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# 'Commander Zero' on the new Nicaragua

As "Commander Zero" he was a Sandinista hero in the movement to overthrow Nicaragua's Somoza regime. Now, years later, the bushy-bearded Eden Pastora Gomez is an outlaw again, fighting this time against the very revolution he helped bring about. Unlike the counterrevolutionary National Democratic Front, which has been accepting support from the United States, Mr. Pastora's ARDE (Democratic Revolutionary Alliance), which appears to be gaining strength, refuses to align with any other nation. Mr. Pastora was interviewed by Mexican television journalist Juan Francisco Castaneda. Here is an excerpt from the interview, which appeared recently on the Mexican television network Televisa.

**JUAN FRANCISCO CASTANEDA:** Why have you taken up this new fight?

**EDEN PASTORA GOMEZ:** Well, it's not new, but a continuation of the past. The Sandinista directorate betrayed the fundamentals of Sadinismo — nonalignment and free elections — by bringing in foreign troops. Some 2,500 Cuban military personnel are in Nicaragua. The directorate has assassinated our Indians in the name of Marxism. There is no religious liberty and no freedom of association. As a result, we have passed from American imperialism to Soviet imperialism. They betrayed the Sandinista ideals, and after a year of political struggle we had to go back to war. We are the true Sandinistas — the anti-imperialist revolutionaries, but anti-imperialist toward both the United States and the Soviet Union.

**Q:** What is ARDE?

**A:** We're the revolutionaries. We're for revolution. We realize Nicaragua has had a revolution and that there have been some revolutionary achievements — for example the national literacy campaign. That's something we defend. The nationalization of natural resources is also something we agree with, as well as the seizure of the Somoza properties and assets. In addition, we support the nationalization of the banks and the export trade. These are positive achievements of the revolution.

We are revolutionaries, but not Marxist-Leninists in the Stalinist mold. We want a revolution with freedom of the press. We want a revolution where there's the freedom to criticize the government if we don't like it. We want freedoms. We want a mixed economy; laws and government by the consent of the people, whether it be by congress or assembly. We want free elections and not elections that are just advisory. We want laws, not decrees. We want sugar, lard, medicine, boots, and we want liberty and peace.

We don't want to align ourselves with the Soviet Union just as we haven't wanted to align ourselves with the United States. We want a nonaligned revolution. We want a revolution without Cuban intervention. We want a nationalist revolution, not an international revolution. We want a revolution for us, the Nicaraguans, that is made by the Nicaraguans themselves. We want our own literacy program. We had one, but it was with the help of 8,000 to 9,000 Cubans who brought their own ideology with them.

**Q:** Last month your forces occupied the small coastal village of San Juan del Norte. But after three days, you retreated in the face of a government attack. What happened there?

**A:** We are fighting a guerrilla war — just like the Salvadoran guerrilla war. We take places, then pull back. So far, San Juan has been our biggest victory. We can't take provinces yet. We're fighting in 30,000 square kilometers that is a quarter of the country. Of that, we control 5,000 square kilometers, which have been totally liberated and where the enemy doesn't enter. So we're fighting as guerrillas; we can't fight a conventional war. We're fighting against Moscow. We're fighting against dozens of helicopters, against rockets, artillery and large quantities of mortars.

We are also fighting this killing rain that's falling.

We're fighting against all the logistics of the Soviet Union. And who helps us? We get a few cents and timid and cowardly indifference from the so-called democracies of Latin America. Some of them give us aid, but it embarrasses them. It's starting to come, though. They give us help on the condition we don't use their names. The most important form of support — political support — they don't give us. They're afraid of stirring up the Communist parties in their own countries or causing problems with the leftist elements in their own parties. For that reason, the fight is difficult and unequal. So we have to fight a guerrilla war.

**Q:** At this time how many men does ARDE have and what are their positions?

**A:** Look, a year ago we took 130 kilometers of border with 360 or 370 men, I forget the exact figure. Now we have 10,000 armed peasants fighting in the mountains and in their villages. We're fighting through the rivers. We're about to arrive at Bluefields (capital of the southeastern coastal district of Zelaya, the most densely populated district in Nicaragua). We have the agricultural settlement of Nueva Guinea surrounded. We're fighting in 30,000 square kilometers.

At San Juan del Norte we demonstrated our force beyond a doubt. The force that the Sandinista Front had in the last war we have now. We have had offers of 10,000 rifles, and I'm going to ask for them. In 90 days we think we will have 20,000 guerrillas, all campesinos (peasants).

**Q:** What can you tell us about the various ports that were being mined in Nicaragua?

**A:** The CIA [U.S. Central Intelligence Agency] has given its support to the National Democratic Front [FDN]. When we launched our armed struggle by bombing Managua, three days later the FDN — the stepchild of the CIA — bombed Corinto (a western port city). When we attacked Pena Blanca (in the southwest), three days later the FDN attacked another port. They have been imitating us that way. They imitated us when we decided to mine the ports with homemade mines and mines from World War II that we obtained from the Mafia. We put them in the Atlantic and at Corinto on the Pacific. The CIA arrived, and they installed sophisticated mines. We protested this foreign intervention. It detracts from what is an internal nationalist war. You lose political force in the country when there's foreign intervention. We are not responsible for these silly mines that hit a fishing boat and cannot sink it.

**Q:** If ARDE gains power, what does Eden Pastora want?

**A:** We are going to win a war, but I am not going to stay in power. I want the assembly to name a chief of state, and I want free elections. I won't be one of the candidates. I want a vacation, a celebration. I am going to offer my congratulations to the elected president

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