new generations?

### **Keywords:**

*Espíritu, fundador, life story, mística, Nicaragua, PN, police institution, revolution, Sandinista*

Cover illustration:      Compilation of photos of several *fundadores* of the Nicaraguan Police Institution | Made by the author

*A deficiency we have, is not to have written down our history, not because we did not think of it but because of the multiple things we have to do at this moment. Time is the worst enemy of history because we forget things.*

Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey is a retired police officer and *fundador* of the Nicaraguan police (Interview: May 2, 2011). See for an extensive description of informants appendix I.

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*Brenda van de Velde*

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## 1. Introduction

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*History cannot give us a program for the future, but it can give us a fuller understanding of ourselves, and of our common humanity, so that we can better face the future.*

*Robert Penn Warren<sup>2</sup>*

Outside the window the landscape of Managua passes by while the sun is already heating up the grey car seats. I put on my sunglasses to look at a countless number of cars and colorful busses overloaded with Nicaraguans passing in opposite direction. On the side of the road small shops sell candies, nuts, small bottles of Coca Cola and tortillas. Between the traffic lights young children of about eight years old try to sell little plastic bags filled with water. After twenty minutes the car turns right and we leave the noise behind us, going up a poorly maintained road on a hill. On that same road many police officers in light blue shirts, dark blue trousers and the majority with a cap on the head are walking straight up to the fence, hundred meters ahead of us. Only a few of them wear a gun. Sadys Martínez stops the car and lets three persons enter his pickup. The officers exchange cheerful greetings among each other and I assume they all need to go to the same office as Sadys. It is almost 8:00 a.m. when we arrive at the fence. Two police officers open the gate and Sadys accelerates, entering the official terrain of the Police Academy. When we pass the gate many young police officers and youngsters without a uniform are standing aside the road. Some of them give Sadys and the other officers in the car an official salute by raising their hand up to the head and by straightening their complete body. Two feet are straighten alongside each other and the shoulders go right up. When Sadys wants to turn his car to the left, I see some cadets waving their hand but not in the way of saluting. Sadys suddenly stops his car and I look around what is going on. Then Sadys and the officers step out of the car so I do the same. I expect to hear a lot of noise but on the contrary, I hear nothing, it is completely silent. At that moment all the police officers and cadets who I can see, raise their hand up to

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<sup>2</sup> <http://hnn.us/articles/1328.html>

their heads and they start singing. Then I understand what is going on. It is exactly 8:00 a.m. and the complete Academy starts singing the police anthem:

*emerged out of the people's party  
as announced by history  
with names unfolded by glory  
rose the National Police  
on the side of the village and its victories*

After a final and loud '*HONOUR SECURITY SERVICE!!*' every police officer continues its own way, Sadys and I step in the car again and we drive to the office of Sadys, only about thirty meter further.

This was one of the first times at the Police Academy that I saw everyone dropping what he was doing to sing the police anthem. Normally I arrived half an hour before 8.00 a.m. and I always went with Sadys to his office far away from the basketball field where the cadets sing the anthem every morning. The police officers on the Academy are not obliged to sing the anthem everyday but I was surprised to see so many officers who indeed stopped their conversations and activities in order to sing along. A huge amount of respect came from all these officers. Also the students who were too late arriving at the basketball field, sung the anthem together with the rest of the officers who were standing on the general terrain of the Academy.

Throughout my fieldwork wherein I have researched how life has been and still is for the *fundadores* (founders) of the police institution I got surprised several times by the amount of respect towards history and even more, towards common humanity. I cannot deny that I had expected to meet many 'macho' police officers, not willing to talk with me about their life and only bragging about the good reputation of their Nicaraguan police institution. The opposite was true and the police anthem captures the essence, I think, of both the *fundadores* and the police institution in general.

## 1.1 Central Question and Research Questions

For over more than forty years the Somoza family ruled Nicaragua with an iron fist, until the overthrown in 1979 by the guerrilla combatants of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* –FSLN) (Walker 1986). From that moment on, the Sandinistas tried to reform the Nicaraguan society and economy and they founded, among other

things, the police institution. During the Somoza dictatorship Nicaragua only had a *Guardia Nacional* (National Guard) and with the establishment of a police institution a new era had begun. The *fundadores* of the police started and managed this new police out of their ideals, ideology and outlook on the world which is often called *la mística* and *el espíritu*. In the years that followed, the Nicaraguan police institution did quite well in comparison to other Latin American countries. Were the *mística* and *espíritu* the driving force behind this success? The question however raises then if *la mística* and *el espíritu* is something that belong to the *fundadores* or to the institution. Today in 2011, there are still *fundadores* working in the national police institution (PN) but probably in a few years there will not be one *fundador* left in the institution. What will happen when they leave the institution? Will *la mística* and *el espíritu* and therefore the success of the institution continue to exist or are they hanging on the edge of becoming history?

I am convinced that we can learn a lot about history and draw important lessons out of it. However, in order to learn something of history, we need to make sure that we record it. Together with my interest in Latin America for many years, I got interested through one of my teachers of the Utrecht University, in recording the life histories of the former guerrilla combatants who founded the Nicaraguan police. In order not to lose an important part of Nicaraguan history, and therefore Latin American history, it is necessary to record the information when it is still available. With this information it is also possible to look at why the Nicaraguan police institution seems to function better in comparison with other Latin American police institutions. To get a closer understanding of *la mística* and *el espíritu* we need to delve into history to understand what these concepts are –or how they are framed - and which role they play nowadays in a state's institution and its policy. Are these concepts nowadays still crucial for the (well)functioning of the institution? And if they are, are *la mística* and *el espíritu* secured within in the institution so that the *fundadores* can retire with no worries? If the *mística* and *espíritu* are not known, supported or adapted among the new generation, it is most likely that the contribution of the *fundadores* will lose ground within the institution and among its members. For that reason the central question that guided me through my research period was :

**What role does the revolutionary Sandinista *mística* and *espíritu* play in the work and life of the *fundadores* and the overall members of the Nicaraguan police force currently and in its history?**

Through their *mística* and *espíritu* the *fundadores* have gained respect and were able to create and maintain an equally respected and professional police institution. A crucial question is then what

this *mística* and *espíritu* actually entails and if different police officers framed these concepts in the same way. What were the sources of this *mística* and *espíritu*? In what way has the political turmoil of the 1990s, when the Sandinistas lost the elections and neo-liberalism became dominant, influenced the *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores* and what influence had Ortega – when he regained power in 2006 - on it. A final question is whether this *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores* have been adopted by the overall institution and streams through the veins of all policemen of the PN or whether it is something typical of the *fundadores* and is bound to disappear as soon as the *fundadores* leave the institution?

## 1.2 Methods, Setting and Research Population

I have conducted fieldwork in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua between February and June 2011. This city was chosen because the main police stations and the Police Academy are established there and a large part of the total amount of police officers works in Managua. Additionally, the chance of finding *fundadores* would be the biggest in the capital. The main focus was on the *fundadores* so they formed the largest part of my informants. I have spoken with still active *fundadores* but also with retired *fundadores*. Although they mainly worked and lived in Managua, I have also done interviews with *fundadores* living and working outside the capital. Many have worked several years in Managua but also several years in smaller villages or in the most northern and isolated part of Nicaragua. Besides the *fundadores* I have also spoken with other police officers such as officers who are officially not considered a *fundador*. Someone is officially considered a *fundador* when he or she started to work in the police institution in the first three months –September, October and November- after the revolutionary triumph in 1979.

The next group of informants consists of all the other police officers who work with the PN less than twenty-five years. So also the officers who only work for one year with the PN belong to this group. How do these younger officers perceive the *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores* and can they identify themselves with these concepts? The cadets on the Police Academy form also an important part of my informants. They receive their training most of the time from *fundadores* so I considered them crucial in order to discover what the *fundadores* try to teach the students. The last group of informants consists of Nicaraguan citizens. They could help me put into perspective what police officers told me about community relations and they could provide me with more additional information which police officers could not give me. On certain points, they provided me with interesting insights in my research which I could never have received from members of the PN. (See for the list of police officers used throughout this thesis: appendix I).

During my in-depth research in Managua I have made use of qualitative research methods.

The most important methods have been different kind of interviews (informal, semi-structured and structured), conversations, surveys and participant observation. According to DeWalt and DeWalt (2002:40) participation is used as a method to gain trust and acquire a position in which it is more likely to obtain valid information. With the aim of recording the life histories of the *fundadores* I have mostly used the qualitative interviews. Initially I started the interviews with many questions but then I realized that people told me more when I only guided the interview with less and more open questions such as ‘can you tell me something about...’. Later on in the research I turned back however to the more structured questions in order to get more detailed information about specific questions I had. The conversations I held, helped me gathering more information which did not always came up in an interview. Furthermore, I have done two surveys. I have done one survey among 41 cadets of different years on the Police Academy. The other survey was executed among 22 police officers who worked varying from one up to twenty-five years with the PN, all with different ranks and in different areas. Both surveys consisted of six open questions with the purpose of acquainting more information and more opinions concerning these different groups in a shorter amount of time. Building confidential relationships within all these different groups of informants was difficult and by asking them questions which they could answer anonymously, it was easier to acquire important information. Next to those research methods, I kept a field diary and I have jotted down notes in my notebook every day. I have recorded and written out every interview in order not to lose important information given by my informants.

### 1.3 Aim and Relevance of the Research

With this research I hope to provide the world of science with more detailed information about the role that the *mística* and *espíritu* played and still plays in the policy and the current functioning of the Nicaraguan security force. If we look to other countries in Central-America, we see that Nicaragua has lower levels of violence and that the police institution is relatively successful in controlling violence and they have a better relationship with the community in comparison to the other countries in Central-America. While Nicaraguan history and the way the police institution was founded are unique, the current Nicaraguan police force could play an important role in the improvement of police institutions in neighboring countries. Furthermore, recording the stories of the *fundadores* of the police institution has provided a wealth of interesting data that was absolutely worth the effort to register. I have prevented that at least not all the life histories of the former Sandinista guerrilla combatants will be lost in the future because that would signify a regretful loss for science.

## 1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis holds seven main chapters which are subdivided in different paragraphs. Chapter two discusses the organization of police institutions and it explains why politics are indissoluble related to police institutions. This chapter also goes deeper into the specific situation of Latin American and it discusses police reforms, something that will be central throughout the whole thesis. This information explains the context of the thesis.

The third chapter shows how the concepts of *la mística* and *el espíritu* were framed by different policemen and women. These frames form the backbone of the entire thesis. Since the concepts *mística* and *espíritu* are frequently used in the upcoming chapters it is important to know what these concepts entail and to keep in mind that they are often differently framed by different actors. Chapter four illuminates the personal stories of the *fundadores* during the revolutionary period in Nicaragua. The history will be discussed starting with the Somoza period. The Somoza dynasty meant a turning point for the Nicaraguan society. The iron fist of Somoza was the direct cause of the Sandinista revolt and this chapter helps to understand why and how the *fundadores* established the police institution afterwards.

The following chapter will discuss the establishment of the police institution. It also analyzes how the institution was influenced and changed by different governments in order to professionalize and de-politicize the police institution. The chapter will focus on the institution and the perceptions of the *fundadores* throughout all these changes. Chapter six will demonstrate the relations the *fundadores* maintain with other parties, such as the new generations of police officers, the government, the president and the community, and how the *mística* and *espíritu* played a role in these relations. It lays an emphasis on the relation between the *fundadores* and their *mística* and *espíritu* and the future of the institution. In the conclusion I will shortly reflect on the most important issues discussed throughout the thesis with the aim of giving a final answer on the main question of the thesis.

## 2. The Police as an Institution

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*The increase of criminality was for a moment ascribed to the poor people, also labeled as the 'dangerous classes'*

*Silver (in Newburn 2005:9).*

Almost every country has its own police institution which serves to control order and to prevent crime in society. The character of these police institutions vary among states and often reflect some of the basic characteristics of these states. To understand the differences and to be able to get a closer understanding of a particular police institution it is important to have a general knowledge about the history and the different aspects of the police institution. For that reason, this chapter will discuss the history and organization of police institutions. It then discusses the doctrine and occupational culture of police institutions. In the third part the relation between police institutions and politics are examined to make clear why police institutions are often controversially related to the political climate. Then there is a paragraph about changes that take place in post-war countries and societies that changed from a dictatorship to a democratic regime. These political climates are discussed because when the political climate changes profoundly, it will affect the police institution and therefore its doctrine as well. This paragraph will focus specifically on the changes in Latin America because many police institutions in Latin America implemented police reforms after such a change in the political climate. In the last paragraph there is a closer look into these police reforms and the consequences for current Latin American police institutions in order to arrive at the specific situation of Nicaragua.

### 2.1 Police History and Organization

Modern police institutions are essentially the creation of nineteenth-century nation states and empires (Emsley 1999:8). Already from the moment that humans organized themselves into communities, some sort of agency was required to enforce agreed norms. Medieval and early modern cities and towns variously possessed citizen patrols or paid watchmen. Similarly, in the countryside villages arranged field guards to protect crops and animals. People who broke the norms by assault or theft, could be punished by the community or taken to a local court. Sometimes, when seeking for reinforcement of their authority or by large conflicts, monarchs

deployed military men as proto-police (Emsley 1999:8). Before the rise of real policed societies, police tasks were thus often carried out by citizens or the army but this was inefficient (Silver in Newburn 2005; Ericson in Newburn 2005).

The word 'police', coming from the Greek *politeia*, had multiple meanings in the early modern period (Emsley 1999:8). The concept of 'policing' changed throughout centuries and different police models and strategies were adopted in European countries<sup>3</sup>. In England police activity was focused on the working class because of the criminals and other 'threatening elements' that largely existed within the poorer sections of the working class (Emsley 1999:12). The increase of criminality was for a moment ascribed to the poor people, also labeled as the 'dangerous classes' (Silver, in Newburn 2005:9). In 1829 the first police institution as we still know it nowadays, was established in London and one of their tasks was to prevent crime and fight against these 'dangerous classes'. Among others, this police model was adopted in other countries as well, although with modifications required by different traditions and different forms of political organization (Bittner 1975:15). However, the models were always characterized by a police that was designed to penetrate civil society. Their main task is to prevent crime and violence and to detect and arrest criminals (Silver in Newburn 2005:13).

Although nowadays most modern nations are policed societies, in Latin America the abovementioned police model was not so commonly accepted and adopted. Latin America is faced with a complete other history than Europe and therefore many countries have never known such a police model until recently. And although many countries do have such a police model nowadays, many of the police forces are poorly paid and poorly trained, they come from a military and authoritarian tradition and they have little legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Consequently, they have been poorly prepared to confront rising crime and violence (Bailey and Dammert 2006:77). Furthermore, the police forces have bad reputations because they participated, and some still do participate, in human-rights violations which has undermined their legitimacy (Bailey and Dammert 2006:78). Bayley (in Bailey and Dammert 2006:19) gives an accurate definition of what in policed societies is meant by the police. The police are: 'people authorized by a group to regulate interpersonal relations within the group through the application of physical force'. The police are the executive agents of force and they are authorized to apply it. Furthermore, a distinction is made in Bayley's definition between internal and external security. The internal security is the concern of the police and the external security is the concern of the military forces. Finally, it is important that the police derive authority from the social units that support them (Bailey and Dammert 2006:19). In order to function it is necessary that the police

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<sup>3</sup> See for an extensive description of the application of these police models the complete text of Clive Emsley: *The Origins of the Modern Police* (in *History Today*, April 1999).

organization rely on the moral agreement and cooperation of citizens and civil society<sup>4</sup>. This body of thought has been incorporated in general police doctrines from the beginning. The penetration of the police in civil society also represents the penetration and continual presence of central political authority and moral order in daily life. In short, the police link authority to daily life, especially in the modern era where the police institution has become a specialized state agency (Silver, in Newburn 2005:13-15). It is generally assumed that within democratic nations, police forces are the state institutions that carry the prime responsibility for law enforcement (Eijkman 2007:18). Law enforcement and maintenance of social control are elements of what constitute policing of the police institution. In democratic countries law enforcement officials such as police officers, are subordinate to the elected government. In this context, the law rather than political power provides the framework for policing. Regardless of any reform, the following three elements should always be preserved: First, the police serve the state's citizens and not the state, and therefore the relationship with the community is an important dimension of policing (Eijkman 2007:19). Secondly, police's transparency should be fundamental and thirdly, the police must serve the law instead of the state (IEEPP 2009:11).

It is not the mandate of the police to produce a new order. According to Ericson (in Newburn 2005:219) their everyday actions on the contrary, are directed at reproducing the existing order. They are just a tool of 'policing' in the wider sense of all governmental efforts aimed at disciplining, refining, and improving the population. In a democracy the police are presented as the defenders of public freedom but leaders who are aware that the regime depends partly on public support, try to at least give the appearance that their police are defending public liberties. According to Kitson (1999:97) the claim of the police of serving the public interest needs to be placed alongside the fact that even in parliamentary regimes they help enforce a dominant ideology and protect the ruling classes.

In providing order the police have an ideological function as well. The order arising out of their action is a reproduction because it is made with reference to the existing order and designed to keep it in its original form. However, the outcome may not always duplicate what was there before the interaction. Order is not simply transmitted in an unproblematic way but is worked at through processes of conflict, negotiation, and subjection (Ericson in Newburn 2005:219). The police have a sense of the order they are reproducing and this is reflected in the activities they are taught to pursue and in the techniques they are taught to use. In dealing with any particular situation the patrol officer decides what, if anything is out of order and then uses the tools to reconstruct order. According to Ericson (in Newburn 2005:220), the police officer

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<sup>4</sup> To make clear what is understood by 'civil society' I use the following definition: 'Civil society refers to groups whose concern is the 'public interest' but which are distinct from the government of the state' (Caparini et al 2006: 44).

therefore negotiates order. Although the law thus provides the framework for policing and the guidelines for maintaining order, in practice the police officer is able to negotiate the imposed order. At the same time it works the other way around since the police symbolize the shifts and strains in the changing socio-political order (Manning in Newburn 2005:192).

## 2.2 Police Doctrine, Mission and Occupational Culture

A police institution strives to work with a single set of guidelines in order to work effectively towards a common goal. This could be called the police doctrine. As stated by the Nicaraguan Capitan Jiménez (2010:23) a police doctrine can be described as ‘the unity of basic ideas which ground the actions of the institution, unite the institution and its members and give it an own character’<sup>5</sup>. According to Rotmann (2009:6) the term ‘doctrine’ is however hardly ever defined or consistently used outside the military context. For the military a doctrine can be seen as: ‘the fundamental principles, practices and procedures that guide the military’ (Rotmann 2009:6). Therefore we could understand ‘doctrine’ as a set of principles and standard operating procedures which are at the core of any bureaucracy, including national police services and other civilian institutions (Rotmann 2009:7). Although doctrine is by definition official, it is not necessarily written down. However, police and other civilian institutions can always have common principles and procedures captured in training materials and the institution can have mission specific directives and operational plans (Rotmann 2009:7-8). These principles and directives are imposed from above.

As described earlier, police forces are state institutions and the law provides the framework for policing. But who defines the police doctrine? During a police reform the police doctrine is often written down by several actors such as the government, the police and sometimes even by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s). The guidelines for the police institution will remain until new reforms or huge changes take place (for example when an authoritarian state becomes a democracy). In Latin America police doctrines are often officially written down but do not always correspond with the direction the country or police organization is heading to. Neither does every police officer always obeys what is written down in the police doctrine. As Glebbeek (2003:63) states: ‘Although sometimes doctrines can be traced in mission statements or police law, most police forces are not clear about their missions, or do not act in accordance to their doctrine’.

Policing is a dangerous occupation and police officers often remark that one of the most

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<sup>5</sup> Capitan Jiménez refers with this quote more literally to the Nicaraguan police doctrine but it could be the doctrine of any random police institution for being so general.

cherished aspects of their occupation is the 'one for all, and all for one' spirit (Bittner 1975:63). This spirit can be related to the more known French term *esprit de corps*: 'The common spirit existing in the members of a group, a spirit that inspires enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group' (Dunkelman 2004:5). Already in 1899 Georges Palante wrote about *esprit de corps*. He explains that in a narrow sense *esprit de corps* is a spirit of solidarity, animating all members of a same professional group. In a broader sense *esprit de corps* is the spirit of solidarity in general in all kinds of social circles such as class and caste in which the individual feels himself subordinated to the interests of the collectivity (Palante 1899:page unknown). Professional solidarity is one of the most powerful social ties and in its action it is most energetic in liberal professions (e.g. clergy, army and police). Mechanics and carpenters for example, do not manifest an *esprit de corps* as developed as that of the officer, the priest or a functionary. They do know a corporate solidarity by uniting in trade unions but this solidarity is purely economic. In the liberal professions *esprit de corps*: 'arrogates to itself a moral sway over individual consciousness' (Palante 1899:page unknown). The corporation imposes on and inculcates in its members an intellectual and moral conformism and marks them with an ineradicable stamp which varies from one group to another. The way of thinking, feeling and acting are different for a priest then for an officer. In the case of the police, officers are generally subject to a powerful hierarchical organization whose effect is to strengthen the *esprit de corps*. According to Palante (1899:page unknown) the more organized and hierarchical a social group, the more narrow and energetic is the moral and social discipline it imposes on its members.

Palante (1899) does also describes the principal characteristics of *esprit de corps*. He explains that a 'corps' is a: 'defined social group with its own interests, its own will to life and which seeks to defend itself against all exterior or interior causes of its destruction or diminution' (Palante 1899:page unknown). A corps fights for moral advantages such as the good name of the corps, influence, consideration and credit. It are the means for ensuring the material prosperity of the corps and its members. In order to defend those moral advantages the corps deploys an incredible energy, fierceness and combativeness (Palante 1899:page unknown). In order to maintain the attitude of the corps, the corps demands that all its members conduct themselves properly. Furthermore, according to Palante (1899:page unknown) *esprit de corps* can be seen as an invader. It does not limit itself to control the professional existence of its members, it often interferes in their private lives as well. Hostility against members of the corps can rise when someone in one way or another seems not to fit in with the corporation. Finally, *esprit de corps* can be considered a collective egoism: 'uniquely concerned with collective ends and disdainful of the individual and individual qualities' (Palante 1899:page unknown). As maintained by Dunkelman

(2004:8), comradeship is therefore not synonymous with *esprit the corps*. It is rather a component of *esprit de corps*. Because of the fact that policing is a dangerous occupation officers cannot do without the availability of unquestioned support and loyalty.

*Esprit de corps* is one of the characteristics of the occupational culture or the so called 'police culture'. Reiner (in Bethan 2010:1-2) describes the following (orthodox) core characteristic of a police culture:

Police, it is said, have an exaggerated sense of mission towards their role and crave work that is crime oriented and promises excitement. They celebrate masculine exploits, show willingness to use force and engage in informal working practices. Officers are continually suspicious, lead socially isolated lives and display defensive solidarity with colleague. They are mainly conservative in politics and morality, and their culture is marked by cynicism and pessimism. The police world view includes a simplistic, de-contextualized understanding of criminality and officers are intolerant towards those who challenge the status quo.

As Manning (in Bethan 2010:4) puts it, police culture encompasses the images officers have of their role, along with their assumptions about the social world which subsequently supports and informs conduct. Although Bittner (1975:63) speaks of a fraternal spirit instead of *esprit de corps*, he states that this spirit binds the members of the police but it also segregates them from the rest of society which is characteristic for the police culture as well. As visible symbols of state authority, the police are liable to become socially isolated from the outside world (Reiner in Bethan 2010:12). In consequence, the solidarity among policemen will rise (Skolnick in Newburn 2005:265). Although they are not one great happy family, officers must work with men they can trust. This aspect includes a rule of silence, for instance; teams of partners do not talk about each other in the presence of non-team members. A complicated network of secret sharing is something common in most police institutions. This are all facets of the so called 'police culture' in which a 'working personality' is developed by most police officers. (Skolnick in Newburn 2005).

Feelings of solidarity can be further exacerbated by the anticipation of danger (Bethan 2010: 12-13). As Skolnick (in Newburn 2005:265) points out in his article about the policeman's 'working personality', every policeman's role contains two principal variables: danger and authority. Those variables are explained by Skolnick (in Newburn 2005:265):

The element of danger isolates the policeman socially from that segment of the citizenry which he regards as symbolically dangerous and also from the conventional citizenry with whom he identifies. The element of authority reinforces the element of danger in isolating the policeman.

These two elements seem to contribute to the solidarity of policemen. In organizational terms according to Bethan (2010:13) solidarity is a favorable feature as it produces a high degree of teamwork. But solidarity also has a sinister face insofar as it encourages the protection and covering up of mistakes of colleagues (Westley in Bethan 2010:13). Generally, as Skolnick further suggests, policemen do not only have the same occupation, they also have a similar outlook on the world. Policemen experience an exceptionally strong tendency to find their social identity within their occupational milieu (in Newburn 2005:270).

### **2.3 Politicization of the Police Institution**

Political values and political aims are supposed to be secondary to the institutional objective of law enforcement (Manning in Newburn 2005:200). This is difficult because police organizations function in a political context and their mandate is defined politically. The police constantly play an important role in the execution of the government's law and justice policy (Kertész and Szikinger 2000:275). Hence, the political system and the police institution are intertwined because as Manning suggests (in Newburn 2005:200-201), the law is a political entity and the administration of criminal law unavoidably encompasses political values and political ends. The police are directly related to the political system that defines and develops the law and the police must administer this law. As stated by Kertész and Szikinger (2000:275) it is up to the police to decide impartially not to allow the intrusion of political influences of any parties and they must override party-political interests to secure the principle of equality under the law.

Although the police are legally prohibited from being publicly political, they often appeal to different community groups and participate secretly in others (in Newburn 2005:201). There are also direct effects of the political nature of the police mandate. As stated by Manning (in Newburn 2005:201) one example can be found in the alienation of many policemen. Policemen can lose interest in their role as enforcers and in the law as a believable criterion. The pressures of politics also erode loyalty to the police organization (and not infrequently lead to collusion with criminals and organized crime). Manning (in Newburn 2005:201) furthermore mentions the exposure to danger, a policeman's social background, low pay, low morale and his vulnerability in a repressive bureaucracy that are all examples of factors that make a policeman susceptible 'to the lures of the underhanded and the appeals of the political'. Finally, Manning (in Newburn 2005:201) points out that police and politics within the community are tightly interlocked: 'The sensitivity of the police to their political audiences, their operation within the political system of criminal justice, and their own personal political attitudes undermine their efforts to fulfill their

contradictory mandate and to appear politically neutral’.

## 2.4 Policing Transitional Societies in Latin America

Changes of the political climate will generate changes in the police institution and therefore in the lives of policemen. Those changes come to the forth especially in post-war countries and transitional societies<sup>6</sup> as we will see in this section. Moreover, the police do not only reflect the nature of the state, but are also responsible for the prevention or promotion of state change. In other words, the police can be seen as ‘major actors’ in changing societies (Marks 2000:558).

In Latin America military dictatorships were established or powerful oligarchies had the political and economic power. In different Latin American countries guerrilla movements tried to overthrow those military dictatorships and oligarchic governments. They tried to establish socialist societies that ‘would root out the corruption and inequality that had characterized the previous dictatorships and oligarchies that had long held political and economic power’ (Kruijt 2008:1). According to Kruijt, the term ‘guerrilla’ literally means ‘small war’ and is used to characterize undeclared wars or covert military operations against an established regime. Guerrilla forces constituted the military arm of national liberation movements in the beginning of the 1960s. In exceptional cases, after victorious wars, former guerrilla formations were quickly and successfully transformed into regular armed forces, for example in Nicaragua. Kruijt (2008:4) states that in Latin America ‘guerrilla’ generally indicates:

the existence of so-called ‘politico-military organizations’ with an ideology characterized by the following features: intense nationalism, anti-imperialism or anti-colonialism; the prospect of a socialist utopia; and overt preparation for social revolution by means of armed struggle.

Specifically the liberation theology and the dependency theory seem to leave their marks on the guerrilla movements (Kruijt 2008:48). The liberation theology connects themes of social justice, human rights and the alleviation of poverty to bible reading (Kruijt 2008:48). In the dependency theory were poverty, exclusion and social conflicts in Latin America explained by the ‘dependent integration’ of Latin America in the capitalist world economy (Kruijt 2008:48). Finally, guerrilla movements were in general widely influenced by the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideologies. The public proclamations of the movements however, often espoused broader, populist messages (Wickham-Crowley 1991:31) and they entered into alliances with the peasantry.

Revolutions of guerrilla movements are often followed by periods of democratic and

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<sup>6</sup> Transitional societies include post-conflict societies as well as societies that transformed from military to civilian rule peacefully (Eijkman 2007:34).

dictatorial governments, often alternating each other. The changes of the political climate have an important impact on state's institutions such as the police institution. It is essential for societies that are in the process of transforming from authoritarian to democratic governance that there exists a change in policing bodies (Marks 2000:558; Neild 2003). Because the fact that the police function as a central institution of the state, they are a necessary element in any democratization process. Hence, the police are an indicator of the quality of democratic institutions, and the behavior of internal security forces is an important part of a government's operational commitment to democratization (Marks 2000:558).

## 2.5 Police Reforms

Police reforms are seen as a first reaction to post-war situations or societies in transition as in the case of going from a dictatorship to a democratic regime. Other pressing socio-political problems as poverty, social exclusion, human rights violations, diminishing support for democratic government and the failure of the rule of law pressure contemporary governments to react (Eijkman 2007:51-52). Police reform refers according to Bailey and Dammert (2006:2) to 'improving police forces' operational efficiency and effectiveness in preventing and repressing crime as well as to strengthening their [...] accountability'. We need to keep in mind that the implementation of police reform depends on specific socio-political contexts and that the scope of police reforms that followed transition was different in each country. There is no single organizational or doctrinal model, neither for public security nor for police reform (Eijkman 2007:37; Glebbeek 2003:63). Call (in Glebbeek 2003:63) argues that police reforms are major reforms when they consist of changes in at least two of the following three dimensions of police structures: hierarchical command, composition, and doctrine.

Many Latin American and other countries implemented police reforms after processes of peace building and (re-)democratization. Police reform was seen as a key for the consolidation of democratic governance and the ending of violence (Glebbeek 2003:63). The term 'police reform' has been used to refer to diverse sorts of reforms according to Glebbeek (2003:63), for example; decentralization, increased responsiveness to ethnic concerns, better oversight systems, increased effectiveness in crime fighting or curbing corruption. Also changing the name of a police force, the colors of the uniforms or removing or reshuffling some police officers can be seen as reforms. A central element of democratic transition is the reform of the police into a professional, efficient, and rights-respecting police force, subordinate to civilian authorities, separate from the armed forces, and free from political influence (Sonneveldt 2009). In the vast majority of Latin American countries the state security policy was replaced by a public security

doctrine (Eijkman 2007:41). Eijkman (2007:41) states that ‘for national security the prime entity to be protected is the state and its territory, while public security is about crime prevention, social order and citizens’ participation’.

In the 1980s in many Latin American countries a transition to a new regime was made after years of rule by a military regime. In countries such as El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala these military regimes were fiercely opposed by guerrilla movements what led to civil conflict (Glebbeck 2009:65). After signing peace agreements some of the guerrilla organizations have been transformed into political parties: ‘acting as peaceful actors in electoral instead of insurgency campaigns’ (Koonings and Kruijt 2004:10). Therefore they could exercise in different extent, influence and power on the national policy. In the particular case of Nicaragua the guerrilla organization has not only been transformed into a political party, it also initiated new state institutions such as the police institution.

### 3. La Mística and el Espíritu

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*The strength of the National Police of Nicaragua does not come from the amount of active police officers, nor it comes from the material resources we have. The strength of the National Police of Nicaragua derives from another kind of factors: its narrow relationship with the community, its ethical values and principles, its work mystic, its conviction that every day we can and should be better; its determination of giving our live, when necessary, for the security of everyone.*

*Aminta Granera Sacasa, First Commissioner and General Director of the PN (2009)<sup>7</sup>.*

In 2009 the National Police of Nicaragua celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. During all kind of speeches and interviews the police spoke about its relative good reputation and all the goals they had achieved in the past thirty years. The success of the institution was (and still is) mainly ascribed to one particular concept: *la mística* and in a lesser extent to *el espíritu*. More particular, thanks to the *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores* the National Police could develop into a successful and professional institution<sup>8</sup>. Although the institution had faced many struggles under the right-wing administrations of president Violeta Chamorro, Arnoldo Alemán and Enrique Bolaños who tried to change the institutional character, according to *fundador* Tomás Borge<sup>9</sup>, co-founder of the Sandinista Movement, these governments did not manage to change the *mística Sandinista* of the police which is still there in 2009.

#### 3.1 Framing *La Mística* and *el Espíritu*

The person who often refers to *la mística* in her speeches and interviews is *fundadora* and current director of the National Police, Aminta Granera. In September 2010 when the PN existed 31 years she wrote the following:

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<sup>7</sup> First Commissioner Aminta Granera Sacasa, General Director and *fundadora* of the PN, during a speech in Managua on the fifth of September 2009, when the National Police celebrated its thirty anniversary.

<sup>8</sup> General Director and *fundadora* Aminta Granera Sacasa, during a speech in Managua on the fifth of September 2009, when the National Police celebrated its thirty anniversary. She also refers to this fact in other speeches and letters such as in *Visión Policial* (2011:7).

<sup>9</sup> Interview in *La Voz del Sandinismo* by Pedro Ortega Ramírez: Tomás Borge: La mística revolucionaria sigue intacta en la Policía, September 3, 2009. Internet page: [http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12](http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12) (Last visited: July 19, 2011).

It has been 31 years of sacrifices, sweat and blood of many male and female police officers who have given their lives during the fulfillment of their duties. With *mística* and love to the people they gave themselves day in day out to this police life full of deprivations, rigourness, adversities, pressures, frustrations, dangers and risks, but always committed to serve the community (Visión Policial 2011:7).

She refers to 31 years of police work in which *la mística* has always been present. In addition she said the following during an interview in *La Lucha Sigue* in 2010 (page unknown): ‘We have demonstrated to the Nicaraguan people and to the international community that our capacity comes more out of a courage, a *mística* and out of a heart than out of our resources’. The current police institution and the current police officers seem to all have a *mística*. Also the current president of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega (who stands above the director of the PN) speaks of a *mística* when referring to the police institution: ‘A new institution, formed by men and women derived from the people’s liberation struggles, filled with values, *mística* and deep feelings of protection and love for the people’ (Visión Policial 2011:6). Tomás Borge said the following during an interview in 2009: ‘the actual police structures continue conserving the *espíritu* and revolutionary *mística*, despite of the neo-liberal governments who insisted on transforming those structures’<sup>10</sup>. Cuarezma Terán and Zapata López (2003:422) finally connect *la mística* more explicitly to the *fundadores* of the National Police: ‘*La mística* of the founders has made it the National Police possible to consolidate an institution within the scope of respect and dignity of a person and subordination to the law’.

To make sense of the next chapters it is important to understand how the concept of *el espíritu* and more important *la mística*, are used and how they are *not* used. Therefore it is crucial to understand how different *fundadores* frame the concept. Stephen Reece gives the following definition about frames: ‘Frames are the organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world’<sup>11</sup>. The frame that is used by the police (Director Granera, President Ortega and *fundador* Borge) is officially spread, but not always very clear. For example Aminta Granera claims that the general capacity of the PN comes forth out of *la mística* while Tomás Borge refers to a revolutionary *mística* which will be conserved in the institution. It is not clear whether they refer to the same *mística* or that they mean something else. Additionally, throughout time the concepts of *el espíritu*

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<sup>10</sup> Interview in *La Voz del Sandinismo* by Pedro Ortega Ramírez: Tomás Borge: La mística revolucionaria sigue intacta en la Policía, September 3, 2009. Internet page: [http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12](http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12) (Last visited: July 19, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> A Practitioner’s Guide to Political Frames by Joe Brewer on June 29, 2010 in *Communication, Training* <http://www.cognitivepolicyworks.com/blog/2010/06/29/a-practitioners-guide/> (Last visited: July 19, 2011).

and *la mística* became personally and differently interpreted by the *fundadores* and other police officers. As a consequence, the frame is transformed by individual police officers.

### 3.2 What is *la Mística*?

Aminta Granera does not explain exactly what is meant by *la mística* although you could replace *la mística* maybe by strive or by aspiration. She neither refers explicitly to a historic moment in which the concept was born. Daniel Ortega refers more to the history with *la mística* but neither he gives an explanation of the concept. Asking the *fundadores* about the meaning of *la mística* did also not give one similar outcome. On the contrary, multiple explanations and meanings were given. *Fundadores* make for example a special distinction between *la mística* and *la mística revolucionaria* in order to prevent misunderstandings with other kinds of *mística* such as a personal *mística* or an institutional *mística*. For example, for *fundadora* and sub-director of the Police Academy Aura María Cubillo<sup>12</sup> *la mística* forms the human being but when she refers to the *mística* of the revolution she speaks about the *mística revolucionaria* which has to do with all the things people fought for such as fighting against poverty. Some of the *fundadores* refer with *la mística* to the revolution; others refer to *la mística* as the way they do their work nowadays as a police officer, as in the case of Sadys Martínez. He explains that the *mística* does not permit that one says 'I work only eight hours a day because that is what I am being paid for'<sup>13</sup>.

Many *fundadores* mingle the different concepts and it remains unclear whether the *fundadores* have clear for themselves what those concepts mean or how they actually think about it. For example, the opinions of the *fundadores* are widely divided when asked if the two concepts (*la mística* and *el espíritu*) are born with the revolution. Some *fundadores* say they were born with the revolution, others say that everybody has a *mística* or *espíritu* when he or she comes into the world. Exactly at this point the opinions are also widely divided when asked if only *they* can have the *mística* or *espíritu*. Some agree and others say that people who have not lived the revolution can have a *mística* or *espíritu* as well. Even when people refer more specifically to the *mística revolucionaria* the *fundadores* disagree about who has it and who not. There are *fundadores* who think that the current generations (who not even have lived the revolution) can have a *mística revolucionaria* as well. Regardless if the *mística* rose during the revolution or not, it can be stated that it is something based on, and related to *el Sandinismo*. In a later stage certain elements of *el Sandinismo* were included in the police institution. After that, the *fundadores* took possession of the concepts and they started to frame it differently.

The following part is divided into two parts in order to understand how all these different

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Aura María Cubillo, March 30, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, February 22, 2011.

persons see *la mística* and *el espíritu*. First *la mística* can be seen as a doctrine, mission, vision and (personal) values. In the second part the *esprit de corps* will be discussed, something that is closely related to the *mística*. It is important to be aware of the fact that on the one hand with *la mística* can be referred to the *mística* of the complete police institution and all of its members (official frame) while on the other hand *la mística* can be seen as something belonging to history and to the personal values of the *fundadores* of the PN (transformed frame).

### 3.3 *La Mística* Framed as Mission, Vision, Doctrine and Values

According to Dirk Kruijt<sup>14</sup> *la mística* refers to the mission of the members of an institution or movement. Therefore *la mística* can first refer to the mission of the Sandinistas. The mission of the Sandinistas in a few words was to end the dictatorship of Somoza and creating a better society. It was the moral force behind the revolution. According to fundador and sub-commissioner Jorge Muñis<sup>15</sup>:

*la mística* was what made that every combatant was willing to die for the revolution [...] *La mística* is for all the comrades who participated and came from every part of country; the complete youth, because in this time the youth was the enemy of the *Guardia Nacional*.

As a result, *la mística* was not only predetermined or exclusive for the *fundadores* of the police institution as explained by Jorge Muñis. *La mística* existed also in the army which had a mission as well<sup>16</sup>. There are *fundadores* who not even know what *la mística* is. Yet, in general the *fundadores* refer with *la mística* or *el espíritu* to the principles and values they had during the revolution and the first years in the police institution: ‘*La mística* for us [*fundadores*] is something as living in those days [during the revolution]. The principles and values of the *fundadores* are valid all the time’<sup>17</sup>. Examples of those principles and values are patriotism, security, dignity, liberty, respect, honesty and equality. These principles were the force behind their ideology (what they wanted to reach, in this case a more just society). So in order to reach this just society one needs to contain and live up to these values and principles.

Nowadays much of these values are important in the vision of the police and they form part of the police doctrine. Therefore *la mística* can secondly refer to the mission of the police institution. The institution to which a member belong, strives for the highest ethical values such as love for the nation and the people, compassion for the poor, a Spartan way of life, willing to

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<sup>14</sup> E-mail contact Dirk Kruijt, April 27, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

sacrifice your life in order to help humanity, being an example for others, etcetera<sup>18</sup>. According to article 97 of the Nicaraguan Constitution the official mission is as follows<sup>19</sup>:

The National Police is a civil armed actor. It has as its mission guaranteeing the intern order, the security of the citizens, the prevention and persecution of the criminal act and everything else as described in the law. The National Police is professional, a-political, impartial, obedient and deliberating<sup>20</sup>.

A vision can change by the years and is therefore not included in the Constitution. The police have its vision however written out as follows: ‘Establishing itself in the Nicaraguan society as an armed actor with a civil nature that guards order and citizen security by means of preventing and persecuting crime<sup>21</sup>. The PN nowadays contains an official police doctrine. This doctrine is based on this mission and vision of the PN (Cuarezma Terán and Zapata López 2003:426). The police doctrine is also often referred to by many police officers as the mission, the vision or the philosophy of the police institution. It can however be stated that the police doctrine is based on the *mística (revolucionaria)*. It is all about striving for a better society and more equality.

The Nicaraguan police doctrine is considered fundamental. It contains the ethical prescription, principles and values which together form the base and reference point for the way of acting (Jiménez 2010:13). So the Police doctrine actually summarizes the essence of the institution. Returning to *la mística* and *el espíritu*, people often refer to these institutionalized principles and values mentioned in the police doctrine when asked what *la mística* or *el espíritu* is. Others also refer to similar principles and values but these can be considered personal principles and values. The PN characterizes itself by respecting the following values; dignity, wherein the vocation of service to the community is important; discipline, every police act should be directed by presidential mandate, constitutional order and disposed to the national leadership; professionalism; a-politicalness; non-party; obedience to the civil authority executed by the president of the republic and its character of the supreme leader and the strict devotion to the political constitution; respect to the political constitution and the inherent rights of the citizens<sup>22</sup>. According to documents of the PN a value is ‘something considered important, estimable, valuable and necessary, it makes someone feel good and raises the spirit. It is everything that with

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<sup>18</sup> E-mail contact Dirk Kruijt, April 27, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> I have searched for the official mission as written down in the Nicaraguan Constitution. The PN have on its website and on posters spread among the districts, the mission and vision also stated out but they are described differently. Although the text on the website differ from the texts on the posters and the constitutional description, they are similar.

<sup>20</sup> Article 97: (<http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Nica/nica05.html> (Last visited May 12, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.policia.gob.ni/ins-mision.html> (Last visited April 14, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.policia.gob.ni/ins-valores.html> (Last visited July 18, 2011).

experience is going to be loved, taking care of and worked with' (Jiménez 2010:4).

Besides the values the PN is also characterized by fundamental principles. According to documents of the PN principles are 'norms that guarantee citizens rights and security of the persons who are in conflict with justice' (Jiménez 2010:4). Examples of principles are legality, good treatment of prisoners, relations with the community, a rational use of force and application of firearms, patriotism, humanism, integrity, *esprit de corps* and an equal gender approach (Cuarezma Terán and Zapata López 2003: 427). The institution describes that the essential of these principles and values of the PN is 'the respect to the life and dignity of the persons' (Academia 30 años: 2009). Every member of the police institution is expected to apply these values daily in a institutional, familiar, personal and community sphere (Academia 30 años: 2009). (See for an content description of the principles and values as taught on the Police Academy, appendix II).

The current police (PN) is called a *Policía Comunitaria Proactiva* (Proactive Community Police). The slogan of this model is: 'desde la comunidad, por la comunidad, para la comunidad' (from out the community, for the community, towards the community) (Academia 30 años: 2009). The Police Academy tries to educate the values and principles to their new members. They state: 'At the Academy we do not teach our students to reprimand, we teach them to confront the dialogue and to search for community solutions, in the conviction that citizen security is a task we all should fulfill (Academia 30 años: 2009). The Police Academy works with a model in accordance with the community mission. The cadets are constantly providing services to the society and her institutions such as police services, promotion of culture, sports and nature conservation<sup>23</sup>.

The Police Doctrine also implies the elaboration of ethical rules of the National Police. These ethical rules regulate the conduct of all of its members and reflect in an explicit way Human Rights and, as a consequence, justice, respect for the life, dignity and integrity of the people (Jiménez 2010:13). More explicitly, ethics are the overall values which guide the community (and thus also the PN) and defines its behavior and acts. *Mística* in this sense is the official doctrine, the mission and vision, the values and ethical rules (which are largely inspired by the Sandinista philosophy) communicated by the police institution to their members. This *mística* is adopted by its members not only in their professional but also in their personal life. Some parts of the *mística* are considered more important by single officers than others and the *mística* is adapted and personalized, as we will see in later chapters.

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<sup>23</sup> During my time in Managua I have seen this active participation of the Academy students at all kinds of activities. So already in the education of the cadets, the considerable important contact with the community is emphasized. According to the police, the community and the Nicaraguan citizens are vice versa constantly asking for the participation of the PN at certain events (Academia 30 años: 2009).

The institutional principles and values need to be imposed in a person himself, the moral base, before it is imposed by authority of law, according to the PN (Jiménez 2010:8). Moral norms feed the professional ethics. Every professional act is not professional without a moral base (Jiménez 2000:31). The moral can be understood as the formation of the individual. All the above described official values, principals and morals of the police doctrine are often mentioned by the *fundadores* as personal values, principals and morals as characterizing for their *mística* (and for many for their *espíritu*):

Look, *el espíritu* is that what moves us as human beings. I have things inside me that makes me dignified, coherent, humane; *el espíritu* is what we have cultivated inside us, the intrinsic values I have. *La mística* is a quality that we can have, it is doing the things with passion, with dignity, with fighting, giving the best of myself. You obtain *la mística* as it grows in your mind, in the ideas, in how you perceive others, how much you care about your village, trying to instill the good things into others<sup>24</sup>.

On the one hand, some mention the personal values and principles as necessary in their work as police officers and at the other hand, many of those values and principles are instilled by, and learned within the institution. *Fundador* Jose Jarquín explains how both are intertwined:

For us [*fundadores*] *el espíritu* is that what moves us in order to reach an effective fulfillment of our work. So if I have nothing that motivates me, I will never do the things right. It is the consciousness that we have as regards the task and mission we need to fulfill. That has to do with the values and principles as the police teaches us, such as humanity, loyalty, the relation with the community. *La mística* is that from the moment that you enter the police, being conscious that you run a risk and that you cannot turn your back. I will continue whether I run the risk of dying during duty or not. *That is la mística* and it is not exactly coming from a revolutionary movement or being a police officer, because many youngsters enter [nowadays] with a *mística*. They are similar and I think that both help us being efficient in our job, both make us sacrifice. I work 32 years with the police and I have not enriched myself with this job. I try not to lose my duty spirit. I can be corrupt and go bribe people but then I would lose my duty *espíritu* and my *mística*. It is possible that there exist police officers in the institution who are like this but I can say that 98 percent of the police officers in Nicaragua have this *espíritu* and *mística*<sup>25</sup>.

So we have seen that with *la mística* can be referred to the values and principles of the official

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Hilda Murillo, March 20, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, May 22 2011.

police institution and its doctrine. *La mística* can be seen as a shared concept, something that you have and need, to fulfill a duty which is filled with (and similar as the personal) values and principles.

When discussing the lives of the *fundadores*, we need to keep in mind the following two things. First, as many *fundadores* (and also other police officers) have explained, since the moment they started working with the police, they have not separate their life as a police man from their daily personal life. Secondly, the *mística* or *espíritu* they have is something that is in the blood, according to Jorge Muñis<sup>26</sup>: ‘although one takes off his uniform, the *mística* keeps flowing in the blood’. All the values and principles the *fundadores* have, are therefore important both in their daily personal life as in their work. The values and principles are valid all the time according to Jorge<sup>27</sup> who gave the following illustration: ‘Imagine that in leisure time I beat my comrade and back here at the Academy I give classes about ethics, that does not correspond’. The conviction or *mística* the *fundadores* have, can be considered an overall power that stands above their work or their personal life.

To conclude, *la mística* can thus be seen as the vision or mission of the police institution and as the vision or mission of the *fundadores*. Later on in this thesis we will see that *la mística* is often framed and alternated by *el espíritu*. The *espíritu* can be seen both as a personal as a shared moral in which living up to the shared norms and values as mentioned above, are considered important. This can also be called *esprit de corps*.

### 3.4 *Esprit de Corps*

With *el espíritu* can be referred to the current police institution but it can also more explicitly refer to the personal *espíritu* of the *fundadores*. For example according to Jose David Jarquín Ortíz<sup>28</sup> *el espíritu* gave the motivation for the revolution while for Sadys Martínez<sup>29</sup> *el espíritu* is something a police officer need in order to fulfill the mission of being police officer. More specifically he refers to *el espíritu humanista* which according to Sadys Martínez<sup>30</sup> signifies: ‘protecting the life goes before everything’. He gave a more explicit example of having *el espíritu humanista*:

One example, a few years ago I met a boy of twenty years old and he said to me: ‘I am studying for being a police officer and I know you’. I was impressed and I asked him how he knew me. You have to know that many years ago I was judicial investigator, I worked on murder cases. He said to me: ‘Many years ago you came to my house, taking away my father’. I asked: ‘why did I take your father?’

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortíz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, May 3, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, May 3, 2011.

'For murder' he said. I thought the boy was complaining but he was not. His father got into a fight with a neighbor and he beat this person to the ground and after three days his neighbor died. I came to arrest him. I asked the boy if I had treated him or his mother in a bad way. He said no. Therefore I asked: 'so why do you still remember me?' He said that the judicial process lasted ten days so he went with his mother to see his father and I let him with his father almost the entire day. The boy continued: 'I said never thank you'. That touched me. After so much time the boy still remembered me.

The part that explains *el espíritu humanista* lays in the part that Sadys Martínez let the boy be with his dad although his dad had murdered someone. Sadys explained that this could happen to anyone. The father of the boy had an alcohol problem but obviously it was never his intention to kill another human being. This man was not evil, it was a social problem that has caused the addiction of this man which eventually led to a horrible accident. The man was going to jail and would be punished, so what would be the sense of punishing both father and son by holding them away from each other? For that reason Sadys describes *el espíritu humanista* also as a philosophical feeling; it is a mental concept about life.

Althusser (e.a. 2006:120) states that every corps works with an ideology but this is often called *esprit de corps*. Dirk Kruijt<sup>31</sup> explains that *el espíritu* refers to the *esprit de corps* which can also be called the moral of a group. It maintains high ethical values such as patriotism, love for the nation and development of the society. Members of a group need to have a high morality and a strong ethical way of acting. It is therefore only possible to held the *mística* high when everyone stands behind it and when every police member has the same corporate morale or *espíritu*. This explains why the *espíritu* is indissoluble connected to *la mística* and why so many *fundadores* confuse these two concepts.

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<sup>31</sup> E-mail contact Dirk Kruijt, April 27, 2011

## 4. Life of the *Fundadores* during the Nicaraguan Revolution

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*I was imprisoned for joining the Sandinista front and in prison they tortured me. They maltreated me only for thinking in a different way. I say, we all have the right to express ourselves'.*

*Fundador* and Commissioner Jose David Jarquín Ortíz<sup>32</sup>

In order to understand what made the *fundadores* participate in the revolution and how they finally started a police institution, this chapter will give an overview of the history of Nicaragua and the armed forces as they existed throughout history, starting right after the independency period of the country. Between 1975 and 1979 the situation in Nicaragua became very harsh, especially for the youth. The *Guardia Civil* of Somoza was very repressive and saw students and young people as the enemy. The *fundadores* tell how life was for them during this period, what made them participate in the revolution and how they were influenced.

### 4.1 Armed Forces before Somoza

After independence in 1821 Nicaragua had two armies; a liberal and a conservative one, wearing respectively a red or green ribbon on the uniform. Those two armies executed both police tasks. However, they also violated the human rights of the people with opponent political ideas. Soldiers were recruited with force by the two armies. The ones who refused were murdered because they were considered opponents of the ideology of the army that recruited them (Pérez Cuadra 2007:7). In 1880 the government of Joaquín Zavala (1879-1883) published an official police regulation in which three different police divisions were introduced; an urban, a rural and a judicial one. The police tasks however, were still executed by the army although a special force named *Resguardo*, was assigned to execute the police tasks (Pérez Cuadra 2007:8). With the liberal revolution in 1893 two important things happened. First, the armed forces were professionalized by means of the foundation of a Military Academy and second, the police was separated by the army and therefore now called a 'republic police' (Pérez Cuadra 2007:9).

In 1912 Nicaragua was invaded by the United States. In the north of Nicaragua the figure of Augusto César Sandino entered the stage. Augusto César Sandino fought against the intervention

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortíz, March 22, 2011.

of the United States in Nicaragua. Thanks to his efforts the United States were expelled in 1933. In the same time Nicaragua had established the *Guardia Nacional* which in that time was assigned to execute police tasks. Yet, in 1923 this *Guardia* was reorganized into a *Guardia Nacional* with a military vision (Pérez Cuadra 2007: 11). After a final reorganization in 1933 the *Guardia Nacional* was assigned to fulfill the dual task of army and police. In this last reorganization the *Guardia Nacional* developed a clear vision. They wanted to create an efficient Nicaraguan military guard which fundamentally was established in order to protect and secure the following elections and they were supposed to guarantee the national order and stability. In this time Nicaragua could not be considered a real policed society because police tasks were carried out by an army (Silver in Newburn 2005; Ericson in Newburn 2005). Only in the capital Managua the *Guardia Nacional* had established an urban police division. In Managua the *Guardia Nacional* used two different uniforms, one for the militaries and one for the police officers. The *Guardia Nacional* held this function until July 1979 (Pérez Cuadra 2007: 12-13). Although the main function of this police division should be preventing crime and violence, and detecting and arresting criminals (Silver in Newburn 2005:13), in Nicaragua and especially in Managua the *Guardia* itself was creating a violent situation as described in the next paragraph.

#### 4.2 Somoza Dynasty (1936-1979)

Before 1979 Nicaragua was ruled by the Somoza family which is described by Pérez Cuadra (2007: 13) as a black page in history. In 1933 Anastasio Somoza García became the head of the *Guardia* and for the next two generations, there were periods when a Somoza was not president of Nicaragua, but a Somoza would always control the *Guardia* – and thus, in effect rule Nicaragua (Lake 1989:11). The *Guardia* was a militarized police which was used as a tool of repression by the Somoza regime (Bautista Lara 2004; Grigsby 2003; Sonneveld 2009; WOLA 2009:6). The anxiety of the people for Somoza and the *Guardia* dates back to the year of 1934 when guerrilla leader Sandino was murdered by the people of Somoza. Already in 1933 the hostility between the *Guardia* and Sandino's supporters intensified which resulted in the death of Sandino. With Sandino out of the way, Somoza took complete power, driving president Sacasa from the presidency in 1935 (Lake 1989:12). In 1955 the old man was replaced as president of Nicaragua (1937-1947 and 1950-1956) by his elder son Luis (1956-1963), and in early 1967 his younger son General Anastasio Somoza Debayle (1967-1972 and 1974-1979) took over the command. General Anastasio Somoza Debayle had already wielded power in Nicaragua for some years through his control of the *Guardia* (Lake 1989:18). Although Anastasio Somoza Debayle had health problems, the Nicaraguan ruler remained the very model of a modern Central American

dictator (Lake 1989:8). His father (Anastasio Somoza García), his brother (Luis Somoza) and Somoza himself had accumulated in forty years of dynastic rule, a personal fortune of hundreds of millions of dollars while the nation was suffering widespread malnutrition and knew an incredible rate of infant mortality. It was said that Somoza was the richest man in Central America (Lake 1989:8).

By 1974 Somoza's regime had become very unpopular throughout Nicaraguan society (Lake 1989:20). Somoza was accused of corruption and the social economic conditions were not very prosperous and the majority of the Nicaraguans lived in poverty. The opponents of Somoza had invented a slogan for the 'first Somoza' Anastasio Somoza García, chief of the *Guardia Nacional*. The slogan characterized his dictatorship: 'Roba y déjame robar' ('steal and let me steal'). Back in 1968 many student demonstrations were repressed and according to *fundador* and commissioner Jose Jarquín<sup>33</sup> right from this moment it was prohibited to have an opinion that was opposed to the opinion of the government.

### 4.3 Revolutionary Years

Especially for the youth the life was almost unbearable under the Somoza regime. Being young was seen as a crime by the *Guardia*. They acted very repressive as explained by many of the *fundadores* of the PN. As sub-commissioner Daniel Gutiérrez<sup>34</sup> recalls: 'the people were terrified, they got into hiding and the ones who were out on the streets were killed. When you burned a tire immediately 80 *guardias* arrived'. Not only being young or a student meant a danger. *Fundador* and retired police officer Eduardo Cuadra<sup>35</sup> tells: 'it was prohibited to yell *Viva la Libertad!* and everything that was related to Sandino, the Cuban revolution, everything was prohibited'. The people began to detest and hate the *Guardia Civil* and the consequence was that the youth began to organize and stimulate a revolution.

Many *fundadores* came from illiterate farmer families or poor neighborhoods. *Fundador* and retired police officer Luis Enrique<sup>36</sup> explains that they suffered many limitations. His father for example, worked more than fourteen hours a day but could not feed his family in a dignified way. As *fundadora* and commissioner Martha Picado<sup>37</sup> explains: 'we started to organize against the dictatorship because although I was young, I knew that with this system of Somoza we would never arrive anywhere'. The ingredients for starting to fight against the dictatorship of Somoza were there; the repression, the violence, the limitations and the social economic inequalities.

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales, March 8, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, March 2, 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, March 16, 2011.

From 1975 till 1979 the resistance against Somoza and his *Guardia* became stronger and therefore the *Guardia* became also much more repressive<sup>38</sup>. In every part of the country dead bodies of mostly young people were found and when a young person insulted the *Guardia*, they immediately killed him, says *fundador* and director of the Police Academy Javier Davila<sup>39</sup>. Sub-commissioner Vilma Reyes<sup>40</sup> was studying at the university in these times:

My university was bombarded about four times. At one occasion I was inside the university when the *Guardia* started throwing bombs. We tried to leave the university and we needed to stay behind the Red Cross or behind a representative from the church to prevent that the *Guardia* would kill us, the students.

*Fundador* and sub-commissioner Angel Solıs<sup>41</sup> lived in Leon when the *Guardia* held him, his friends and several other young people:

We were walking in a street nearby a church when a patrol of the *Guardia* stopped and hold us all. They revised us but they did not find anything. Then they revised the persons who were held at the same time as me and my friends. The *Guardia* found a little follicle with marihuana. The other day these persons were found dead.

Angel, who now is fifty years old, says that the *Guardia* did not respect anyone.

#### 4.4 Role of the *Fundadores* during the Revolution

Most of the *fundadores* were still very young when they started to organize. Generally they were between thirteen and twenty two years old. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>42</sup> indicates two moments; the first moment is when someone integrates in a social movement which was not precisely the FSLN. The second moment is the 'real' integration in the FSLN. At high schools and universities one became aware of the existing organizations and the possibilities to organize. Others came in contact with the organizational work or social movements because of active family members. Eduardo himself participated in a student movement when he was fourteen years old. Because it was prohibited to yell *Viva la Libertad!* and to talk or publish everything that had to do with Sandino or the Cuban Revolution they started to print texts clandestinely and make graffiti in the nights. Other small and quite easy jobs were delivering messages between high ranked

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with *fundador* and current director of the Police Academy Javier Davila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Javier Davila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Vilma Reyes, May 27, 2011

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Angel Solıs, April 11, 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, March 2, 2011.

combatants, transporting or removing weapons and communications with the FSLN. Although not everyone was participating in these movements, everyone did something to help. Many *fundadores* contributed by working from the neighborhoods. As a *fundadora*<sup>43</sup> explains:

I participated in the neighborhood because the whole world was organizing. I made drains to prevent the tanks of Somoza from entering the neighborhood and I was vigilante during the nights.

When the situation became more oppressive, several *fundadores* started to join the 'real' FSLN and they started doing more dangerous jobs. They made barricades (photo 1) against the people of Somoza, they learned how to make bombs which they fabricated in clandestine houses, they recruited new people and they participated in huge manifestations of about twenty thousand persons, originating from all kind of layers of society. During the night they held assaults, they tried to confiscate weapons and they skirmished with the *Guardia*<sup>44</sup>. Another job of these so-called guerrillas was hiding arms in their houses. This was very dangerous considering the fact that there was a lot of betrayal and the *Guardia* could enter the house at any moment<sup>45</sup>. In the house of one of the *fundadores* many people assembled, even the mothers of who their children were killed by the *Guardia* started to come together. People made secret doors to hide guerrillas, boxes to hide small weapons etcetera. Many times opponents of the revolution informed the *Guardia* whereupon they entered the houses and killed everyone. According to Daniel Gutiérrez<sup>46</sup> there was a moment in 1974 when they wanted to stop because the *Guardia* was killing many comrades. The *fundadores*<sup>47</sup> explained that they never gave up fighting because although many loved ones had died, these sacrifices could not have been for nothing and this even stimulated the fighters to continue fighting. Noticeable is that most histories of the *fundadores* are similar and Daniel among others speaks continuously in the 'we' form. It seems that there exists an unwritten shared history which they distribute among outsiders.

The next step for guerrillas was to confront the *Guardia*. The guerrillas were working clandestine and they needed to find ways of gathering weapons because they had nothing to fight with. One way of gathering weapons was by stealing them from the *guardias*. An informant who wants to remain anonymous, tells that he had already learned from people who came down from the mountains how to make contact bombs and how to use a rifle. Killing the *guardias* and confiscating their weapons was a common way of eliminating the *Guardia* and at the same time

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<sup>43</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview May, 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Among others interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales, March 8, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales, March 8, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, May 18 2011.

gathering weapons. Most of the time the activities were executed in small groups of about two persons. The informant explained how this went:

We waited till the *guardia* was sleeping. I took my rifle and approached the *guardia* from behind. I am not proud of what I did but I killed the *guardia* by cutting his throat off. Then we took the weapon he was carrying’.

Although he admits that he needs to confront God one day, he says that he did this because he needed to and he would do it again<sup>48</sup>.

Fighting against Somoza and his Guardia was far from safe. Fortunately, Daniel and Mireya Guardado had many luck. They both escaped to the *Guardia* several times in a miraculous way. Daniel<sup>49</sup> for example, was reading a revolutionary pamphlet on the table when the *Guardia* entered his house. He was convinced the *Guardia* would kill him but they did not. They were illiterate and did not understand what Daniel was reading so they did not kill him. Mireya<sup>50</sup> escaped from the *Guardia* in different occasions as well. At one occasion the *Guardia* bombarded her with a rain of bullet fires but fortunately not one of them hit her.

All insurgent activities were done in a structured way. The guerrillas were divided in groups. Every group or cell had its own structure and contained approximately ten comrades consisting of both men and women. The work was divided between these ten people; some were in charge of the propaganda, others took care of the financial part. Every cell had his own task, some had an organizational task and others had a more political or ideological task. The head of the cell coordinated the work and the persons. The people had contact with persons of other cells but no one knew how many cells existed. Nobody knew the real name of his or her comrade either; everyone lived under a pseudonym name. Angel Solís<sup>51</sup> a guerrilla active in the actual fighting explains the unpleasant situations and psychical pain that caused these pseudonyms:

We used pseudonyms, my pseudonym was Pepe. We were trying to liberate Río Blanco when my comrade, who we used to call *el pelón*, was killed by a *guardia* in the night. We were not aware of his killing and we found him the other day. We never knew his real name.

The roles the *fundadores* played in the revolutionary years were thus widely divided. Some only brought letters and others were really fighting and confronting the soldiers of Somoza.

Nevertheless, together they had a plan, a conviction about what they wanted to realize with this

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<sup>48</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview March, 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales, March 8, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Mireya Guardado Reyes, March 30, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

revolution.



**Photo 1** Newspaper article in 1979: Also women contributed in the revolution, making barricades and watching over it | Archive of the newspaper *La Prensa*. Exact date unknown.

#### 4.5 Motivation to Fight

During the revolution many *fundadores* have experienced a harsh time. Jose Jarquín<sup>52</sup> was tortured by the *Guardia*. Mireya Guardado<sup>53</sup> lived some fearful moments when she was shot by the *Guardia* and when her husband was missing and almost killed<sup>54</sup>. Daniel Gutiérrez<sup>55</sup> told awful stories about the war in which people were burned alive by using aggressive substances, people who were thrown out of helicopters and horrible assassinations. He recalls:

One day we were shot by the troops of Somoza. My comrade who was standing next to me was hit and he asked me to help him but I was trying to avoid the other bullets so I could do nothing for him. He finally died in my arms. I took his nameplate and I needed to continue fighting for my own life.

The poor situation of most Nicaraguans and seeing many students been killed for just being

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortíz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Mireya Guardado Reyes March 30, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Fortunately he escaped because right at the moment that the *Guardia* wanted to kill him, they fled for the arriving troops of the FSLN.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales. March 8, 2011.

student gave the impulse to organize and to fight. Parents, universities and priests made the people and especially the youth aware of their situation. As commissioner Daniel Trejos<sup>56</sup> explained: ‘you could not stay neutral, there was a great necessity of surviving’. Jose Jarquín<sup>57</sup> gave a specific example how he got conscience about the situation in Nicaragua by thinking of his own village:

In this place there was no public transport, water, light nor a cemetery to bury the deaths. I remember that this already had started some struggles. I was fourteen years old when I integrated in the struggle of the people. I remember that at one occasion a little girl died in the neighborhood and there was no place to bury her. So the community demanded a terrain to be able to bury its persons and then the *Guardia Nacional* came. They dug up the girl where we had buried her and they took her to another cemetery. I believe that these kinds of things made the people aware because they were isolated from basic services which the government did not guarantee.

The people wanted to improve the social justice and they wanted an equal society. *Fundadora* Obando<sup>58</sup> explains that she has been a fighter against social injustice. According to her the objective of the war against Somoza was ending the inequality, reaching more justice and reducing the gap between the exploiters and the exploited.

The statement of Kruijt (2008:1) about guerrilla organizations who tried to root out the corruption and inequality that had characterized the previous dictatorships is certainly valid in the case of Nicaragua. The main reason for all the *fundadores* to join the FSLN or other opposite parties was to resist Somoza. The Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* – FSLN) was founded in 1961 by Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge and Silvio Mayorga but by 1974 the FSLN had developed a political organization. Its purpose was to overthrow the Somoza dictatorship and create a new kind of society based on the egalitarian ideals of Sandino. As indicated by Kruijt (2008:4) they had an intense sense of nationalism and anti-imperialism. The FSLN was a small clandestine guerrilla front until the late 1970s, when massive social unrest gripped the country in response to Somoza’s efforts to retain control (Tatar 2009:160). According to Jose<sup>59</sup> many youngsters integrated in the fight against Somoza with the hope achieving a change within society. During this period the FSLN was allied with various social movements that were agitating against the Somoza regime, among them the Christian base communities, the Secondary School Students’ Movement and the Students’ Revolutionary Front (Tatar 2009:160).

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Daniel Trejos March 3, 2011.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Obando, May 25, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

A retired *fundador*<sup>60</sup> answered the following at the question what it meant to be a Sandinista: 'being against the dictatorship, being against the North American imperialism, creating an independent nation, fighting poverty, being fair and honest and regaining dignity. *That* was being a Sandinista'. (Interesting that he talks in the past tense, probably this is related to the fact that not every Sandinista identifies him or herself anymore with the current Sandinistas, also called *Danielistas*). Back then, the *fundador* was offered a scholarship to study at a university in Italy. The revolution in his country was at this moment reaching a crucial point so he decided to decline this scholarship in order to fulfill his 'duties' in Nicaragua. According to Martha Picado<sup>61</sup> they 'handed themselves over' to the revolution: 'We did not expected anything; we were working with the conviction that we were forging a new society and it was therefore necessary to hand ourselves over for this compromise with the society'.

#### 4.6 Influences

Becoming consciousness about the social situation in their country, injustice and the goal of achieving a revolution did not appear out of nowhere. There were certain influences that contributed to the awareness of the people about the then current situation. Other influences contributed to the development of fighting strategies. The university for example, was a 'medio de conscientización' (medium for awareness raising) about the national problems. Javier Dávila<sup>62</sup> states: 'at the university I learned about the details of the problem which was the *Somocista* military dictatorship'. Most of the adolescents started to talk about and discuss national problems at the universities. At the universities most of the adolescents also started to be active in a social movement. Martha Picado<sup>63</sup> describes that right from the moment they started to organize; they started to study the different social situations in the country. Other people became aware of the situation thanks to relatives who were involved in activities contra Somoza. Martha García<sup>64</sup> did not have the possibility of going to the university nor had she any contacts with other activists. She bought the newspaper every day and started to become consciousness about the injustice in her country. Especially when she read that Somoza had arrested Commandant Borges, one of the founders of the FSLN: 'I realized that it was unjust how they treated Borges and steady I turned into a fan with the same ideals'. Aside from the consciousness that was created at the universities more sources such as Marxism, religion and the Cuban Revolution were partially responsible for inciting consciousness according to the literature. Although Kruijt (2008:48) stated that in general

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<sup>60</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview May, 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.

guerrilla movements were widely influenced by the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideologies, we will see that in Nicaragua these influences had less importance. The liberation theology on the other hand, left more marks on the Sandinistas.

Some of the students on the university started to read books about Marxism. In these times literature about Marxism was however not the most important aspect that instilled them with a revolutionary inspiration, according to Luis Enrique<sup>65</sup>. The most important aspect was the social economic conditions in which the Nicaraguans were living. Therefore he does not believe that a theory of Marxism or any other kind made him aware of the situation. As he illustrates:

In my house we bought the cheapest bread available, we needed to bear harsh circumstances and we suffered many limitations. You cannot convince me that such a theory made me aware that I am in a bad situation. My father worked more than fourteen hours a day and he could not feed his family meanwhile there were people who were living in better circumstances and they did not even work. Just because they were the owners of some company they could live in richness without worrying about the poor<sup>66</sup>.

Even though Luis had not read Marx the underprivileged situation in which his family lived and the class differences he described would be according to Marx enough reason to take up a proletarian revolution.

Although the literature did not make Luis aware of the current situation, he does not deny that he started to read books related to Marxism. He sees the literature and official theories more as nutrition for the revolution than the actual 'awareness maker'. The people actually preferred to hear the ideas of their own national heroes such as Sandino and Fonseca, the founder of the FSLN. *Fundador* and commissioner Francisco González<sup>67</sup> illustrates:

We had a comrade who disappeared one day. He knew a lot but he only talked to us about the Russian war, about Lenin etcetera but we asked him to tell us about the persons who fought for Nicaragua, such as Sandino, Carlos Fonseca, but this type only talked about Russia.

So in contrast to what the literature makes us believe about the importance of Marxism during the Sandinista revolution, none of the *fundadores* knew a lot about Marxism. Francisco<sup>68</sup> admits that in Cuba during trainings they also taught Marxism but as Daniel Gutiérrez<sup>69</sup> explains, the majority of the people did not receive classes about Marxism because the level of most students

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<sup>65</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Interview with Francisco González Rodríguez, February 28, 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales, March 29, 2011.

was too low to understand the important aspects of Marxism. They preferred their own national heroes as examples and inspiration. They were influenced by the personality and the ideas of their predecessors. The ideas the Sandinistas had, came therefore firstly from their own experiences with the social-economic situation and secondly from the ideas of national heroes who fought for the same cause as the Sandinistas; a better and more just society. Carlos Fonseca for example talked a lot about the suffering of the Nicaraguan people and Sandino was *the* person who fought against imperialism. *Fundador* and commissioner Elman Valle<sup>70</sup> admits that the ideas of Sandino and Fonseca made him decide to join the police in 1979 in order to improve the situation.

As we have read earlier, Kruijt (2008: 48) writing about the guerrilla groups of Central America gave liberation theology an important position in the sources of inspiration of the guerrilla revolutions. Although not all *fundadores* were religious and for that reason did not mention it as a major source of inspiration, according to Francisco,<sup>71</sup> the largest part of the consciousness raising about the situation came (aside from the universities) from the Jesuits schools. Priests made many people consciousness about the poor situation and they told people to fight for their basic needs. The most illustrative example can be found in the story of Luis Enrique<sup>72</sup>:

At one day two Colombian priests named Julio López Jaramillo and Guillermo Restrepo López came to my house. They started to talk with my parents. My father said to me 'bring these priests and me a cup of coffee' and I sat down with them to hear what they had to say. They talked about the difficulties in which the country was living, the misery, the dictatorial anti-human regime, the criminal *Guardia* who killed you for being young etcetera. Then they proposed my parents to integrate into the revolutionary process and in June 1974 my family started to form part of the FSLN.

For Luis his Christianity is even more important than being a Sandinista. Although he has a great sympathy for the movement, he has not a Sandinista flag in his heart, in contrary to the rest of the *fundadores* who have the *Sandinismo* in their veins<sup>73</sup>. For Luis embracing a Sandinista is the same as embracing a '*contra*'. God is the highest power and thanks to his faith he has even forgiven a person who has tried to murder his whole family. Actually, this person and Luis are friends nowadays. This shows that for him, and probably also for others, faith was of most influence in his ideas and way of thinking.

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<sup>70</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Francisco González Rodríguez, February 28, 2011.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.

Eduardo Cuadra<sup>74</sup> explains that he was assigned to do work in the most conflictive neighborhoods in Managua. There were no water facilities and public transportation. Eduardo needed to form communal committees and organize people for the fight against Somoza. These activities were intertwined with the activities of the churches. Eduardo<sup>75</sup> tells about the role of the churches:

They started to study Gospels from a popular point of view, the whole liberation theology came by. From Christianity they laid emphasis on the fact that the problem was not of a divine nature but that we needed to organize in the neighborhoods in order to exercise our rights.

For Francisco Bautista<sup>76</sup> his religion motivated him to join the Sandinistas as well. He elucidates that it is difficult to see the religion apart from the revolution. From the seventies religion conversed into a bastion against the exploitation and the repression. This movement in the Roman Catholic Church is also known as the Liberation Theology which criticized the social injustice, human rights violations and poverty within society (Kruijt 2008:48). Francisco<sup>77</sup> clarifies that joining the church did not necessarily meant joining politics as well but from the religion one picked up a certain connotation with politics. Priests made the people aware of their poor economic situation and therefore many revolutionaries entered the process through religion.

The feeling of injustice and wanting to do the right thing for many Sandinistas came forth out of their belief in God and compassion with humanity. They had a certain conviction originating from their belief. With this conviction they participated in the overall Sandinista movement. Their *mística* therefore, some *fundadores* claim, can be considered as something related to their faith and is not only preserved for religious persons (nor for revolutionaries). Not every revolutionary was religious as well but they did have *la mística*. As *fundador* and sub-director of the Police Academy Sadys Martínez<sup>78</sup> illustrates:

*la mística* is not possession of only revolutionaries. It presents it in them but it is possible that a person who is not attached to a movement like the revolutionaries has the same solid principles.

*La mística* in the case of the Sandinista revolution consisted of an overall resistance against injustice which was the motivator for their mission according to Sadys.

When asked to the *fundadores* if other countries or other revolutions have had any influence

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<sup>74</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>75</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, March 3, 2011.

on their revolution, only one person mentioned immediately the Cuban revolution. The majority did not mention the Cuban revolution at all as an example for their own revolution. However, when bringing Cuba up as a specific example, they all agreed that Cuba has been important for them by providing financial resources, offering trainings in Cuba and moral support. In contrast, while most persons stated that the Cuban revolution was not considered an important influence for their ideas and ways of fighting, many *fundadores* went exactly to Cuba for their preparation. In Cuba they received classes about guerrilla tactics, they learned how to make bombs, how to attack the *Guardia* efficiently etcetera.

#### 4.7 Revolutionary Triumph

After more than forty years of authoritarian rule by the Somoza family, a dictatorship regime came to an end when it was overthrown by the Sandinistas in July 1979. About 35.000 people lost their lives (photo 2), 110.000 people were injured and 43.000 children were led behind orphans during the revolution (Pérez Cuadra *year unknown*: 12-15). Nonetheless, almost all the Nicaraguan people went out to the streets and celebrated the triumph on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July (photo 3<sup>79</sup>). Daniel Ortega, a former guerrilla commander in the FSLN and politician, became the new president of Nicaragua after the overthrow in 1979.

After the triumph most of the combatants stayed voluntarily with the armed forces. Combatants who did not had the intention to stay, were asked to stay because of their knowledge of some kind. Finally there were also citizens who joined the armed forces voluntarily because they wanted to continue with their activities. Many *fundadores* such as Javier Dávila, Angel Solís, Eduardo Cuadra and Francisco Bautista had the aspiration of going back to the university. Their help was however needed because all the state institutions were remained empty and the society needed to be rebuilt. Therefore they decided to stay with the armed forces just one year in order to help build up the society again. None of them would however return to the university after one year.

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<sup>79</sup> PN: Memoria, 30 años con el mismo compromiso: a PDF document made for the 30 anniversary of the Nicaraguan police institution. This document contains several photos made during the revolution and the last 30 years of policing and is made by the National Police itself.



**Photo 2** Newspaper article in 1979: The discovering of a mass grave of people murdered during the dictatorship | Archive of the newspaper *La Prensa*. Exact date unknown.



**Photo 3** Revolutionary triumph 19th of July | PN: Memoria, 30 años con el mismo compromiso.

## 5. The Establishment of the Police Institution by the *Fundadores*

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*The world of police was truly unknown to us but what we lacked in knowledge we made up in the youthful, revolutionary enthusiasm of the day.*

*Bautista Lara (in Marenin and Das 2010:245).*

With the revolution the whole *Somocista* structure of the state was destroyed and all the state institutions remained empty. The *Guardia Nacional* did not exist anymore and all the ministries were left without employees. It was now up to the Sandinistas to initiate a new society, including a new police apparatus. Chapter five describes the initial period of the new police institution in Nicaragua and all the challenges it faced after. It discusses the initial police model and the radical changes within the police institution in the nineties. Finally, this chapter also gives an insight in how the *fundadores* have tried to maintain their *mística* during all the turbulent years.

### 5.1 How Did They Start?

The last city that Luis Enrique<sup>80</sup> with his comrades had liberated was Jinotega. He was assigned to stay there and he was appointed the first commandant of the police of Jinotega. However, he describes the problems the Sandinistas needed to confront:

When we left the war, we were part of a political military structure (the Sandinista front), we were a party, an political and ideological formed organization with a clear objective, with clear fight models, we had a war strategy against the imperialism, war tactics against the dictatorship, a clear model of a new society. We destroyed the *Somocista* structure and now the FSLN needed to fill this emptiness but how? We realized that we did not even know how many ministries the state had, which ministries we wanted to create or who were going to be the leaders of these ministries. I remember that someone said in a reunion, 'I have a friend who is economist and I think he could be the minister of finances'. We did not know anything, and less about the police...<sup>81</sup>

The country suffered a complete institutional chaos and it was the task of the Sandinistas to reconstruct almost every institution and restore the order<sup>82</sup>. The first steps taken by the FSLN after the overthrow of Somoza, were the dissolution of the Guard and the establishment of a new police institution. The foundation of the police was officially on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1979

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

as a civilian organization under the Interior Ministry which was headed by Tomás Borge (Bautista Lara 2004:18; WOLA 2009:6). The Sandinista Police Force which was initially both a state and a party institution, had the reputation of being incorruptible and enjoyed widespread public trust (Kruijt 2008:109).

This new police institution was however according to Bautista Lara (2004:19) an unprofessional institution. By late 1979 the Sandinista Police had 12,000 members though most had little police experience (Sonnevelt 2009; WOLA 2009:6) and as Rocha Gómez (2005:2) suggest, the members identified themselves in the first place as militants of the FSLN, and as policemen in the second place. Within the police, promotions and nominations were subordinated to political decisions and the execution of police work included the political objectives of the Sandinista government (Bautista Lara 2004:19). Initially the police was called the *Policia Nacional* (National Police). According to Mario Pérez<sup>83</sup> the name of the Sandinista police was nowhere written down. The reason that the *Policia Nacional* changed in the *Policía Sandinista* was due to two factors. First, the people called the national police *la Policía Sandinista* because they related the police with the Sandinistas of which almost every member had fought in the war against Somoza. In the second place the police officers were called Sandinistas by opponents, in order to distinguish the new officers (Sandinistas) from the old ones (Guardias)<sup>84</sup> (Pérez Cuadra *year unknown*: 16).

Luis Enrique became the head of more than six hundred policemen and women when the highest commandant said to Luis<sup>85</sup>:

Aminto, [pseudonym of Luis], we are going to split up. One is going to the administer the production, one the army and you, you are the youngest and you get along with everyone, with the village, with the teachers, the drivers, let's make a military police to put order in the city'.

However, no one knew exactly what to do or what a police contained. Most of the people never had heard about a police, they only knew the *Guardia*. Francisco Bautista<sup>86</sup> decided after the triumph that he wanted to make use of his scholarship in Italy but Francisco was told that they wanted to found a national police so he was ordered to go to Chontales to help founding this police. Francisco illustrates:

I did not know anything about what it meant to be a police, I never had read anything about it.

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with Mario Pérez Cuadra, February 24, 2011.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with Mario Pérez Cuadra, February 24, 2011.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011

However, I took my backpack, a book and I took the bus to this place called Chontales but which was a unknown place for me. In Chontales they gave me a vehicle but I did not know how to drive anything so they gave me a driver as well. I asked him to teach me how to drive.

Eduardo Cuadra<sup>87</sup> decided also that he wanted to go back to the university. However, he heard that they were founding a police and he went to see what they were doing. Suddenly there was a problem with the police in León and he was send over there to help solve the problem. Eduardo tells what he did:

‘Well, things we [the police] will never do again. We started for example to alphabetize the police, we started an overall alphabetization campaign in the whole country, we formed cultural departments who sung and helped painting in the neighborhoods and we started to talk in the neighborhoods about what the police was going to do’ (photo 4).

By asking what the police was about to do in this time Eduardo<sup>88</sup> explains: ‘Maintaining order, controlling, prohibiting prostitution, apprehending of delinquents and reducing the amount of vagabonds’. Just as during the Somoza period, after the revolution the main task of the police was still not only preventing crime and violence and arresting criminals as stated by Silver (in Newburn 2005:13).



**Photo 4** Sandinista police officers helping paint street marks | PN: Memoria, 30 años con el mismo compromiso

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

## 5.2 First Couple of Years

Jose Jarquín<sup>89</sup> remembers that after the triumph he was standing in a former house of a *Guardia*. The luxury house was abandoned and everything was left behind. His comrade told Jose 'Julían (which was his pseudonym), take one of the televisions!' Jose answered to his comrade that he had not fight for this. Although he came from a poor family, his intention with the revolution was never to enrich himself. At the end of this story he explained: 'I do not think that I have the right to demand something from the government just for the injuries that I have still today, I was somebody who fought for a cause'<sup>90</sup>. The mission and the ideas the Sandinistas had during the revolution did not suddenly disappear after the triumph. They had the freedom to reconstruct society but they continued with the same ideals and with the same *mística* after the revolution.

While higher combatants were trying to organize a new government, the police confiscated all the buildings and houses that were left empty by the Somoza followers and the *Guardia* in order to establish different police departments. The actual Police Academy for example, is established in a former house of Somoza (see photos 5-6<sup>91</sup>). The police patrolled in cars and at motors which were left behind by the fled *Guardia*. They painted all the equipment in other colors with the purpose of cleaning out the image of the *Guardia* and of Somoza. Although the police cooperated a lot with the army, they both had their own emphasis. The army was mostly working in the mountains, defending the revolution and the police had the task of looking after the security of the citizens<sup>92</sup>.

The policemen and women started to work by going into the neighborhoods, telling the Nicaraguan citizens who they were, how they would work etcetera. They also explained the citizens where to denounce a complaint or a crime. The activities of the police were divers. Besides informing the citizens, the police also founded schools to capacitate police members, they gave history lessons to the policemen and women about the Nicaraguan history, and as earlier mentioned, they started an alphabetization campaign. At this point the orthodox core characteristics of the police culture as described by Reiner (in Bethan 2010:1-2) can in this stage be invalidated. The Sandinista Police did not seem to celebrate masculine exploits, nor they showed willingness to use force and they did not lead socially isolated lives. However, the police also needed to start with the 'real' police work such as patrols and capturing criminals. As Sady Martínez<sup>93</sup> recalls: 'We knew how to manifest, we knew how to hold strike actions, how to throw bombs etcetera, we knew how to provoke disorder but we did not know how to create order'.

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>91</sup> Actually this house was of one of the mistresses of Somoza.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Sady Martínez, February 22, 2011.

Therefore the Panamanians came to Nicaragua. Right after the revolutionary triumph Panama sent instructors and scientists in order to help the Sandinistas to rebuild society and to train the police. When the Panamanians left, the Cubans came in order to help the Nicaraguan police force.

The police had time to execute other activities as well because according to most *fundadores*, there was not much crime or violence in these days. As stated by many *fundadores*, there was a huge increase of robberies but in the first few years after the revolution there was hardly any real violence. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>94</sup> explains that the revolution brought something totally new to the people. In contrast to other countries in Latin America who were in transition, the Sandinista Police did –until the nineties– not consist of old *Guardias* so they gained more legitimacy in the eyes of the public. Additionally, the citizens as well wanted a new society and they cooperated with the Sandinistas, the new government, the police and the army in order to establish this new society without fear and violence. So besides the activities of the police in the neighborhoods and the cooperation with the community, the community as well is responsible for the relation the Nicaraguan police has with the community. The police derived authority from the society and they relied on the moral agreement and cooperation of the Nicaraguan citizens which according to Bailey and Dammert (2006:19) is important in order to function.

The good relation the police had with the community is also visible in the food the community provided to the police officers. In the first period after the triumph the police members did not get any salary and they received food and drinks from the community. Francisco Bautista<sup>95</sup> explains that it was even strange for them to receive their first salary after three months of hard work:

Youths, some not even done with puberty, became the chiefs of police in provinces and municipalities. We did this with a strong sense of duty. In fact, we questioned the payments we received for our “jobs” as *violations of the revolutionary spirit* (Bautista in Marenin and Das 2010: 245).

The police did not have a timetable and at this point the police institution was more important than being with family. Nonetheless, Francisco refers to the high state of romanticism in which they lived, considering a salary as something absurd. Steady they understood that in order to live, it was necessary to receive a salary and it became more normal.

In the first years the police could operate relatively free. The work of the police officers was still not exactly defined and many officers had not received any trainee. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>96</sup> for

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

example was never told how to solve problems. He solved problems in his own way as he thought was right, or he took the phone and called someone who did have the knowledge about the particular problem. That is the reason why so many *fundadores* tell that they learned so much in this period. They needed to listen and learn from the people who had the knowledge about something in order to execute their police work. The police officers worked a lot in teams and they held many reunions. It was very common being at a reunion till midnight discussing and solving problems. The next day however everyone stood up at six in the morning again and went back to work. The ideas the Sandinistas had about the new society could therefore be translated relatively easily into practice. There were no existing models to use, everything needed to be invented by the same people who destroyed the dictatorship.

Every *fundador* was sent to another department of the police in order to help founding the institution. Leon was known as the capital of the revolution and Managua had more available equipment for executing police tasks. Besides this relative prestige, no department was more favorable than the other<sup>97</sup>. The knowledge and skills of someone were determinant for the place one went. People were acknowledged for their skills so the majority of the police was content with the department he or she was sent to.

According to Angel Solís<sup>98</sup> thanks to the convictions or the *mística* the Sandinistas had in this period they were able to develop this solidarity, *la hermandad* and the humanism which we could call *esprit de corps*. However, it was not only a happy period. Angel Solís<sup>99</sup> illustrates:

I was a guerilla when I was still very young. I also integrated in the police as an adolescent out of a necessity. I did not have the same recreation opportunities as others. Shortly after I went to Cuba for two years and I did not have any communication with my family. It was very difficult.

These situations made the *fundadores* having doubts but most of them had their *mística* which helped them getting through these difficult moments. Together they were able in the police to find a way of being just one body without thinking in an individual way in order to go forward. Elman Valle<sup>100</sup> explains that he first did not want to use the police uniform. Although he did administrative work for the police in these days, he did not want to form really part of an armed force. However, after a while he saw the harmony within the police force and he felt part of it. He started to wear the uniform when he saw the honesty and the humility in the police officers who had the desire of improving the nation.

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<sup>97</sup> Interviews with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011 and Obando, May 25, 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.



**Photo 5** Former house of Somoza, now serve as the main offices of the director and sub-directors of the Police Academy. The rest of the property is also domain of the Police Academy and serve as dormitories for the cadets, training ground, classrooms and other offices | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde



**Photo 6** Terrace with swimming pool which nowadays is not used anymore due to financial deficiencies | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

### 5.3 First Police Model

The idea of the *fundadores* was to create a police, according to Javier Dávila<sup>101</sup>, as an antithesis to the *Guardia*. The *Guardia* was repressive so this police was not going to be repressive. The role of the new police forces was, in contrast to the National Guard, to act as servants, friends and protectors of the people (Walker 1986:111). The mission of the new Sandinista police was to protect children, the weak, the criminals and the ‘anti-socials’. Their overall mission was to protect the whole community (Historia Acapol 2009; Academia 30 años 2009). Criminals therefore were relatively well treated (photo 7). Javier Dávila<sup>102</sup> calls this a social phenomenon. He explains that from 1980 the police started with a wide range of social values in which cooperation with the community was the most important one. The police was considered a community institution. Furthermore as stated by Sadys Martínez<sup>103</sup> they wanted to create a sense of justice, try to create a better society in which walking at the streets was not a synonym for fear and being young was not a crime. The new police was going to be *humanista*, *solidaria* and *comunitaria* (humane, solitary and communitarian) (Academia 30 años 2009).

According to Eduardo Cuadra<sup>104</sup> the Panamanians left rapidly because the model of the Panamanians was not compatible with the model of the Sandinistas. The model of the Panamanians was too military while the Sandinista Police wanted to cooperate with the community. The Cuban model had more influence in the policy of the Sandinista police because it helped in the approach to the community<sup>105</sup>. One of the most important aspects of the police model was to ‘be in the community’, participating in the community and resolving problems with the community. Therefore they did not know the concept of an eight hour workday. The police officer should not be seen as someone of the police, but as someone of the community. He does not participate in the community and leaves when his job is done. Eduardo<sup>106</sup> describes that the police participated at the *piñatas*<sup>107</sup> in the neighborhoods and cleaned the streets in collaboration with the people. The police model consisted of a strong connection between the community and the police. The police not only worked for the community and for the people, the people also supported the Sandinista police. The community felt that the police was part of the community and there was a high sense of respect and trust between the two<sup>108</sup>.

The police model furthermore consisted of respecting human rights, promoting dignity and

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<sup>101</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, February 22, 2011.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>107</sup> A *piñata* is a decorated box filled with candies which traditionally is beaten by children with a stick till the candies fall out.

<sup>108</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

sharing happiness and sorrow. As Luis Enrique<sup>109</sup> illustrates: ‘first we rose out of the village, later that village was our nutrition’. The *fundadores* claim that thanks to this model no one dared to bribe or insult a police officer. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>110</sup> refers to the ‘auditorio social’ of the model. This strategy signified that the police was meant to have their eyes and ears always open, they were supposed to organize meetings in the neighborhoods and they held public debates about the situation in the community. This strategy was relatively advanced but when the *contra* revolution started, the whole situation changed and the strategy lost ground. The *contra* revolution prevented the further development of the Sandinista vision of a communitarian police (*policía comunitaria*). The emphasis of the police shifted to a military strategy which harmed the relation between the police and the community<sup>111</sup>.



**Photo 7** Newspaper article in 1979: Prisoners receive a humane and dignified treatment, in contrast to the barbarity of the *Guardia Somocista* | Archive of the newspaper *La Prensa*. Exact date unknown

<sup>109</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>111</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

## 5.4 The Police During the Contra Revolution

The Reagan administration wanted to destabilize and overthrow the Sandinista government what led to the *contra* war (Hale 1994; Walker 1986). The United States financed a large part of the war against the Sandinista government because of the fear for the establishment of a socialist country. In the first years of the eighties there was no such thing as a *contra* revolution. The Sandinistas however never stopped defending their revolution because there were always people against the Sandinistas who in a few occasions tried to stand up against the new rule. The first relative peaceful years after the revolution made it possible for the police to reach every region in the country in a rapid and effective way. After 1983 the *contra* revolution became more visible and the Sandinistas needed to concentrate more on defending their revolution. The *contras* consisted mostly of *Somocistas* or people who disagreed with the new Sandinista regime. Many *Somocistas* and former *guardias* had fled the country after the triumph of the Sandinistas. They went to neighboring countries such as Honduras. There they organized again and with this help of the United States they attacked Sandinista basements in the north of Nicaragua with the objective of attacking the social base that supported the revolution. In these areas the police needed to withdraw as it was the job of the army to confront the *contras*. Most of the time the *contras* entered Nicaragua for only a few days and then they draw back in order to prepare a following attack from Honduras. When the *contra* revolution became very strong, the army asked the help of the police force. So many former guerrillas including women went back to the battle field, only this time in the north of Nicaragua to fight against the ones who wanted to destroy their Sandinista society.

In the countryside the situation became much more insecure. This caused fear within the society and as a result people did not want to cooperate anymore with the revolution out of fear of being killed<sup>112</sup>. In the more urban areas the people felt less threatened by the *contras*. Everyone feared a huge attack of the United States but as Martha Picado<sup>113</sup> describes:

Our defense was so strong that the *contras* did not have the chance of invading, they did not have the capacities. The anxiety we had, was for the *gringos* because they were the ones who financed the *contra* war.

According to many *fundadores* the *contras* by themselves were never able to destroy the Sandinista regime. Only with help of the North Americans they could prepare a final attack. The *contras* never succeeded to capture the cities. The important police departments were therefore never

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<sup>112</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

attacked. Nonetheless, although not officially registered, Silva (2006) states that 50.000 people have died in this conflict between the Sandinista army and the *contras*.

According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) the police was in this time able to construct a policing model focused on prevention, education, and service to the community in an effort to ensure a high level of efficiency despite the country's poverty (WOLA 2009:6). On the other hand according to Francisco Bautista<sup>114</sup>, between 1984 and 1990 the police could not develop in the way it would have developed if they did not had to focus on defending their revolutionary project. The Sandinistas saw the *contra* revolution as a sever threat for their revolutionary project so they changed their tactics. The model of a *policía comunitaria* had changed into a more military defense strategy and they acted more repressive against followers of the contra revolution (anti-*Sandinistas*) or people who had another opinion than the *Sandinistas*.

Because of the ongoing war which had caused many deaths, the citizens started to manifest against the Sandinista regime and indirectly against the Sandinista police. Many who had supported the Sandinistas during the revolution were dissatisfied and considered the Sandinista government authoritarian and unresponsive to the needs of the people (Tatar 2009:158). The community was not so willing to participate anymore as before the *contra* revolution. The people wanted to end the war and both the Sandinistas as the opposition agreed to hold elections. Both would accept any outcome in exchange for the war to end. The police had lost much sympathy by acting much more repressive after 1983 and many people voted for the oppositional neo-liberal party of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (1990-1997)<sup>115</sup>. The Sandinistas lost the elections in 1990 and that entailed many changes not only for the society but also for the police.

## 5.5 Mayor Changes

As stated in the theoretical part, when the political climate changes profoundly, it will affect the police institution. The change to a neo-liberal government meant several important changes for the Nicaragua police. The first important transformation was the change of the name of the *Policia Sandinista* into the *Policia Nacional* (PN). The second change was the replacement of the old uniform by the current blue uniform (see for photos appendix III). Another change was the removal of the chief of the police institution, commandant René Vivas. President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro (1990-1997) dismissed the head of the police along with other middle and top Sandinista officials. The rest of the command structure however was maintained largely intact. The fourth important change was the financial stop which signified a danger for the professionalization of the institution. A closure of the Police Academy followed as well (Bautista

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>115</sup> Informal conversation with Sady's Martínez, March 28, 2011; Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, March 16, 2011.

Lara 2004:21; Glebbeek 2010; Historia Acapol 2009; WOLA 2009:6).

The new administration of president Chamorro tried to cut the longstanding ties between the Sandinistas and the police. Chamorro exerted much pressure on the police institution. In order to execute the new neo-liberal policy, the new government sought ways to replace the whole Sandinista state apparatus including the police institution (Breimer 2006; Walker 1986). The objectives of Chamorro were the followings. First, she wanted that the Sandinistas who were active in the police resigned from their jobs to prevent a national insurrection. Secondly, she wanted to change the mentality and the ideological convictions of the police officers (Pérez Cuadra 2007:25). She therefore closed the Police Academy in order to prevent the spread of for example the Sandinista ideology and history. Furthermore, for the first time in history, the police functions were separated from the military (Bautista Lara 2009, page unknown). The police discourse now shifted from a military vision to a citizen security approach (Rocha Gómez 2005:3). In addition, in 1992 a new police law came into function that defined the legal demilitarization, de-politicization and impartialness of the institution, making it a professional institution (Bautista Lara 2004:21; Bautista in Marenin and Das 2010:243; IEEPP 2009:16). This law also guaranteed the absolute subordination of the National Police to civil authority and the institutionalization of the force's hierarchical order and functioning. Everything would be ruled by an institutional policy or doctrine defined by the National Police itself as described in chapter three (Grigsby 2003; Rocha Gómez 2005:2; Sonneveld 2009; WOLA 2009:6-7). The police institution was now considered to be an armed institution, civil, a-political and professional by nature (Pérez Cuadra 2007:26).

As Jorge Muñis<sup>116</sup> and others state, many Sandinistas left the police for several reasons. First, between 1992 and 1993 ex-members of the *contras* received courses with the objective to insert them into the PN which for some Sandinistas was unacceptable. Secondly, the new government had taken some measures which reduced study opportunities for citizens and many students went to the streets to demonstrate. The new government gave orders to the police to reprimand these students. So the police started to do things they never had done before and many left the institution because they refused to repress students and therefore to betray their ideals. Some people even started to compare the police with the *Guardia*<sup>117</sup>. According to Luis Enrique<sup>118</sup> the values of the police were starting to disappear and as he recalls: 'we were starting to lose our face'. Although in their interior they knew where to go and who they were, all those external pressures made the police change. After a while police members start to protest as well because

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<sup>116</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, February 22, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, April 6, 2011.

although they had acted more repressive in the eighties, it was against their vision to reprimand the people who asked for social justice.

It was also hard to see that all the things that were achieved with the revolution were annulated by the new neo-liberal government. For example in the years after the revolution people did not have to pay for education or for healthcare. Now the people needed to start paying for education and healthcare. Also all the public services were privatized although the whole society tried to resist. This social crisis generated violence among the Nicaraguan citizens. The Sandinista police was a police that had served the community and worked with the community before and the people went therefore to the police to solve their problems<sup>119</sup>. As a consequence, the ties with the community were partially restored. On the other hand however, the police was used on various occasions to repress demonstrations of the citizens against these government's neo-liberal reforms. The police also faced budgetary problems (Grigsby 2003; Rocha Gómez 2005; Sonneveld 2009; WOLA 2009:7). According to Grigsby (2003) these budget problems made the police more susceptible to corruption.

A final point deserves to be discussed here as well. After 1990 the police and its members started to use the term 'doctrine' and 'mission'. Sadys Martínez<sup>120</sup> illustrates why he uses the word mission:

I prefer not to talk about an ideology, that makes me think of Marxism or Communism. Public institutions have a mission or a vision. For the police it is better to talk about their mission, doctrine, vision or doctrinal principles.

Before 1990 the then called Sandinista police needed to execute what the Sandinista administration considered important and therefore the police had the same (Sandinista) ideology as the government. *Fundador* Bautista<sup>121</sup> explains: 'The police was Sandinista and we were too, I integrated into the police in accordance with my Sandinista vocation'. The *fundadores* could express their ideology and political preference openly but this had now changed. The police needed to dissociate itself from political ideologies and they started to use the word 'doctrine'. Martha Picado<sup>122</sup> explains however: 'at an institutional level the police became a-political [...] but it did not mean that we did not carry on our [Sandinista] ideology in our hearts [...] I continued working with the same ideology'. In addition, a police institution always serves a government

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<sup>119</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011; Interview with Sadys Martínez, March 3, 2011.

<sup>120</sup> Informal conversation Sadys Martínez, February 26, 2011.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

which contains an ideology<sup>123</sup>. By using the word ‘doctrine’ the police try to comply with their professionalism but in reality using the words ‘mission’ and ‘doctrine’ can be considered a way of preventing people to associate the current PN with the Sandinista ideology or any other ideology.

## 5.6 Maintaining the *Mística*

The first months were the most difficult. The police were going through a professionalization process, they needed to change their uniform, their internal divisions were changed and they started to demilitarize. The people tried however to preserve the fundamentals of the police origins, for example the community model<sup>124</sup>. Francisco Bautista<sup>125</sup> explains what impact this new government had:

We saw these changes in a practical way. We were now a bit older and we understood that we needed to let go some characteristics of the institution and that we needed to preserve the most important ones. We had also more technical knowledge about the police so we were ready to professionalize the institution. We also had a wider vision and we were able to compare the strengths and the weaknesses of our own model. So although it was a hard change, we had the capacity to confront it.

Many *fundadores* agreed that the police lost some of their characteristics and values with this governmental change. However we have seen that things already started to change with the *contra* war. Many police officers blame the nineties for the change of the institution. The nineties made the institution change but already in the eighties the ideals and the mission of the Sandinista Police was already changing its course.

For the *fundadores* of the PN it was hard to unite their *mística* with the ideals of the new neo-liberal government during the nineties. Jorge Muñis<sup>126</sup>, Sadys Martínez<sup>127</sup> and Javier Dávila<sup>128</sup> remember the student manifestations during the nineties. Commissioner Rómulo Mejía<sup>129</sup> who officially is not a *fundador* (he started in the army in 1980 at the age of thirteen), describes that they were ordered to repress the participants at one of these manifestations. Rómulo explains that he had the chance of confronting his mother and brother on the other side (who were Sandinistas as well). So his personal *mística* was challenged at this point. He needed to make a decision between being professional or protecting his family and his ‘political party comrades’.

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<sup>123</sup> Ideologies and ideas about how the world should look like are formed by governments and political parties and the police should carry out this ideology.

<sup>124</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011

<sup>127</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, February 22, 2011.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Rómulo Mejía Solano, February 28, 2011.

Both ways he would betray his *mística*. Instead of abandoning their conviction the police decided to manifest as well because they did not want to repress the students. Another example is the Police Academy which was almost closed during this time to avoid the spread of Sandinista ideas between cadets. According to Jorge<sup>130</sup> they managed to keep the Academy because of the *mística* they had. Later on, the government acknowledged that an Academy was necessary in order to instruct new police officers so it was re-opened.

The *fundadores* do not only talk negative about the nineties. According to Daniel Gutiérrez<sup>131</sup> the police suffered a harsh time in this period. Yet, for example president Arnaldo Alemán (1997-2002) was the only president that raised the salary of the policemen. The success the police had, was not recognized until this presidency of Alemán according to many *fundadores*. During the presidency of Alemán the police regained its strength because the liberal government recognized that the police were doing a ‘good job’<sup>132</sup>. The new government gave room and certain freedom to the police institution to continue with their good work. Although the nineties are referred to as a social trauma by for example Javier Dávila<sup>133</sup>, many *fundadores* are also glad that the police as an institution finally received a legal recognition and it is even called a ‘step forwards’ by some people<sup>134</sup>. The reforms were included in the constitutional reforms of 1995 wherein the PN’s nature and functions were explicitly defined and clearly distinguished from the military’s role. In 1997 the police doctrine was formulated, stating the vision, mission and institutional principles of the PN (Bautista Lara 2004:21). Franco Montealegre, who headed the Police between 1996 and 2001, has stressed out the importance of those steps:

For the first time in the history of Nicaraguan public order, the police’s organization, it’s functioning and field of action is established. The foundations are laid [for the force] to acquire its own differentiated identity; the institution’s civil nature is reaffirmed and it declares itself to have a non-party nature (in Grigsby 2003).

The institution which originally was built on Sandinista ideas, concepts and values, was now officially recognized with law 228. This law was already in the making because the police institution did not have any laws and nothing was officially defined. This law was approved by the government of Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. Chamorro wanted to make the institution an a-political institution and by means of this law she could make this happen. She approved the law and consequently the police institution was now officially an autonomous and a-political

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<sup>130</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales. March 8, 2011.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales. March 29, 2011.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Interviews with Daniel Trejos, March 3, 2011; Pérez Cuadra February 24, 2011.

institution. Contradictory is the fact that the law was made in cooperation with the then current police officers, who were Sandinistas. So although the uniforms changed and the government wanted to cut off the Sandinista roots, by making the institution a professional institution guided by laws and regulations, (unintentionally) the foundations led by the Sandinistas were now secured. Moreover, according to *fundador* Jose Jarquín<sup>135</sup> their leaders managed to keep a good relation with the highest leaders of that government. Exactly those leaders managed to mark the police institution by their origins in the constitution by writing down the objective of the police; ‘preserve our *espíritu* and our *mística*’<sup>136</sup>. In contrast however, according to Daniel Trejos<sup>137</sup> with law 228 the police turned into a professional police ‘leaving aside the personal *mística*, every person maintained his own internal *mística*’.

The Sandinistas who still formed part of the police institution were however put in difficult positions. As mentioned earlier, the relation with the community was partially restored, but at the same time the institutional legitimacy of the police was questioned by both state and civil society actors because of the institution’s Sandinista roots (Sonnevelt 2009: page unknown). Luis Enrique<sup>138</sup> explains for example that people still saw the police as a Sandinista institution and they therefore thought that they could commit crimes while getting protection from the police. Luis was sent to Estelí where at that moment Sandinistas had abducted several anti-Sandinistas. The police was expected to serve the whole community and they arrested the Sandinistas. Luis describes what follows:

We started to arrest several Sandinistas who were responsible for the abductions. These Sandinistas saw me as a traitor and they arranged that someone placed explosives in my house in order to kill my family. Fortunately they survived. However, I did not change my way of acting because I thought that I was doing the right thing. Then they set me up and they killed my driver. After that incident they went to my house and they killed my guard and they beat my wife.

Although the Sandinistas were put in a difficult position, for the most doing the right thing was considered more important than protecting the Sandinistas. Their sense of justice which already was an important value during the revolution, prevailed here.

The *fundadores* always have wanted to create a better society with more justice and humanity which was their cause and their motivation. Most of the police officers have not lost the cause, motivation and values. Because they stayed with the police they were able to include several of

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<sup>135</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Interview with Jose David Jarquín Ortiz, March 22, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Daniel Trejos March 3, 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, April 6, 2011.

these values in the new police institution. Luis<sup>139</sup> for example was coordinator of an important commission in this time. This commission thought about the image the new institution was going to have. In this commission the people (former Sandinistas and new police officers) realized that the new institution, according to what the nation needed and the social circumstances in which they were living, could not stand out without values, principles and strategic elements. Values such as humanity, respect, unity, and tolerance are therefore now officially part of the current police doctrine and the slogan ‘Honor, seguridad y servicio’ reflects where the institution really wants to stand for. The police anthem, which was written in 1995 by this same Luis, has therefore not the rhythm of a military march at the background but music of violins and other soft instruments which reflects the civil nature of the police institution.

Although many *fundadores* are away from home most of the time and in their police work they face money and equipment deficiencies, they almost all agree that it is their *espíritu* or *mística* that give them strength to continue, both in their personal life and as a police officer. The police officers in Nicaragua have the lowest salaries in comparison with other Central American countries. The *fundadores* have never earned a lot of money with their police work but as Francisco González<sup>140</sup> explains: ‘As *fundadores* we do not earn much money, we work more for conviction’. This conviction never stopped. Angel Solís<sup>141</sup> illustrates: ‘from my youth I integrated in the war and I have seen many comrades die so I continue eliminating corruption and giving the police a positive image’. The conviction of the *fundadores*, originating from the revolution is what they keep continuing. In the retired *fundadores* we see the same conviction coming back. As Francisco Bautista<sup>142</sup> states: ‘I need money to survive but I do not need more, why should I need more?’. Money is not the most important thing as already was the case right after the revolutionary triumph when the revolutionaries did not think of receiving any salary for their (police) services. Not only in their work the *fundadores* hold on to their conviction. Elman Valle<sup>143</sup> for example, holds on to his conviction when he goes home. At home he tries to spend time with his wife and kids and he tries to give the good example. His slogan is to respect his comrades, his bosses and every other human being. In his neighborhood Elman Valle talks with delinquents to make them conscious, he gives advices to his neighbors and he tries not to insult anyone and he does that without wearing his police uniform. *Fundadores*, retired and still active ones, have maintained their *mística* after the revolution and they still try to act conform their *mística*.

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<sup>139</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, April 6, 2011.

<sup>140</sup> Interview with Francisco González Rodríguez, February 28, 2011.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

<sup>142</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.

Although sometimes it seems that the *fundadores* idealize the power of the *mística* and they seem to accomplice their *mística* or *espíritu* twenty-four hours a day, there are situations in which it is difficult to live up to the *mística* or *espíritu*. Sadys Martínez<sup>144</sup> gave the following example when asked if his *mística* was put to the test one day in an occasion:

One day I brought my daughter to the university and I stationed my car a bit outside the road but the road was not very wide. When I arrived there was not any problem, the vehicles could pass normally. At one moment the road was blocked but I did not realize that I was the one who was blocking the road. So one person warned me but I was thinking that it was not me. I tried to demonstrate that the traffic could circulate, trying to guide the person who was stuck with his car. He could not get his car free and the people were shouting and screaming at me. At that moment I put one of the values of *la mística* to the test which was having respect for other people because the people here do not conceal. I became furious but they were right, can I be fined by a police officer? Yes I can! However, luckily and rapidly I got myself together and I asked for apology but I was dominated by pride which is an anti-value opposite to *la mística*. At these moments you are put to the test to at which point by being a police officer you can lose the perspective of respecting the people.

Another *fundador* told that he had been unfaithful to his wife although he knew that what he was doing was ethically not right and against his conviction or *mística*. A *fundadora*<sup>145</sup> admits that her principles were put to the test when she was leader of the transit police. She said that nobody controlled her and that she could have done what she wanted, including bribing people. She did not tell whether she has bribed people or not but she thanked her principles of during that time which made her survive. Striking is the fact that she explicitly mentioned her political-ideological principles as the principles that helped her coming through this situation. Finally, with the government changes, many highly-placed Sandinistas tried to enrich themselves. This affair became also known as '*la Piñata*'<sup>146</sup>. Suddenly many Sandinistas turned into the same capitalists as Somoza and his followers were. This illustrates that not every Sandinista had *la mística* and it also shows a dark side of an idealized concept.

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with Sadys Martínez, February 22, 2011.

<sup>145</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview May, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra, May 2, 2011.

## 6. Current Police Institution (PN) and the Future

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*¿Cómo será el fruto si la semilla es hermosa?*

*How will the fruit be when the seed is beautiful?*

*Commandant Tomás Borge Martínez*

In the current PN the references to Sandino and to the history of Nicaragua, and in particular the history since 1979, are everywhere. This is maybe not so spectacular as initially seems considering the fact that the whole country, not only the police institution, strongly tries to keep its history alive. The question however is which aspects of this history are still valid and serve as guideline in the present and in the future police institution. The following questions will be answered in this chapter. When *mística* is ascribed to the *fundadores*, have they been able to transfer this *mística* on the overall police institution? What future has the institution without the *fundadores*? What is the main contribution of the *fundadores* to the institution according to themselves and the younger generations? Finally, we will discuss if the re-election of the current Sandinista President Ortega, has made it easier for the *fundadores* to cherish and disseminate their *mística*? This chapter gives a closer insight in the current PN and the role of the *fundadores* and their *mística* in the institution.

### 6.1 Heritage of the *Fundadores*

The current police anthem (written in 1995 by *fundador* Luis Enrique Rodriguez) illustrates the ties between the old and the new police. A clear reference to the history is made:

Surgido del seno popular [...]	(Emerged out of the people's party) [...]
nació la Policía Nacional [...]	(rose the National Police)[...]
a lado del pueblo y sus conquistas	(on the side of the village and its victories)
a lado del pueblo y sus dolores	(on the side of the village and its sorrows)
cultivando vocación de servidores	(cultivating the mission of being servants)
creció esta Policía con carácter humanista	(grew this Police with a human character)

After the last phrase the anthem continues but not anymore in the past tense. It now reflects the essence of the current police mission and everything they teach on the Police Academy:

salvaguardas de la vida y de la paz	(guardians of life and peace)
protegemos a todos por igual	(we protect everyone equally)
nos inspira la justicia como ideal	(we are inspired by the ideal of justice)
contribuimos al progreso de la comunidad	(we contribute to the progress of the community)
como faro y eterno compromiso	(as beacon and eternal compromise)
a los heroes caidos recordemos	(to the fallen heroes we remember)
y al futuro de la patria prometemos	(and to the future of our homeland we promise)
HONOR SEGURIDAD SERVICIO [...]	(HONOUR SECURITY SERVICE) [...]
estamos dispuestos al sacrificio	(we are willing to sacrifice)
nos impulsa nuestro lema y el valor	(our slogan and bravery drives us)
combatiendo al crimen y los vicios	(fighting against crime and vices)
capaces de entregar la vida por amor	(capable of surrender our life for love)

(See appendix IV for the complete police anthem).

Humanity, justice and community are the three key words characterizing the old Sandinista Police and the current National Police. Angel Solís<sup>147</sup> explains one of the reasons why the current police has this humanitarian face:

The humanitarian face the police has today originates from the revolution. One of the main examples is when the last soldiers of the Guardia and their weapons were handed over. The respect for these soldiers, handing them over alive, taking them to tribunals, to the Red Cross, that is one of the principles of humanity. Many of them were our neighbors, comrades in one way or another and we always respected them. I think that there the humanism is born which represented this police throughout its history.

Several police have said that they always try to give a good treatment to prisoners. As multiple times explained: ‘the police need to attack the evil, not the prisoner, just as a doctor who treats the illness and is not the enemy of the patient’. The police also help the community in emergency situations such as natural disasters. They help citizens with all kind of things such as bringing them to safe places or they help the rescue workers which fortifies the humanitarian image of the police.

It is interesting how the anthem could be approved however in a time when the people wanted to eliminate the connection with the Sandinistas. The creator of the anthem explains that

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<sup>147</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

the first reason is because in the time the police anthem was written there were about 600 *fundadores* active in the institution. Although officially the police institution was not a political institution anymore, due to the amount of people who were still committed to the Sandinistas the anthem was approved by the institution<sup>148</sup>. The second reason for approving the anthem is given in the following quote of Luis Enrique<sup>149</sup>:

In November two comrades died in Matagalpa saving the life of other people and I realized that the phrase 'capable of surrender our life for love' was becoming a daily fact. I saw a little girl saying to her dead father 'why did you leave me when you promised me that you would take me to my graduation?'. So when we presented the anthem to the board they approved it. They saw that the anthem not only involved the history of the police but also the duty of the current police. We were not ashamed to say where we came from, nor to our compromise with the society and its conquests. However, I was asked to which conquests I referred. I said that it was a conquest to overthrow a bloody dictatorship, it was a conquest that we stood up as an entire nation, the alphabetizing campaign was a conquest and it did not matter that this coincided with a Sandinista government. It was also a conquest that when we headed up to a civil war, we managed to defend the democracy and finally all the disasters we have survived such as earthquakes, seaquakes and hurricanes was a conquest. And the anthem was approved..

The heritage of the *fundadores* can therefore be seen not so much in their relation with *el Sandinismo*, but in their way of thinking, their values and principles (their *mística*). This part could be preserved in the current police institution. Although the police institution needed to change in the nineties and became a-political, the *fundadores* could preserve the essence of their moral and actions which could be separated from being Sandinista. Having the same values and principles was not an equivalent for being Sandinista but the connection with *el Sandinismo* is rapidly made because *el Sandinismo* was characterized by these same values and principles. These days at important occasions and at the Police Academy, cadets and police officers sing this anthem together, sometimes twice a day on the Academy (photo 8). This maybe seems a bit militaristic but in essence this anthem, which has a positive text and is made upon the music of violins instead upon a militaristic rhythm, contributes to the forming of a unity among the cadets; a unity which will be positively instilled with the important values and principles of being a police officer.

On the other hand, although many *fundadores* agree that with the professionalization many of their values and principles were written down officially, according to several *fundadores* many of their values and principles has been lost as well. For example, according to the same Luis Enrique

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, April 6, 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, April 6, 2011.

Rodriguez<sup>150</sup> the respect for women has decreased. He blames however not the police institution or the *fundadores* for this loss of respect in the institution. He states that it is to blame to a universal loss of values in society which affect the police institution as well. He also fears a harm to the heritage of the *fundadores* in the police institution because of the new generation of police officers who come from marginal neighborhoods. Police officers nowadays come from ‘dysfunctional places’ such as failed marriages, households in which an authoritarian paternal person or manners are missing or where there is a surviving culture. It is incompatible that persons who a month ago lived at the streets with wide pants are now police officers with authority and have the opportunity of making money. Therefore it is difficult for the police to maintain their face.

The Nicaraguan police is nowadays still known and often praised for its cooperation with the community. Right after the revolution the Sandinistas wanted a police opposite to the *Guardia*. They did not want to repress the community but help the community. This vision is still visible in the PN. Most of the police men and women, do not wear a gun, not even when they enter the most dangerous areas of Managua with which they show their non-violent behavior towards the community. Martha Picado<sup>151</sup> however explains: ‘the institution has its principles, that someone does not always follow them is another thing’. Many police officers admit that some of their colleagues do not always follow the institutions’ principles. Although they state that it concerns only a few cases (which is something difficult to verify and which can be said to protect the good name of the corps, something in accordance with Palantes definition of *esprit de corps*), being corrupt and bribing citizens is an often called example of police officers who do not follow the institutions’ values and principles and doctrine. Corrupt police officers in most cases will be removed from the institution. However, one *fundador*<sup>152</sup> told that he one day faced a subordinate who admitted that he had bribed a citizen. The *fundador* explains that this happens because salaries are low and on various occasions officers start bribing citizens out of financial problems. In this case the subordinated almost started to cry and the *fundador* describes that together they searched for a solution –which he did not tell-. This officer stayed with the police and is now captain.

The mission of the Sandinista Police was to serve the community (*vocación de servicio*). This also counts for the current PN. The strong tie that the police claim to have with the community can however be put in a different perspective when we look to the current political situation. The police is questioned by the same community for their actions which seem to serve only the

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<sup>150</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>151</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>152</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview April, 2011.

followers of the current president Daniel Ortega, according to many citizens. An often heard sentence of the opponents of Daniel Ortega is “la policía no es de Daniel Ortega” (‘the police is not Daniel Ortega’s police’: la Prensa, April 3, 2011) which indicates the current tensions between the police and a part of the community. The police seems to shift its attention away from the community in order to serve politics and the police is losing its humanitarian face by treating persons (regardless of the fact if they are only opponents or not) in such rough way as happened at April 3 this year when a former Sandinista combatant was beaten up by the police during a oppositional manifestation.

A final issue should be discussed here because many *fundadores* still consider themselves Sandinistas. Some openly talk about their political preference, others are more reserved. The group who talks openly of being a Sandinista emphasize that although they feel themselves being Sandinista, in their work they will never let their political preference play a part. Thanks to the professionalization of the police institution they are meant to be a-political and the *fundadores* have assured that they will always act professional and they will not let their political preference influence their actions. *Fundadora* and commissioner Obando<sup>153</sup> said the following when asked if she is still a Sandinista: ‘I continue to be a Sandinista but I am not going to put the institution in danger. I have my principles very clear that I am the national police, I am police for the entire society’. Whereupon asking her a tricky question what she is first, police of Sandinista, she answers: ‘First comes *el Sandinismo* although I hide it, discreetly, because before being a police I was a Sandinista’. These words can be related to the exact words of Martha García<sup>154</sup>: ‘we now have law 228 which says that we are a-political but I think that is a lie because we have *el Sandinismo* in our veins’. Maybe the actions of the *fundadores* can be considered a-political, we can question the fact if they are really as a-political as they say they are.

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<sup>153</sup> Interview with Obando, May 25, 2011.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.



**Photo 8** Police officers and cadets on the Police Academy ready to sing the police anthem at 8 a.m  
| Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

## 6.2 Contact with Civil Society

The police is proud of the survey they hold among the citizens at the end of every year. Citizens can put down the things they think that need more attention in the next year and the police will set out a plan to accomplish at least a few of these requests<sup>155</sup>. However, not one of the interviewed citizens has ever seen such a questionnaire. So although according to the police the ties with the community are very strong, the citizens sometimes question this close relationship. Nevertheless, my experiences are that the police indeed do work with the community in a positive way. They give lectures on universities to talk about personal crime prevention but also many police officers help citizens with small things. During the Carnival in Managua a man had problems with the chain of his motor and immediately three police officers rushed to this man in order to help him. On the days that I drove to the Police Academy with Sadys Martínez I noticed that he always stops when he thinks someone needs his help (regardless of the fact that he is wearing his uniform or not). This help can consist of assisting a traffic police officer or stopping his pick-up car for some poor citizens who ask for a ride in the trunk of his pick-up. On Sundays

<sup>155</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

throughout the whole country police officers play sports with juvenile groups and demobilized youngsters in order to build relationships in every part of society<sup>156</sup>. In order to get contact with these groups, the police works close together with religious and community leaders<sup>157</sup>. PN director Aminta Granera often underlines this close relationship between the police and the community. In 2010 she said the following in an interview: ‘this Police is entrenched in the community, it is entrenched in every corner of Nicaragua, in the supermarkets, at the beaches, in the streets, at the highroads, in the rain, in the drought, at every moment and in every place there is the National Police’<sup>158</sup>. The Nicaraguan police still upholds this community-based policy in contrast with other police institutions in Central America where the so called ‘zero tolerance’ policy has gain more popularity<sup>159</sup>.

The anonymous informant who has killed several people during the revolution explains that his *mística* contains values and principles derived from the Ten Commandments (although killing does not correspond with the Ten Commandments). Nowadays he explains that his *mística* does not allow him to understand why a man would beat up his wife or children. He admits while he clenched his fists that these molestations makes him furious. If he would see a man beating up his wife, he will beat up the man in question by himself<sup>160</sup>. That also does not coincide with the values and principles derived from the Ten Commandments nor with *la mística*. It can be said that the personal *mística* of the *fundadores* is responsible for the way in how they response to the civil society. Christiam Martínez<sup>161</sup>, the daughter of Sadys Martínez, told how she went with her family to a family visit when another automobilist almost caused an accident:

My father stopped the car and went talking with the driver of the other car. The driver of the other car had driven very recklessly with his family in the back of his car. My father did not wear his uniform but he started talking with the driver and explaining how dangerous his actions were. He tried to make the driver consciousness of the fact that he was not only putting himself in danger but also his entire family.

This situation confirms that *la mística* is not only important in a personal sphere or in the police institution. Also in the contact with the society *la mística* is the motive for the *fundadores* to act. As

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<sup>156</sup> Interview with Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010.

<sup>159</sup> According to Rocha Gómez the Nicaraguan police noticed that in other countries ‘zero tolerance’ policies had had higher costs (in financial as in organizational prestige) than community-based policies. He also mentions the approach towards youth violence in Nicaragua as different. Operations towards youth gangs were named after holidays – Bethlehem Plan at Christmas or Beach Plan in the Holy Week – in contrast with the police operations in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras which had names that expressed their will to severely suppress gang members: Anti-Gang laws, Broom Plan, Zero Tolerance Plan and Strong Grip Plan (Rocha Gómez 2005:5).

<sup>160</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview March, 2011.

<sup>161</sup> Interview with Christiam Martínez, April 30, 2011

Elman Valle<sup>162</sup> further illustrates: 'If I see a drunk driver I need to find a way to take away his keys because if I do not he might kill someone'. *La mística* can therefore also be seen as an attitude. According to Martha Picado<sup>163</sup> *la mística* obliges her to have an attitude in accordance with her principles such as being an example for her family, at work and in the community.

Although *la mística* seems to be very strong and decisive in the way the *fundadores* live and act, it cannot prevent family problems which also contains a part of civil society. Francisco González just as many other *fundadores* is not able to dedicate much time to his kids. He works 24 hours a days as a policemen which characterizes the so called working personality. Because of their devotion which forms part of the *esprit de corps*, the police become segregated from the rest of society as highlighted by Bittner (1975:63). Although most female *fundadores* tell that they brought their children to their work in the past, not one male *fundador* tells that he brought his children to work as well. Many *fundadores* are divorced and many have children with several men or women. It is striking that *la mística* was able to reach so many things but seemed to be incapable of holding families together considering the fact that the family is considered the basic of society. This point could be related to the *esprit de corps* as explained by Palante (1899). *Esprit de corps* interferes in private lives because someone does not separate his profession from his personal life and it can also be seen as a collective egoism (Palante 1899). *Esprit de corps* is only concerned with the collective and disdainful of the individual and we can conclude that family relationships suffer under this strong *esprit de corps*.

### 6.3 Contact with Colleagues – *Esprit de Corps*

The contact between *fundadores* can be described as brother love or can be compared with family bonds. *Hermano* (brother) is an often heard word among the older generation of police officers. Besides the normal institutional contacts the still active *fundadores* have, they also meet outside the police work. At both occasions as most *fundadores* agree, they greet each other in a brotherly and amicable way. This is due to the mutual trust according to Angel Solís<sup>164</sup>. They are more than just colleagues, they are friends as well and they share the same history. Additionally, *fundador* Elman Valle<sup>165</sup> tries to save some of his money and at the end of the year he invites his staff and their partners to a dinner. He gives as a reason that although he has a management task, they are the ones who do the real job.

Besides this personal initiative the PN direction organizes reunions between the *fundadores* as

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<sup>162</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.

<sup>163</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>164</sup> Interview with Angel Solís, April 11, 2011.

<sup>165</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.

stated by Martha Picado<sup>166</sup>. Last year they reunited with all the female *fundadores*. Several *fundadores* refer to the police institution as their (second) family. This is an important characteristic for the current institution. Relationships between colleagues are more than just professional relationships. Additionally, there exist many marriages between policemen and women. As *fundadora* Martha García<sup>167</sup> describes: ‘sometimes I feel lonely and my boss asks me how I can feel lonely if I am surrounded by my family. This is the reason why I wanted to stay with the police. Although I have a family at home, I practically go home just to sleep’. The police do not possess sufficient equipment and financial resources so the police officers are obliged to work more than eight hours a day<sup>168</sup>. Most of the time the work is so demanding that the police barely go home. Several officers decide therefore to spend the night in their offices. Sadys Martínez for example, has always a mattress in his office and Francisco González spends many nights in the hammock he keeps in his office. These situations make the relationships between the members of the institution close. On the other hand though, it often causes problems in the family sphere considering the frequent absence of the officers.

The close relationship between the members of the police institution works also as a stimulation. In the case of Martha García<sup>169</sup> a comrade stimulated her to go to the university. She never had the possibility to study and although she was a *fundador*, this did not mean automatically a rise in rank. If she wanted to ‘climb up the ladder’ she needed to study. Her mother however had always said to her that studying was not necessary and she was hesitating about what to do. Although she needed to start at the bottom, she is now heading up to a degree in laws.

Not every *fundador* has the desire to reunite with other *fundadores* but that does not seem to affect the relationships. The *mística* of the persons stimulates them to respect the wishes of every individual. The retired *fundadores* keep also contact with their former colleagues although according to several their attention has shifted away a bit. Luis Enrique<sup>170</sup> for example, prefers to spend time with his family, something that always has been difficult while being a police officer. Nonetheless, he thinks it is important to continue being friends with other *fundadores*. It is a characteristic that should be maintained in the police. Luis came especially to the Police Academy to do an interview. He saw this interview as the perfect possibility to reunite with his former colleagues (photo 9). His former colleagues also took their time to converse a while with him and a very positive sphere could be noticed between the several old combatants. Many old

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<sup>166</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>167</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.

<sup>168</sup> According to director Aminta Granera in 2010 in Nicaragua there are 175 police officers for every hundred thousand habitants while the international norm, the average is 350 police officers for every hundred thousand habitants (Entrevista a Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010).

<sup>169</sup> Interview with Martha García Miranda, May 11, 2011.

<sup>170</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodríguez, May 18, 2011.

memories were revived, some were sad, others were hilarious.



**Photo 9** *Fundadores* Javier Dávila (Director of the Police Academy), Luis Enrique Rodríguez (author of the police anthem) and Sadys Martínez (sub-director of the Police Academy):  
reviving of old memories | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

#### 6.4 Position of the *Fundadores* in the Current PN

Of the original amount of twelve thousand *fundadores* there were still 460 *fundadores* within the police institution in 2009<sup>171</sup>. In 2010 this amount has decreased to 360 *fundadores*<sup>172</sup>. Many of those *fundadores* have accomplished high ranks but there are several *fundadores* who have not ‘climb up the ladder’<sup>173</sup>. Two of the interviewed *fundadores* do not have the same rank as most of the others. One of them is Martha García Miranda who has reached the rank of inspector but got

<sup>171</sup> Cuadra García, Ricardo: Homenaje a fundadores de la Policía Nacional, September 2, 2009 [http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6150:homenaje-a-fundadores-de-la-policia-nacional&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12](http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6150:homenaje-a-fundadores-de-la-policia-nacional&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12) (July 19, 2011).

<sup>172</sup> Entrevista a Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010.

<sup>173</sup> According to Sadys Martínez only twenty *fundadores* have a relatively low rank.

never 'higher' because she had not studied. She admits that she wants to achieve a higher rank but that is for economic reasons. With a higher rank her salary will increase. Although she has a lower rank and still works on a type machine instead of on a computer, she is not treated differently by other *fundadores*. There are also non-*fundadores* who have reached a higher rank but according to Martha García Miranda they have studied in order to reach this higher rank. Technically she has the same opportunity to achieve a higher rank as any other police officer so rank difference cannot be considered a '*fundador* issue'. As in most institutions, education, age, experience and willingness (to accept a transfer for example) are responsible for 'climbing up' to higher functions and ranks. The *fundadores* do not feel more privileged nor do they have more rights in achieving higher ranks. Vilma Reyes<sup>174</sup>, a high official, is officially not a *fundadora* but works with the police from the beginning. Vilma Reyes states that the *fundadores* maybe have special attention but they are not more privileged in taking decisions. Decisions are taken in according to the functions, the ranks or a certain professional capacity of the people. Being a founder of the institution do not give the right of decision making.

The *fundadores* themselves do not consider themselves a separate group of police officers nor do they feel more privileged. Every informant admits however immediately that there are probably a few *fundadores* who do consider themselves more special but those can be considered individual cases. Contradictory here is that although they say they neither feel themselves privileged nor a separate group, almost every *fundador* proudly emphasized the fact that he or she is a *fundador* at the beginning of each interview. Additionally, the *fundadores* have a special band together but their professionalism makes assure that this will not have any kind of negative influence for the institution. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>175</sup> resumes his opinion about the *fundadores*: 'the only thing how you could differentiate us is that the we as *fundadores* had a political project in mind, that is all'. Francisco Bautista<sup>176</sup> explains that there exists a trap we should try to avoid: 'we should not overestimate the role the *fundadores* have now, we had a role before'. The *fundadores* nowadays need to be considered as police officers. There is no reason to forget the role they had before and there exist different ways to remember or appreciate the *fundadores* but in the current institution they are considered equal to the non-*fundadores*. Francisco Bautista<sup>177</sup> continues to explain why: If you would continue praising the role of the *fundadores*, there exists the possibility of creating barriers. Emphasizing the difference in generations can create a division within the institution. Therefore it would also be a wrong idea to keep the *fundadores* longer in the institution than necessary. This can cause distrust among the younger generations because they will lose

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<sup>174</sup> Interview with Vilma Reyes, May 27, 2011.

<sup>175</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra, May 2, 2011.

<sup>176</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>177</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

their confidence in obtaining these jobs. If the police do not retire the *fundadores* it will obstruct the normal circulation within the institution.

Maybe the institution is not intentionally creating barriers, there always will exist a difference in generation. This however has not specifically something to do with the *fundadores*. Martha Picado<sup>178</sup> explained that after a reunion with female *fundadoras* they had the idea of reuniting with the three generations of women (generation of the *fundadoras*, the second generation of people who joined the police after the first year of the institution and the youngest generation who work less than ten years with the police). In this reunion the three generations sat down and talked about how each generation thought of the other generation. Striking was that the second generation felt part of the first generation (*fundadoras*). The youngest generation however asked the other two generations to be more supportive and they wanted that the older ones would approach them more. They wished that the older women would help them more with the work, that they talk more and that they let the younger generation experience more according to Martha Picado<sup>179</sup>. This however is something that can occur in every institution in which more than one generation is active.

The second generation has no resentment to the first generation for being *fundador*. As explained above, this generation feels part of the first generation although they officially do not wear the '*fundador* badge'. There was an official month that pinpointed whether someone was officially a *fundador* or not. Vilma Reyes is an police officer who integrated in the police a month after this official date. People who integrated three months after the official date still can make a petition in order to get them recognized as official *fundador*. Vilma<sup>180</sup> has never appealed to this official recognition but she does however feel herself a *fundadora*: 'the badge is a distinction but the character of a *fundador* you wear in your consciousness, your heart and the work you do'. She tells that she is always invited at '*fundador* reunions' and the other *fundadores* do not make her feel excluded. This is in contrast with what Martha Picado<sup>181</sup> has told. According to her only the officially recognized *fundadores* are invited to these meetings. Questions can therefore be raised about these meetings and the special '*fundador* badge'. Why emphasizing the difference between *fundadores* and *non-fundadores* (officially by giving a badge and unofficially by inviting only *fundadores* to reunions) when everybody is trying so hard claiming that there is not a difference between being a *fundador* or not.

The youngest generation of police officers including the students on the Police Academy were interviewed as well. Remarkable is the fact that there are entering youngsters at the Police

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<sup>178</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Vilma Reyes, May 27, 2011.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

Academy who do not even know who the *fundadores* are. I remember quite well the face of one of the students when asked how they thought about the role of the *fundadores*. He had a giant question mark on his face and had no idea who the *fundadores* were or what their exact relation was with the police institution. On the contrary, the fourth year students<sup>182</sup> knew exactly who the *fundadores* were and most of them indicate having much respect for them. However, not many students referred exactly to the history of the *fundadores*. They referred to the *fundadores* as people who are of big significance for the institution because they work so long with the police and have many knowledge and experience. In contrast to what the younger generation of female officers told about how they wanted to be approached more by the *fundadores*, several fourth year students explain that the *fundadores* are accessible and always willing to help. This is probably due to the difference between the Police Academy which is designed to educate and help improve the new police officers and the work floor at which the contact with the *fundadores* reduces significantly. Some do refer to *el Sandinismo* of the *fundadores*. One of the students who nonetheless spoke very positive about the *fundadores*, told as well that *el Sandinismo* becomes more visible in the institution when the elections are nearby. Another student referred to the positive influence that *el Sandinismo* had in the police institution. There were also several critics aimed at the *fundadores*. One student thinks that the *fundadores* sometimes feel jealously towards the new generations because according to this student the change to a new generation of police officers signifies a change to professionalization. The *fundadores* have always been very proud of one of their biggest accomplishments, the professionalization of the institution. They admit that the younger generations have more skills than they had in the past but they do not seem to agree that this will bring the institution to a higher level of professionalization.

The opinions of other police officers (neither students, nor *fundadores*) about the position of the *fundadores* are diverse but in general the police officers talked positive about the *fundadores*. Some see the *fundadores* as the examples of the institution and appreciate their contribution to the institution. Others wish to see the influence of the *fundadores* reducing. They indicate that the *fundadores* are persons who do not want to leave the institution or who distrust the new generations and have little interest in their subordinates. They are occupying high ranks and gave not many opportunities to others. However in generally every non-*fundador* considers only one word appropriate for the *fundadores* and that is 'respect'. They are considered as examples. They share and teach their knowledge and are considered a fundamental pillar for the development of the future generations.

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<sup>182</sup> Several interviews with fourth year students, April 19, 2011.

## 6.5 Passing through *la Mística* and *el Espíritu*

According to many *fundadores*, the new generations have not the same dedication as the *fundadores* had (and still have). Luis Enrique<sup>183</sup> has the opinion that this dedication cannot be taught and this new generation is therefore responsible for the absence of a *mística* and *espíritu*. On the one hand, for most of the *fundadores* it is difficult or even impossible to pass through exactly *their* conviction because the new generation will follow a different path in the future. The motivations to enter the police are not the same anymore. Luis Enrique<sup>184</sup> states that he worked with the police out of conviction while the new generations enter out of financial motives. Nowadays for example, the police offer a guarantee for work, social assurance and other benefits. So you see many single mothers entering the Police Academy for stability reasons. According to Cuarezma Terán and López (publication year unknown:423), the mission of the police will not be the same as the police of the *fundadores* because the new members of the police do not originate from a process of developing a social historical determined vision which was the case for the *fundadores*. Rather, the new members obtain their visions through a process of academic formation.

On the other hand, many *fundadores* do have confidence in the younger generations because they work with modern equipment and they do not have to discover how to elaborate the police work as was the case for the *fundadores*. They also admit that they cannot continue with their work forever. Obando<sup>185</sup> explains: ‘we do not have the capacities we had before. For example, I cannot run anymore as I could before’. The *fundadores* compared the education of the new students with parental education. If you as a parent are afraid of letting your children home alone it means that you have failed, you did not have educated them right. Although younger generations enter the institution out of other motives than the *fundadores* did, with a good training they are able to carry on and improve the institution. The current police institution has much confidence in the training of the new police officers. Every *fundador* emphasizes that giving the good example is crucial and as Jorge Muñis<sup>186</sup> explains: ‘with our example we transmit *la mística*’. Striking is however that in practice many *fundadores* (and also other officers) do not always give the good example to the students. Many times I have seen police officers driving a motor without a helmet or driving a car and talking on the telephone at the same time (in spite of the reality, most admit that wearing a helmet is very important). I remember one day being in a car with a *fundador* when a street vendor tried to sell a protected animal. Instead of taking action (in any way) the *fundador* started talking with the vendor about what kind of food the bird eats. But maybe I am wrong here. When asked to the *fundador* why the police do not take action against those

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, May 18, 2011.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with Luis Enrique Rodriguez, May 18 2011.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Obando, May 25, 2011.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Jorge Muñis Franco, March 11, 2011.

vendors he answered that these people ‘at least do something’, referring to the fact that this persons is working for his money instead of robbing people so why punishing him? Maybe humanism is the golden rule and overrules small crimes.

Although the opinions of the *fundadores* about the younger generations are highly divided, according to Francisco Bautista<sup>187</sup> it is something normal that it will be difficult to pass through their *mística*. The task therefore of the entire PN is to try to consolidate the professionalization. It means that the PN need to lay more emphasis on the original principles and incorporate them better into the new generations with the purpose that they assimilate those values and principles that it becomes something of everyday life and forms part of an internal culture. In order to preserve the contribution of the *fundadores* according to Francisco<sup>188</sup> it is important to:

preserve the institutionalization of our values, experiences, principles, the principles why we founded the police. We founded the police to serve the community, with respect for the community. That is the essential of the police. If the successors assume the same attitude we do not have to worry.

This same attitude however show already signs of cracking. Although the youngest officers seem to adapt partially the values and principles, police officers who work longer with the institution admit they do not care a lot about the institutionalized values and principles. In fact, I have observed many young police officers who do not salute their colleague officers or superiors, something also noticed by the *fundadores*. Saluting has to do with respect and this value seems to lose ground among younger police officers. Among twenty-two of these police officers was asked if there were values they had learned at the Academy but which they do not use in practice. For example the following answer was given: ‘For me courtesy does not have any importance because in reality this is an value or principle difficult to apply’<sup>189</sup>. There are always situations in which it is difficult to salute a superior (for example during an operation) but I witnessed several situations in which it was however easy to salute a superior but officers neither did salute their superiors.

Also noteworthy was the fact that not one of the younger officers talked explicitly about a *mística* or *espíritu* as used by the *fundadores*. Several officers do mention the *esprit de corps* as something the *fundadores* teach to the new generations. Sofía Hunter<sup>190</sup> for example refers with this *esprit de corps* to the way how one works in a team, companionship and the values of the police. We can state that the *mística* of the *fundadores* in the institution is replaced by the younger

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<sup>187</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>188</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

<sup>189</sup> The survey was anonymous. Only age, sex and year of starting as a police officer are known. In this case the contestant had an age of 29 and he started in 2003 as a police officer.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with lieutenant Sofía Hunter, March 24, 2011.

generations by the institutional *esprit the corps*. She also says that she and her generation have the same principles as the *fundadores*. Although officers say they prefer to see some changes in the institution, there is no indication that the new generation has a need for a new doctrine or for a new package of values and principles within the institution. The roots of the *fundadores* are firm and seem to serve more purposes than only institutional ones. Sofía<sup>191</sup> for example illustrates that the values of the *fundadores* are also valid and used in her personal life. The majority seems willing to pass on the values of the *fundadores* even in family spheres.

Because of the professionalization of the police, many *fundadores* assume that the main values and principles will be preserved. In order to preserve the values of the *fundadores* the cadets on the Police Academy are often obliged to make murals or posters about history. At one occasion cadets of all different years needed to make such posters about the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino (photo 10). It was remarkable how many references the cadets made to the current police institution and to the FLSN with these posters. More remarkable was the active participation of the cadets who were very creative and who really wanted to show the contribution of Sandino to the current values and principles of the institution.

According to Eduardo Cuadra<sup>192</sup> *la mística* still forms part of most of the *fundadores* however, as he describes it, this *mística* is included into the institutionalized values of the PN. It are these values which are taught on the Police Academy and are considered the most crucial factor in succeeding as police officer. As Javier Dávila<sup>193</sup> illustrates: ‘any person can learn how to use a gun but not everyone can be a police officer. The conviction about the nature and social function of a police cannot be learned nor used correctly by everyone’. It remains an unanswered question if the *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores* can be passed through to the new generations who not have lived the revolution. Many *fundadores* agree that everybody contains a certain *mística* which they will learn to use and improve at the Police Academy. The *fundadores* who work on the Police Academy consider this as their job they need to accomplish. Regardless of the fact that someone has a *mística* or not, it is important to stand on the same line and transmitting an equal image, which refers to the *esprit de corps* or a shared morale. This counts for both *fundadores* as younger police officers and cadets. If the *fundadores* however want to pass through their *mística* it is important to teach in accordance with this *mística*. As explained earlier, the police officer is able to negotiate order and if not every officer negotiates the same order, the institution is not transmitting one and the same image. For the continued existence of *la mística* and *el espíritu* it is

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<sup>191</sup> Interview with lieutenant Sofía Hunter, March 24, 2011.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra, May 2, 2011.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Javier Dávila, February 22, 2011.

crucial therefore to teach everyone the principles of this *mística* and *espíritu*. If not, the police officer will negotiate another order which is not in accordance with the *mística* of the *fundadores*.



**Photo 10** Poster 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

## 6.6 Influence of Presidents

In 2006 the Sandinista Daniel Ortega won the elections again and the Sandinistas were back into power<sup>194</sup>. However, the police institution was in the meantime changed into a professional and a-political institution. With the return of Ortega in the government, the society and the police received more benefits as they had right after the revolution. Children receive meals at schools and also the police officers receive a free meal at work. Many *fundadores* therefore, talk positively about this new government change. The police officers do still not earn much money but most of the interviewed *fundadores* do not mind this aspect because as earlier stated, they work for their conviction and not for the money. In addition, the changes gave a new impulse to their *mística* because certain principles and accomplishments of right after the revolution were now re-

<sup>194</sup> According to Tatar (2009:158) it is not clear whether Ortega's new presidency represents a continuation of the Nicaraguan Revolution that brought the Sandinistas to power in 1979. Various social movement activists see the FSLN as shifting from left to right. Many 'old' Sandinistas did therefore not identify themselves anymore with the current Sandinista party (FSLN) and the ideas of Daniel Ortega. Although Daniel Ortega positions himself as the defender of the 'authentic' revolutionary tradition, there are other political parties such as the *Movimiento de Renovación Sandinista* (Movement of Sandinista Renovation – MRS) who also originate from the 'authentic' FSLN (Tatar 2009:162). Nevertheless, even the Sandinistas who do not like Ortega may support him in certain situations because they identify with the revolutionary past of the FSLN (Tatar 2009:159).

established. In that same year Daniel Ortega told the Nicaraguan police and army to remember their roots, as both institutions have their roots in the Sandinista Revolution (Grigsby 2003; IEEPP 2009:45; Sonneveld 2009). It seems that Ortega uses his position to politicize the police force again<sup>195</sup>. The institution however, always obliges its members to act first professionally (according to the *esprit de corps*) and in a second place according to their (personal) *mística*.

Now, in the year 2011 the police still claim to be a-political. It can however be questioned if they are so a-political as they claim they are. Many police officers in the current police institution do openly show their political preference. In their offices and at the police stations hang many posters of Ortega in the electoral campaign (photo 11). Additionally, on many motors on which the police in uniform execute their job are the stickers with their political preference visible and the computers of the police officers show slogans of the electoral campaign (see appendix VI for photos). It is remarkable that only posters of Daniel Ortega were shown and not of other electoral candidates. Although it is difficult for police institutions to function in a political context (Manning in Newburn 2005:200), that does not mean the police officers themselves need to start showing their political preferences. At this point the police is allowing the intrusion of political influences although they should override party-political interests to secure the principle of equality under the law as pointed out by Kertész and Szikinger (2000:275). When people were asked about these facts, they all started immediately to talk about their a-politicalness and that although they maybe have a political preference in their personal life, they would never show it at work because therefore they are a professional institution. However, one *fundadora* explicitly said: ‘we [the *fundadores*] adore the current president’<sup>196</sup>. Eduardo Cuadra<sup>197</sup> who is now retired confirms my observations:

My opinion is divided in two moments: before Daniel Ortega and after Daniel Ortega. I think that before the police managed to keep a line between the institution and politics. Today I believe that the police are crossing that line. Today the police are more political. There are police officers who use identifications with a political party and they participate at political reunions.

Eduardo Cuadra<sup>198</sup> also gave the example of a manifestation in León several years ago. People were protesting against the government. The *Danielistas* waited them up, they cut of their pass and they started burning cars and confronting the protesters. The police were present but did not do anything, they did not arrest anyone. The same seems to happen nowadays.

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<sup>195</sup> In January 2008 Ortega also strongly criticized the police, who according to the president had fallen victim to capitalism (Sonneveld 2009).

<sup>196</sup> In order to protect my informant I made the informant anonymous. Interview March, 2011.

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

<sup>198</sup> Interview with Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey, May 2, 2011.

President Daniel Ortega wants to be re-elected in the upcoming elections of November which is illegal. This provokes confrontations between Sandinistas (or also called *Danielistas*) and followers of other political parties. At one occasion the opponents of Daniel Ortega wanted to manifest against this illegal matter. A few days before Sadys Martínez<sup>199</sup> told that every opponent could go out to the streets to protest whenever he or she wants because they live in a free country. The contradiction is that on the day the opponents wanted to march, Daniel Ortega decided to close off the main streets and he arranged the police for executing this job. The police was at this moment playing an important role in the execution of the government's law and justice policy while political values and aims are supposed to be secondary to the institutional objective of law enforcement as explained by Manning (in Newburn 2005:200). So the police needed to make sure that nobody could pass and demonstrate against Daniel Ortega. This is a good example of the police serving the state instead of the law. In the meantime the Sandinistas organized themselves as well and they held a manifestation through Managua. Finally this caused so many frustrations by the opponents, that they tried to pass the road blockades and it ended up in a harsh confrontation between the police and Daniel Ortega's opponents (see for photos appendix VII).

Ironically is that the police are a-political in the sense that they do not give a better or worse treatment to criminals who are Sandinista. In this confrontation they beat a formal Sandinista up, who in the revolution was a high respected chief but now demonstrated against the politics of Daniel Ortega<sup>200</sup>. She ended up with a broken arm and a large photo on the front page of the newspaper *la Prensa* (*la Prensa* April 3, 2011). The police need to be careful not to violate human-rights because this undermines their legitimacy which will strengthen the bad reputation police forces already have in Latin America according to Bailey and Dammert (2006:78). In 2009 Tomás Borge<sup>201</sup> stated that: 'for the first time in many years there exists an excellent relation between the police, the people and the government'. Furthermore, the police doctrine was relatively corresponding with the direction the PN was heading to. By acting repressive the police institution goes in against their own doctrine. He called the relationship 'a perfect trio'. Also PN director Aminta Granera underlines this good relationship between the police and other state branches. She speaks of a relationship of respect with for example politics and politicians. She admits however, that it is difficult to maintain a good balance between the police and politics

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<sup>199</sup> Informal conversation with Sadys Martínez, March 6, 2011.

<sup>200</sup> Informal conversation with Jomi, a Nicaraguan citizen, April 2, 2011.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Tomás Borge in *La Voz del Sandinismo* by Pedro Ortega Ramírez, September 3, 2009 [http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12](http://www.el19digital.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6176:tomas-borge-la-mistica-revolucionaria-sigue-intacta-en-la-policia-&catid=23:nacionales&Itemid=12) (July 19, 2011).

when acting out on the streets<sup>202</sup>.

Another interesting point concerning the influence a president has in the police institution can be found in the retirement of several police officers. In the case of Eduardo Cuadra and Francisco Bautista they were both obliged to retire from the police institution. The reason was that the then current presidents in both cases were afraid of a coup. Francisco Bautista<sup>203</sup> for example was dismissed by president Bolaños (2002-2007). Francisco was postulated in 2001 as director of the police but in 2004 a family member of Francisco was chosen to be the mayor of Managua. So the president told Francisco Bautista that he was afraid they would prepare a coup against him so he dismissed Francisco Bautista from the police institution. Presidents and politics in general have more influence in the Nicaraguan police institution than admitted by most of the interviewed persons. Maybe in earlier days the police were a-political, nowadays under the current circumstances is it hard to maintain this statement.



**Photo 11** A notice board at the main police station in Managua with a poster of the electoral campaign of Daniel Ortega | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

<sup>202</sup> Entrevista a Aminta Granera Directora General de la Policía Nacional, in La Lucha Sigue, September 8, 2010.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Francisco Bautista Lara, May 3, 2011.

## 6.7 Future PN

Most of the *fundadores* are still very young and do not think about stopping. Nonetheless, if nothing changes in three years, they need to retire according to the constitution. Martha Picado<sup>204</sup> says the following about their retirement: ‘I hope they will let me teach at the Academy but I am not thinking of sitting down in my house, I want to go further but I am not used to being in the house and doing nothing’. Gloria Mendoza<sup>205</sup> also represents the majority of the *fundadores*:

I am already fifty years, five years more and I have the option to go or not to go. If I go now I have a lot to do but I cannot imagine myself without doing anything because I am a person who likes to be active, looking for new things [...] so I see myself in the future working with governmental organizations, giving classes, doing businesses.

Almost everyone thinks of teaching at the Police Academy when they retire and a few are going to start their own small business. Nobody knows how to do nothing considering the fact they are already working since their youth. Nevertheless, the *fundadores* admit they would love to spend more time with their family and Elman Valle<sup>206</sup> explicitly mentions that he wants to rest. The *fundadores* have demanded a lot from themselves and they have given everything the last thirty-two years. In addition, it would be good to retire in order to give another generation the opportunity to grow. More important however, the *fundadores* also deserve to rest after their huge contribution to what now is seen as one of the best police institutions of Central America.

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with Martha Picado Aguilon, May 16, 2011.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Gloria Mendoza, May 24, 2011.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Elman Valle, April 13, 2011.

## 7. Conclusion

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The *fundadores* of the Nicaraguan *Policía Nacional* have played and still play an important role in the functioning of the police institution. In order to answer my central question: ‘What role does the revolutionary Sandinista *mística* and *espíritu* play in the work and life of the *fundadores* and the overall members of the Nicaraguan police force currently and in its history?’, I outlined the history, starting from the beginning: the Somoza dynasty, the Sandinista revolution and triumph, the establishment of the police institution, the *contra* war, the governmental changes and police reforms since the 1990, to the current police institution and the actual position of the former guerrilla combatants in the current PN.

Guerrilla movements in Latin American countries tried to root out the corruption and inequality that had characterized the previous dictatorships. Although in the literature was written that the liberation theology, the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideologies had a wide influence among those movements, for the majority of the *fundadores* this cannot be stated. Especially the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideologies resulted to have less influence on the *fundadores* and former guerrilla combatants. The liberation theology was more often mentioned by the *fundadores* as important influence, but considering the research results it was not the principal ‘awareness maker’ of the poor situation of most Nicaraguan people. The most Nicaraguans became aware of the poor situation by looking to what was happening in society. As a consequence of the repression and violence by the *Guardia* and the limitations and social economic inequalities, first the youth and later almost the entire society began to organize and stimulate a revolution.

Organizing was far from save but that did not stop the Nicaraguan society to fight against Somoza and his *Guardia*. By using a cell-structure the Sandinistas could prepare attacks against the *Guardia* out of the clandestine homes of the people. After the Somoza and his *Guardia* were defeated in 1979, the country suffered a complete institutional chaos. One of the first things the Sandinistas did to help reconstructing the state, was establishing the Sandinista Police in September 1979. Although the institution consisted of policemen and women, the members of the institution considered themselves in the first place as militants of the FSLN (Rocha Gómez 2005:2). The institution was therefore considered unprofessional.

There existed a kind of euphoria in which everyone wanted to help constructing a new and better society and therefore the police worked closely with the community. The *fundadores* of the police institution were police officers 24 hours a day and they spend little time with their family.

The most important goal of the *fundadores* was to serve as an antithesis to the *Guardia*. Protecting the community was considered the mission of this Sandinista police. In the first years after the revolution the police model was directed at 'being in the community'. When the *contra* revolution starts this situation changed and it prevented the further development of the Sandinista vision of a communitarian police. The Sandinistas were now occupied with defending their revolution and therefore the emphasis of the police shifted to a military strategy –with more repression– which harmed this relation with the community.

After this period the Sandinistas not only lost much of its support and legitimacy, they also lost the elections of 1990. The change of the political climate had important impacts on state's institutions such as the police. The new neo-liberal government implemented several important reforms in the police. Police reforms are seen as a key for the consolidation of democratic governance and the ending of violence as also was the case in Nicaragua. The administration of Chamorro tried to cut the ties between the Sandinistas and the police, and the police discourse now shifted from a military vision back to a citizen security approach (Rocha Gómez 2005:3). The institution became professional, demilitarized and a-political. Although many Sandinistas left the PN, others tried to preserve the fundamentals of *el Sandinismo* and their *mística* and *espíritu* within the institution. With law 228 the institution which was built on the Sandinista ideas, concepts, values and morale, which became part of what was later called the *mística* and *espíritu* of the *fundadores*, was now officially recognized as such. Although it was a difficult time for the *fundadores*, their sense of justice remained important. Most *fundadores* did not lose the cause, motivation and values as experienced during the revolution. In addition, the new institution could not stand out without values and principles such as humanity and respect. Therefore, they now form officially part of the current police doctrine. The slogan 'Honor, seguridad y servicio' reflects where the institution really wants to stand for and the current police model is described as a proactive community police. I state that the heritage of the *fundadores* should not be seen in their relation with *el Sandinismo* but in their way of thinking and their values and principles –which were formed by the Sandinista philosophy– that could be preserved in the current PN. In other words, the essence of their *mística* and *espíritu* was preserved. There are however some values and principles that have been lost within the institution but that is due to the a universal loss of values in society.

The majority of the *fundadores* (and also other policemen and women) dedicate much time to their work. As a consequence police officers are often away from home but all the *fundadores* agree that their *mística* give them the strength to continue. Family ties are suffering from these deficiencies and maybe also from the *mística* and *espíritu* because we have seen many *fundadores* and

other police officers living in disintegrated families. Their devotion, which according to Dunkelman (2004:5) is an element of *esprit de corps*, make them feel responsible for the police institution but it decreases their spirit for the family. I do not say that police officers neglect their families or that they do not care enough, on the contrary. I have noticed a strong feeling of love and responsibility towards their families but due to their call of duty within the police, families break up sometimes unintentionally.

Especially during the nineties the *fundadores* struggled to maintain their *mística* and *espíritu*. It was hard for them to unite their *mística* and *espíritu* with the ideals of the new neo-liberal government. The *fundadores* were ordered to repress Nicaraguan citizens which was something against the principles of the *fundadores*. Also *fundadores* were put in difficult situations because of the Sandinista roots of the police institution. Sandinistas in society thought they would be protected by the *fundadores* because of the police's Sandinista roots. As a consequence, the institutional legitimacy of the police was also questioned by both state and civil society actors. Although the course of the police had already changed with the *contra* war, the *fundadores* blame the nineties for experiencing difficult moments in their *mística*. *Fundadores* experience also personal situations in which it is difficult to live up to the *mística* or *espíritu*. Being unfaithful and trying not to be corrupt are two examples of situations in which it was difficult for the *fundadores* to maintain their *mística*. More important however were the Sandinistas during the nineties that took advantage of the government change. Several Sandinistas resulted to be as capitalistic as Somoza in this period and this shows that some socialistic values such as equality became less important. These Sandinistas adapted the *mística* to their personal life and their morale and it also shows that *la mística* cannot be idealized and that not every Sandinista or *fundador* follows the same path.

The few *fundadores* who still work with the PN receive much respect from the other generations and they are seen as important examples. Yet, as in each institution or company wherein more than one generations works, there exist some critiques towards the other generations. Although the *fundadores* do not seem to feel more privileged they always mention that they are *fundador* and they wear a special '*fundador* badge'. The PN must be careful not to overestimate the role of the *fundadores* because the *fundadores* had a role before, they had a political project in mind but nowadays they need to be considered police officers, just as the rest of the officers, according to one of the informants.

The PN have systemized the original values and principles and it is the task of the entire PN (and not only of the *fundadores*) to incorporate them into the new generations. These new generations will then assimilate these values and principles and finally it will form part of an internal culture. The *fundadores* themselves see the new generations as their children and they

compare the training of the new cadets with parental education. Although they enter the institution out of other motives than the *fundadores* did, with a good training they are able to carry on and improve the institution. Although not every new police officer seems to know the role of the *fundadores* or mention specifically *la mística* or *el espíritu*, there exists a strong *esprit de corps* among the younger officers. Although they will have another formation process than the *fundadores* had, the essence of the values and principles of the *fundadores* will remain alive.

A final important result of the research concerns the so-called a-politicalness and the humanitarian face of the institution. It seems that Ortega uses his position to politicize the police force again. Although many *fundadores* still consider themselves Sandinistas, they are supposed to be a-political and many assure that they indeed act a-political. I have stated that we can question the fact if they are really as a-political as they say they are when we look to the manifestations of the current electoral campaign. The slogans of Daniel Ortega's presidential campaign are found throughout the entire institution. We have also seen that the police seem to shift its attention away from the community in order to serve politics. Additionally, the police lose its humanitarian face again because they act in a harsh way during the current political manifestations. This all shows that it is difficult for police organizations to function in a political context.

In order to give form to this thesis I have used an important framework in which *la mística* and *el espíritu* are explained. Important here is that although the concepts were framed differently by the different *fundadores*, they all referred in some way to the institutions' doctrine, mission, vision and the principles and values of the institution. They adopted and in some cases adapted the *mística* to their personal life and their morale. This *mística* was not only important for their personal morale but became also an important element of a shared morale within the institution, the *esprit de corps*.

The concept of *esprit de corps* is explained by Palante (1899), in the narrow sense, as a spirit of solidarity. This spirit that is used in the police institution strives to work effectively towards a common goal. This could be called the police doctrine. The *fundadores* mingle up *la mística* and *espíritu*, but that is not surprising because *espíritu* is part of the *mística* and the other way around. I have stated however that the personal *mística* of the *fundadores* within the institution has turned into an institutionalized *esprit de corps* consisting of different values and principles –originating from the socialistic principles of *el Sandinismo*– which serve as guideline for the police mission. The *fundadores* were able to preserve their *mística* in the police institution by securing their main objectives in official laws since the 1990s. Their ideas to strive for a better and equal society, the main reason why they took part in the revolution in the first place, have become a central part of the current police institution and mark the exceptional position of the Nicaraguan police

institution As stated many times before, their ideas are reflected in the current institution, in its doctrine, its mission, vision and principles and values and therefore their *mística* is carried on in the future. Moreover, in order to carry on this *mística*, not only a personal but also a corporate morale of all police members is essential, the *espíritu* or *esprit de corps*.

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## Glossary

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<i>Contra(s)</i>	Counterrevolutionary insurgents fighting against the Sandinista government. Their armed attacks began in 1980 and the group initially consisted of former <i>Guardias</i> but later on also peasants from the northern provinces, former Sandinistas, ethnic minorities and indigenous groups from the Caribbean Coast formed part of the so-called <i>contras</i> . The U.S. supported the <i>contras</i> by means of financial support.
<i>Danielista(s)</i>	Term for the followers of Daniel Ortega.
<i>Espíritu</i>	According to Dirk Kruijt <i>el espíritu</i> refers to the <i>esprit de corps</i> (moral of a group).
<i>Esprit de corps</i>	<i>Esprit de corps</i> can be seen as the moral of a group: ‘the common spirit existing in the members of a group, a spirit that inspires enthusiasm, devotion, and strong regard for the honor of the group’ (Dunkelman 2004:5).
FSLN	<i>Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional</i> ( <i>Sandinista National Liberation Front</i> ): Armed insurgency against the Somoza family. It began as a student-led organization in opposition to the Somoza dictatorship but eventually included multiple insurgency groups who cooperated in overthrowing Somoza.
<i>Fundador(es)</i>	Founder(s): in this case founders of the Nicaraguan Police Institution.

<i>Fundadora(s)</i>	Female founder(s): in this case founders of the Nicaraguan Police Institution.
<i>Guardia(s)</i>	Soldier(s) of la Guardia.
<i>Guardia (Nacional)</i>	(National) armed actor created in 1933 and from 1926 had the double function of army and police. La Guardia was in command of Somoza and became in the sixties and seventies a very repressive force.
<i>Mística</i>	According to Dirk Kruijt <sup>207</sup> <i>la mística</i> refers to the mission of the members of an institution or movement. <i>La mística</i> is however explained in different ways, it can for example also has a personal interpretation for different persons.
<i>PN</i>	<i>Policía Nacional</i> (National Police)
<i>Sandinismo</i>	Originally a range of ideas based on the ideas of Augusto Sandino. This first turned into a revolutionary movement and later into a political movement.
<i>Sandinista(s)</i>	Term for the followers of Augusto Sandino.
<i>Somocista(s)</i>	Follower(s) of Somoza.

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<sup>207</sup> E-mail contact Dirk Kruijt, April 27, 2011.

## Appendices

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### Appendix I: list of police officer informants used for this thesis

Ángel Solís:	<i>Fundador; Sub-Comisionado</i> (works with a special unity)
Aura Maria Cubillo Medrano:	<i>Fundadora; Comisionada, administrative sub-directora</i> of the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy
Cristian Martínez:	Daughter of Sadys Martínez
Daniel Gutiérrez Parrales:	<i>Fundador; Sub-Comisionado</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Daniel Trejos:	<i>Comisionado; Fundador</i> of the Nicaraguan army (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Eduardo Cuadra Ferrey:	<i>Fundador; Retired police officer.</i> Was sub-director of the PN from 1992 till 2001
Elman Valle:	<i>Fundador; Comisionado</i> (in 2011 working at <i>la Plaza del Sol</i> , police head office in Managua)
Fernando Borge:	<i>Fundador; Comisionado Mayor</i> (in 2011 working at <i>la Plaza del Sol</i> , police head office in Managua)
Francisco González Rodríguez:	<i>Fundador; Comisionado</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Francisco Javier Bautista Lara:	<i>Fundador; Retired general commissioner</i> and well-

known writer

- Gloria Mendoza: *Fundadora; Comisionada* (in 2011 working at *la Plaza del Sol*, police head office in Managua)
- Hilda Morillo: *Fundadora; Comisionada* (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
- Javiér Dávila: *Fundador; Comisionado Mayor*, (in 2011 Director of the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
- Jorge Muñis Franco: *Fundador; Sub-Comisionado* (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
- Jose David Jarquín Ortíz: *Fundador; Comisionado* (works in the northern part of Nicaragua)
- Kenya: Police officer (rank unknown, in 2011 working at the intelligence department in Granada)
- Luis Enrique Rodriguez: *Fundador*; Retired police officer. Writer of the police anthem
- Luis Jobel Morales: *Fundador; Sub-Comisionado* (in 2011 working at the 2nd district of Managua)
- Manuel Rocha: *Fundador; Comisionado* (in 2011 working at *la Plaza del Sol*, police head office in Managua)
- Marinda Trejos: Rank unknown (in 2011 working at *la Plaza del Sol*; works with the police more than 20 years)
- Mario Pérez Cuadra: Rank unknown (in 2011 working as a teacher at

	the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Marta Jiménez Pérez:	<i>Capitan</i> ; (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Martha García Miranda:	<i>Fundadora; Inspectora</i> (in 2011 working at the 2nd district of Managua)
Martha Picado Aguilon:	<i>Fundadora; Comisionada</i> (in 2011 working at <i>la Plaza del Sol</i> , police head office in Managua)
Mireya Guardado Reyes:	<i>Fundadora; Comisionada</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Obando:	<i>Fundadora; Comisionada</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Rómulo Vladimir Mejía Solano:	<i>Comisionado</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy; works with the police more than 20 years)
Sadys Martínez:	<i>Fundador; Comisionado</i> (in 2011 sub-director of the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Sofía Hunter:	<i>Teniente</i> (in 2011 working at the Walter Mendoza Martinez Police Academy)
Vilma Reyes:	<i>Comisionada Mayor</i> (in 2011 working at <i>la Plaza del Sol</i> , police head office in Managua; started working with the police in 1980. )

## **PRINCIPIOS Y VALORES INSTITUCIONALES**

### **PATRIOTISMO:**

Amor a la patria, el respeto a sus símbolos, sus héroes, su historia, tradición y costumbres; búsqueda permanente del bien a la patria y preservación de la unidad de la nación. Orgullo de pertenencia a la nación, manifestado en la conducta, actuación y forma de vida y la promoción de los valores nacionales.

### **LEGALIDAD:**

La organización, funcionamiento y actuación de la Policía se basa rigurosamente en la ley. Legalidad implica el apego irrestricto al marco legal existente, la defensa y promoción del Estado de Derecho, la promoción y defensa de los derechos humanos y la actuación imparcial sin distinción de raza, sexo, credo, posición política, económica o social. La legalidad está por encima de los intereses personales o de grupos particulares.

### **HUMANISMO:**

El ser humano es el centro y razón de ser de la actividad policial. El humanismo es elemento de cohesión interna y hacia fuera fortalece el vínculo de solidaridad con la comunidad. Expresión de HUMANISMO por parte del policía es su actitud de profundo respeto al ser humano y a su dignidad; su sensibilidad y solidaridad ante las personas; el respeto y promoción de los derechos humanos, en particular la protección y seguridad de los derechos, libertades y garantías de la niñez y de la adolescencia. Para ello, afirmará y consolidará una nueva cultura de reconocimiento a los niños como sujetos sociales de derecho.

### **PROFESIONALISMO:**

Formación profesional de los miembros de la institución, con una actitud constructiva motivada por la vocación de servicio, en correspondencia con las tendencias modernas de la ciencia y la tecnología, para elevar la capacidad de respuesta a las demandas y necesidades de la comunidad y del Estado en el campo policial.

El profesionalismo tiene su expresión práctica en la actuación policial digna, consciente, firme, decidida, serena y ponderada, con apego estricto a los principios establecidos en la Constitución, las Leyes y Reglamentos.

### **INTEGRIDAD:**

Honestidad, transparencia, compostura y decencia en la vida laboral, personal y social. Comportamiento acorde con la ley y las normas sociales, actitud ejemplar en todos los aspectos de la vida, que fortalezca el honor de la institución y sus miembros ante la sociedad.

### **SERVICIO A LA COMUNIDAD:**

El trabajo policial en todos sus ámbitos tiene sentido sólo en su estrecha vinculación con la comunidad a la que sirve, con el fin último de prevenir actos o situaciones que atenten contra la seguridad individual y colectiva.

El Policía mantiene una actitud permanente de disposición al servicio, de respuesta a las demandas de la comunidad, en estrecha vinculación con ella y actúa en correspondencia a las necesidades y aspiraciones sociales de seguridad y tranquilidad.

La institución policial y sus miembros mantienen comunicación permanente con la comunidad a través de mecanismos formales e informales para fortalecer sistemáticamente sus vínculos.

### **ESPIRITU DE CUERPO:**

Conciencia y convicción de pertenencia al cuerpo policial, que propicia y promueve la solidaridad, cooperación, fortaleza, unidad y cohesión de sus miembros hacia fines y objetivos institucionales. Lealtad a la institución, fidelidad a sus mandos y cohesión alrededor de los principios, valores, visión y misión de la Policía Nacional plasmados en su Doctrina.

### **CARATER PREVENTIVO DE LA ACCION POLICIAL:**

La razón de ser de toda acción policial es la prevención, ordenamiento escalonado que va desde la prevención para evitar actos que atenten contra la seguridad individual o colectiva, hasta la prevención de daños mayores a la sociedad mediante la ejecución de acciones coercitivas.

Conjuntamente con la comunidad, debemos desarrollar la capacidad de identificar circunstancias, condiciones, tendencias, vulnerabilidades físicas, sociales o de otra índole que nos indiquen la posibilidad de que ocurra un hecho de interés policial, para evitarlo o restringir sus efectos, disminuyendo la necesidad de ejercer acciones policiales de respuesta durante o después de la ocurrencia del hecho.

### **ENFOQUE DE GÈNERO:**

La Policía Nacional asume plenamente el enfoque de género, por convicción de su necesidad y justeza, y lo incorpora en sus políticas internas de selección de personal, formación profesional y técnica, asignación de grados y cargos, así como en sus relaciones con la comunidad.

Ampliar a la mujer policía los espacios de participación en todos los ámbitos de la institución, en particular su acceso en igualdad de condiciones a cargos de dirección, es el mejor medio para promover la toma de conciencia sobre la identidad de género. Asimismo, contribuirá a generar a nivel institucional y social cambios de valores, actitudes y conductas orientadas a avanzar en la equidad entre hombres y mujeres y a la eliminación de cualquier tipo de trato discriminatorio por razones de género.

Prescribed police attitudes | Jiménez 2010:18-19

## **DE LA ACTITUD Y RESPONSABILIDAD POLICIAL**

Todo miembro de la Policía Nacional actuará siempre sobre la base de las siguientes actitudes:

1. Profesará el Patriotismo, entendido como el amor y lealtad a la patria, a través de la promoción y defensa por el respeto a sus símbolos, a su soberanía, a sus héroes nacionales, patrimonio histórico-cultural y tradiciones.
2. Actuará siempre con respeto y apego a la legalidad, sin discriminación de género, edad, nacionalidad, condición social, religión, raza, ideología, filiación partidaria o de cualquier otro tipo.
3. Brindará un trato justo, sin discriminaciones, respetuoso y digno a todas las personas, en especial a aquellas que presentan mayor vulnerabilidad social, tales como: personas con discapacidad, mujeres embarazadas, niñas, niños, adolescentes y ancianos/as.
4. Respetará a los/as integrantes de los pueblos indígenas, reconociendo sus derechos, deberes y garantías consignadas en la Constitución Política.

5. Brindará atención especial y diferenciada a las víctimas de abuso sexual o violencia intrafamiliar, y procederá con la debida diligencia a fin de prevenir o investigar todo acto violento contra la mujer, la niñez, las personas de tercera edad y los minusválidos/as.
6. Buscará la superación de su personalidad, facultades y competencia profesional y técnica para adquirir un pensamiento creativo y crítico y disponerse a brindar un mejor servicio a la comunidad que sirve.
7. Procurará mantenerse mental y físicamente en óptimas condiciones para el buen desempeño de sus funciones, por lo que no abusará de la prescripción médica y evitará el abuso de bebidas alcohólicas y del tabaco, y en general, de toda práctica o sustancia psicotrópica, que tienda a deteriorar su salud física y mental.
8. Expresará lealtad y amor por la institución policial, se sentirá orgulloso de ella y lo demostrará con su actuación dondequiera que se encuentre.
9. Informará por escrito a su Jefe/a inmediato superior, toda transacción, inversión o adquisición de bienes o valores especificando el origen y el modo de obtención de los mismos.
10. No emitirá criterios a priori sobre hechos, situaciones y grado de responsabilidad o culpabilidad de personas en proceso de investigación por actos delictivos y siempre mantendrá la debida reserva, confidencialidad o en su caso, riguroso secreto, respecto a la información que conozcan en el ejercicio de sus funciones.
11. Mantendrá una actitud firme en la lucha contra toda forma o indicio de corrupción, y en ningún momento, utilizará su actuación o servicio policial como medio para obtener beneficios o favores personales.
12. Mantendrá en especial, una actitud firme y vigilante de toda conducta que, a lo interno, pueda propiciar o propicie administrativa u operativa, para tal fin, se prevendrá un subsistema y procedimiento que garanticen el flujo responsable de la información.
13. Protegerá y promoverá el prestigio y el buen nombre de la institución y la actividad policial.

### **ACTITUD PERSONAL DENTRO DE LA COMUNIDAD Y LA FAMILIA**

Todo/a funcionario/a de la Policía Nacional tendrá la siguiente actitud personal dentro de la comunidad.

1. Mantendrá relaciones positivas y constructivas con todos los sectores sociales de la comunidad a la que sirve, igualmente brindará su aporte personal para el logro de una vida comunal socialmente sana y segura.
2. Tratará a todas las personas de la comunidad con profundo respeto hacia la dignidad humana y conducirá sus relaciones dentro del campo más estricto de la ley y la ética, sin dar lugar a propuestas o iniciativas vinculadas a prácticas de favoritismo.

3. Actuará, aún si se encuentra fuera de servicio, por su iniciativa o por requerimiento de auxilio, en forma ágil y oportuna ante cualquier situación que atente contra el orden público y la seguridad ciudadana.
4. Cuidará que su aparición en actos públicos o en todo medio de difusión hablada o escrita, sea con el máximo respeto a su figura de autoridad y salvaguardará bajo cualquier circunstancia, su propio prestigio y el de la institución.
5. Promoverá relaciones familiares armoniosas, basadas en el amor, el respeto y la solidaridad, alejado de actos de violencia, humillaciones, discriminaciones, amenazas u ofensas que lesionen los derechos humanos y las buenas relaciones familiares.

### **RELACIONES ENTRE POLICIAS**

Todo/a funcionario/a de la Policía Nacional tendrá como principio el siguiente trato entre policías:

1. Tratará a sus compañeras y compañeros con mutuo respeto, evitando las expresiones o críticas que puedan dañar su reputación moral o profesional y el de su entorno familiar.
2. Será solidario/a con los compañeros y compañeras, activos o en retiro, brindando un trato especial a aquellos afectados por enfermedades y problemas que afecten sus facultades, vitalidad o condiciones de vida; así como, con los/as miembros de la institución que en el cumplimiento del deber o en ocasión del servicio, han cometido circunstancialmente hechos tipificados como delitos no dolosos.
3. Contribuirá al proceso de integración y equidad entre hombres y mujeres en la institución, y promoverá la igualdad y la ampliación de espacios para la mujer policía.
4. Desarrollará relaciones mutuas, de tipo profesional, técnico, humano, especialmente con los/as nuevos/as integrantes de la Policía Nacional para el buen desarrollo de sus funciones y fortalecimiento de la institución.

**Appendix III:** replacement of the old uniform by the current blue uniform



**Photo:** Uniform and badge  
1979-1990 | PN: Memoria, 30  
años con el mismo compromiso



**Photo:** Uniform and badge  
> 1990 | PN: Memoria, 30 años  
con el mismo compromiso

## Appendix IV: Police Anthem (Original Spanish version and English translation)

### Original Police Anthem

surgido del seno popular  
como parto anunciado por la historia  
con nombres ungidos por la gloria  
nacio la Policía Nacional  
a lado del pueblo y sus conquistas  
a lado del pueblo y sus dolores  
cultivando vocación de servidores  
crecio esta Policía con caracter humanista  
salvaguardas de la vida y de la paz  
protegemos a todos por igual  
nos inspira la justicia como ideal  
contribuimos al progreso de la comunidad  
como faro y eterno compromiso  
a los heroes caidos recordemos  
y al futuro de la patria prometemos

HONOR SEGURIDAD SERVICIO

estamos dispuestos al sacrificio  
nos impulsa nuestro lema y el valor  
combatiendo al crimen y los vicios  
capaces de entregar la vida por amor  
como faro y eterno compromiso  
a los heroes caidos recordemos  
y al futuro de la patria prometemos

HONOR SEGURIDAD SERVICIO

### English Translation

emerged out of the people's party  
as announced by history  
with names unfolded by glory  
rose the National Police  
on the side of the village and its victories  
on the side of the village and its sorrows  
cultivating the mission of being servants  
grew this Police with a human character  
guardians of life and peace  
we protect everyone equally  
we are inspired by the ideal of justice  
we contribute to the progress of the community  
as beacon and eternal compromise  
to the fallen heroes we remember  
and to the future of our homeland we promise

HONOUR SECURITY SERVICE

we are willing to sacrifice  
our slogan and bravery drives us  
fighting against crime and vices  
capable of surrender our life for love  
as beacon and eternal compromise  
to the fallen heroes we remember  
and to the future of our homeland we promise

HONOUR SECURITY SERVICE

**Appendix V:** photos of posters about the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino made by students on the Police Academy



**Photo:** Poster 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino | Taken By: Brenda van de Velde

**Photo:** Poster 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde



**Photo:** Poster + presentation first year students 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

Photo: Poster 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino |  
Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

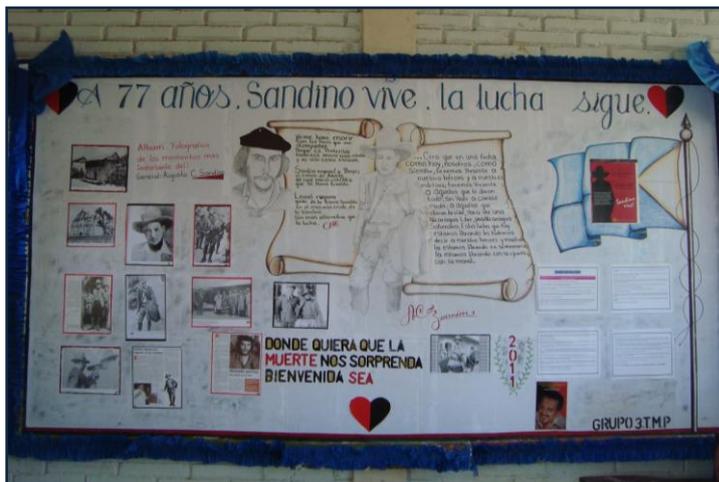


Photo: Poster 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sandino | Taken  
by: Brenda van de Velde

**Appendix VI:** photos of the visible political preference on the computers and motors of the police



**Photo:** Computer of a police officer with political background  
| Taken by: Brenda van de Velde



**Photo:** Police motor with sticker of the electoral campaign of Daniel Ortega | Taken by: Brenda van de Velde

**Appendix VII:** photos and snapshots of videos of *La Prensa* made during the confrontation between followers of Daniel Ortega and the opposition





Aminta Granera helps a boy standing up when he is aggressively arrested by the police. When the boy stands on his feet the police want to handle the boy aggressively again. Then Aminta Granera says to the officers ‘stop being violent, we do not want to be violent’ (‘Deja de ser violento, no queremos violencia’).