

NICARAGUA

THE STOLEN REVOLUTION



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By Max Singer

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Cover. Crowds gather during commemoration of first anniversary of the revolution against Somoza

Introduction: Making Judgments

Free and progressive people throughout the world exult when a revolution succeeds in overthrowing a tyrant. And so it is hard to accept facts that show that the hopes raised by a successful revolution have been betrayed, and the revolution has been transformed into a new tyranny and a new colonialism.

The Sandinista leadership promised pluralism and pragmatism. Did they mean it? Or were they classic Marxist-Leninists determined to impose their ideology on their countrymen by force as quickly as they prudently could? Were the visible elements of pluralism and pragmatism evidence of uncertainty or disagreement within the leadership? Or were they the result of a Sandinista decision to move only gradually to install totalitarian rule? Did the Sandinistas move slowly in squeezing independent groups to conceal their true nature for as long as possible, and thus preserve the benefits of Western financial and political support? Or were they forced to militarize and to repress opposition because of hostility and danger from the United States?

Initially, the question of what they "intended" was confused with the question of who "they" were. Was the revolutionary government that of Alfonso Robelo, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Eden Pastora, and dozens of other reformers and democratic revolutionaries, or was it firmly in the hands of the Marxist-Leninist leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)? If the FSLN Directorate was in control, was it unified, or were there pluralist factions within it?

Despite the difficulty of these questions, some people seemed to

know the answers before they looked at the facts. Many in the United States, Europe and elsewhere seem to think that any reform designed to help the poor at the expense of the rich and middle class is at least the first step down a slippery slope to communism. Some still see any criticism of the United States, or any connections with Russia or Cuba, as proof of communism. And some have a double standard that perceive any violence against a government, however tyrannical, as intolerable, but condone violence by government forces.

On the other hand, many individuals uncritically accept the claims of any group who learns how to disguise its true character with the thinnest blanket of anti-Western, leftist rhetoric. Such people see any attempt to question the credentials of those seeking power "on behalf of the masses" as automatically reactionary, or as excessive anti-communist zeal.

Given such strong preconceptions among large numbers of individuals, the inability of political experts and ordinary citizens, within Nicaragua and without, to reach clear-headed judgments about the nature of the Sandinista regime is not surprising. The difference between a genuine commitment to democracy may be difficult to distinguish from a forgery, at least initially. Therefore, it is necessary to go beyond a recitation of superficial facts and statements and look at character, motivation and intention.

Today, after a record of three years of Sandinista rule, the evidence now is there for all to examine.

Nicaragua Now

What are facts about Nicaragua?

The Sandinista leadership declared that they were committed to pluralism and the encouragement of a mixed economy. Neither of these commitments is being kept. As the facts demonstrate, the Sandinistas

have instituted policies designed to harass, eliminate or win control of the press, independent labor unions and political parties, the Church and ethnic minorities such as the Miskito Indians. In short, the Sandinista Directorate is openly repressing the very groups that are the essence of political and social pluralism.

Post-revolutionary Nicaragua probably has registered some gains. Health care has improved in some areas, and literacy has been increased by 20 percent according to official reports. At least for a time, more citizens had a sense of political participation through a revolutionary block system, the Sandinista Defense Committees. But the price has been high: economic failure that has resulted in intermittent food shortages, uncontrolled inflation, growing foreign debts, a weakened private sector vulnerable to expropriation and severe problems in agriculture.

Cuban and Soviet influence is large and growing, and the Sandinistas have launched ambitious programs to militarize substantial segments of the society. Nicaragua's military, underwritten by the Soviet bloc, provides training, arms and logistical support to guerrillas in El Salvador and threatens its neighbors, Costa Rica and Honduras.

As a result of these domestic and international policies, the Sandinista Directorate today is isolated; many of its former comrades-in-arms have left in disillusionment, and support for the regime is waning among virtually every sector of Nicaraguan society—among the very people in whose name the Sandinistas fought the revolution.

As U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Thomas Enders has charged: "The new Nicaraguan regime is turning into a new dictatorship based once again on a privileged and militarized caste. Like the Somoza regime before it, Nicaragua's government is beginning to make war on its own people."



Daniel Ortega (at microphone), one of the leading members of the Sandinista Directorate, speaks to a gathering shortly after victory over the Somoza regime in 1979.

The Background

It is not necessary to detail the wrongs committed by the Somoza dynasty during the nearly half century that it ruled the small Central American republic of Nicaragua. It is an all-too-familiar story of greed and corruption by a regime maintained in power by the repressive use of force.

The Somozas were no mild authoritarian regime reasonably reflecting the desires of most of its constituency and omitting only the forms of popular control. The last of the line, Anastasio "Tacho" Somoza, added incompetence to the family's list of vices. He exploited and

oppressed the people of Nicaragua, and in return provided neither efficiency, inspiration, nor any other redeeming feature.

The best evidence of the nature of Somoza's rule is that by 1979 all elements of Nicaraguan society except the National Guard had decided that the regime must be overthrown. The consensus against Somoza included workers, the priests and bishops of the Catholic Church, business and professional communities, peasants and villagers.

The history of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary Nicaragua is a complicated story of organizational and ideological maneuvering among various opposition groups and social sectors. The final stage in the struggle began in January 1978 after the murder of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, owner and publisher of *La Prensa*, Managua's principal daily newspaper. Democratic and moderate opposition groups then realized that all hopes of peaceful political protest and reform were vain, and decided to join forces with the Sandinista movement,

accepting the leadership of its nine-man Directorate, which included Daniel Ortega, Humberto Ortega, Tomas Borge and Jaime Wheelock.

The main sectors of the community, including the Broad Opposition Front, the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), and the National Patriotic Front led by a distinguished "Group of Twelve" democrats, agreed to work with the FSLN only after negotiations in which the Sandinistas agreed to preserve political pluralism and a mixed economy, and to hold free elections quickly.

Most of the Sandinista Directorate were known to influential Nicaraguans. It is a small country and generally the Sandinistas were not peasants or villagers from the hinterland, but sons of members of the small middle- and upper-class groups of Nicaragua. Citizens knew that the three main factions of the FSLN had

been united by Fidel Castro, and that in the preceding years Castro had supplied at least two of the factions with guns and money.

But the leaders of the democratic left and center who opposed Somoza decided to accept the risk of alliance. The third "Tercerista" faction of the FSLN was less clearly Marxist-Leninist, and the entire Directorate made solemn promises of political pluralism and a mixed economy. The moderate leaders hoped that if the democratic groups joined the struggle with the Sandinistas, and they made a revolution against Somoza together, the democratic majority would be able to prevail. "By playing the game, we hoped to influence the process," said Arturo Cruz, who held a series of high positions in the revolution until he resigned as Ambassador to Washington early in 1982.

Joaquin Cuadra Chamorro, father of Joaquin Cuadra, current FSLN Defense Vice Minister, expressed a similar hope when he said: "So we reached an agreement with the clear understanding that socialism is not possible for Nicaragua. I saw my role as trying to rescue our youth from radicalism."

The Sandinista promises to their revolutionary allies were embodied in the program released by the Junta of the Provisional Government on June 27, 1979, in San Jose. These promises included: "effective democracy," "the operation of political parties without ideological discrimination (except Somocistas)," "universal suffrage," "freedom of expression, of worship, and for forming unions, guilds, and popular organizations," and "a foreign policy of independence and nonalignment."

The Sandinistas made similar commitments to the Organization of American States (OAS) in a letter of July 12, 1979, which also explicitly promised "the first free elections our country has known in this century."

But even after virtually all of Nicaragua decided that Somoza's rule had to end, and agreed to work together under Sandinista leadership

to do the job, Nicaragua suffered massive bloodshed and destruction before Somoza was ousted. The armed struggle probably cost more than 10,000 lives.

During the final stages of the revolution, the Sandinistas, because of their broad popular support at home, received significant help from democratic governments in the area, such as Venezuela and Costa Rica.

On July 19, 1979, a Government of National Reconstruction (GRN) headed by a five-member Junta which included two non-Marxists, Alfonso Robelo and Violeta Chamorro (widow of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro), officially assumed power. The Junta also established a large Council of State whose members represented a wide range of views and affiliations, but which proved to have no substantial power.

The Struggle for Revolutionary Control

Since the Marxist-Leninist minority had most of the top positions from the beginning, the "struggle for power" was never a close contest. Arturo Cruz, who was a member of the



Anastasio Somoza, ousted dictator of Nicaragua

"Group of Twelve" allied with the FSLN, and who had been made head of the national bank in the Provisional Government (GRN), described to Patrick Oster of the *Chicago Sun-Times* how he realized in the second week after the revolutionary victory that the Sandinistas and not the GRN Junta were in control. On one day he got approval from the Junta for a bank action. But on the next, the Junta met again with two uniformed members of the Sandinista Directorate present, and the Junta reversed itself. It was clear to Cruz that the Directorate controlled the majority of the Junta.

The following April, Cruz reports, the Sandinistas expanded the Council of State to give themselves a majority on that body too. That action led to the resignations of Alfonso Robelo and Violeta Chamorro from the Junta (Chamorro "for reasons of health"). But Robelo urged Cruz to take his place. And Cruz, although he says that he already could see that pluralism wasn't working, decided to join the Junta and try to change the situation. His efforts were frustrated and he resigned from the government, but he was prevailed upon to accept the post of Ambassador to Washington—an action that, in retrospect, was part of a successful effort by the Sandinista regime to conceal its true character and direction.

Yet the fact is that the Sandinistas, like many ideologues, wrote and published openly about their intentions. And even though they spelled out their totalitarian plans and their commitment to the Soviet bloc, they still were able to convince people that they were "well-meaning idealists" and at least potentially neutral. On October 5, 1979, the Sandinistas issued an "Analysis of the Situation and Tasks of the Sandinista People's Revolution" containing the political and military theses presented to a three day Assembly of FSLN Cadre held from September 21 to 23. In this report, the FSLN Directorate stated:

—The GRN (which had two independents on the five-member Junta) was "an alliance of convenience organized by the Sandinistas to thwart Yankee intervention [and] it was not necessary to negotiate with the bourgeoisie, just to give some representation to people with a patriotic reputation."

—They noted that although "without doubt there is no domestic power stronger than the FSLN," they had so far produced "only a foundation" and were setting up a wide array of their own organizations, including "an army politicized without precedent, organized within a state that was trying to conserve relics of old institutional forms."

—In their discussion of the economy they said that because of grave difficulties "at the present moment it is necessary to maintain a neutral position with respect to the imperialists."

—They saw no immediate danger from a resurgent National Guard or from their neighboring countries. The main factors that had influenced their policies since July 10 included: the

need to train the army, to maintain an alliance with the bourgeoisie and "the expectation of financial help from the Western bloc." But they noted that this "need to appear reasonable during the 'intermediate' period was beginning to cause dangerous problems such as "an independent labor movement."

—The Directorate said that a variety of steps needed to be taken to protect the FSLN from "enemies of the revolution" during the "stage of democratic transition" in which small political parties must be maintained "because of international opinion."

—They emphasized the need for unity in an ideology of "support of the World Revolution." And they concluded by making it plain that "we are an organization whose greatest aspiration is to retain revolutionary power" and that "the first task is to educate the people to recognize that the FSLN is the legitimate leader of the revolutionary process."

This extraordinary document makes it clear that the Sandinista leadership was determined from the beginning to hold power by totalitarian

methods and to use that power to establish a Marxist-Leninist system.

The Sandinistas also made it clear that they saw the world as divided into imperialist and socialist camps, and were determined that Nicaragua would reject true nonalignment and ally itself completely with the socialist camp (which does not include the West Germany led until recently by Helmut Schmidt).

Humberto Ortega, one of the representatives of the "least Marxist" Tercerista faction, made another explicit statement of FSLN thinking in a speech to a meeting of "military specialists" on August 25, 1981. Ortega said:

Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution, our vanguard's analytical tool for...carrying out the revolution....We cannot be Marxist-Leninist without Sandinism, and without Marxism-Leninism Sandinism cannot be revolutionary. Thus, they are indissolubly linked....Our political strength is Sandinism and our doctrine is Marxism-Leninism.



Arturo Cruz, a former member of the Junta, was disillusioned with the Sandinistas but continued in the revolutionary government until 1982, when he resigned as Ambassador to Washington



The Nicaraguan Junta with Costa Rican President Rodrigo Carazo Odio in 1979. From left to right: Moises Hassan, Sergio Ramirez, Violeta de Chamorro, President Carazo, Daniel Ortega and Alfonso Robelo Chamorro and Robelo, both non-Marxists, resigned in 1980.

Ortega's speech is over 4,000 words of pure, hard-line Marxism-Leninism. For example, he refers, without any hint of satire, to the Lenin-led Bolshevik revolution as "the creation of a classless society in which man's exploitation of his fellow man could gradually be eliminated."

He went on to say that:

...on July 19, 1979, world society was polarized into two major camps.... the camp of imperialism, the camp of capitalism, headed up by the United States and the rest of the capitalist countries in Europe and throughout the world...[and] the socialist camp made up of various countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America and with the Soviet Union in the vanguard.

Although Ortega delivered this speech two years after the FSLN took power, no one who reads it can believe that he only recently had arrived at these convictions. At no point did he refer to any statements or actions of the Reagan Administration as having influenced his view of the United States. He gave no basis for seeing how any amount of American friendliness or generosity toward the Nicaraguan revolution could have changed his view of the world.

In the same speech, reported by Branko Lazitch in the Paris-based magazine *Est & Ouest*, Ortega notes that, "on 19 July...our people were...ideologically backward." And he also explained that the elections planned for 1985 "...will in no way—like a lottery—decide who is going to hold power. For this power belongs to the people, to the FSLN, to our Directorate...."

In the same article Lazitch refers to another statement of Ortega's describing the temporary alliance with the middle class as "exclusively tactical. We have accepted the collaboration of the middle class, which is ready to betray its country, but at any moment we can take its factories without firing a single shot...."

It is now clear that the defeat of the democratic left majority in the revolution in Nicaragua was, to use the word preferred by revolutionaries Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo, a

"counterrevolution" from the top—like that of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Communist Party in 1959-60. Instead of a real struggle for power, there has been the largely one-sided process of concentrating the tools of political and physical power in FSLN hands, while weakening all independent groups and leaders.

From the moment of victory over Somoza, the Marxist-Leninists of the FSLN Directorate have controlled the revolution almost totally, with no intention of sharing power. They allowed the normal disagreements, failures of coordination and differences of phrasing among themselves to deceive people about their essential unity. And from time to time they indulged their personal feelings and relationships with individual non-Marxist Nicaraguans to give an image of "personalism" and flexibility. And they have made temporary concessions whenever necessary to reduce resistance and to preserve illusions of their pragmatism or openness.

The Sandinistas also have used the simplest technique of all to confuse people about their intentions. They lied. As late as April 1982 Tomas Borge said to James Nelson Goodsell, Latin American correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Nothing will deter us from maintaining political pluralism and a mixed economy...no matter what the cost." Goodsell also quotes a "top Sandinista leader" as scoffing at reports of Nicaraguan complicity in the arms flow to El Salvador as "a pack of lies," and cites Junta president Daniel Ortega as saying, "We believe in nonalignment."

This technique worked even with a reporter as experienced as Goodsell, who reports that "the Sandinista Directorate...is composed of nine men widely viewed as well-meaning idealists who are genuinely concerned about the Nicaraguan people," and are "self-proclaimed Marxists." A theme of Goodsell's article was that

the Sandinista leadership is still "trying to find its way." The government of "Marxist-leaning guerrillas...has yet to define itself."

Human Rights

Immediately upon taking power, the FSLN began to build totalitarian instruments of physical coercion and control.

The Sandinista police, or security force, which performs the functions of the former Somoza National Guard, has grown to more than 5,000 men. In addition, a revolutionary block committee system, the Sandinista Defense Committees (CDS), similar to that established by Castro in Cuba, has been established to provide direct sources of information and coercion for the FSLN in each neighborhood.

Eden Pastora, Commandante Zero, a hero of the revolution, stated on April 15, 1982:

...in the light of day or in the dead of night, the seizures, expropriations and confiscations oppress somocistas and anti-somocistas, counterrevolutionaries and revolutionaries, the guilty and the innocent. In the jails they beat the counterrevolutionaries together with the Marxist revolutionaries, these latter punished for the grave crime of interpreting Marx from a different point of view than the comrades in power.

One of the most widely respected figures in Nicaragua for many years was Jose Esteban Gonzalez, a vice president of the Social Christian Party, who organized the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission for Human Rights in 1977 to oppose abuses of the Somoza regime. As noted in reports of his press conference in August 1982, during Somoza's rule Gonzalez had been able to arrange the release from prison of Tomas Borge and other Sandinista leaders. Borge returned the

favor by having Gonzalez jailed and lifting his passport. Only through the intervention of the International Commission of Jurists, Gonzalez says, was he able to go into exile. He since has been sentenced in absentia to 16 years in prison.

Gonzalez now heads the Nicaraguan Committee for Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica. In March 1982 he wrote the following in *The Washington Post*:

What has happened in Nicaragua is very grim. There have been massacres of political prisoners. I myself with other members of the Human Rights Commission examined mass graves at two different sites near the city of Grenada in October 1979 and March 1980. Other persons in whose truthfulness I have full confidence have witnessed similar evidence at other sites—and even those who are still in Nicaragua will so testify. These killings cannot be dismissed as rash acts of post-revolutionary anger. They have continued for over two years—some occurred within the past few months.

The official number of political prisoners in Nicaragua now stands at 4,200—higher than the highest figure ever registered under Somoza. There have been hundreds of disappearances—although the government never responds to inquiries about such persons.

The recent report of Gonzalez's Commission on Human Rights, covering the first three years of the revolution, cites many instances of torture by the security forces. Minister of the Interior Tomas Borge admitted the Sandinista use of torture as early as his press conference of November 14, 1979, at which he made unredeemed promises to punish those responsible.

The Press

There now are three newspapers in Managua. The afternoon paper is *La Prensa*, which has been the country's leading paper for many years and one of the foremost opponents of the Somozas. It is now edited by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Jr., the older son of the man murdered by Somoza. The two morning papers are *Barricada*, the official paper of the FSLN, run by Carlos Fernando Chamorro, Pedro Joaquin's younger son, and *El Nuevo Diario*, a paper started by Pedro Joaquin's brother, Xavier Chamorro.

Previously there were four newspapers. In January 1980, security forces closed down the far-left newspaper *El Pueblo*, and Bayardo Arce of the Directorate warned that other media could receive the same medicine. Similar threats are made frequently, and the regime has issued a number of decrees constraining the news media.

In April 1980, a Sandinista-backed strike closed *La Prensa* for three days. As part of the strike settlement Xavier Chamorro left *La Prensa* and started the new pro-Sandinista paper, *El Nuevo Diario*.

In July of the following year, the government shut down *La Prensa* for

two days. Since then it has been forcibly closed a number of times: five times in the last three months of 1981 alone. The Orwellian reason given is that it "violated freedom of the press." Then in January 1982, a mob attacked the paper. Three people were wounded by shots from the paper's guards, and it was closed again for two days.

A few days later the government closed Radio Amor indefinitely for broadcasting a report that the owner of the station was beaten for having broadcast a Venezuelan denial of Sandinista charges that Venezuelan Embassy employees were plotting sabotage in Nicaragua.

After declaring a "State of Emergency" on March 15, 1982 (originally for 30 days, now extended until January 1983), formal censorship began. Censorship is used extensively to harass the press and to hold back news that the Sandinistas don't want publicized—including such straightforward items as the Conservative Party's announcement that it was supporting Argentina in the Falkland-Malvinas dispute (as was the FSLN). The government even closed the friendly *El Nuevo Diario* for a day for the offense of using the phrase "state of siege" (reminiscent of Somoza) to describe the new state of emergency.

In his March *Washington Post* article, Jose Esteban Gonzalez said: "The official Sandinista press



Past and present editors of *La Prensa*. Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Sr. (left), an outspoken critic of the Somoza regime, was assassinated by an unknown gunman in 1978. Chamorro's son, Pedro (right), took over as editor. Pedro Chamorro, Jr., has endured even worse censorship and harassment than his father as a result of the paper's independent, often critical stance toward the regime in power.

regulations permit less freedom of the press in Nicaragua today than under the 'black code' of the Somoza dictatorship." In his Washington press conference in August 1982, Gonzalez reported that in July Sandinista thugs beat up Horacio Ruiz, an editor of *La Prensa*, and that they attacked Cruz Flores, a photographer, a few days later.

Censorship and harassment of *La Prensa* continues. In August 1982, editorial page editor Humberto Belli stated that he left Nicaragua for exile in Caracas because it was no longer possible to publish his opinions in *La Prensa*. Even within the strictures of existing censorship, he added, the selection and play of the news angers the Junta and results in repeated closings of the paper.

One survey of *La Prensa* in mid-August 1982 showed that the Junta's Office of Communications Media censored 60 to 65 percent of news material intended for publication. Most of the censored news stories related to confrontations between church and state, notably reports of violence in the town of Masaya that differed significantly from official versions published in pro-Sandinista newspapers.

Violeta Chamorro wrote the following in a letter to "The People of Nicaragua," which was censored in *La Prensa*:

With each passing day, freedom of the press is found to be more limited.... But the ultimate limit of this lack of freedom has occurred with the letter which Pope John Paul II sent to the Nicaraguan bishops, which on three consecutive occasions we were prohibited from publishing. And when permission to publish was given to us, they wanted to impose the obligation of heading the letter with a communique from the Office of Communications Media, which besides being insulting to His Holiness, was false. For those reasons La Prensa did not publish on (the 9th, 11th and 12th) of August.



Different front pages of the August 17, 1982, issue of *La Prensa* illustrate the impact of censorship imposed by the Sandinistas. Two headlines of the uncensored edition, top: "Violence in Masaya" and "The Incident in the Religious Schools" contrast with the censored version, above, approved by the government: "Pluralism Confirmed Best Government" and "PLO Exit Plan Approved."

Scarcely three years (after I entered my homeland at the head of a new Government of National Reconstruction) the Sandinista government, guided by totalitarian ideologies imported from other countries far from our history and our culture, is trying to maintain the concept that liberty of conscience is divisionism or ideological war.

It has been my fate to live... during the greater part of the 45 years in which we endured the bloodiest dynasty that this hemisphere has had. Many of the current leaders had not yet been born and therefore do not know the brutal methods used by Somoza.... But I feel now that I am reliving that horrible nightmare.

In sum, Nicaragua is not yet as totalitarian as some other countries with regard to the press. Independent media still function, albeit under tremendous pressures. They continue, however, to be regarded as enemies of the revolution, are censored and harassed, and will be tolerated only on Sandinista terms.

Political Parties

Nicaragua has five political parties in addition to the FSLN (which Daniel Ortega told *Chicago Sun-Times* reporter Patrick Oster is not a political party but "the vanguard" of the revolution); the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN), established in 1979 and headed by Alfonso Robelo, member of the first revolutionary Junta; the Social Democratic Party; the Social Christians; the Democratic Conservative Party, a long-time opponent of Somoza; and the Liberal Constitution- alists. In April 1981, all of the parties joined in a statement condemning the Sandinista attacks on political organizations as demonstrating a "decision of the Sandinistas to set up in our country a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship."

In November 1980, the government denied the MDN a permit to hold a rally. A mob sacked party headquarters, with police watching; authorities prohibited publication of the story.

In March 1981, the Sandinistas blocked a MDN rally and mobs sacked the houses of some of Robelo's supporters. In January 1982, the police cancelled a rally of the Conservative Democratic Party.

MDN head Alfonso Robelo had to flee the country in the spring of 1982. He



Alfonso Robelo, former Junta member, resigned after nine months with the Sandinista Directorate, and has announced his support for Pastora (Commander Zero)



A hero in the 1979 revolution, Edén Pastora, known as Commander Zero, resigned as Deputy Defense Minister of the new government and formed an organization that opposes the current Sandinista Junta.

said in an interview on Panamanian television:

In Somoza's time many of his opponents, including myself, faced him openly and decisively....I cannot return to Nicaragua. It would be suicidal. I fought from inside, first as a member of the government Junta... and later from outside the government, but always from within the revolution....I am a part of the true Nicaraguan revolution, fighting against the real counterrevolutionaries who are now in power in Nicaragua....I spent two years in Nicaragua fighting from the plains, denouncing the Marxist-Leninist leaders, who respond only to Soviet-Cuban interests. My life had been so gravely threatened that I felt that I had already taken enough risks....

Religion

Nicaragua is 95 percent Catholic, with a feeling for the Church that is closer to that of Poland's than to that of Italy's. Most of the rest belong to several Protestant denominations, notably Moravians, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

The Catholic hierarchy, led by Managua's Archbishop Obando y Bravo, and the bulk of the clergy, were an important part of the opposition to Somoza. Most of the Protestant churches supported the revolution as well.

The Sandinistas consider the Church a threat and have moved to control it and limit its influence, although they have been at some pains to emphasize that they are not against Nicaraguans practicing their religion.

In July 1982, the government halted the traditional Sunday television broadcast of the Archbishop's church service. Twice mobs have attacked the Archbishop physically, and his car has been heavily damaged by mobs.

In August a group of men seized Father Carballo, spokesman for the Church hierarchy, and beat, stripped and paraded him in front of a jeering

mob. They then arrested him, refused to notify the Archbishop, threw him into a cell and interrogated him, still naked, for six hours.

In the same month a mob badly beat the auxiliary bishop, Monsignor Vivas. Several opposition "church groups" occupied the Church of Our Lady of Fatima to protest the Archbishop's transfer of a priest who embraced the "theology of liberation."

A small group of priests, several of whom are in the government, and who call themselves the "People's Church," still support the Sandinistas. But the hierarchy, led by Archbishop Bravo, and apparently most of the priests, have become disillusioned with the FSLN. But as in Poland, the freedom of the Church to criticize the government is limited.

Some argue that the "split" in the Church is between ecclesiastical conservatives concerned only with religion and the hereafter, and those clergy who believe that the Church also must be concerned with the lives of its parishioners. And some officials have tried to claim that the dispute is between those who believe the Church should identify with the poor and oppressed, or with the rich and

powerful. Tomas Borge has tried to propagate this view, stating that: "We have a church of the rich and the church of the poor."

But this description is false and divisive. Archbishop Obando y Bravo and his bishops supported the revolt against the Somoza regime, and have remained strongly committed to social action on behalf of the poor and oppressed of Nicaragua. They believe, however, that the Sandinistas are not truly serving the poor.

Pope John Paul II sent an eight-page letter to the bishops of Nicaragua to express his support for them. He urged them to continue working for the unity of the Church in Nicaragua, stating that it was "absurd and dangerous" to assert that a "People's Church" should be organized next to the existing Church. And he described such a "Popular Church" as a "grave deviation" from the will and plan of Jesus Christ.

Most of the Protestant churches also have become disillusioned with the Sandinistas after initially supporting the revolution. In March 1980, the government arrested 20 Jehovah's Witness missionaries from the United States, Canada, Britain and Germany.



Archbishop Obando y Bravo greets some of his parishioners following a mass honoring heroes of the revolution. A long-time foe of Somoza, he has suffered from Sandinista violence.



Crowds attend a religious procession in Masaya, where violent protests in 1982 between anti-Sandinista groups and government supporters over incarceration of a priest, left several persons dead and injured.

Nineteen were deported; security forces killed one "while attempting to escape," according to the Ministry of Interior.

On August 9, 1980, Sandinista Community Defense Organizations (CDS) temporarily occupied more than 20 small churches belonging to several Protestant groups. The spokesman for the CDS charged that the action was directed against the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and Seventh Day Adventists, alleging that these churches were counter-revolutionary and in communication with the CIA.

The Miskito Indians

The Atlantic Coast region of Nicaragua traditionally had been largely isolated from the main part of the country. The 70,000 Protestant, English-speaking Indians and blacks

who live there, including 55,000 Miskito Indians, comprise about half the population of the area. The Indians are organized in 256 communities with elected representatives. The people of the Atlantic largely have kept aloof from politics in the rest of the country. They did not support Somoza. And 115 Miskitos, led by a member of the Council of Elders, joined the FSLN, although they left after a few months because of Marxist-Leninist indoctrination.

Shortly after coming to power in July 1979, the Sandinistas tried to replace the Councils of Elders of the Miskito communities with Sandinista Defense Committees. In the first week of August, authorities arrested a number of Miskito leaders. The conflict soon worsened when the Miskitos grew angry with Cuban teachers working in a literacy program who tried to propagate "Marxist dogma." In October a Miskito leader, Lyster Athers, was murdered under suspicious circumstances.

The Miskitos also rejected government proposals that they felt would have amounted to confiscation of their property and given the Sandinistas the power to select Miskito leaders. Subjected to intensifying harassment, some Indians began moving across the Coco River into Honduras.

In March 1982, Steadman Fagoth, the elected representative of the Miskitos, reported in the *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*:

While I was in Seguridad Estado Jail Number 3 in Managua, on March 18, 1981, at seven in the evening Tomas Borge, Juan Jose Ubeda and Raul Gordon came to my cell and warned me that Sandinismo would be established on the Atlantic Coast, even if every single Miskito Indian had to be eliminated. On May 10, 1981, I was put under house arrest after having been tortured for 59 days by the Sandinistas.

Fagoth was released because he promised to go to the Atlantic Coast to try to calm the situation and travel to the Soviet Union for study. Instead he fled to Honduras.

The pressure on the Miskitos, and the movement to Honduras continued during the rest of 1981. Fagoth states: "December 27, 1981, there was a massacre at Leimus. Thirty-five people were buried alive; some were dug out by their relatives. One survivor, a 19-year old named Vidal Poveda from Waspu, lives today in a refugee camp in Honduras. On December 27, 1981, another massacre occurred in Pilpilia...." Some investigators who have tried to confirm reports of such massacres have found evidence to support the claims, others have not.

By February 1982, 10,000 of the 55,000 Miskitos estimated to have been in Nicaragua in 1979 had fled to Honduras, where about half of them are living in refugee camps.

The Sandinistas then moved against the entire Miskito community. They forcibly removed at least 8,500 Indians from their homes along the Coco River, leveled their villages and placed them in new settlements. Many of them, such as those located at Tabsa Fry and Sumubila, are more accurately termed detention camps, since the inhabitants, after being marched there, are not permitted to travel beyond the immediate vicinity of the camps.

On February 18, 1982, the Episcopal Conference of Nicaragua issued a communique signed by all of the nation's bishops. The communique explicitly recognized the right of the government to take actions it deems necessary in connection with national defense, but noted that there are "inalienable rights that under no circumstances can be violated." The bishops' communique went on to state:

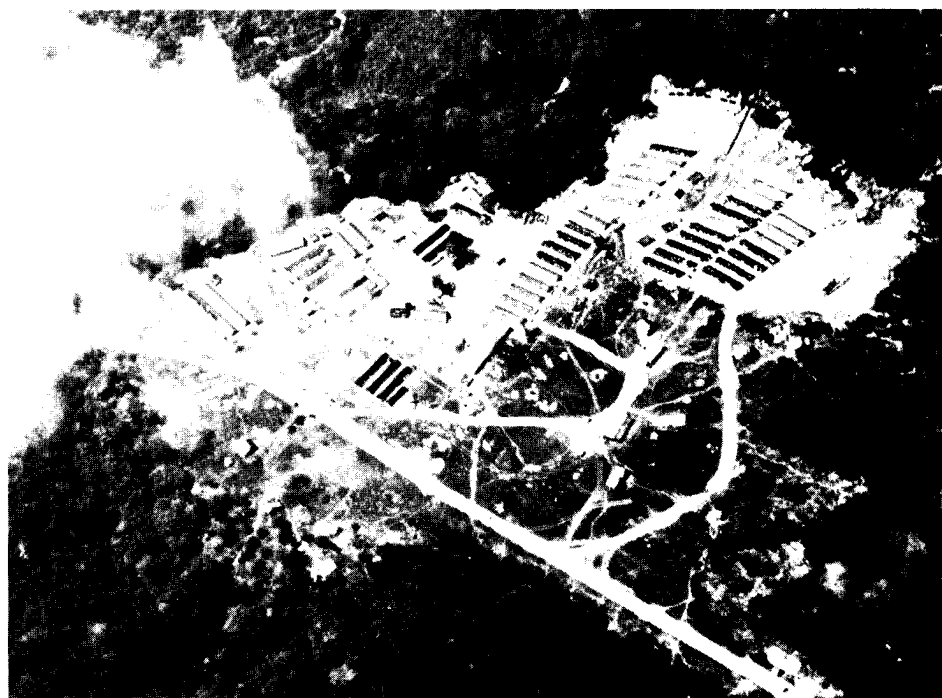
...we must state, with painful surprise, that in certain concrete cases there have been grave violations of the human rights of individuals, families, and entire populations of peoples. These include:



Miskito Indians, displaced by the Sandinistas, are forced to live in "resettlement" camps which they are not permitted to leave. Miskitos were given six hours to gather their personal effects and leave their homes. After an eight day walk, they arrived at camps such as this. Rather than accept Marxist-Leninist doctrine and live in what amount to detention facilities, many Miskitos have sought refuge in Honduras. Because of their resistance to the Sandinistas, some Miskitos have been tortured or killed.

- Relocations of individuals by military operations without warning and without conscientious dialogue;
- Forced marches, carried out without sufficient consideration for the weak, aged, women and children;
- Charges or accusations of collaboration with the counterrevolution against all residents of certain towns;
- The destruction of houses, belongings and domestic animals;
- The death of individuals in circumstances that, to our great sorrow, remind us of the drama of other peoples of the region.

The Sandinistas claim that their actions are part of a long-term plan to improve the living conditions of the Miskitos and to protect them from "counterrevolutionaries." But the so-called counterrevolutionaries only became a threat following Sandinista repression.



Aerial view of a Miskito "resettlement" camp in Sumubila, Nicaragua.

Labor and the Private Sector

Before the revolution, Nicaragua possessed a labor union movement with a growing democratic wing that had two main components: the Nicaraguan Workers' Central (CTN), affiliated with the international agencies of the Christian-Democrat labor centers; and the Confederation of Labor Unification (CUS), affiliated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and which participates in the programs of the U.S. labor movement's American Institute for Free Labor Development. (Despite a propaganda campaign to the contrary, the Institute has never received any CIA money).

A Somoza-controlled labor group was also active, as well as a breakaway Marxist-oriented labor organization.

CUS was a leader in the general strike of business and labor protesting the murder of Pedro Chamorro and in the final general strike of June 1979. Luis Medrano, the CUS Secretary General, who went abroad to try to promote an international boycott of Nicaragua, was murdered on his return.

CUS and CTN were part of the Broad Opposition Front (FAO) against Somoza. But although the FAO had numbers and organization in the fight against Somoza, the FSLN had most of the guns.

When the FSLN took power it immediately began to create its own mass organizations to take the place of FAO groups: workers in the Sandinista Workers' Central (CST), farmers in the Association of Campesino Workers (ATC), as well as mass organizations for women, youth and children.

The CST, which in 1981 joined the Soviet-controlled World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), began to

compete with the two main free union movements, CTN and CUS, often using the army and the police. Armed units frequently accompanied CST organizers to meetings of workers, for example, and increased their vote totals accordingly, either because audiences were impressed or intimidated. Many workers also joined the CST because they thought it would have more influence on Sandinista-managed enterprises formerly owned by Somoza interests.

In December 1979, as part of a campaign to pressure the Health Care Workers Union (FETSALUD) into leaving CTN and joining CST, authorities imprisoned a FETSALUD leader in El Chipote, formerly Somoza's prison for political opponents. Members of the Junta appeared at a FETSALUD branch meeting calling on the workers to switch affiliations, and CTN protestors were arrested.

The Sandinistas used similar actions against other branches of CTN. Police machine gunned their offices and vehicles, and the CST seized the CTN office in Pueblo Nuevo with the help of the army.

In January 1980, authorities, at the instigation of the CST, arrested the CUS leader of the stevedores union in Corinto, Zacarias Hernandez, and held him without charges for several days. The house of a CUS officer was bombed, and the army arrested two officers of another CUS union. In the next month, two CUS activists, Victoria Garcia Montoya and Guadalupe Garcia, were arrested and interrogated in prison.

In March a "spontaneous" demonstration led by the police, with members shouting "people's power," stormed the offices and arrested the leaders of the Central for Labor Action and Unity (CAUS), a Maoist-led union with strong representation among textile workers who were on strike because of the decline in real wages. Ivan Garcia, the Secretary-General of the Sandinist CST, who witnessed the demonstration, said that "the Nicaraguan workers have realized that all those elements that help stop production here are acting against the fundamental interests of the revolution."

The Sandinistas have continued their role as strikebreakers. On the day that they succeeded in ending a strike by sugar-cane cutters, the head of the Marxist-oriented union explained on the radio that "the working classes are independent in capitalist states because there are antagonistic contradictions. In the revolutionary state these contradictions do not exist. Any differences are resolved through high level dialogue, through revolutionary positions held both by the administrators of the state and the workmen who produce material goods."

On November 24, 1980, the CST released a document describing its view of the role of labor. It said that although some unions resorted to "labor stoppages," the CST would "intensify the revolutionary process by constantly increasing production.... the workers must work under austere conditions."

The conflict between the free unions and the CST and the FSLN continues. The pressure of arrests and beatings, together with various legal and economic actions, has greatly reduced the strength of CUS and CTN. As with all organizations that seek to remain independent and resist repression, the Sandinistas falsely accuse them with being counterrevolutionaries and agents of the CIA.

The CLAT, the organization of Latin American unions associated with Christian Democratic parties and the AFL-CIO, has condemned the CST and strongly supported the free unions in their struggle to survive against the Sandinistas. But the ICFTU and other labor groups have not officially supported the position of the free unions, with which they long have been affiliated, in their dispute with the government-sponsored unions, because they are effectively unable to take a stand different from that of the Socialist International. Many people think it ironic that the socialist movement should find itself being used to protect government-controlled "company unions" in their effort to destroy free unions.

Even though Nicaragua is a country of only 2.5 million people, its private sector has been organized extensively. The umbrella organization for the private sector—including business, professional and agricultural groups—is the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP), which opposed the Somoza regime and joined with the FSLN in the revolution.

The move against businessmen began early in the regime. On November 17, 1980, the Sandinista security forces, using a sophisticated entrapment plan, killed Jorge Salazar, a prominent businessman, and arrested others. As a result, COSEP and the moderate political parties withdrew from the Council of State.

Harassment continued in a variety of forms. Then on October 21, 1981, four businessmen, including Enrique Dreyfus, President of COSEP, were taken from their homes in the middle of the night, imprisoned and interrogated rigorously for several weeks. Three were released four months later, after being convicted of anti-government activities. Their crime: writing a public letter to the government criticizing its actions.

Militarization

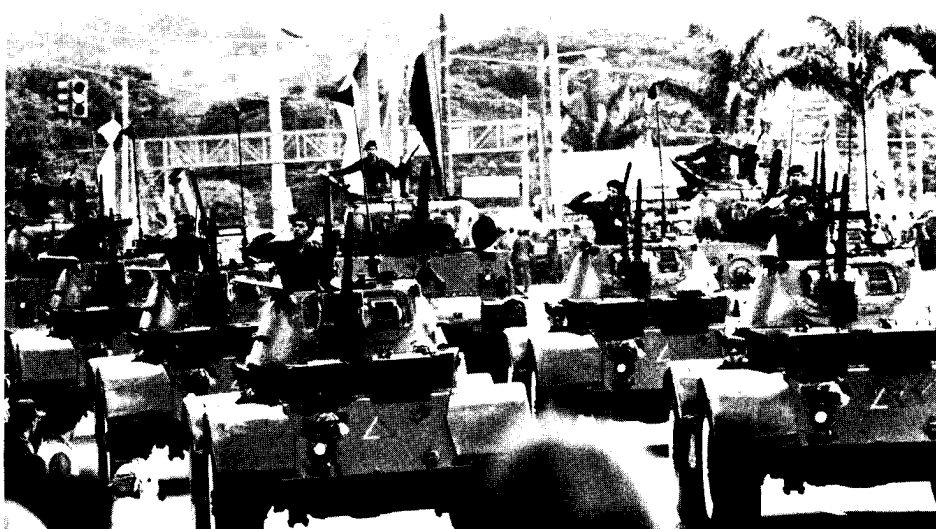
Most Latin American countries have only a quarter or third of one percent of their population in the military (active duty and ready reserves). Exceptions are Argentina and Peru with more than half of one percent, Chile with three quarters, and Uruguay with more than nine tenths of one percent in the armed forces. Prior to his final year in power, Somoza's National Guard—a combined national police and defense force—did not exceed 7,500 men. During the last year, the Guard's ranks rose to slightly less than 15,000—and at that swollen level constituted no more than three-fifths of one percent of the country's population.

The Sandinistas have placed more than two and one-half percent of the Nicaraguan population in the armed forces, with 22,000 in the standing military and 50,000 in the still-growing militia, according to Oster of the *Chicago Sun Times*. (There are published reports that the Sandinista plan calls for a standing military—including the air force—of 50,000.) They have added 36 major military installations to the 13 that Somoza had, and have expanded four airfields—all documented in aerial photographs released by the U.S. government.

In military terms Nicaragua is following the Cuban pattern. Cuba has

2.3 percent of its population in the armed forces. Its army is large enough to dominate its neighbors (except the U.S.), to provide overwhelming support for the ruling party at home, and to make forces available for overseas missions such as in Angola and Ethiopia.

The Sandinista military program, which was well underway by early 1980, is moving Nicaragua to a new level of armament for Central America. They are preparing for advanced jet fighters (while their neighbors have planes of the early-1950's), for heavy tanks (so far 20 to 30 T-55's have arrived, plus a dozen armored personnel carriers).



Parade of tanks (top) rolls by a crowd during celebration of first anniversary of victory over Somoza. Nicaragua's rapidly expanding military buildup threatens its neighbors. Among the latest additions to the army's inventory: heavy Soviet T-55 tanks.

Local militia (above) unit is part of military force that is twice as large as that of any country in Central America—and is still growing.



heavy artillery (including 152-millimeter howitzers), anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns, and missiles.

The military, which will dwarf the forces of Nicaragua's neighbors, is composed of 20 newly formed and armed battalions, one of which is armored, and half of which are motorized.

Costa Rica, Nicaragua's southern neighbor, is noted for not having any army at all, although it does have a small semi-military national police force of several thousand men equipped with light arms. Honduras, Nicaragua's other neighbor, has an army of only 12,000 men. Some exile groups of Nicaraguans, a minority of whom are ex-Guardsmen, are also in Honduras, but they could not assemble even a lightly armed military force of as many as 3,000 men. El Salvador, whose border is only 80 kilometers from Nicaragua, has a more sizable army, totaling some

17,600 men, but it is heavily engaged by local guerrillas armed and supported by Nicaragua, Cuba and Soviet bloc forces.

The expanding Nicaraguan army poses a major threat to its neighbors, even if political constraints prevent it from crossing borders in brigade- or division-size invasions. It can send "volunteers," or provide recruits for guerrilla forces. The Nicaraguan military certainly will be capable of powerful military raids against any target within 50 to 80 kilometers of its borders. None of its neighbors will have the ability to defend effectively against such raids, which gives Nicaragua's neighbors an uncomfortable sense of vulnerability.

Moreover, there is no good reason to doubt, despite the denials, that

Nicaragua is continuing to train guerrilla units that are infiltrated into El Salvador, as well as to transship locally significant amounts of arms into the country. Debates in the press on this issue usually revolve around the nature and quality of this evidence. No sophisticated Latin American has any doubts that Nicaragua is providing such support; Castro and Nicaraguan leaders even occasionally admit it in private.

In late 1980 and early 1981, Nicaragua served as an important staging site for a massive Cuban-directed flow of arms to Salvadorean guerrillas. The Salvadorean anti-government guerrilla coalition, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, (FMLN), continues to receive sustained logistic support with the help of the Sandinistas, primarily by air and sea, but also by land. Nicaragua also is the site of FMLN training camps.



Fidel Castro (opposite page, third from left) accompanied by Daniel Ortega and members of the Junta, arrives in Nicaragua for celebration of first year of Sandinista rule.

May 1980. Daniel Ortega visits the Soviet Union for discussions with President Leonid Brezhnev

The size of the military and security forces means that young Nicaraguan citizens face a draft plus strong pressures to serve in the militia or reserves, which many individuals resent. It is unlikely that foreign military assistance accounts for all the costs of the military program. As a result, the Nicaraguan economy, and in the end, the people, bear a large part of the mounting cost of the Sandinista military establishment.

Foreign Influence

Many supporters of the revolution overlooked all the failings, and even the crimes, of the FSLN as part of the inevitable excesses of any revolution; but they are unable to accept the degree of Cuban domination of their country that they have witnessed.

Men like Eden Pastora felt that they hadn't freed their country from Somoza to turn it over to Fidel Castro, however much they preferred a progressive political orientation.

The armed forces of Nicaragua—which number 70,000, including militia and ready reserves—have approximately 2,000 Cuban advisers and trainers. This means that Cubans, in addition to advising at headquarters and running training and technical programs, can be assigned down to the company level.

Dozens of East Germans are working with the secret police and other security forces. The Palestine Liberation Organization has a large "embassy" and, according to Christopher Dickey of *The Washington Post*, was involved in the operation of

five of the eight new Nicaraguan military training camps. According to U.S. sources, Bulgaria has trained Nicaraguan pilots to fly the advanced Soviet MIG aircraft that recently have been shipped to Cuba. Soviet-bloc personnel also provide advanced communications and other technical capabilities, U.S. officials report, with Cuba coordinating many of these programs as well as providing support for the intelligence services.

It is easy to underestimate the impact of such a large foreign presence. The Nicaraguan labor force is about 800,000, of whom 500,000 are farmers, which means that since the FSLN took power, there has been one Cuban in Nicaragua for each sixty or so Nicaraguan non-farm workers. Although a majority of the Cubans have been doctors and teachers, they perform political work as well, and constitute part of a large, intrusive foreign presence.



In 1979 shortages forced people to stand in long lines for food, as here in Masaya. Today, three years after the revolution, failing economy continues to plague the country.

Welfare and the Economy

The individual Miskito Indians, union leaders, members of the press, clergy, and business and political leaders who have borne the weight of Sandinista repression are only a small minority of the population. The rest of the populace has suffered less and had some compensating gains. Some of the Cuban aid has been used to implement educational programs, and the medical assistance program probably has raised the level of health care, although not enough foreign

assistance has been used to buy the medicines that Nicaragua needs.

In the beginning virtually all Nicaraguans supported the revolution enthusiastically. In getting rid of the Somozas, citizens felt that they had taken control of their lives, that, at long last, they had a government that worked and spoke for the peasant and the working man and woman. Much of the new activity, such as the appearance of foreign doctors and teachers, and the work of block committees, made people feel that the government cared about them. As a result, many were willing to accept sacrifices, including limits on political action and expression, as the price to be paid for these gains.

But the cost of the revolution now has become too high for most people and the benefits—including the psychological gains—are fading. These costs go beyond the loss of

freedom and human rights, and the pressure on the Church. The practical day-to-day costs that most people experience come largely from two directions: the demands for military service and failure of the economy.

Sugar is rationed, for example, and each adult is allowed only one pound per week regardless of the size of the family. Real wages have declined sharply because of the increased inflation rate since 1979.

In 1979 Nicaragua was a fairly poor country, but far from the ranks of the poorest. According to the World Bank its per capita Gross National Product (GNP) was \$840 in 1978 and had grown 14 percent since 1970. This placed Nicaragua at a level with Colombia and the Dominican Republic.

The fight to overthrow Somoza caused substantial damage and disruption to the economy. With last-minute plundering by Somoza and his cohorts, 1979 GNP dropped by about one quarter. But in 1980, the first full year after the revolution took power, GNP apparently only climbed about half way back up to where it had been in 1978. According to the government, GNP increased 8.7 percent in 1981, which meant that average income still remained below that of 1979.

The years since the revolution have been difficult for economies like that of Nicaragua all over the world. High interest rates and oil prices, combined with low commodity prices and world recession, hit many countries hard—although nations comparable to Nicaragua still managed to increase their GNP. Nicaragua also suffered from heavy rains and floods in 1982.

Clearly there are many negative factors in the Nicaraguan economic situation for which the regime is not to blame. But the Sandinistas are responsible for policies that have damaged the economy severely, among them high military and security costs, and weakened business confidence and productivity.

The cost of the increase in military manpower alone probably approaches one percent of GNP, even assuming that the heavy weapons and support construction comes free from foreign suppliers—which it doesn't. Overall, it is reasonable to estimate that Sandinista militarization has cost Nicaragua at least \$100 million in 1981 alone, or in excess of \$300 per family.

The support that enabled the Sandinistas to take power had been based on a Sandinista commitment to

a mixed economy. The government inherited the Somoza family enterprises, which automatically gave the state an immediate major share in the economy, perhaps as high as 40 percent.

From the beginning, however, the Sandinista leadership demonstrated that it gave absolute priority to gaining a monopoly of political power and developing a military security machine over the needs of the economy.

These priorities certainly hurt the private sector; but in addition, the Sandinistas set out on a conscious course to weaken and reduce the private sector. Sandinista expropriation of private enterprises may have raised the government share of the economy to close to 50 percent.

If the Sandinistas have displayed malice in their policies toward private



Two members of the Nicaragua Junta, Daniel Ortega (second from left) and Sergio Ramirez (fourth from left) join cotton pickers in Leon. The regime's mismanagement of agriculture has resulted in plummeting harvests.

business, their record in agriculture is one of ineptitude. Nicaragua's harvests have dropped by as much as 50 percent since the regime assumed power, including drastic cuts in output of the country's chief export crops, cotton and coffee.

And although its economic impact is minor, many Nicaraguans also have been affected psychologically by seeing Sandinista leaders take over the large villas and Mercedes cars of the Somocistas. As in Russia and China, the high-ranking cadre live very well indeed in Nicaragua, and at a time when workers are being exhorted to practice "revolutionary austerity."

The result of these blows to the economy, and of Sandinista economic disinterest and mismanagement, is that Nicaragua simply isn't producing enough to go around. In the end, the people pay the price—and must make some hard decisions about who is responsible for this growing economic fiasco. Are these hardships the legacy of Somoza, the result of outside forces, and the necessary price for revolution? Or is the economic suffering the result of policies of a clique who is sacrificing the welfare of the people to the demands of ideology and their own political aggrandizement?

Eden Pastora, a founder in 1959 of the FSLN, who still believes that "injustice and class exploitation are the roots of the tragedy," thinks that many of Nicaragua's people have come to the second conclusion. He says: "With sadness I have seen in my people the reign of unease, of anguish, of fear, and of the bitterness of frustration and personal insecurity, ... (because of) this regime of terror...."

Recently mass demonstrations have broken out against the government. According to eyewitness accounts, 3,000 people in San Judas joined a funeral procession for a boy

killed and mutilated by the security service after trying to steal a car. In August 1982, violent protest in Masaya, the town where the Sandinista revolution began, lasted several days.

In brief, three years after the FSLN takeover, the people are oppressed by a regime unable to provide either bread or freedom. Moreover, they must bear an increasing military burden and accept growing Soviet and Cuban intrusion in their domestic affairs.

The Failure of Excuses

The Sandinistas and their supporters take advantage of people's ignorance or forgetfulness about Central American history to develop convenient myths that excuse their own actions and place responsibility for the new Nicaraguan tyranny on the shoulders of others. It is vital to keep the record straight:

—The Sandinistas propounded the main features of their basic commitment to Marxist-Leninist totalitarianism in the report of their meetings of September 21-23, 1979.

—Individuals and organizations independent of the Sandinistas have been systematically forced from power. In April 1980, for example, Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo resigned from the Junta to protest the FSLN unilateral move to give itself a majority in the Council of State.

—The regime moved immediately against the Atlantic Coast Indians. Miskito leader Lyster Athens was murdered in October 1979. Sandinista promises to return his body and punish his murderers were never fulfilled. Since then, large numbers of Miskitos have been forcibly deported from their homelands and placed in settlements that are little more than detention camps.

—The Sandinistas were implementing plans for a greatly expanded army and rapid national militarization by the first half of 1980.

—The Directorate established close ties to Cuba and to other communist and terrorist countries and organizations, such as Libya and the PLO, in the same period. Cuba had over 2,000 people working full time in Nicaragua by July 1980.

—The totalitarian, militarized character and program of the FSLN was clearly evident by July 1980, the end of their first year in power.

—During the Sandinista's first year, U.S. banks made a generous extension of Nicaragua's foreign debt with current payments to be less than half the market level (the rest to be paid at the end of the loan). The United States also greatly increased its aid to Nicaragua, compared to what it had given during Somoza's regime. The Carter Administration suspended aid in December 1980, only when it was evident that Nicaragua was continuing to supply arms and training to guerrillas in El Salvador.

—Western governments and international financial institutions provided hundreds of millions of dollars to Nicaragua during the Sandinistas' first year, with U.S. support.

—There is no real "Somocista" threat. The remnants of the National Guard are either in prison or dispersed in exile. Those in Honduras possess neither the arms nor the numbers to challenge the regime. Somocism has no substantial political appeal or supporters, even among exiles and those who now reject that new regime. It has never represented a danger to the revolution in Nicaragua.

—Occasionally, news stories appear about groups of Nicaraguan exiles "training" in private camps in the southern United States. Politically, these stories bolster the myth of Nicaraguan beleaguement and provide convenient justification for the Sandinista military expansion. But realistically such groups pose no military threat to Nicaragua whatsoever.

Conclusion: The Now and Future Nicaragua

In 1979, the Sandinistas chose to militarize Nicaragua; to destroy the political power of their democratic allies in the unions, the Church, and in the business and political communities; to build a security apparatus that can enforce totalitarian controls; to

enlist aid from Cuban and the Soviet bloc nations to secure their domestic power base; and to build a large military organization.

At present, Nicaragua is a grave threat to all the countries of Central America, beginning with its immediate neighbors, Costa Rica and Honduras. Sandinista troops regularly cross the border into Honduras and have been responsible, according to recent reports, for the kidnapping and disappearances of more than 100

Honduran citizens living in the border areas. Second, Nicaragua is a threat to El Salvador, where the Sandinistas already provide a flow of arms and logistical support to guerrilla forces.

One of the reasons why some political leaders in Honduras and Costa Rica have hesitated to oppose Nicaragua and to organize their defenses is that they are concerned about the international political and intellectual forces that Nicaragua might bring to bear against them. But if Nicaragua is



*Sandinista soldiers
on training maneuvers near
the Honduran border*

isolated from all political support except that of Cuba and the Soviet Union and its allies, and if nonaligned countries, and independent left voices around the world join in unmasking Nicaragua's totalitarian character and tactics of aggression, then regional democratic forces will be able to unite to defend themselves.

Recently, the democracies of Central America have moved collectively to counter the Sandinista threat by bolstering their own defenses, and through concerted diplomatic initiatives. Honduras, for example, has proposed a regional plan calling for an end to border incursions, a freeze on imports of heavy weapons and comprehensive verification. The United States also has made a series of proposals centered around a nonaggression agreement between the U.S. and Nicaragua, and an end to Nicaraguan intervention in El Salvador and interference in Costa Rica and Honduras. And in October 1982 at San Jose, Costa Rica, the nations of Belize, Columbia, El Salvador, the United States, Honduras, Jamaica, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic called upon all nations in the region to respect each other's territorial integrity, to reaffirm the commitment to human rights, to reject threats or the use of force, and to halt escalation of the arms race in Central America.

Almost all of the allies of the Marxist-Leninist leadership of the FSLN have become disillusioned and moved into opposition, including figures as diverse politically as Eden Pastora, Alfonso Robelo, Arturo Cruz and the editor of *La Prensa*, Pedro Chamorro, Jr. Moreover, the regime has alienated the entire spectrum of moderate, democratic-left and center groups and organizations, from the Church to union, business and professional groups.

Although Nicaragua is ruled by an ideological regime that has established much of the apparatus of totalitarian control, islands of independence, small democratic voices, still survive. These independent democratic groups and individuals have little authority or power, and are unable to influence policy. Yet they remain—and must be preserved.

As Jose Esteban Gonzalez wrote in March 1982:

The people of Nicaragua still yearn for freedom, and have no wish for a return to government like that of the Somoza era. The Catholic Church is strong, and firmly devoted to human rights. Other groups—the private sector, political leaders, trade unionists—are still pressing for the fulfillment of the promises of the revolution. And the Sandinistas have at times proved sensitive to international pressures for human rights.

An international campaign for Nicaraguan human rights could have a very significant impact...[but] stop romanticizing a revolutionary leadership that has turned against the democratic promises of the revolution.

International awareness is a powerful weapon in the hands of the forces of democracy. They can focus so much attention on *La Prensa*, the Church, the free unions, political parties and the private sector that the Sandinistas cannot afford the political cost of eliminating them. Further, Western democratic political organizations and nations can deny legitimacy to Nicaraguan claims against its neighbors. These actions can reduce the Nicaraguan threat and help demonstrate that democracies can understand and defeat totalitarian aggression.

The voices of pluralism and democracy in Nicaragua, and their oppressors, need to know that eyes from all over the world are on them. If free and progressive people everywhere maintain a continuing commitment to the issue of freedom in Nicaragua, if they insist that the Sandinistas comply with their promises to their revolutionary partners and to the OAS, then the islands of democracy in Nicaragua can be sustained and endure. ■

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Photos

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