

United States Department of State



Sandinista Prisons

A Tool of Intimidation



Copy 1986

Department of State Publication 9492
Bureau of Inter-American Affairs

Released August 1986

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*The revolution . . . kills individuals
and intimidates thousands.*

—Leon Trotsky commenting
on the policy of “Red Terror,”
Democracy Versus Dictatorship, 1922.

In the American continent, there is no regime more barbaric and sanguinary, no regime that violates human rights in a manner more constant and permanent, than the Sandinista regime.

—Ismael Reyes, former President of the Nicaraguan Red Cross. Sandinista harassment forced him into exile in 1983.

Foreword

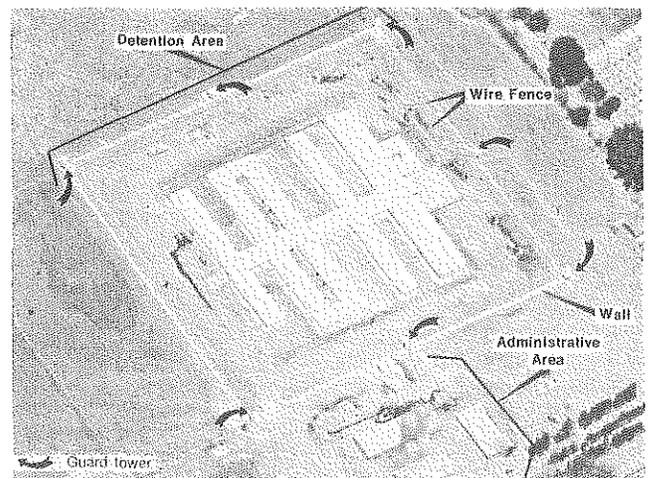
The Sandinistas now hold more political prisoners than any other government on the Latin American mainland.

The Sandinistas use the prison system in Nicaragua to hasten consolidation of their totalitarian regime by imprisoning those who express opposition to the revolution. To make room for the increased numbers of Nicaraguans they arrest, the Sandinistas have expanded the system and crowded more prisoners into existing cells. Somoza kept an average of 600 political prisoners. The Sandinistas, with at least 6,500 political prisoners and more than 2,000 former National Guardsmen behind bars, now hold more political prisoners than any other regime on the mainland of Latin America. In the entire hemisphere, only Communist Cuba holds more political prisoners. Nevertheless, some human rights groups ignore political imprisonment as a tool of Sandinista repression.

As a regular practice, the Sandinistas frame political dissidents on criminal charges. "Crimes" include criticism of the regime and failure to spy on neighbors for the government. By jailing victims without telling them why, the Sandinistas intimidate the victims and others who observe the process.

Abuse of prisoners is widespread and serious. The Sandinistas torture prisoners physically and psychologically; they routinely ignore civil rights, such as habeas corpus, right to counsel, and to be informed of charges; and they murder them.

The human suffering caused by the Sandinista prison system is incalculable. Eyewitness and victim accounts reveal the effect on the victims of abuse of power. The Sandinistas' goal is consolidation of Marxist-Leninist control of Nicaragua through intimidation of the population.



La Palmera prison near Granada—one of several prison facilities built or expanded in Nicaragua in the seven years since the Sandinistas came to power.

Driven by a fear of people's opinions, the totalitarian state imprisons citizens whose thoughts and acts are outside the narrow band of permitted orthodoxy.

Marxist-Leninist regimes invariably control most aspects of daily life. One technique of intimidation and repression is short- and long-term imprisonment. One result is a greatly increased prison population. Despite the blatant use of imprisonment as a tool of repression and the increase in the number of political prisoners under the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua, most human rights organizations have ignored this aspect of government repression.

Political prisoners are those imprisoned for their beliefs or political acts, regardless of the actual charge. The term political prisoner does not include those who have gone beyond advocacy and dissent to commit violent acts or other crimes.

During the Sandinista era, Nicaragua has greatly increased its number of political prisoners. The independent Permanent Commission on Human Rights of Nicaragua (CPDH) estimates that the Sandinistas are holding 6,500 political prisoners.* According to the CPDH, Somoza held about 600 political prisoners. Without including the political prisoners held in the General Directorate of State Security (DGSE, from its Spanish initials) prison system, the government-sponsored National Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (CNPPDH) released a figure

*The CPDH figure of 6,500 does not include former National Guardsmen who have been imprisoned since 1979. *El Nuevo Diario*, the Nicaraguan Government-supported newspaper, recently published a figure of 2,386 for currently held former National Guardsmen. Before this figure was published, the CPDH estimated 1,500-2,000 of the original 3,500 National Guard prisoners remained in prison. Some reports place the number of Nicaraguan political prisoners at a higher level. For example, Jaime Chamorro, editor of *La Prensa* (before its suspension, the only remaining independent newspaper in Nicaragua), estimated 10,000 political prisoners in an April 3, 1986, article in the *Washington Post*.

of 7,591 prisoners. This new figure represents a 50 per cent increase over 1983.

According to the Department of State Human Rights Report for Nicaragua in 1983, the Sandinistas held about 5,000 prisoners in that year. Precise figures for the number of uncharged political prisoners and DGSE prisoners cannot be obtained, and the statistical picture is muddled by Sandinista pronouncements. For example, on April 28, 1986, Comandante Daniel Ortega claimed the Sandinistas held only 3,500 prisoners. Ortega spoke just before *El Nuevo Diario*, the government-subsidized newspaper, published the CNPPDH figure of 7,591 as the total for Nicaraguan prisoners. Whatever set of figures is used, there appears to be at least a tenfold increase in political imprisonment in Nicaragua.

Just as important as the disputed figures are the conditions under which prisoners are held. For example, many prisoners in Nicaragua have never been charged with a specific offense or formally sentenced. According to the *Nuevo Diario* figures, 2,323 prisoners currently await sentencing. Many prisoners seized for political offenses are held on spurious criminal charges. Conditions within the prisons are often harsh, and torture, both physical and psychological, appears to be common. Prisoners held by the DGSE frequently face a situation of not knowing why they are being held or how they can secure their release. This indeterminate imprisonment is designed to intimidate the victim and to serve as an example to others. The purpose is to cause the people to become their own jailers by limiting their own behavior. This report explains how the process works in Nicaragua.

Information in this report is compiled from U.S. intelligence sources, defector reports, interviews with former prisoners, and other eyewitness accounts. This report includes material provided by Nicaraguan exiles such as former

Chief Investigator of the Special Investigations Commission of the Nicaraguan Ministry of Interior, Alvaro Jose Baldizon Aviles; former Sandinista General Directorate of State Security (DGSE, or Sandinista secret police) agents Javier Torres and Rigoberto Wilford; Mateo Jose Guerrero, former Executive Director of the government Human Rights Commission; former Vice Minister of Justice Alberto Gamez Ortega; and former Nicaraguan Red Cross president, Ismael Reyes. A report written by Wesley Smith, an American familiar with Central America, and a report on prisons by the Permanent Commission on Human Rights of Nicaragua (CPDH), an independent human rights group located in Managua, also were used in preparing this report.

Although the experiences of the witnesses differ, their testimony paints a consistent picture of the Sandinista prison system. Alvaro Baldizon, in particular, derived specific information from his job as an investigator looking at reported human rights abuses. His job was to ascertain the facts to enable the government to concoct plausible cover stories. As a militant of the Sandinista party, cleared for much of the most secret information of the Ministry, he had intimate knowledge of the operations of the Ministry of Interior and the DGSE. After becoming aware of the full implications of his role, Baldizon considered resigning his position. Unable to do so without spending a year in military detention, he secretly planned to leave Nicaragua. After managing his escape in July 1985, he came to the United States and made his story public. His reports have been supplemented and substantiated by other ex-Sandinista officials and by other testimony.

DGSE agents Javier Torres and Rigoberto Wilford joined the stream of refugees from Nicaragua in 1985. They have also presented information on the activities of their former organization.

Mateo Guerrero fled Nicaragua in early 1985 from his position as Executive Director of the CNPPDH, the official government human rights commission for Nicaragua. Like Baldizon, Guerrero became disillusioned when he realized that his role was not to protect the victims of human rights abuses, but to protect the government from the international consequences of its actions.

Alberto Gamez Ortega, a college friend of Sandinista Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge, had been openly critical of the Somoza regime. Within six months of the revolution the Sandinistas had appointed him Vice Minister of Justice. By November 1982, he had become disillusioned with the Sandinista system of justice and resigned. Almost immediately Gamez went from an administrator of the Sandinista justice system to one of its victims. He was held in Managua's *El Chipote* prison for two and a half months. Five months after his release he was able to visit Costa Rica for treatment of health problems, and never returned to Nicaragua.

Ismael Reyes, Director of the Nicaraguan Red Cross during the latter years of the Somoza regime, continued in

that position under the Sandinistas until the regime drove him into exile in 1983.

Wesley Smith, an American, lived in Central America for two years. He later traveled through the area and conducted investigations and interviews on a private foundation grant, interviewing hundreds of victims of the Sandinista system in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Costa Rica. He consolidated the interviews in a report titled, "The Sandinista Prison System: A Nation Confined," released in March 1986. Smith's interviews confirm the information provided by Baldizon, Guerrero, and Reyes on conditions in the Sandinista prison system.

This report focuses on the conditions under which political prisoners are held in Nicaragua. Although various estimates for the number of political prisoners exist, including the published Sandinista figures, the suspension of habeas corpus in political cases and the large number of clandestine arrests make it difficult to determine how many political prisoners the Sandinistas hold at any given time. And the numbers cannot tell the story of the so-called "floating prison population"—those Nicaraguans who are arrested and rearrested and held for short periods under stressful conditions to deter them from future resistance or disagreement with the regime. They suffer their ordeals in obscurity, but the effect on their personal lives is catastrophic. As Leon Trotsky, the revolutionary companion of Lenin, said of the policy of the "Red Terror": "The revolution . . . kills individuals, and intimidates thousands." In Nicaragua, political detention is designed to intimidate the entire country and to end opposition to the Sandinistas. The effect of this intimidation on political life in Nicaragua is devastating.



Former Vice Minister of Justice Alberto Gamez Ortega was held for two and a half months following his resignation from the Sandinista government in 1982.

The Sandinistas run three different kinds of prisons, but sometimes the distinctions blur.

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Interior (MINT), headed by Comandante Tomas Borge, centrally controls the entire penal system.* The MINT, which has more than 200 Cuban advisers, is also responsible for foreign intelligence, internal security, police, and investigation services. The Penal Directorate (SNP) of the MINT operates the prisons under the *Sistema Penitenciario*. The MINT's DGSE operates those under *Operaciones*.

Prisons described as *Sistema Penitenciario* are theoretically ordinary criminal prisons. The DGSE secret police run the *Operaciones* prisons. However, as other interviewees have reported, these distinctions are theoretical, since political prisoners may be charged under criminal statutes (sometimes with grossly faked evidence), prisoners are mixed, and, at any rate, the entire prison system is under Borge's control. *Sistema* facilities are usually larger than *Operaciones*, which hold 500 or fewer prisoners. Defectors and other sources have identified at least 23 Sandinista prisons in Nicaragua, although Somoza had only 19.

The Sandinistas have also created *Granjas*, model minimum security prison farms which hold trustee prisoners, low-ranking ex-members of the National Guard, those about to finish their sentences, and prisoners who have served as informers. Sandinista tour guides show these facilities to visitors as typical of prisons of Nicaragua.



AP/Wide World Photos

Comandante Tomas Borge Martinez, whose Ministry of Interior controls the Sandinista prison system.

Former prisoners and defectors confirm the existence of clandestine DGSE facilities. Alvaro Baldizon has reported at least 20 clandestine jails, many of which are isolated houses where 5 or 10 prisoners are held in complete secrecy. There are also 48 local police stations throughout the country, each with a few ordinary holding cells.

Arbitrary Incarceration

Some people held by the Sandinistas are clearly political prisoners. Others are probably political prisoners, but have been jailed under trumped-up criminal charges. Former Sandinista government officials have reported that the Sandinistas routinely frame mid-level political opponents on false criminal charges. Using criminals in their employ, the secret police break into opponents' homes and automobiles to plant evidence such as narcotics, then stage raids to "discover" the evidence.

The Sandinistas use short-term jailing and interrogation to inhibit opposition activity. Frequently, political and religious leaders are required to report to *El Chipote* prison or the State Security interrogation facility "Casa 50" (House Number 50) at a specified date and time. The secret police then detain them for 6-48 hours. This short-term jailing technique is often applied to lawyers who attempt to defend political prisoners.

Accusations

Offenses that may result in arrest include failure to attend Sandinista Defense Committee (CDS) meetings, objecting to the draft, or a too vigorous practice of religion. Evangelical Protestant groups are frequently the target of such action. For example, shortly after the October 15, 1985, restatement of the State of Emergency, the DGSE summoned principal

*Under Somoza, only one prison, the *Carcel Modelo* (Model Prison), was run by the national government.

REPUBLICA DE NICARAGUA
MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR
SECCION DE OPERACIONES

Organo: D.G.S.E.

Fecha: 27/2/86

CITACION

Se procede a la citación de JOSE [REDACTED]

Vecino de Colonia Maximo Jerez, casa No. [REDACTED]

A fin de que se presente en: Relaciones Públicas, ubicadas detrás del Hotel Intercontinental, Col. Oscar Pérez Cassar, casa No. 50, Managua.

Con el objeto de: ENTREVISTA

Ante: Tnte. Reymundo Rodríguez C. el día: [REDACTED] 1986

a las [REDACTED] horas.

NOTA: Por no encontrarse el interesado, se le entrega la citación a: _____

CITADO

Persona que recibe

S/T. CONCEPCION GARCIA M.
CITADOR

TENTE. REYMONDO RODRIGUEZ.
Oficial Investigador

A typical citation to report to "Casa 50" for an interview. Ironically, this document calls for the cited individual to report to the "Public Relations" department. Such interviews can result in as much as two years of detention without judicial process.

Protestant leaders to *El Chipote*. Those summoned included the current and former presidents of the National Council of Evangelical Pastors (CNPEN), the head of the Alliance for Children (a children's Bible study organization), the national director of the Bible Society, and the pastor of the First Evangelical Church of Managua. Eight Catholic priests from the Managua area were called in during November 1985. Their offenses included mentioning "political issues" in their homilies and asking the government for the return of Church offices and properties seized by the government.

Any expression of opposition to the regime can result in sudden arrest or a citation to report to prison. Often, when the primary purpose has been to intimidate, the detainee is neither informed of the nature of the offense nor formally charged. Since the Sandinistas have taken charge, the police have the power, without referring cases to a court, to impose administrative punishment of up to two years for "offenses against the state" such as cattle rustling, distribution of drugs, insult to authority, and economic crimes such as hoarding and speculation. Police court sentencing does

not permit the right to legal counsel, habeas corpus, or appeal. Thus the police can and do arbitrarily sentence victims for as much as two years in prison without reference to any other authority. Other offenses that can result in detention under the rubric "offenses against the state" include:

- selling grain on the open market
- refusing to join the militia
- selling foodstuffs on prohibited days
- professing counterrevolutionary ideology
- investigating Sandinista abuses
- organizing civic opposition to the Sandinistas
- criticizing the government
- feeding armed resistance fighters
- refusing to work on government cooperatives
- refusing to conduct neighborhood vigilance
- counterrevolutionary activities
- presenting legal defenses for political detainees
- membership in the National Guard

Inside the Prisons

Most feared of all is the former secret police facility in Managua—*El Chipote*.

Population density in the Sandinista prisons is much greater than during Somoza's era, and the size of individual facilities has been increased. During Somoza's reign Nicaraguan prisons held about 600 political prisoners, according to the CPDH. The Sandinistas have increased the number of prisons in Nicaragua, and expanded some facilities. There has also been a tenfold increase in the number of political prisoners. Examples of expansion include the 1983 additions and construction in progress on a new addition to the *Carcel Modelo* (Model Prison) in Tipitapa, which had been Somoza's main incarceration facility. According to Ismael Reyes, each cell in the *Carcel Modelo* held one prisoner during the Somoza regime; now these same cells hold four to seven prisoners. Moreover, defectors report that about 35,000 people have passed through the prison system since 1979, including regular inmates and the "floating prison population." As opposed to the shorter detentions which may be used for those interrogated at *El Chipote*, periodic detentions of the "floating prison population" range in duration from a few hours or days to a month or six weeks. The purpose is intimidation. Release is sometimes offered if the victims agree to cooperate with the DGSE by providing

information on fellow citizens.

Most feared of all the Sandinista prisons is *El Chipote*—the former Somoza secret police facility in Managua. Since the Sandinistas took over, *El Chipote* has been remodeled. The former classic bar-type cell doors have been replaced with solid metal plate doors with a tiny window. Underground cells are ventilated only by a narrow air tube, or one slot in the solid metal door. Cells are brightly lighted or totally dark. In most cells, the only toilet facility is a hole in the floor—usually with fluorescent paint around the edges to guide the prisoner in the darkness.

El Chipote and other prisons feature small cells about one meter high and a half-meter long and wide called *La Chiquita*, or "The Little One." Between interrogation sessions, victims are made to wait in these tiny cubicles, in which the prisoner can neither sit nor stand, but must rest with back and knees jammed against opposite walls. Some are nearly air tight, with a small tube in the top as the sole ventilation system.

The February 1986 report of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights (CPDH) estimates that there were 9,000 prisoners in Nicaragua, of which 6,500 are political

prisoners. The latter number does not include the former National Guardsmen still held in prison, though most are, in fact, political prisoners. Many have never been charged with crimes, but are incarcerated solely on the basis of their former association with the Guard. The Sandinistas imprisoned these Guardsmen after special trials which amounted to mass condemnation rather than individual consideration of specific crimes. Exact numbers of prisoners are difficult to verify because habeas corpus for political crimes was effectively suspended under the State of Emergency initially declared in March 1982, and periodically reinstated, most recently in October 1985. Without habeas corpus, political prisoners can be detained without judicial consent or record. The sharp increase in arrests, which began with the new emergency decree of October 15, 1985, has continued in 1986. For example, more than 300 Catholic lay workers, Protestant evangelists, and ordinary farmers were recently jailed in the Nueva Guinea area in January 1986. An additional 150 persons were arrested in Matagalpa and about 200 in Juigalpa.

Ex-Sandinista officials report widespread corruption within the Penal Directorate. Corrupt practices include renting prisoners out to labor for the profit of the prison staff, selling for profit products produced by prisoners, coercing sexual favors from wives of inmates, and appropriating packages sent by the Red Cross and religious organizations.

Torture

According to Nicaraguan refugees, the Sandinistas torture and murder prisoners. The secret police interrogate prisoners with the assistance of Cuban advisers, who routinely participate in the physical abuse. Besides physical torture, DGSE interrogators psychologically torture the prisoners. Middle-class prisoners frequently are the victims of this psychological torture, which leaves no scars to show to international visitors. And the middle class is particularly vulnerable to the psychological torture used, since exposure to the harsh conditions of the prisons is completely alien to their daily life. DGSE interrogators often physically torture peasant prisoners, since they are unlikely to be protected by well-connected family or by the possibility of revelation of their suffering to the international media. The Sandinistas also murder prisoners. Bodies of prisoners killed by security forces are routinely photographed with weapons so the Sandinistas can claim they were Contras killed in combat, and the number slain is added to government claims of rebel casualties.

Psychological tortures include:

- subjection to fake executions
- detention of family members

- use of recorded screams attributed to prisoners' family members crying out under torture
- forcing victims to exercise naked before their guards, who taunt them on their performance
- uninterrupted darkness
- extended solitary confinement
- disruption of physiological rhythms by randomly varying periods of light and darkness and feeding intervals
- firing unloaded pistols into the open mouth of the victim

Physical methods of torture include:

- confinement in barrels of cold water for long periods
- hanging by the hands
- placement in hot boxes
- confinement to *La Chiquita*
- repeated movement from hot to cold cells
- placement in neck-deep sewage pits
- beatings with rolled wet towels
- multiple rape
- physical beatings with bare knuckles or boxing gloves
- forced standing for long periods
- denial of food
- attacks by trained dogs
- beatings with wooden clubs
- prolonged forced staring into the sun
- subjection to pain-inducing sound
- electrical shock to genitalia



Nicolas Nelson Perez Aviles, a Managua taxi driver, died in police custody in June 1982. When his body was turned over to relatives, bruises and deep cuts indicated he had been tortured. The official explanation of his death claimed that he had been shot while "attempting to escape."

“I was in jail for two years and never saw a judge.”

Few outside visitors are able to see other than the model prison facilities, particularly the farms that the Sandinistas exhibit to foreigners. Neither the International Red Cross nor Mateo Guerrero, head of the official Sandinista human rights organization, could observe DGSE facilities or attend to prisoners there.

Because the Sandinistas can force it to end its operation at any time, the nongovernmental CPDH must limit its activities. Protected from closure only by its international reputation and the Sandinistas' fear of worldwide negative publicity, the CPDH has developed a methodology which allows it a limited ability to investigate cases. To avoid provoking further limitations, the CPDH investigates only those cases brought directly to its offices. Formal pursuit of a case requires signed and sworn affidavits. Few people are willing to risk prosecution by the government for formalizing their complaints. The CPDH reports that many cases are brought to it informally, and it estimates that Nicaraguans denounce only one in ten Sandinista abuses. Peasants in areas far from Managua have little inclination to make the trip to Managua on the slim chance that exposing themselves to imprisonment will result in help for a missing relative.

Some who have survived the prison system and escaped from Nicaragua were interviewed in Honduras and Costa Rica. Others have been interviewed by U.S. Embassy officers and visitors from Washington, D.C., or have publicized their experiences after leaving Nicaragua. A small sample of their experiences is presented here.

Labor leader Eugenio Membreno was imprisoned in November 1983 after publicly debating members of the Sandinista labor union (CTS). The issues of the debate were the main evidence against him. This case shows how petty the motivation for a political arrest can be. Membreno states:

We were finally sentenced to 50 days in prison for what the judge called “ideological differences.” One of the CTS [Sandinista union] members asked the judge that we be condemned. When he was asked why, the CTS leader said, “Because the CTN [Membreno's union] leaders think they were borne by Tarzan's mother.” That meant that we thought we were supermen and so the Sandinista said, “That is why I think they should be condemned.” That was one of the accusations against us by one of the witnesses at the trial.

Methods of interrogation can accomplish their terrorist purpose without leaving a mark. A prisoner who must remain unidentified because he is still in Nicaragua described

an incident that happened to him at one of the small rural clandestine facilities of the type reported by Baldizon:

[The prison guards] lined us up in the back of the yard right next to the swimming pool. Our hands were tied behind our backs and they would walk by and push us into the pool one by one. They would let us start drowning and then they would pull us out of the water and make us confess our “counterrevolutionary” activities as we gasped for breath.

A prisoner who had been in *El Chipote* reported:

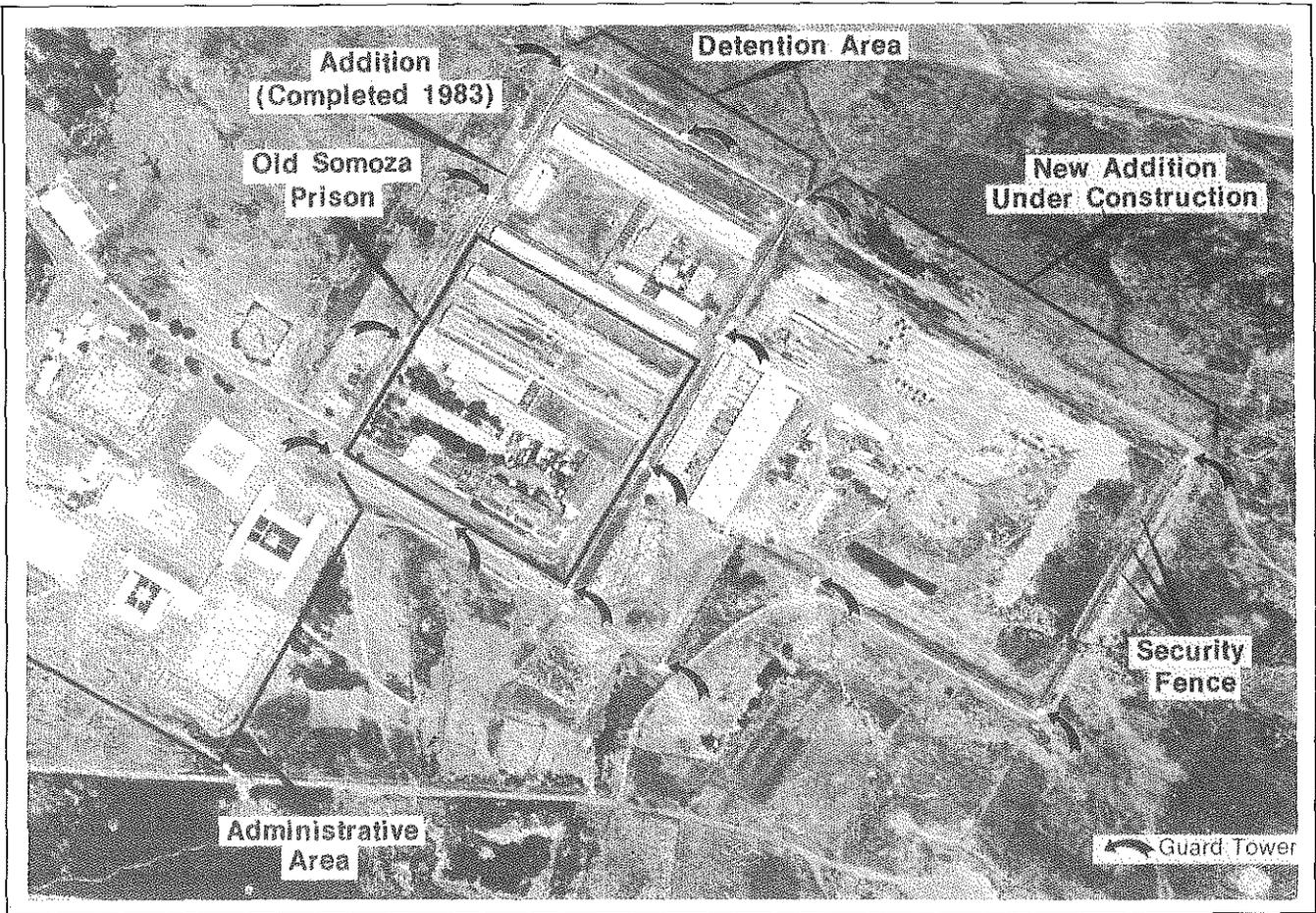
They took me to *El Chipote* and put me into a cubicle for what must have been one hour. You could hardly breathe in the cell and it was pitch black. They then took me out and interrogated me. I was placed into a larger cell later on. During the days I sweated it was so hot and in the night the cells got real cold. During the night I could hear the screams and cries of women coming from other cells.

Silvia Guzman Guerrero was arrested on May 17, 1985, on accusations made by Sandinista Defense Committee members that she had engaged in unspecified “counterrevolutionary activities.” Although no evidence for the charges was ever presented, she experienced the following:

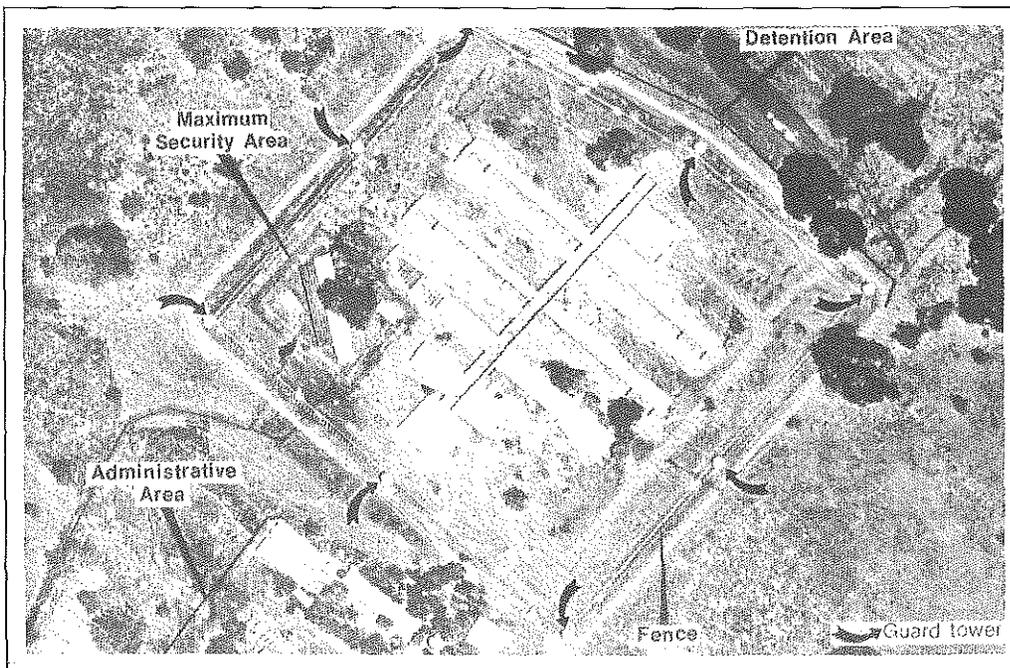
I was taken to the prison *El Chipote* in the middle of the night. As we got close to the Intercontinental Hotel I was told to put my head to the floor of the car, which I did. I was conducted into the prison which is located at the top of the hill behind the hotel. They took all my personal information and then one [Sandinista soldier] took me to a cell no more than 32 inches wide. I felt like I was going to suffocate and after about 15 minutes I started to cry. They then took me and put me into a larger cell that had four beds in it. It was totally dark in this cell as well. At noon the next day we were taken out of *El Chipote* and sent to *Las Tejas* in Matagalpa. In Matagalpa we went for four days without water. We were given *gallo pinto* [rice and beans] to eat but the food was spoiled. I was number 7009 and my father was number 7007 because I had an opportunity to see him at the other end of the hall during one occasion. He was released after 15 days in *Las Tejas*. I was never taken before a judge or tribunal but they repeatedly said we had been condemned for four years.

Others confirm that formal charges were not brought against them. Jose Rivera, 32 years old, reported on conditions he experienced:

The treatment one receives in *La Modelo* is very severe. They don't let you sleep. When you are lying down in the middle



Above: This aerial photograph of the former Somoza *Carcel Modelo* (Model Prison) shows additions the Sandinistas made in 1983, as well as continuing construction to expand the prison. Below: Asuncion Prison near Juigalpa. Even with new prisons and additional construction at existing facilities, there is a shortage of space for some 7,500 prisoners.



of the night they throw water on you and take you out for interrogation. I and other prisoners believe they have killed many prisoners because they are taken out for interrogations and they never return. They had never judged me for any crime because they said there were too many prisoners to judge immediately. I was in jail for two years and never saw a judge.

Denis Correa reports his personal experience of the difficulty for outside observers to learn the truth about the prisons:

We always knew when the journalists would arrive because we started receiving good attention. They permitted us to wash our clothes and those who had none were given some. On certain occasions they put bicarbonate in our food so our stomachs appeared full. You could never speak to a journalist even if you trusted him because the guards were always in their presence. Whenever the journalists did ask questions we of course said nothing. Others felt pressured to say the food was good and so they did.

Jimmy Hassan was picked up on October 31, 1985, for his activities as the National Director of the Campus Crusade for Christ in Nicaragua. After a short detention, he was released but given a citation to report to State Security for further interrogation. In the interrogation at *El Chipote* he endured typical psychological torture routines, such as *La Chiquita*, the cold room, and the Sandinista trick of firing an unloaded pistol at the victim. He was then taken to the State Security jail which lies just behind the Intercontinental Hotel in Managua. He soon realized that many of his colleagues had been arrested also:

And finally they said that they were going to begin proceedings to arrest my wife because I had not wanted to confess my links with the counterrevolutionaries. Again they took me to the hallway of the two-by-two cell. They opened the door and inside the room there was one of the members of the Campus Crusade. They shut that door and opened another one. There was another staff member completely nude. And then they shut that door and opened another one, and in that room there was a young woman involved in the movement, completely nude. They shut the door and opened another one and put me in. About an hour later they took me out of the cell and back in the cold room. Here they told me that all my fellow staff members had confessed everything and that they didn't need my confession, but that they wanted to give me another opportunity.

Hassan was then released:

When I arrived in my house I found my wife; they had not arrested her. You see, when I was in the cold room the second time I began to hear the crying of a woman and the officer told me that possibly she was my wife. So when I was set free there at my office I thought that my wife was arrested.

After his arrest, Hassan's relatives, friends, and staff members were interrogated and told they were prohibited to contact him on pain of arrest. Yet he states:

I would like to state that I am a privileged person because dozens of Nicaraguan Christians have passed through much more painful experiences than mine. They have suffered much more, especially the churches in the countryside, and especially those that have very little communication with the city.

Reflections

For the average Nicaraguan, the danger of political imprisonment under cruel conditions continues.

Of the intelligence information and other testimony cited in this publication, the most troubling facts are the increase of political prisoners under the Sandinista regime, the abuse of prisoners, and the intimidating effect on the entire Nicaraguan population of the DGSE's ability to arrest anyone and to hold prisoners under abominable conditions until their will is broken or they die.

Ismael Reyes, former President of the Nicaraguan Red Cross, assisted imprisoned Sandinistas during the Somoza period. He compares the prisons under Somoza and under the Sandinistas:

Somoza, the monster, allowed me (as President of the Red Cross) to visit Sandinista leaders (Tomas Borge, Luis Carrion,

Carlos Nunez, Marcio Jaen) in the Model Prison and in the embassies where they had sought asylum. [This group included the revolutionaries Joaquin Cuadra, Ricardo Coronel-Kautz, Miguel D'Escoto, and Sergio Ramirez.]

Somoza, the criminal, allowed me to visit Carrion in jail whenever his parents requested me to do it. He allowed me to visit Borge in jail for medical attention by one of our doctors and for his relatives to see him, etc. He allowed me to visit Nunez and attend to his tuberculosis treatment in the jail; to visit Jaen and keep him informed about his mother who carried on a hunger strike in our institution.

Somoza, the murderer, allowed Tomas Borge to call me on the phone at night from the Model Prison, asking for favors.

He allowed me to visit Colonel Larios in prison after he had led an unsuccessful insurrection in the army, and he allowed me to transfer a group of relatives of the Sandinista prisoners from the Nunciatura to the Red Cross headquarters, to take care of them and provide them medical attention during their hunger strike.

The Sandinista government never allowed me to see Colonel Larios (former Minister of Defense in the Sandinista regime) in the Model Prison, and they would shoot dead any warden who allowed a prisoner to make a phone call, for they consider it a crime and treason. I am not defending Somoza. I am

comparing two very grave evils that have different degrees of monstrosity.

Never a supporter of Somoza, but thoroughly familiar with his prison system, Reyes now criticizes the Sandinistas for their misuse of imprisonment. For the average Nicaraguan, the danger of political imprisonment under cruel conditions continues. For those who have not been imprisoned, the example of their compatriots reminds them of the price of dissent. Intimidation of the people is an effective weapon in consolidating Marxist-Leninist control.

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