Traditionally, Christianity and Marxism have always been enemies. Sociologist of religion Steve Bruce speaks of “a traditional monolithic religious bloc confronted by the equally monolithic organic ideology of Communism and socialism.”¹ Evangelical apologist Francis Schaeffer, while conceding Marx and Engels expressed an interest in man, argued that when their political theory was developed to its logical conclusion “man became devalued in the communist state.”² Meanwhile, Dale Vree believes synthesising Marxism and Christianity is impossible. He argues recent attempts are only mildly successful because they are dialogues between the revisionists, or dissident, strands within each (he labels them ‘dialogical Christians’ and ‘dialogical Marxists’), rather than traditionalist, or conservative majorities within both, which are wholly incompatible. Thus, Vree speaks of two “disjunctive belief systems” hostile towards each other for more than a century.³ Throughout the twentieth century, then, most Catholics and Protestants rejected communist atheism (the product of Marxist materialism) and decried restrictions faced by churches in the East Bloc. Alasdair MacIntyre writes:

Because persecution by Soviet power was designed to deny, so far as it could, any independence to the lives of the churches, Christianity had to identify itself with the cause of the anti-Communist West.⁴

Evangelical antipathy towards communism (especially in the U.S.) is even more acute. Steve Bruce highlights a 1988 Christianity Today poll of Evangelicals in which 54% of respondents wanted the U.S. to “work harder at fighting communism around the world.”⁵ Between 1958 and

⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, Marxism and Christianity (London: Duckworth, 1995), v.
⁵ Steve Bruce, Pray TV: Teleevangelism in America (London: Routledge, 1990), 181–182.
1967 the National Association of Evangelicals adopted seven resolutions condemning communism, more than any other topic it has addressed since 1942.\textsuperscript{6} Pentecostalism is especially anti-communist. Subscribing to premillennial dispensationalist eschatology (see discussion in Chapter 7) it associates biblical Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38–39) with Russia.\textsuperscript{7} Thus, classical Pentecostals viewed the Soviet Union and East Bloc with hostility. (Pentecostal observer Dwight Wilson goes further, detailing how Pentecostal eschatology and Russian anti-Semitism make Pentecostalism anti-Russian, as well as anti-communist).\textsuperscript{8} Finally, several studies cited in Chapter 1 (especially those by David Haslam and NACLA) also highlight how Central American Evangelicalism was strongly anti-communist, while many of the Nicaraguan Evangelical leaders I interviewed expressed strong anti-communist sentiment.

Clearly, then, if the Sandinistas were Marxists or communists this would have been acutely troubling for Nicaragua’s conservative Protestants, and thus have a highly detrimental effect on Evangelical-Sandinista relations. Initially, Sandinista ideology was not a major issue. Mark Everingham has pointed out how, by the closing stages of Somoza’s dictatorship, “it was difficult to find a citizen in the country who did not talk like a revolutionary and claim the vindication of national hero and martyr, Augusto Cesar Sandino.”\textsuperscript{9} Yet after the Triumph, the Frente began tightening its grip on government, and the emergence of an anti-Sandinista opposition prompted discussions among Nicaraguanists concerning the nature of Sandinista ideology. Harry Vanden regards sandinismo as a blend of Third World Marxism, Guevarist revolutionism, and a Nicaraguan national consciousness rejecting U.S. intervention in Nicaragua’s affairs as a sovereign nation.\textsuperscript{10} This ‘anti-Yanqui’ nationalism drove Sandino’s revolutionary movement and also underpinned the rise of the FSLN in 1961. Thus, Vanden believes this national (rather than class) consciousness, represented the


\textsuperscript{7} An ancient Pentecostal view that was later popularised and expounded by Hal Lindsay, The Late Great Planet Earth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970).

\textsuperscript{8} Dwight Wilson, ‘Eschatology, Pentecostal Perspectives On’ in Burgess and McGee, Dictionary of Pentecostal, 266.


\textsuperscript{10} Harry Vanden, ‘The Ideology of the Insurrection’ in Walker, Nicaragua in Revolution.