Of Nicaragua’s population of 2.9 million, 54% live in cities, 48% are under fifteen years old and 68% are under 24 years old. The majority of Nicaraguans have known no life other than that of natural disasters, the savage military repression of the National Guard, and the revolutionary struggle against Somoza’s dictatorship.

In Nicaraguan poetry, earthquake and revolution are interchangeable images of inevitable upheaval and transformation. It is within this imagery that “los muchachos” (the kids) learn to define themselves, their accomplishments and their responsibility as Nicaraguans for developing their own potentiality.

* earthquake, violent upheaval

CHILDREN OF THE TERREMOTO*

Baby and literacy primer. The family occupies the one room still stable in an office block demolished by an earthquake in the old commercial centre of Managua.
Above: Two orphans living in the ruins of a Managuan theatre. The stage provides a space for their lean-to shelter and for games rehearsing the roles their older sisters and brothers already play in the militia. Below: In Managua the housing shortage is endemic. While housing projects are beginning to take shape in this lakeside barrio, it remains one of the poorest in Managua. The drum is the block’s only water supply.

Top: The detritus of earthquake and the trophies of street fighting — adventure playgrounds and artifacts of revolutionary culture for Managuan children. Below: Veteran Sandinista and grandson at Commemoration Rally. Images of children and guns, anathema in our eyes, have different significations in a country which sees itself as the product of its history of rebellion and which is totally mobilised in defence of its revolution.