The Battle for Nicaragua

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1.

The elections of November 1984 were a turning point both for the Sandinista regime and for its opponents. As I described in a previous article,[1] the election of President Daniel Ortega took place without the participation of the principal opposition coalition—the Coordinadora group—led by Arturo Cruz, who claimed that the government would not allow his group the minimum conditions necessary for a fair campaign. Notwithstanding the judgment of some observers that the vote was "a step toward democracy," the Sandinistas soon tightened their control over civilian life—abetted, as in the past, by the tactics of the Reagan administration.

On the evening of November 6, while the votes were being counted both in Managua and the US, the administration circulated intelligence reports suggesting that a Soviet freighter might be delivering M16-21 fighters to Nicaragua. The administration used the scare to persuade members of Congress to support direct military action if M16s appeared in Nicaragua. In fact none were delivered. The US sent a reconnaissance plane whose sonic booms were heard twice in Managua. The Sandinistas, predicting an imminent invasion, as they had eight times before, took the occasion to militarize the country further and impose harsher controls. (The shipment in question was of one of two delivering a total of six Soviet MI-24 combat helicopters. What was new about it was that it was the first to come in a Soviet freighter and directly from a Soviet port.)

The invasion scare was over in a few days. But throughout November and December, activists from the opposition parties and groups were harrassed and jailed often for brief periods—including followers of the Social Christian party, the Independent Liberal party led by Virgilio Godoy, and several union leaders. Press censorship became more severe and dozens of opposition leaders were denied exit visas. Small merchants found themselves in increasing difficulty with the government, and demonstrations against the draft were suppressed. The attacks from rebel forces based in Honduras and Nicaragua became much more intense, and more of the countryside became embroiled in a civil war backed by the superpowers. A report from Managua in the London Sunday *Times* of January 13, 1985 noted that rebel

> attacks are getting to the point where the government, instead of publicizing the killings [by the rebels], as it used to, appears to have decided that fear of demoralization overcomes the value of publicity.

After the elections, the number of people illegally leaving the country sharply increased. In early 1985, the Costa Rican minister of public security announced that in three days, three thousand Nicaraguan youths had entered his country. "Before the refugees were *campesinos*—but now we're getting young people from the city."

Many of them were escaping the draft, which was imposed on young men over fifteen in 1983 and became an acute issue throughout the country in 1984. According to that year's annual report of the OAS's Inter-American Human Rights Commission: "On many occasions young people who are ineligible under the very terms of the law that created the service are drafted into it." The Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights, an independent organization which has been strongly critical of the Sandinistas, reported that in November 1984, just after the elections, an estimated three thousand young people in Chinandega were taken from their homes in handcuffs during a forced recruitment drive. After the draft was imposed, school attendance fell as much as 75 percent in some regions, and young Nicaraguans have told journalists that they are afraid to ride public vehicles or go to the movies because of the fear of draft roundups. In

March 1985 an ABC television report estimated from extensive interviews that 35 percent of the eligible Nicaraguans were evading the draft and 20 percent of those conscripted later deserted.

During the last months of 1984 there were at least six large street demonstrations against the draft. According to *The Washington Post* (January 18, 1985), on December 28 residents of Nagarote, a cotton town twenty-five miles northwest of Managua, set up barricades and fought Sandinista soldiers who were rounding up local young men for army service. The soldiers were directed by local CDS (Sandinista Defense Committees, neighborhood block committees) officials and accompanied by *turbas* (mobs) wielding clubs and sticks. The previous week two hundred women, the mothers of soldiers, had forced their way into an army training camp in San Rafael del Sur to protest the drafting of their sons and demand their release. In May a group of Creoles and Indians on the Atlantic Coast who had been recruited into the Sandinista army revolted during a battle with Miskito Indian guerrillas and liberated Miskitos from an army prison. Twenty-two rebels and Sandinista troops were reported to have died in the mutiny.

By 1985 the government was devoting nearly half of its resources to the war. Its foreign debt was more than $4 billion; and Nicaragua became the first developing country to fall more than six months behind in the payments of its debt to the World Bank. As in El Salvador, the war has placed a huge burden on Nicaragua's economy and has impaired the government's ability to improve the standard of living of peasants and workers. The embargo on trade announced by the US last spring imposed new hardships on the Nicaraguans and strengthened the hardliners among the Sandinistas. So have the efforts by the US to block Nicaraguan loans from the Inter-American Development Bank—a policy that many Latin American governments have objected to.

But the economic situation had been worsening since the end of 1981, before the war with the rebels became a major factor, and after the US and other Western governments contributed $1.6 billion in aid to the Nicaraguan government. The middle class, alarmed by politically motivated expropriations, became relucant to invest. State companies, in which there were widespread mismanagement and corruption, failed to take up the slack. By the end of 1981 real wages were sharply falling and unemployment was rising. Peasants, unable to sell on the private market and unwilling to sell at state-imposed, artificially low prices, cut back on production. By 1983, this caused nationwide food shortages, a vast black market, and high inflation. Many Nicaraguans quit their farming and factory jobs to engage in speculation, buying and selling black market goods. In 1984, a dozen new shantytowns sprang up around Managua, inhabited by *campesinos* and urban poor unable to pay rent.

Describing the economic situation as "hellish," Daniel Ortega announced in February 1985 an austerity plan that sharply reversed Sandinista economic policies and reduced the extent of government intervention in the economy. The new economic policy devalued the currency, removed price subsidies, cut state spending and state employment, restricted the property of state farms, increased taxes, and intensified the campaign against "speculators."[2]

As their standard of living fell to approximately the same low levels that had prevailed during the early 1960s, Nicaraguans heard from the government itself of widespread graft by Sandinista officials. During the winter of 1984 and 1985, many of the public clinics were without medicine and equipment, but soap, refrigerators, air conditioners, and other electrical equipment, as well as large quantities of medicines—all stamped "Ministry of Public Health"—turned up on the black market. The authorities, after first censoring an exposé of graft in *La Prensa*, accused a ring of corrupt officials headed by the minister of health, who was later fired. There have also been reports of illegal sales of state agricultural machinery, public land, and gas rationing coupons, as well as arbitrary police fines and embezzlement by heads of state companies.

On April 3, 1985, the head of the Sandinista national police said, "The problem of corruption and economic crime is so great that it could damage Nicaragua as much as counterrevolutionary activity." He was no doubt correct in saying that "counterrevolutionary... elements can usually take advantage of the discontent that generalized corruption produces among the masses."

Most of the protest against corruption, however, was not planned by the rebels, who have been notably unsuccessful in organizing opposition in the cities. Many of the local demonstrations that have taken place seem to have been spontaneous, like the antidraft protests and the "candy riot" in Managua last June, when a group of women and children invaded a state warehouse after word spread that thousands of boxes of East German and Bulgarian candy were melting in the heat.[3]

Through the spring and summer of 1985 popular protests increased. On May Day, fifteen hundred workers tried to

[1] See my article on the elections in *The New York Review* (December 5, 1985).

[2] The currency devaluation of more than 200 percent was intended to revive Nicaragua's exports, which had shrunk from $646 million in 1978 to $400 million in 1984, producing a commercial deficit of nearly half a billion dollars. The government reportedly began negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. Private Sandinista and IMF sources say these negotiations are being directed by Joaquín Cuadra Chamorro, president of the Central Bank and a moderate.

[3] Announcing the formation of "a National Commission of Struggle Against Corruption" in April 1985, Vice-President Sergio Ramírez attributed the increase in corruption to the rapid growth of the state sector since the revolution and to "survivals of Somozismo." According to the newspaper of the Nicaraguan Communist party, *Avance* (March 1985), "the fundamental cause of corruption is the ruling party's concept of power which considers public funds as private property." The real salaries of "ministers, viceministers, and other officials [are] kept secret," *Avance* said, and these officials are "provided automobiles, exempted from paying for rent, telephone, electricity, water while they are paid in dollars for purchases at the diplomatic store, in Panama or Miami."

Since 1980 Sandinista officials have blamed their much-commented-on administrative inefficiency on a "lack of trained cadre." Agustin Jarquín, leader of the opposition Social Christian party, argues that both inefficiency and corruption derive from the general practice of awarding government jobs and promotions on the basis of Sandinista party loyalty.

Jorge Alaníz Pinell, a former high-ranking Sandinista government official, recounts some striking cases of government corruption and waste (see Jorge Alaniz Pinell, *Nicaragua*, Costa Rica: Kosmos, 1985, chapters 7 and 8). Alaniz Pinell and other analysts trace Nicaragua's corruption and poor economic record to the departure of qualified technicians and bureaucrats from the original revolutionary coalition. Merle Linda Wolan in a revealing series of ar-

march from a church in a working-class neighborhood of Managua, where they heard a sermon from Archbishop Obando y Bravo, to a site where a union leader had been killed in the struggle against Somoza. Sandinista police and *turbas* broke up the march. Several weeks earlier, union complaints had forced the government to raise wages. But with inflation running at 200 percent a year, prices rose several times faster. In September a leftist construction-union leader began a hunger strike demanding that the Christmas bonuses, which the Sandinistas had cancelled, be restored. He was immediately arrested but other labor unions took up his demands. Workers in government unions have taken part in unauthorized strikes, notwithstanding the assurances in August of Comandante Bayardo Arce, one of the most powerful of the Sandinista leaders, that

> Nicaraguan workers now have class consciousness, because they do not expect salary increases, a reduction of the work week, or an increase in vacations. On the contrary, the workers have renounced all that. Payment for overtime has been replaced by the revolutionary concept of voluntary work and other necessary sacrifices for the defense of the revolution.

Fewer and fewer workers show the kind of enthusiasm Arce describes. A significant number of young Nicaraguans, however, are willing to make sacrifices for the revolution, especially those who have voluntarily joined the armed forces. They point to the benefits of the revolution for health, education, and the distribution of land. As Arturo Cruz told the novelist Mario Vargas Llosa in an interview published in *The New York Times* of April 28, 1985,

> the literacy campaign, rural development, the improved status of women—they are all positive. But [the Sandinistas'] most important achievement is that they have broken down the tremendous class barriers that once divided society. The Sandinistas' mistake is thinking that none of these accomplishments is compatible with freedom.[4]

The well-to-do leaders of the right wing of the Nicaraguan political opposition have become paralyzed since the elections of 1984. They fear Sandinista reprisals and are suspicious of all the other opposition groups. They dream of a US invasion. The more moderate and left-wing parties representing professionals and workers have been far more active. In late September 1985 the Social Christian party called a meeting that brought out more people than could fit into the theater in Managua where the meeting took place. Virgilio Godoy, leader of the Independent Liberal party (PLI), told me in November that during 1985 his party was able to "organize nationally" for the first time, despite the arrest of more than fifty activists and the drafting of many more into the army. A young PLI leader told me, "We have a conviction [*mística*] that we are struggling not so much for political power but for the survival of our culture, our national identity." I heard similar views from Socialist party activists. Two other Marxist-Leninist parties have also joined in protests organized by trade unions and opposition political parties.

2.

In previous crises Nicaraguans have turned to the Church as the symbol of national identity. A small number of priests have joined with the regime, which has supported a "people's church." But as Vargas Llosa wrote in his *New York Times* article, "the efforts of the leaders of the 'people's church' to combine politics and religion have only found a response in the intellectually militant members of the middle class, most of whom are already converts." The "people's church," he wrote, "is largely composed of members of the religious elite—priests and laymen whose intellectual dispositions and sociopolitical work lie beyond the scope of most of the Catholic poor."

The traditional Church has been increasingly estranged from the regime since the early 1980s, and there seems no doubt that large numbers of Catholics see the Church as an ally against an oppressive system. On June 14, 200,000 Nicaraguans went to the airport to greet Miguel Obando y Bravo when he returned from Rome where he was elevated from archbishop to cardinal, some of them waiting since 9:00 AM for the cardinal's plane to arrive at 5:00 PM. It took the cardinal's car nine hours to drive through the dense crowd to his house, six miles from the airport. Many in the crowd shouted, "Christianity yes, Communism no" and "the [Sandinista] Front must go," jeered at Sandinista police, and attacked foreign journalists as "*internacionalistas*" or government collaborators. When the government tried to disperse the crowds by switching off street lights, people burned tires by the roadside and lit torches.

Like many of the other Nicaraguans who are now the active leaders of the opposition inside the country, Obando y Bravo is not a man of the right. He was twice called upon by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to arrange the release of Sandinista political prisoners from Somoza's jails and issued statements justifying armed rebellion against Somoza. He now says that Nicaraguans "want neither communism nor capitalism," a view that implicitly criticizes some of the important supporters of the rebel forces as well as the Sandinistas. The cardinal has called for a dialogue between the two sides. He began holding masses throughout the country this summer, preaching a message of "unity and national reconciliation," which attracted large crowds. The Sandinistas sent armed security agents to the Catholic radio station to stop them from broadcasting tapes of his talks. Eleven seminarians who had been assured that they were exempt from military service were drafted into the army in late September 1985, and immigration authorities threatened to expel fifteen foreign priests if they made statements critical of FSLN policies.

On October 12 security officials confiscated both the first issue of a new Church newspaper and the printing press. Three days later Lenín Cerna, head of

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ticles on the Sandinista leaders in the *Los Angeles Herald* described, for example, how Tomás Borge sought to trick her into believing that the modest bungalow in which he received her was his own home ("Portrait of an Enemy—Nicaragua under the Sandinistas," first of six parts, *Los Angeles Herald*, May 9, 1985, p. 1).

[4]Other former members of the Sandinista government question the Sandinistas' commitment to women's rights. See Xavier Arguello, "A Guerrilla and His PEN," *The New Republic* (February 24, 1986).

Sandinista state security, led a raid on the Church's welfare office, a center for Catholic activists, and prevented priests from entering it. Then came Daniel Ortega's decree of October 15, suspending the rights of speech, assembly, personal security, and freedom of movement, and labor's right to organize strikes. Americas Watch has reported that several hundred people have been arrested, questioned, and then released since the emergency decree. They have included the Catholic and Evangelical clergy, trade-union leaders, and a well-known journalist. According to the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights, two Social Christian party activists were brutally murdered in November, one after being tortured. Ortega blamed "US imperialism" and rebel "sabotage and political destabilization" for the decree; but the main targets of the actions taken under it have not been saboteurs or people giving assistance to the rebels but the civilian political opposition and, primarily, the Church.


UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos

Adolfo Calero, leader of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN)

During the weeks that followed the October 15 decree, Sandinista authorities intensified their campaign against the Catholic Church and other religious organizations. State security officials detained and questioned several Catholic priests and Evangelical ministers. They were stripped and subjected to long interrogations while naked. At the end of December the Catholic radio station was closed down. *La Prensa*'s editor told me that censorship was more severe than ever—articles that were censored included announcements of confirmations and baptisms and news of hurricanes, as well as reports of the decisions of the National Assembly. The ban on outdoor meetings has not prevented many thousands from attending Cardinal Obando y Bravo's masses in fields and public squares. He told me: "Twenty thousand people will not fit into a church."

I was able to see what the cardinal meant on November 7 when he held a mass in Ocotal, a small town several miles from the Honduran border, in an area contested by the rebels. Three thousand people came on foot from small hamlets in the region. Some had been walking for days. The authorities did not set up roadblocks to keep people from entering Ocotal, as they had done previously for two larger masses that had been held elsewhere since the October 15 decree. They refused to allow business in Ocotal to close that day, however, and prohibited public employees from attending the service. When the cardinal arrived, the crowd surged forward, carrying me into the church with it. Inside people were so packed together it was difficult to breathe and impossible to move. The cardinal's theme was that the Nicaraguan people were a people estranged from itself, from truth, from God.

Obando y Bravo told me he sought to be "the voice of those who have no voice." With the various members of the political opposition unable to act freely and the weak and divided leaders of the Coordinadora—the coalition of conservatives and liberals that mounted the principal challenge to the regime before the 1984 election—out of popular favor, Miguel Obando y Bravo has emerged as its undisputed leader. The Catholic Church is the only national institution capable of resisting the government, and, as in Poland, a sort of "dual power" exists in Nicaragua. Political and military power is in the hands of the FSLN, but the cardinal is the leader who clearly seems to have the broadest social and moral appeal. The Church cannot organize an open political opposition, but the Sandinista leaders are unable to impose socialism on the Cuban model, not because many of them do not wish to but because they face a resistant population.

3.

After the elections many more Nicaraguans turned to armed resistance. "In December and January...volunteers streamed into the rebel border camps," Julia Preston of *The Boston Globe* reported on March 18, 1985. In January Arturo Cruz—who had been an official in the revolutionary government and then the leader of the Coordinadora before the elections—changed his position. In November he had said that the new president should be given a "period of grace" to see whether the regime would allow a "political opening." In January he declared that unless the Sandinistas renounced Soviet and Cuban military assistance, he would support a resumption of US funding for the rebels. Cruz, like some other former anti-Somocistas who had tried to oppose the Sandinistas peacefully inside Nicaragua, now moved toward an alliance with the rebels—an alliance, as we shall see, that has left him far from his announced goal of leading a united democratic opposition movement.

In Washington, House Speaker "Tip" O'Neill has called the rebels "butchers and maimers"; the Reagan administration has hailed them as "lovers of freedom and democracy," "our brothers," "the moral equal of our founding fathers." Most of the rebels, who reject the word "*contra*" as a pejorative Sandinista label, claim that they fight "to restore the original goals of the revolution," including pluralism and democratic institutions.

How seriously can such claims be taken? The rebel leaders are drawn from former officers and troops of Somoza's National Guard, from pro- and anti-Somoza businessmen and politicians, former Sandinista fighters, and Indian leaders. Repeated efforts to unite them have failed. Most of them have had support from the CIA, and the story of their shifting relations with secret US agencies is central to any understanding of them. They are organized in several armed groups, from the fanatically anti-communist leaders of the Honduran-based FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force) to the divided social democrats of the "southern front" on the Costa Rican border who were originally drawn to Edén Pastora, the former Sandinista who left Nicaragua in 1981, protesting the "Cubanization of the Nicaraguan revolution." Pastora and his allies sought negotiations with the Sandinistas on several occasions. The FDN, until 1984, attacked as capitulation all efforts to negotiate. Of the two groups of Indian combatants, Misura has been allied with the FDN and Misurasata was formerly allied with Pastora.[5]

The fighting in eastern Nicaragua (which Nicaraguans call the Atlantic Coast) has usually appeared to outsiders as a baffling sideshow. It is Nicaragua's oldest but least publicized insurgency, in

[5]Misurasata was created after the revolution by members of the Miskito, Sumo, and Rama ethnic groups. The name is a combination of the first letters of Miskito, Sumo, Rama, and Sandinista, and the Miskito words "Asla takanka" (meaning "together"). Misura drops the reference to Sandinista.

which groups of Creoles and Indians, mainly Miskitos—who are largely Protestant and do not speak Spanish—have been resisting Sandinista control. Between 1980 and 1985 perhaps one quarter of all rebels came from the Atlantic Coast. Missionaries, refugees, and even some government officials say that this is where the government has been most unpopular and had least authority after the Sandinista takeover in 1979. Miskito fighters have been able to enter almost any village in the region, under the cover of night.

Outside governments—Spanish, British, American—have seen the Atlantic Coast as a strategically important part of Nicaragua, and so have the Sandinistas since coming to power. The region has gold, lumber, and fish. It also has a long border with Honduras, and its ports are vital for receiving Cuban supplies. Immediately after the takeover Sandinistas dispatched troops as well as scores of Cuban doctors, nurses, and teachers to help pacify the region. The highly independent indigenous population resented the arbitrary behavior of Sandinista soldiers, their political indoctrination, and the raising of Cuban flags. The Sandinistas often responded by denying much-needed supplies to the Miskitos, who, some of the *comandantes* said, were suffering from "massive ideological backwardness." Miskitos resisted the government's attempts to replace communal lands and tribal organization with state farms and block committees. Early in 1981 the government arrested approximately thirty Miskito leaders, setting off a wave of protest along the Atlantic Coast. By the fall of 1981 there was intense fighting between Indian fighters and government troops. "The Nicaraguan government," Penny Lernoux observed in *The Nation* of September 14, 1985, "allowed its distrust of the Indians to degenerate into civil war, and with each spiral in the violence it became more difficult for the Sandinistas to understand that ethnicity cannot be squeezed into the mold of class struggle." (See also her article in the *National Catholic Reporter*, April 26, 1985.)

The Sandinistas' next move, in December 1981, was to forcibly relocate forty-two Miskito villages near the Honduran border into resettlement camps—about eighty-five hundred people in all. An exodus of ten thousand Miskitos into Honduras followed the episode, and in November 1982 another seven thousand Indians were transferred to state-owned coffee plantations.[6]

The two Indian guerrilla groups on the Atlantic Coast since 1981, Misura and Misurasata, cooperate in the field but their leaders have been bitterly antagonistic. Misura's longstanding chief, Steadman Fagoth, linked himself almost from the outset with the right-wing leaders of the FDN. The principal Misurasata leader, Brooklyn Rivera, claims that Fagoth tried to assassinate him. Both men had been accused of using violence to eliminate rivals. Rivera made a tactical alliance with Edén Pastora, but he has been concerned almost exclusively with the persecution of the Indians. Late in 1984 he began to negotiate with the Sandinistas for Indian land rights and a cease-fire. In May 1985 these talks were cut off when the Sandinista minister of the interior Tomás Borge announced that a national autonomy commission was being created to deal with the Miskito problem and demanded that Rivera declare an unconditional cease-fire if the talks were to continue.

In August 1985, Fagoth, whose brutality and abuses toward civilians embarrassed some of his own supporters, was expelled from Misura. Later that month, Rivera claims, the Honduran authorities, with the complicity of the US, kept him from attending an "Indian unity" meeting on Honduran territory. At the meeting a statement was issued announcing that a new Miskito organization called Kisan had been formed. It was immediately denounced by some of the former leaders of Misura and the current leaders of Misurasata as the artificial creation of the FDN. Rivera protested that the FDN had "seized and intimidated Miskito community leaders, demanding that they either support the FDN or be killed."

The Sandinistas have been unable to subdue the Atlantic Coast. "The people reject the troops," Mateo Collins, the local director of the Protestant Committee for Aid and Development, told *The New York Times* in an interview published on February 8. "Many people believe nothing good can come from the Sandinistas." Since last autumn there has been an unstable, unofficial truce in the region. The Sandinistas have allowed Miskitos to resettle in their burned-out villages. They have granted an amnesty to Miskito fighters, started informal talks with guerrillas in the field, and moved Sandinista troops out of Miskito villages to barracks in coastal cities. Some Sandinista supporters, who were distressed by the treatment of the Miskitos, are hopeful that these conciliatory actions mark a decisive change in the FSLN's attitude. Since the beginning of 1985 several thousand Miskito refugees in Honduras have returned to the Atlantic Coast; and since early December flights have taken refugees from Mocaron in Honduras to Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua. Rivera, for his part, claims that the Sandinistas, unable to pacify the Atlantic region, have had to settle for an uneasy truce there in order to concentrate their efforts against the FDN in the north.

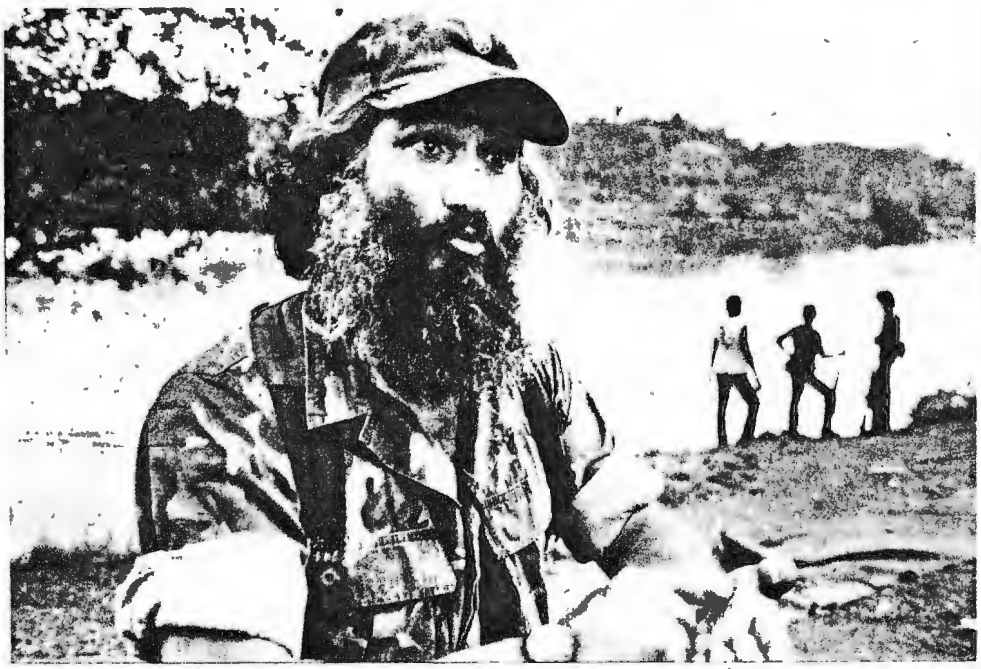
Fighting has continued on the Atlantic Coast. In late October, Miskito troops dynamited a key bridge north of Puerto Cabezas. On February 8, Stephen Kinzer reported in *The New York Times* that in late January the Sandinistas had carried out bombing attacks on at least three Miskito Indian villages in the area near Layasiksa. In one of the attacks rockets and five-hundred-pound bombs were dropped from two planes and a helicopter. "Villagers said they suspected the bombing might have been aimed at a group of rebels led by Brooklyn Rivera," who had returned to Nicaragua to "discuss the military and political situation with other Miskitos."[7]

Reynaldo Reyes, the Miskito leader of the largest group observing the cease-fire, said that "the bombing was a serious violation of our agreement" and that it endangered the truce. Bishop Hedley Wilson, the leader of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua, told Kinzer that he "hoped the Government would halt all bombing in and around the villages" because "these people aren't armed and they aren't actually involved in any conflict." Rivera and his group escaped in a boat to an island off Nicaragua.

4.

The FDN is the largest and most successful rebel group. Its military forces were not organized by "lovers of freedom and democracy" and they are not led by such people now. The top leadership has undergone several changes but it has always consisted of National Guard officers. Its precise origins are difficult to trace, but the FDN began by bringing together different groups of guardsmen who had scattered after the Sandinista takeover in 1979. Some were trying to carry on fighting on the Nicaragua-Honduras border; others took odd jobs or worked as hired gunmen in Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador; still others were in Florida.

One group of perhaps twenty junior National Guard officers (formerly part of a US-trained elite battalion) met in the offices of a group of Cuban exiles where they took an oath of loyalty with blood rites, and proclaimed themselves bound by a right-wing *mistica*—devotion to the cause of anticommunism and to overthrowing the Sandinistas. They were determined to avenge Sandinista persecution of their former National Guard comrades.[8] But they had no money. At first most of the senior National Guard officers, as well as politicians, businessmen,



Photograph © Chris Steele Perkins/Magnum Photos

Edén Pastora

[6]There have been conflicting accounts of the relocation of 1981. The report of the Latin American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS found it to be justified, at least on a temporary basis, by the "emergency situation" resulting from rebel incursions.

Another report, by the International League for Human Rights, challenged this interpretation, concluding that "the forcible relocation of the Miskito Indians (1) was well planned long before it was put into effect; (2) was extended to villages a distance from the border regions and especially from the zone of conflict; (3) was conducted without compensation to the displaced persons; and (4) has resulted in the continuing restrictions on movements of displaced persons. All these factors indicate that the relocation measures far exceeded what is required by the exigencies of the situation."

A similar view was expressed in testimony to the OAS commission by Armstrong Wiggins, a Miskito Indian who formerly worked for the Sandinista government and later became associated with the Indian Law Research Center in Washington.

See the OAS "Report on the Human Rights of a Segment of the Nicaraguan Population of Miskito Origin" (November 29, 1983 and May 16, 1984) and "Nicaragua's Indians," issued by the International League for Human Rights (July 1983). Wiggins's testimony was given to the commission on March 2, 1982, April 12, 1983, and May 11, 1984. By 1984 it was estimated that as much as a third of the Indian population had been displaced. See Shirley Christian, *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family* (Random House, 1985), p. 266.

[7]See Stephen Kinzer, *The New York Times* (February 8, 1986), p. 2, and the UPI dispatch on the same page.

[8]The three thousand guardsmen were dealt with severely. "Special tribunals," composed of their former enemies, were set up to judge them. No effort was made to identify the military units that had not participated in combat. Many guardsmen today remain in prison, unaware of their sentences or the length of their confinement.

and landlords, refused to meet with them. One exception was Colonel Enrique Bermúdez, the defense attaché in Washington during Somoza's last years. In early 1980, having received $300,000 from Somoza's cousin, Luis Pallais Debayle, he began to organize this and the other groups of guardsmen into the September 15 Legion,[9] named after the date of Central America's liberation from Spain in 1821.

Under Bermúdez's command the Legion's headquarters were moved from training camps in Florida to Guatemala, at the time the center of a Central American terrorist network that harbored right-wing fugitives like Roberto d'Aubisson and provided training camps for Salvadoran death squads. Bermúdez negotiated an agreement with the Argentine military dictatorship. In exchange for money, arms, and training, the legion would pursue the "dirty war" against the Argentine *Montoneros* who had fled to Central America and to some of whom the Sandinistas had given sanctuary. A group of Bermúdez's men went to Argentina and received training there, not only in the use of arms but in techniques of "interrogation." The Argentine government later sent officers to Honduras to train Bermúdez's guerrillas. The legion also received money from Salvadoran businessmen.

Its first intelligence chief, Ricardo ("Chino") Lau, was accused in 1984 by a former director of Salvadoran intelligence of helping d'Aubisson to assassinate Archbishop Oscard Arnulfo Romero. Lau was still associated with Bermúdez up to late 1984. During the 1980 Republican campaign Bermúdez also met with and got encouragement from some future members of the Reagan administration who were then close to Senator Jesse Helms.

Bermúdez was also making contact with the first of what were to be successive groups of former opponents of Somoza who were disenchanted with the Sandinistas. José Francisco ("Chicano") Cardenal had participated with Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the editor of *La Prensa*, in an unsuccessful guerrilla movement against Somoza in 1959. In 1978 he was a leader of the strikes that businessmen organized against Somoza. After the Sandinistas stacked the quasi-legislative Council of State in May 1980, Cardenal, who was its vice-president, left Nicaragua and formed the Nicaraguan revolutionary democratic alliance (ADREN). ADREN entered into a short-lived, shaky alliance with Bermúdez's September 15 Legion. This was the first of many unsuccessful attempts to merge anti-Somocistas with Bermúdez's group. When the two organizations separated in October 1980, Cardenal joined two brothers who had fought against Somoza, Fernando ("El Negro") and Edmundo Chamorro and a distant relative, the former Jesuit professor Edgar Chamorro.[10] They formed an organization called the Nicaraguan Democratic Union (UDN).

In the summer of 1981 another attempt was made to unite the two anti-Sandinista groups—the UDN with about one hundred members, and the September 15 Legion with about seventy-five. "El Negro" Chamorro refused to have anything to do with the ex-guardsmen but Cardenal and Edgar Chamorro agreed to do so, and in October 1981 the FDN was founded by merging the September 15 Legion with a section of the UDN led by Cardenal.

Edgar Chamorro told me that he and Cardenal had hesitated to join forces with former guardsmen: "They were the ones who had persecuted our family." Yet he decided to join for two reasons. The Sandinistas, he said, were "putting in place a Cuban-type system" and had become a "power elite unwilling to listen to anyone outside the party's inner circle." Furthermore:

> The Americans told us we must unite to get their backing. It was a marriage of convenience. We needed to build an army, and we saw Bermúdez as a professional military man; the military types needed moderate, democratic credentials and contacts. We thought the Americans would help us subordinate them [the military] to us [the civilians].

He was not the first Nicaraguan democrat to harbor such illusions or to say he felt trapped between Sandinista intransigence and American blindness.

Cardenal says a State Department official, Secretary Alexander Haig's special assistant, General Gordon Sumner, "insinuated" to him that unity with the former guardsmen would assure a flow of money to the rebels. Cardenal's first meeting with the CIA was in July 1981. The insurgents, he was told, should cooperate with the Honduran and Argentine governments with whom, it was clear, the CIA was in close touch.

In August 1981 Reagan's assistant secretary for inter-American affairs, Thomas Enders, traveled to Managua where he promised the Sandinistas to keep out of Nicaragua's internal affairs if the Sandinistas ceased arming and otherwise assisting the Salvadoran rebels. Enders failed to get an agreement, and in November 1981 the White House authorized CIA funding for the Nicaraguan rebels.

Shortly before this, Bermúdez, on instructions from an Argentine colonel in charge of relations with the FDN, moved his headquarters to Honduras, where the FDN was assured it would get a friendly reception from General Gustavo Alvarez, the Commander in Chief of the Honduran armed forces and a protégé of the Argentine military. The CIA provided supplies and training in sabotage. In March of 1982, FDN saboteurs trained by the CIA blew up two bridges in northern Nicaragua; the Sandinistas, in response, declared a state of emergency.

Enders, according to State Department sources, saw support of the FDN as a "second track," a way to pressure the Sandinistas to consent to US demands (especially that they end their involvement in El Salvador), but also as a means

[9] Richard Millett, the leading historian of the Nicaraguan military, says that Bermúdez had "independent contacts with U.S. military personnel" but "no connections with [Somoza's] atrocities" (Richard Millett, "Praetorians or Patriots," in Robert S. Leiken, *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict*, Pergamon/Carnegie, 1984). Nevertheless, unlike some other National Guard officers, Bermúdez did not rebel against Somoza or denounce his regime after it fell.

[10] The Chamorros of Granada are the best known of the prominent Nicaraguan "historical families." Several Nicaraguan presidents and Conservative party leaders have come from this family as well as Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the late editor of *La Prensa*. Edgar Chamorro's grandparents were third cousins to Pedro's. The Chamorro brothers are more distantly related to Edgar.

of appeasing the far-right-wing forces inside and outside the Reagan administration, who were determined to overthrow the Sandinista regime. In August 1983, Julio Lopez, the FSLN's top foreign-policy official, told me in Managua, "We can accept the Enders deal" on El Salvador. But by then what was called the "second track" was already central to the Reagan administration's policy. Nicaragua was deeply divided, and the rebels had become a major military force based in the Honduran camps, where CIA officials were replacing the Argentine officers in charge of training.

5.

A second wave of former opponents of Somoza left Nicaragua in 1981, this time led by dissident Sandinistas, including "Comandante Cero," Edén Pastora, who was famous for having led the raid on the National Palace in 1978; and, later, for his command of the southern front in the war against Somoza. Pastora's departure from Nicaragua, along with that of his chief associates, including Carlos Coronel and Leonel Poveda, marked the first major break in Sandinista unity. Pastora traveled to Cuba, Panama, and Guatemala—where, he told me, the Sandinistas blocked his participation in the Guatemalan revolutionary movement even though he had been given $5 million by the Libyan government for the revolutionaries. He came to the surface in early 1982 in Mexico. There he met Duane ("Dewey") Claridge (whom Pastora knew as Mr. Maroni), the CIA agent charged with organizing the *contras*.

The CIA began to finance Pastora's organization in 1982, and in 1983, from what I have been told by both US government and rebel sources, the CIA gave more money to Pastora than it did to the FDN. Dewey Claridge considered the charismatic ex-Sandinista more likely than Bermúdez to win Nicaraguan and international support, even if Pastora resisted advice to make his organization more efficient and resented any suggestion that he was serving US interests.

At this point, the Reagan administration officials did not agree about their aims in backing Nicaragua rebel forces: Was it to bring down the Sandinista regime or to force it into making concessions? But their tactics were clear. There were now two basic ideological camps in the resistance—the first was on the northern border, in Honduras, composed of national guardsmen and backed by traditional right-wing party leaders and former associates of Somoza, many of them in Miami; the second, based in Costa Rica on the southern border, consisted of former Sandinistas and social and Christian democrats. The CIA backed both, intending to combine them into one. But it wanted to be sure that whichever side it backed would accept American political and military instructions.

During the summer of 1982 Pastora united his group with Alfonso Robelo's Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN)—a social democratic organization with some five hundred members, which had been closely allied with the moderate Tercerista wing of the Sandinista movement during the insurrection—and with Brooklyn Rivera's Misurasata. They formed ARDE (Revolutionary Democratic Alliance). While Dewey Claridge was urging ARDE to merge with the FDN, throughout 1982 and early 1983 Pastora and Robelo were requesting negotiations with the Sandinistas on their proposals for restoring civil liberties, dispensing with Cuban advisers, and adopting a nonaligned foreign policy. They sought, unsuccessfully, the good offices of European social democrats and Congressional liberals both to intercede with the Sandinistas and to give them backing in Washington. (Prime Minister Soares of Portugal, they said, gave them some encouragement.) Carlos Coronel, then Pastora's chief political adviser, traveled to Havana to discuss a Nicaraguan settlement with Cuban officials. Nothing came of these talks either. In April 1983 Pastora's guerrilla forces, by now more than a thousand men, including several hundred former Sandinista soldiers, entered Nicaragua near the Costa Rican border; he was again commanding a "southern front," as he had in the war against Somoza.

Meanwhile, within the FDN's political directorate, relations with Cardenal grew tense. Cardenal told me that Bermúdez and his right-hand man, a former landowner named Aristides Sanchez, wanted the FDN to be "a political party to seize power just like the Sandinistas, not a liberation movement to organize elections." Cardenal told Sanchez: "You're serving the Argentines just as your father served Somoza." According to Cardenal, Bermúdez and his National Guard associates "promoted an invasion by a conventional army; we wanted a guerrilla war with internal support."

Cardenal, by now an uneasy member of the FDN's political directorate, told me that in May 1982 he sought out Pastora in Costa Rica. Pastora told Cardenal that he could not join with the FDN so long as it included Lau and Bermúdez. In August 1982 Edmundo Chamorro of the UDN told me that he and his brother favored uniting UDN, ARDE, and the FDN. But Cardenal's talks with Pastora infuriated the FDN leadership. Cardenal claims that Bermúdez tried to assassinate him.

During 1982 and 1983 the Sandinistas' conflicts with the Church, the trade unions, peasants, and Indians, together with the unpopular draft, increased the number of rebel recruits beyond the expectations of their leaders and CIA sponsors. According to congressional intelligence committees and journalists covering the war, the FDN grew from six hundred in 1982 to between four and five thousand in March 1983 to twelve thousand by early 1985 (not including several thousand unequipped combatants). Pastora's ARDE had as many as six thousand recruits by early 1984, most of them unarmed. Both in northern and southern Nicaragua (not to mention the Atlantic Coast) the local population often provided the rebel group with food, shelter, and information. The first American reporters who traveled with the FDN in the spring of 1983 found, as James LeMoyne reported in *Newsweek*, that northern peasants "seemed to welcome" the insurgents.[11]

To the surprise of many in the CIA, Bermúdez's FDN, not Pastora's ARDE, benefited most from the Sandinistas' problems. The FDN, with its well-organized camps in Honduras, was able to absorb new recruits more effectively. To quiet the concerns of congressional supervisory committees, the CIA decided to improve the group's political image and to try to remove the stench of its Argentine and Guatemalan connections by bringing in recognized anti-Somocista leaders. A CIA agent using the alias Tony Feldman went to Miami to interview candidates. A new set of leaders was produced at a December 1982 news conference, including Edgar Chamorro and a former Sandinista named Indalecio Rodriguez, along with Bermúdez. As Chamorro recalled: "It was done in a big hurry.... The CIA was anxious to please Congress." "Chicano" Cardenal claims that the powerful exiles of the Nicaraguan oligarchy, including Edgar Chamorro, saw to it that he was excluded. He later told me he regarded the National Guard officers as "once trusted employees of Somoza now working for new bosses." Cardenal now runs an insurance agency in Miami.

6.

In January 1983 Adolfo Calero joined the FDN directorate. Calero had been a leader of the Conservative party and was active in the strikes that helped bring down Somoza, but he also had long-standing ties with the CIA. According to Edgar Chamorro, the CIA summarily installed him as president of the National Directorate and Commander in Chief of the FDN. During 1983 and 1984, Calero removed several former National Guard officers accused of corruption and abuse of authority. The CIA also formulated a "code of conduct" for the FDN and wrote a now notorious field manual which the administration claimed was designed to curtail FDN terrorism. But it included instructions on how to "neutralize," i.e., assassinate, local Sandinista officials. Americas Watch and American journalists have published reports of operations against Sandinista officials that were carried out in ways that could have been suggested by the manual.[12]

Though ARDE found support in isolated southeastern Nicaragua and occasionally carried out successful guerrilla attacks, Pastora proved to be a disappointment to his followers. His former associates say that his sense of having been deceived by the Sandinistas made him regard subordinates as potential rivals for power. When Comandante Luis Rivas became known for a successful attack on a Sandinista patrol, Pastora dismissed him. In 1983 and 1984, Pastora broke with virtually all of his potential comrades, including Alfonso Robelo, Brooklyn Rivera, and Carlos Coronel, and many field commanders as well. In August 1984 Robelo told me, "I'll always be Edén's friend, but it's impossible to be his ally." After ARDE broke up, a collection of feuding factions remained on the southern front.

Pastora's associates say that between January 1983 and the spring of 1984, he received as much as $650,000 a month from the CIA, together with nine air drops of equipment and arms. Yet Pastora failed to pose a serious military challenge to the Sandinistas and wasted the aid he got. Arms supplied by the CIA turned up on the Costa Rican black market. On one occasion, an ARDE task force sabotaged the wrong cables and blacked out southern Honduras instead of Managua.

Many people have supposed that the CIA connection damaged Pastora, but the reverse may also be true. The decision to support him was a departure from the conventional CIA practice of backing reliable pro-Americans like Calero. It can

[11] See James LeMoyne, *Newsweek* (April 11, 1983), and Christopher Dickey, *The Washington Post* (April 3, 4, 5, 1983).

[12] See, for example, Dan Williams's report in the *Los Angeles Times* (August 14, 1985).

be compared with the Soviets' decision in the mid-1970s to back *Fidelista* political-military fronts like the Sandinistas instead of traditional Communist parties.[13] Pastora's incompetence embarrassed his CIA sponsors. When his organization began to fall apart, the CIA lost ground in the bureaucratic contest it was carrying on with the National Security Council for control over operations against the Sandinistas. Dewey Claridge and other CIA officials who had supported Pastora were transferred.

After the CIA cut off his funds in 1984 and an attempt was made to kill him, Pastora told me that the FDN, the CIA; and the FSLN were all plotting together to destroy his reputation. In early 1985, were used to give it legitimacy. During that month Chamorro quit the FDN, denouncing it for concealing human rights abuses, for its abject dependence on the CIA, and for its authoritarian mentality.[14]

In February 1985, after he was blocked from participating in the elections of 1984, Arturo Cruz agreed to ally himself with the FDN—on the understanding, he said, that "its internal reform process would continue and gather steam." In June, he, Calero, and Robelo announced the formation of the Nicaraguan Opposition Union (UNO), which Robelo called "an umbrella for all democratic forces." Cruz told me his experience with the Sandinistas convinced him that they would

Reuters/Bettmann Newsphotos

Enrique Bermúdez, military leader of the FDN

he turned for financial help to Cuban exiles in Miami. In June 1985 the FSLN carried out a successful offensive against his troops near the Costa Rican border. His past allies fault him not for accepting CIA funds—which they regard as unavoidable in a war against what they regard as a repressive regime armed by the rival superpower—but for weakening the forces that might have worked out a "democratic option" on the southern front and thus strengthening the FDN.

Arturo Cruz and Alfonso Robelo say that Pastora's failure left them no choice but to press for reform inside the FDN even as they tried slowly to reassemble the southern front. In June 1984, Robelo broke with Pastora and became yet another of the former Somoza opponents (like "Chicano" Cardenal and Edgar Chamorro) who sought to make the FDN a democratic organization—and who never agree to a political settlement unless there was a "broad democratic opposition alliance" that was backed by a military force but not subordinate to it. In *The New York Times* of November 4, James LeMoyne gave a revealing account of the difficulties he and Robelo have faced in achieving this goal:

> Disagreements between the three UNO directors have been made more acute because Mr. Calero is also the head of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the largest and most effective guerrilla army. The position has allowed Mr. Calero to forge close ties with the White House and the CIA. As a consequence, Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo feel literally outgunned by Mr. Calero and at times have thought that when they argue with Mr. Calero they are also arguing with the CIA, according to three different rebel officials. Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo have no regular contact with top military commanders in Mr. Calero's rebel army, the officials said

Other former associates of Pastora such as Carlos Coronel and Alfredo César still refuse to join with the FDN without guarantees that the FDN will be reformed. In August 1985, César, the former Sandinista secretary of the ruling junta and the former president of the Nicaraguan Central Bank, established BOS (Southern Opposition Bloc), a group that has had the backing of Pastora and some of the leaders of his guerrilla army, but very little money.

The experience of Robelo, "Chicano" Cardenal, and Alfredo César underlines the dilemma confronting Nicaraguan democrats who supported the revolution and believe it has been betrayed. Convinced as they are that military force is needed to persuade the Sandinistas to modify an increasingly repressive regime and allow the democratic opposition to take part in a political settlement, how can they mount such force without underwriting a group whose leaders are also hostile to democracy? Pastora's and César's alternative—a unification of the democratically minded rebels on the southern front that would advocate a separate "third way"—has so far failed to come about. In part this is because of Pastora's poor leadership and their own differences; but Pastora, Robelo, and César also blame it on the refusal of those they regard as their "natural allies"—American liberals and European and Latin American democrats—to back them. When they turn to such allies as Calero and Bermúdez, they have limited influence and are also denounced. Independent of the will of many of the combatants, the Nicaraguan conflict has been turned inexorably into a superpower conflict. Robelo and Cruz maintain an uneasy alliance with the FDN in the hope of reforming and broadening it to include the rest of the rebels on the southern border. But their attempt to reform the FDN will be an uphill struggle, to say the least.

7.

The cutoff in American aid in 1984 following the mining of a Nicaraguan harbor by the CIA created serious supply and intelligence problems for the FDN. It may also have increased the influence of the extreme right-wing groups in the US and abroad that back it. The FDN received military supplies from Taiwan, Guatemala, and rightist elements in the Salvadoran Air Force. From supposedly private groups in the US, Western Europe, South America, Taiwan, Israel, and South Korea, as well as Cuban exiles, has come an estimated $26 million in funds. The boards, benefactors, and members of these groups overlap and include such right-wing figures as Daniel O. Graham of High Frontier—the "Star Wars" lobby—Anna Chennault, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, Pat Boone, Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and the Christian Broadcasting Network, Joseph Coors, and Wayne Newton. The network is coordinated by a small group led by retired General John Singlaub, who was relieved of his command in South Korea by Presi-

[13]See Robert S. Leiken, *Soviet Strategy in Latin America* (Praeger, 1982), ch. 4.

[14]He has since described his disillusionment with the FDN in a long affidavit to the World Court, published in part in *First Principles*, a publication of The Center for National Security Studies, Washington, DC (September–October 1985).

"A MAN entering a Senate office building was arrested for carrying two submachine guns, a pistol, and 146 rounds of ammunition. He explained that he was acting as a bodyguard for Mr. Gun Control himself, Senator Edward Kennedy. He was released when Kennedy confirmed his story. In a public statement, Kennedy added that he is still personally opposed to guns."

dent Carter for publicly criticizing the president. In the spring of this year, Singlaub reviewed the FDN troops in a rebel base on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

The US government secretly encouraged this "private-sector initiative" after Congress cut off CIA funds in 1984. On October 8, 1985, *The Washington Post* reported that White House officials chose Singlaub to coordinate fund raising for the FDN, and urged countries receiving US aid, such as Taiwan and South Korea, to raise money for the FDN through similar private networks. A National Security Council official took a leading part in raising money for the FDN. Though Cruz and Robelo have allies in the State Department and the NSC, they are up against a covert alliance of former National Guard officers, FDN and American extremists, foreign governments, and powerful elements in the Reagan administration. Strong ties of loyalty, or fealty, have developed between CIA officials acting as imperial patrons and their colonial adjutants in the FDN.

Weeks after Cruz and Robelo founded the UNO last June, Calero was refusing to carry out joint decisions and stacking the UNO with former Somoza officials.[15] He was also planting criticisms of Cruz in the Costa Rican and Miami press, and spreading rumors among FDN troops that Cruz "only wants to gain control of the FDN so he can negotiate them away to the Sandinistas." UNO and Congressional sources say that Calero obstructed the efforts of Cruz and Robelo to clean up FDN human-rights practices and tried to stop the UNO from getting control of US and private funds. Calero also opposed expanding the UNO to include Pastora and BOS last autumn. The BOS leaders said at the time that they would join UNO only if Calero stepped down as leader of the FDN.

Reports of Calero's intransigence, and of his backing from the White House and the CIA over other leaders, were disturbing to several moderate Democrats and Republicans who had, for the first time, voted for aid to the rebels last June and been promised by the President that human-rights abuses by the FDN would be strictly punished. They included Representative David McCurdy (D-Oklahoma), Dante Fascell (D-Florida), William Richardson (D-New Mexico), and Senator David Durenberger (R-Minnesota). After they expressed concern to the administration, Cruz was able to get support and funds for an independent UNO human-rights office, based in Costa Rica, to investigate the FDN's abuses. The office opened in January with a staff that included Ismael Reyes, the former president of the Nicaraguan Red Cross, Roberto Ferrey, who was exiled by Somoza and later became a legal adviser to the Sandinista ministry of justice, and Alberto Gamez Ortega, a former vice-minister of justice in the Sandinista government. They say they are collecting information on abuses both by the FDN and the Sandinistas. Whether they will have real power to monitor the FDN's activities and punish abuses remains to be seen. The UNO began talks with BOS in November that were soon suspended, and then resumed, with no results so far. There is little visible evidence that the basic situation described by LeMoyne, in which the dominance of Calero and Bermúdez is supported by the White House and the CIA, has changed.

[15] *The Boston Globe* (September 1, 1985); *The Christian Science Monitor* (October 15, 1985).

8.

While the top leaders of the FDN continue to refuse to share real power with such former supporters of the revolution as Cruz, Robelo, and César, the guerrilla forces themselves are too large and have too much support inside the country to be dismissed simply as a tool of the CIA, Bermúdez, and Calero. There are some twenty thousand active armed insurgents from a Nicaraguan population of three million, of which the FDN makes up about twelve thousand. Absolutely and relative to each country's population, they outnumber the Salvadoran guerrillas—nine thousand in a population of five million. The FDN claims that 40 percent of its troops are former Sandinista soldiers and less than 2 percent former national guardsmen.

The "*contras*" are no longer mercenary bands striking from border sanctuaries. Those who claim that the rebels could not exist without outside funding and training should recall the arguments that were made against the administration that the rebels in Salvador were a genuine indigenous force. In 1984 Sandinista officials acknowledged that quite aside from the troops in Honduras and Costa Rica, there were as many as eight thousand rebels inside Nicaragua. They have been unable to hold any territory against the Sandinistas' artillery and aerial attacks, but guerrilla units are able to move through three quarters of Nicaragua's mountainous terrain.

Daylight ambushes of army convoys suggest that, like the Salvadoran guerrillas, they receive information from local residents. The *Miami Herald* reported that the insurgents "appear to enjoy substantial and growing support among small farmers and campesinos." Dan Williams of the *Los Angeles Times* noted that when an FDN force briefly captured La Trinidad, a village in the historically pro-Sandinista region of Esteli, "peasants led the contras through Sandinista bases in the mountains."[16] Marcel Neidergang of *Le Monde* reported on November 25, 1985, that the *contras*' ability to open a new front of the war in the central Nicaraguan departments of Chontales and Boaco, nearly two hundred miles from the Honduran border, was "doubtless a sign of the complicity of the region's peasants." (Neidergang's report in *Le Monde* of December 3 gave further evidence of such "complicity.")

Such rebel sympathies on the part of the rural population were apparently among the main reasons the government decided to evacuate large numbers of peasants last spring to establish a free fire zone. According to *The New York Times* of March 19, 1985, the forced evacuation

> had two objectives, according to Sandinista officials [in Jinotega] and Western diplomats in Managua who specialize in military matters. The first is to deprive the rebels of material support and intelligence by removing relatives and neighbors sympathetic to them from war zones. But equally important, these sources said, is the creation of "free fire zones" where the Sandinista People's Army can operate freely among the rebels.

Journalists reported that in the areas around San Juan de Limay and El Naranjo Sandinista troops burned peasants' houses to prevent them from returning.[17]

"Unlike the struggle against Somoza," wrote former Panamanian vice-minister of health Hugo Spadafora a few months before he was murdered by Panamanian National Guardsmen in the fall of 1985, "this war...is predominantly a peasant insurrection." Spadafora was a doctor who once fought alongside the Sandinistas in 1979 and then later joined with Pastora and Rivera against the regime. He complained that the press "has neglected almost completely to cover the war in depth, in the heart of the country, the natural epicenter of the *campesino* insurrection." The top rebel leaders, he said, "feel threatened when the media tries to cover the war inside Nicaragua since...international exposure...will raise the status of middle level cadres that direct and maintain the war effort deep within the country."

The growth of the FDN has created strains between the peasants, who make up its ranks, and the FDN leadership, which is still tied, as we have seen, to Nicaragua's *ancien régime*. The FDN troops have their own heroes and their own peasant *mistica*, which should not be confused with that of the FDN's ancestor, the September 15 Legion. Most of the FDN troops are peasants, small landholders, shopkeepers, and dirt farmers from the rugged and deeply Catholic north and from the cattle country in central Nicaragua. Most of them are dedicated to overthrowing the Sandinistas, whose agricultural policies left them much worse off, while government controls became more severe.

Some sense of their feelings is given by a scholarly study of the revolution by Professor Forrest D. Colburn of Princeton, to be published in May.[18] Colburn writes that his general aim is to describe "the intentions of the Sandinista revolutionary elite and to explain why their rosy expectations were dashed even before they were confronted with a US-financed counter revolution." He writes:

> The inability of the revolution to date to provide a better standard of living and the continuing call for sacrifices have made many rural Nicaraguans sharply critical of the Sandinistas. For example, peasants interviewed outside the Jinotega said they felt the Sandinistas were "working for themselves, and not for the people." More commonly, rural laborers are cynical, with the hope they had at the onset of the revolu-

[16] *The Miami Herald* (January 27, 1985); *The Los Angeles Times* (August 14, 1985).

[17] There have been conflicting reports both about the numbers of people forcibly relocated and the total number of people displaced. Americas Watch estimates from its own sources that at least twenty to twenty-five thousand people were forcibly relocated during 1985. Julia Preston wrote in *The Boston Globe* of August 22, 1985 that the "Sandinista troops drove an estimated 45,000 Nicaraguans from their homes in Esteli province in March." Amnesty International writes in its new report "Nicaragua, the Human Rights Record" that some seven thousand Nicaraguan families from Matagalpa and Jinotega provinces were compulsorily relocated in March. Journalists have reported on the flight of tens of thousands of people to Honduras. On the burning of houses, see Edward Cody, *The Washington Post* (March 26, 1985).

[18] *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua: State, Class and the Dilemma of Agrarian Policy* (University of California Press).

tion dashed. When discussing their life since the revolution, peasants often make such comments as, "*Estamos jodidos*" ("We are screwed"). The attitude of many toward the regime is summed up by such remarks, common throughout rural Nicaragua, as "*La misma mierda, solamente las moscas son diferente*" ("The same shit; only the flies are different") and "*Un hueso diferente, el mismo perro*" ("A different bone, the same dog").

Colburn goes on to say that "the disenchantment of the rural poor cannot by any means be equated with support for the counterrevolution but it does complicate the already difficult task of improving the welfare of rural laborers." The attitudes he describes, in my view, help to explain the cooperation with the rebels that reporters have observed. The FDN, on the other hand, has shown little interest in recruiting middle-class young people from the cities in southern Nicaragua. Many young refugees from the cities prefer to sit out the war in camps in Honduras and Costa Rica because they do not trust the rebel leaders.

According to James LeMoyne, among the rebel groups themselves there is much unhappiness with the current CIA-imposed leadership, and many of the rebels he interviewed believed that a new, more legitimate leadership is needed.[19] *Comandantes* in the field often share their troops' resentment of the FDN high command.[20] As one former Pastora associate described them, "They're a mixed bag of Zapatas and Pancho Villas," i.e., peasant revolutionaries and rebel brigands. The FDN is a movement with a peasant base, some populist middle-echelon officers, and a mostly reactionary leadership imposed and maintained by the US.

The presence of former national guardsmen in the FDN officer corps is not in itself decisive. Former guardsmen occupy positions in most factions of the civil war. Bernardino Larios, the first Sandinista defense minister, was a former national guardsmen. Some FDN officers, according to Richard Millett, the leading authority on the National Guard,

> were last-minute additions to the guard; had they been offered any chance to return after the revolution, they would have likely done so. But no offer was made and they became permanent exiles whose only real hope of returning was to overthrow the new regime.[21]

But what is of greater concern is the fact that the FDN high command, with one exception, is drawn entirely from the National Guard, and many were senior officers in it. Most of these men are intensely loyal to Enrique Bermúdez and are called "Enrique's group." Together with Adolfo Calero and Aristides Sanchez they form a cabal that is closely linked to a shadowy network of expropriated landowners, bankers, and industrialists, and former associates of Somoza. These exiles influence the FDN leadership through family ties or as former or current employers. Most supplies for the FDN, as LeMoyne reported, "are handled by Mr. Calero and Mr. Calero's brother and brother-in-law." Surrounding the FDN are former Somocista military officials like "El Tigre" Medina. In April Calero was host at a fund-raising dinner at Medina's Miami restaurant; and in July a party was given in honor of Calero by the richest members of the Miami exile community. This reminded some of those present of similar celebrations in honor of Somoza.

9.

During the last half of 1985 the military initiative swung in the direction of the government. The Sandinistas, who have had much difficulty in organizing militias in rural zones, have been flying in troops to counter rebel raids on villages. In August in La Trinidad, and again in November in San Domingo in central Nicaragua, the Sandinistas used several Soviet-made MI-24 helicopters to disperse rebel attackers. In both cases the helicopters caused civilian casualties. On the second occasion the rebels brought down a Soviet-made MI-8 helicopter, with a SA-7 anti-aircraft missile probably purchased in Portugal. The US administration claimed the helicopter was piloted by a Cuban.[22] As Edward Cody of *The Washington Post* wrote recently (December 6, 1985):

> The Popular Sandinista Army, advised by Cuban officers and supplied through Soviet allies, has altered its size, tactics, organization and equipment significantly in the last two years to repel the guerrillas with increased speed and force, according to Nicaraguan officials and other military sources.
>
> The main rebel organization, the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force, has suffered from a cutoff in CIA funding and logistical support during roughly the same period. As a result, according to these assessments, the rebels have been unable to resume the high level of attacks reached in the summer and fall of 1984.

Furthermore, the FDN rebels are not only politically divided, as we have seen, but poorly trained, and lacking in first-rate combat officers partly because of the absence of urban recruits.

The war, meanwhile, has had little direct effect on Nicaragua's cities. It is difficult to know just what large numbers of people feel about the rebels. In August and November of 1984 I talked with more than a dozen people in Monimbo, the enclave of some fifty-five hundred Indians in the city of Masaya where an insurrection in February 1978 set off the uprising against Somoza. They told me that they and their neighbors listened regularly to the FDN's clandestine radio. They spoke admiringly of Edén Pastora. They told me they would support the rebels even though they distrusted the "*Guardas*," i.e., the national guardsmen.

I heard similar views from people I talked to in the shantytowns around Managua and also in the provincial cities of Léon, Chinandega, and Estelí, where there were insurrections against Somoza in 1978. In two towns in Estelí province, several parents told me that their sons had gone off to join the rebels. Other poor people I talked to would start by supporting the regime and then express critical views as they overcame their initial distrust. Some who were critical of the regime were also opposed to the rebels. But the willingness of Nicaraguans who had fought against Somoza to cooperate with rebels, many of whose leaders are tainted with Somozismo, seemed to me to reflect a sense of desperation.

The FDN has done little to take advantage of growing urban discontent. This is not entirely because Sandinista control makes it difficult. That same month, the national leader of the CDSs (Sandinista Defense Committees), Leticia Herrera, announced that block committee watches would have to be reduced for lack of popular participation. She acknowledged that some block committee leaders are considered "*caciques de barrios*" (neighborhood bosses). It is not only Sandinista security forces that have prevented the FDN from organizing dissidents in the cities; it is the narrowly militaristic character of the FDN itself. Its grave defects prevent it from rallying enough support inside and outside Nicaragua to modify the regime.

[19] *The New York Times* (April 23, 1985).

[20] From the FDN political directorate, for example, Alfonso Callejas charged Bermúdez with regarding the civilian leadership as mere front men (*Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1985). In December 1983 FDN field commanders joined younger Honduran officers to protest against the FDN command. When Chicano Cardenal was political leader of the FDN, regional commanders complained to him that FDN officers beat their troops and robbed FDN funds.

[21] Richard Millett, "Praetorians or Patriots" in Robert S. Leiken, *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict*, p. 84. Elsewhere Millett had written of the "chronic discontent" among junior officers during Somoza's reign: "Many do have a sense of nationalism, a desire to see the Guardia develop a more honorable and professional image" (*Guardians of the Dynasty*, Orbis, 1979, page 258).

[22] See *The Washington Post* (December 7, 1985); *The New York Times* (December 6, 1985).

Nicaragua's civil war is a shocking sequel to the "beautiful revolution." As a *New York Times* correspondent commented:

> Some of the violence...can only be described as fratricidal. Witnesses to the killing of Bayardo Centeno, an official of the Plantanares cooperatives, say his own cousin executed him using a machine gun and then a bayonet.

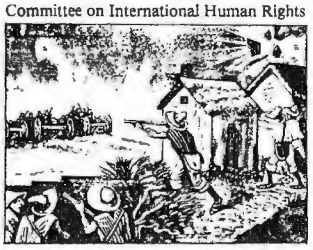
"One has the impression that a lot of personal scores are being settled," said a diplomat in Managua.[23] Americas Watch and other human-rights organizations have collected many statements from Nicaraguans charging appalling abuses by the FDN and Misura. The FDN's abuses have been reported to include deliberate terrorist tactics, kidnapping, sexual abuse of women captives, torture, routine summary execution of prisoners, causing people to "disappear" in Honduras, forcible recruitments, and selective murder of civilians. American journalists have published many accounts by witnesses who say they have seen atrocities committed by the FDN.[24] In its latest report, Amnesty International states:

> While some prisoners were reportedly taken to bases outside Nicaragua by opposition forces, the forces of the FDN were more frequently reported to retain no prisoners, killing captives on the spot or after brief field interrogation. In some areas they reportedly killed their captive before the assembled residents of target communities.

The FDN's spokesmen have acknowledged some of these abuses, but its leaders have yet to show that they have an effective mechanism for monitoring the behavior of the soldiers who commit them. (Last autumn one FDN officer was released from command after executing three Sandinista prisoners and the FDN now says he will be tried. It also announced in November that sixty officers were being trained to monitor human-rights abuses.) They argue that indiscriminate terror against civilians would be inconsistent with the FDN's rapid growth, although it is of course possible for both selective terror against supporters of the Sandinistas and recruitment of those who oppose them to take place at the same time. The Sandinista army, the FDN and Miskito leaders say, deliberately endangers noncombatants through "civilian shielding"—mixing soldiers and civilians in convoys, etc. Both sides appear to be guilty of indiscriminately placing land mines.

10.

What explains Nicaragua's descent into violence? Unlike Guatemala and El Salvador, Nicaragua has in the past been largely free of death squads and unchecked state violence, except in the later years of Somoza. Part of the explanation, certainly, lies in the desires for revenge on the part of former guardsmen in the FDN and the willingness of the CIA and the Reagan administration to sponsor such forces, which they have been unable or unwilling to control. But from former government officials, among others, we learn that the Sandinistas' own actions have also helped to create the climate of violence. Jorge Alaniz Pinell, the Sandinistas' representative to the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva between 1980 and 1982, and now in exile in Paris, has described, in his book *Nicaragua*, two massacres in which a total of 130 former guardsmen who were held in detention were killed before 1981. The Lawyers Committee on International Human Rights



has documented abuses by the Sandinista "Popular tribunals," such as intimidation of witnesses and defense lawyers and "coercive forms of interrogation."

A recent Sandinista defector trained in police methods in Moscow, Alvaro Baldizon, estimates that two thousand Nicaraguans have been kidnapped, tortured, or executed by Sandinista authorities since the revolution. Baldizon charges that in late 1981 Tomás Borge approved a secret plan for "special measures"—i.e., assassinations—to be carried out by small squads of no more than five persons against low- and mid-level opposition activists, peasants judged sympathetic to the rebels, captured prisoners, and Miskito Indians. When I interviewed Baldizon he told me that he personally knew of some six hundred such special assassinations. He claimed he had verified the existence of clandestine cemeteries for "special measures" victims in two war zones.

Baldizon served as a special investigator in Borge's Ministry of Interior. He says that Borge, concerned by queries from international human-rights organizations about missing Nicaraguans that often implicated his ministry, and fearful of losing support from friendly Latin American and European governments, set up a special investigations committee in December 1982, to which Baldizon was assigned. According to Baldizon, 90 percent of the allegations against Sandinista security forces from the families of victims proved accurate. In June 1985 Baldizon fled to Honduras with a large folder of official committee documents containing information on the committee's handling of the cases it considered. The documents include accounts of investigations of numerous executions and disappearances and a memo from an officer of the special investigation committee referring to "special measures."

On December 3, Americas Watch, which is investigating Baldizon's charges, sent him a letter raising many questions, particularly about the number of executions he reports and about what Americas Watch regards as discrepancies in his statements. Americas Watch director Aryeh Neier believes that

> some of Baldizon's information is accurate, and it certainly should be further investigated, as we are trying to do. So far, we find his claim that, to his knowledge, the Sandinistas have killed six hundred civilians inconsistent with the information compiled by the anti-Sandinista Permanent Commission for Human Rights in Managua, the OAS's Latin American Commission on Human Rights, as well as Americas Watch. These organizations have reported information on approximately three hundred killings and disappearances of civilians carried out by the Sandinistas, apart from combat, since 1980.

Baldizon showed me the draft of a point-by-point reply. According to him, the apparent discrepancy is explained by the widespread fear among Nicaraguans of reprisals by the pervasive security apparatus when they make denunciations to human-rights organizations. The issues between Baldizon and Americas Watch are still to be resolved. His story remains deeply disturbing, however, especially since he was in a position to learn of executions and other abuses that could have remained unknown to the human-rights organizations.

Another disturbing account comes from Mateo Guerrero, former executive director of the National Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, a man who worked closely with organizations like Amnesty International. Guerrero says that in late 1984 Alejandro Bendana, the secretary general of the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry, told him his organization should stop investigating complaints of Nicaraguans and act instead as "an arm of Nicaraguan foreign policy," devoting itself to denouncing "*contra*" abuses. Guerrero "could not stand lying any more," so he defected.

Guerrero told me he was looking into the case of a "disappeared" farm worker named Ramon Ordonez Ramírez who, he discovered, notwithstanding government denials, had been held in state prison and probably mistreated. (In Washington Guerrero was told by Baldizon that Ordonez had been assassinated, one of the last "special measures" cases Baldizon investigated in May 1985.) When the government published a statement that Ordonez had been freed, the Ordonez family blamed Guerrero for complicity with the government's lies. Press accounts of Guerrero's own findings on Ordonez's treatment had been censored. Later, Guerrero says, he was harassed and threatened by Sandinista groups for being "a defender of Somocistas." The FDN, meanwhile, accused him of concealing Sandinista atrocities and broadcast notices of his physical description and whereabouts. "For discovering certain irregularities, I was now in jeopardy both from the Sandinistas and the counterrevolution."

Just as an increasing number of Nicaraguans are caught in the cross fire of widening civil war, so too the American public is caught in a bitter propaganda war over Nicaragua. In a final article, I will consider America's own entanglement and the bleak prospects for any settlement of the conflict. □

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[23] *The New York Times* (March 24, 1985), page 11.

[24] See Americas Watch, "Violations of the Law of War by Both Sides in Nicaragua," (March 1985 and June 1985); Organization of American States, "Annual Report of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, 1983–1984"; "Report on the Situation of Human Rights of a Segment of the Nicaraguan Population of Miskito Origin" (October 1983); Reports of the Nicaraguan Permanent Commission on Human Rights (June 1984–January 1985); Amnesty International, *Nicaragua, the Human Rights Record*, to be published in March 1986. Americas Watch asserts that "while both sides have committed serious violations of the laws of war, there has been a sharp decline in government abuses." A lengthy firsthand investigative report in *The Atlanta Constitution* (April 28, 1985) raised questions about the methodology of the recent human-rights reports and reported large-scale human-rights violations by the Nicaraguan government.

Elliott Abrams

Current
Policy
No. 802

Permanent Dictatorship in Nicaragua?

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

The following is from a statement by Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C., March 5, 1986.

I would like to discuss our policy toward Nicaragua as it affects a complex of issues that has been of particular concern to me during much of my government career—human rights.

We here in Washington have been justly pleased during the last month about the role our government played in supporting developments that have advanced human rights in Haiti and in the Philippines. Those directly involved are probably the only ones who know just how much had to be done to help ensure favorable outcomes. But act they did, and they and you, as Members of Congress, deserve to share in the praise. It is a cause both branches of government have actively supported.

Over the past several years, we have also heard comment, from citizens as well as from Administration officials, about the importance of supporting human rights in Central America. Some truly historic gains have been made in El Salvador and in Guatemala: there has been a lot of credit to share. And I don't think there is a person in this room who has not applauded the progress that has taken place in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil over the past 2 years.

I suggest that we should be no less committed to human rights in Nicaragua. That there are major human rights problems in Nicaragua is not at issue. Recent events in Nicaragua—including abuses committed by the armed resistance as well as those committed by the Sandinista regime and its enforcers—are summarized in the latest White House *Report on Nicaragua*, dated February 4, 1986.

The question is, what are we going to do about it? These problems are not going to go away by themselves. It is a fact of life that, absent the pressures that alone seem to restrain them, the Sandinistas will not turn about and negotiate away the absolute power they have ardently gathered for the past 6½ years.

The resistance is another fact of life: a fighting force some 20,000 strong—20,000 citizens of Nicaragua who have taken it upon themselves to fight the repressive regime in Managua. There is no turning back for them. It is illusory to assume that peace will come to Nicaragua if we abandon them.

It is equally illusory to assume that military assistance for the democratic resistance will contribute only to human rights abuses. If properly led, trained, and equipped, the armed resistance will be better able to function as a disciplined force during military operations. El Salvador's Army showed that, with reliable U.S. assistance, it can be done. The United States expects the Nicaraguan resistance to follow a code of conduct on the battlefield that will protect noncombatants and prisoners.

The President has specifically designated $3 million of the $100 million request for aid to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance exclusively for the strengthening of the observance and advancement of human rights. Consistent and sustained U.S. backing, combined with strong internal monitoring within the resistance forces themselves.

can improve human rights performance and minimize suffering among noncombatants.

Nicaragua is a real problem for us. We must face it. Neither the assault on democracy nor the fight for freedom will wait for the Washington calendar. Neither posturing nor passivity will bring about a solution.

It is never easy to bring about constructive change in this world. It is usually a messy business, fraught with difficult choices. But we have been making the right choices—in favor of democracy and human rights—in the Philippines, in Haiti, in South America, in Guatemala, in El Salvador.

We must stand by the same principles in Nicaragua and support the resistance that is fighting for democracy and human rights.

Or are we prepared to suggest that, unlike Marcos, Duvalier, or some Argentine generals, the Sandinistas have succeeded in consolidating their dictatorship? That they are now free to spread totalitarianism and terrorism to Central and South America from a secure base on the mainland?

We have just now all agreed that permanent dictatorship is not inevitable in Haiti or the Philippines. The question now facing the Congress is whether we are to accept that communist dictatorship will be permanent in Nicaragua. ■

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Secretary Shultz

Current
Policy
No. 797

Nicaragua: Will Democracy Prevail?

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is a statement by Secretary Shultz before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., February 27, 1986.

U.S. assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance is an essential element in our efforts to defend Central America from aggression, to preserve recent democratic gains, and to improve prospects for renewed economic growth and equitable development. It is an important stimulus to a diplomatic solution to the Central American conflict. It contributes to our defense against Soviet and Cuban military intervention in this hemisphere. Finally, it can help to restore to the Nicaraguan people their right to self-determination denied by a minority that seeks to perpetuate itself in power by force of arms and totalitarian controls.

In short, the assistance the President requested on February 25 is needed. It is legally, morally, and strategically justified. And it can make a vital difference to the emergence of a democratic outcome in Nicaragua and throughout Central America.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In talking with foreign leaders and Members of Congress, I find that just about everyone agrees on what the problem is. It is that a democratic revolution has been betrayed by a violent minority willing and even eager to serve as an instrument of Soviet and Cuban strategic designs on the hemisphere, including armed aggression in the form of support for terrorism and subversion.

In 1979, Nicaraguan democrats and their sympathizers throughout the world believed that the end of the Somoza regime marked a new beginning for Nicaragua. Nicaraguans learned very quickly, however, that instead of democracy, they had fallen prey to what the Sandinistas say is "revolution by vanguard" and what the rest of us know is communist totalitarianism. The popularity of the overthrow of Somoza concealed the establishment of a new dictatorship that threatens the security of Nicaragua's neighbors and has brought the cold war to Central America.

Intervention

One of the most striking characteristics of Sandinista communism is its messianic impulse to violence. As Congress has repeatedly and formally found, Nicaragua has since 1980 been engaged in unlawful intervention, serving as the staging ground for arms shipments to guerrillas in El Salvador. Because so much attention has been focused on this arms flow to El Salvador, which has been sustained and occasionally massive, it is less widely known that at one point or another Sandinista intervention has touched virtually the entire hemisphere.

The map on page 3 depicts the breadth of Nicaragua's interventionist activities. (It also makes clear, incidentally, that the Nicaraguan communists are perfectly serious when they refer to their policy as one of "internationalism.") The map identifies the countries where the current Nicaraguan Government has tried to export violence, by shipping arms, training guerrillas, or providing the kinds of support necessary for terrorist operations. Managua has become a gathering place for terrorists from all over the world, including Europe and the Middle East as well as Latin America.

Two aspects of this pattern of intervention are worth emphasizing.

First, the intervention is strongest against Nicaragua's immediate neighbors, but it is not limited to Central America.

Second, the pattern is politically indiscriminate. Violence and subversion have been directed against democracies and even against Contadora countries as well as against dictatorships and more traditional military regimes.

Militarization

The Sandinistas like to portray themselves as nationalists, but their soldiers are trained and supported in combat by thousands of Cubans and other foreigners known as "internationalists." And this is why, despite its limited size and resources, Nicaragua is able to intervene so widely in the hemisphere: it has

been armed by the Soviet Union and is manned by Cubans in key sectors from training and weapons use to intelligence and counterintelligence.

The first Cuban advisers entered Managua with the Sandinistas and took up positions in Somoza's bunker less than a week after he left it. As soon as the security apparatus was in place, Soviet-bloc arms began to arrive to give the Nicaraguan communists the capacity to repress their own people and to engage in unconventional warfare against their neighbors without risk of a conventional military response.

Chart I depicts the militarization of Nicaragua by this combination of Soviet-bloc weapons and Cuban manpower. The total of Cuban advisers has stabilized at slightly lower levels since October 1983, when the U.S. action in Grenada led the Cubans to seek a lower profile in Nicaragua. Soviet arms shipments peaked in the fall of 1984 with the delivery of HIND attack helicopters at a time when the resistance had been cut off from U.S. Government assistance. The reality is clear: Managua's military capabilities are closely tied to the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Cuban military and security officers, in fact, have done everything from helping with the establishment of political control structures in the armed forces and the state security apparatus to an active combat role with sophisticated Soviet weapons systems.

THE RISE OF THE RESISTANCE

When Daniel Ortega spoke in Havana on February 5 to the Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, he referred to "the blood of Cuban internationalists fallen on Nicaraguan soil." Ortega was talking about Cubans killed fighting Nicaraguans inside Nicaragua.

In this fact is a bitter truth: Nicaraguans who dissent must fight more than other Nicaraguans. And they must fight a sophisticated, heavily equipped, and pervasive security apparatus designed to deny power to all but the ruling communist vanguard. One need look no further than the fate of Solidarity in Poland over the last few years to realize the difficulty of taking on such a formidable internal security apparatus.

Chart II (see p. 6) demonstrates the growth of armed resistance in the face of the new Nicaraguan police state. The resistance responds to a long series of repressive acts, some of which are listed chronologically in the chart. These go from the arrival of the Cubans and the establishment of the defense committees in the summer of 1979 to the start of censorship and the postponement of elections, the murder of opposition leader Jorge Salazar, and the burning of Indian villages in 1981. Catholic and Protestant church leaders were systematically attacked, and the Pope was insulted. Forced conscription came next, followed by stage-managed elections, Ortega's visit to Moscow, and finally the suspension of civil rights in the fall of 1985.

By betraying their promises of pluralism, the Nicaraguan communists have forced the citizens of Nicaragua to take up arms once again. Like Somoza, the Sandinistas don't seem to listen to anyone who isn't armed. And, like Somoza, they seek to blame outside forces for the resistance of their own people to their policies.

The Nicaraguan communists like to say that covert U.S. support created the resistance; that their opponents are all agents of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and of the heirs of Somoza. This is ridiculous. It was Sandinista repression that in 1979, 1980, and 1981 destroyed the coalition that overthrew Somoza and sparked the resistance. In 1979, 1980, and 1981, the United States was providing aid to the Government of Nicaragua, not to the resistance.

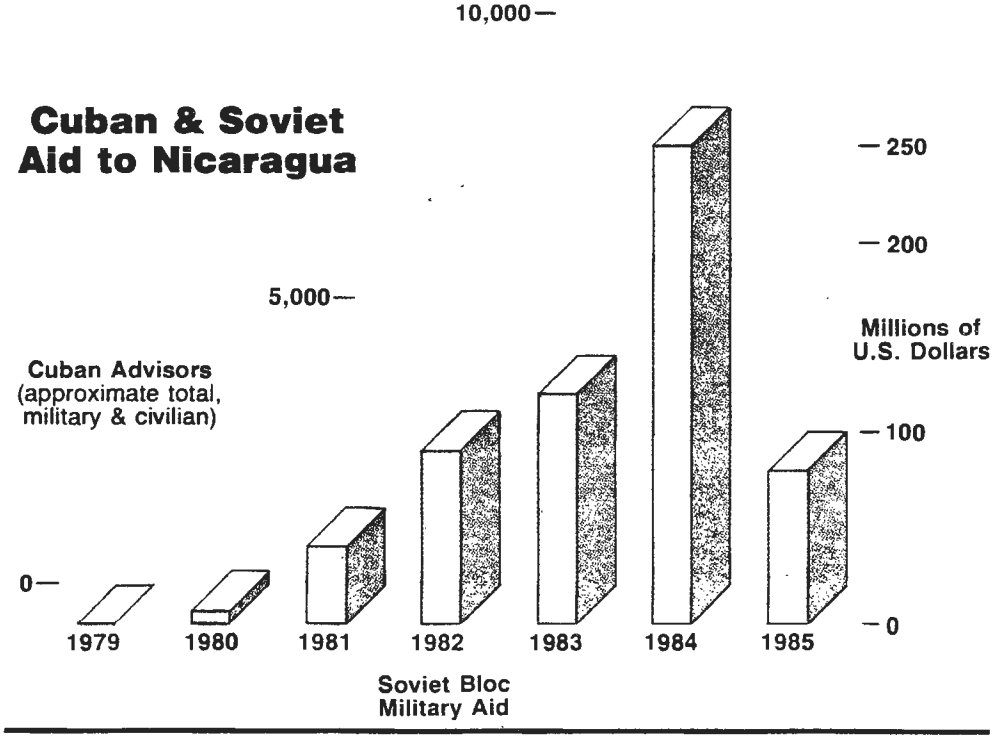
From May of 1984 until late in 1985—well over a year—the U.S. Government provided no assistance to Nicaraguan resistance forces. As indicated in Chart II, the resistance grew by 50%, roughly from 10,000 to 15,000 during a period when there was no U.S. Government assistance.

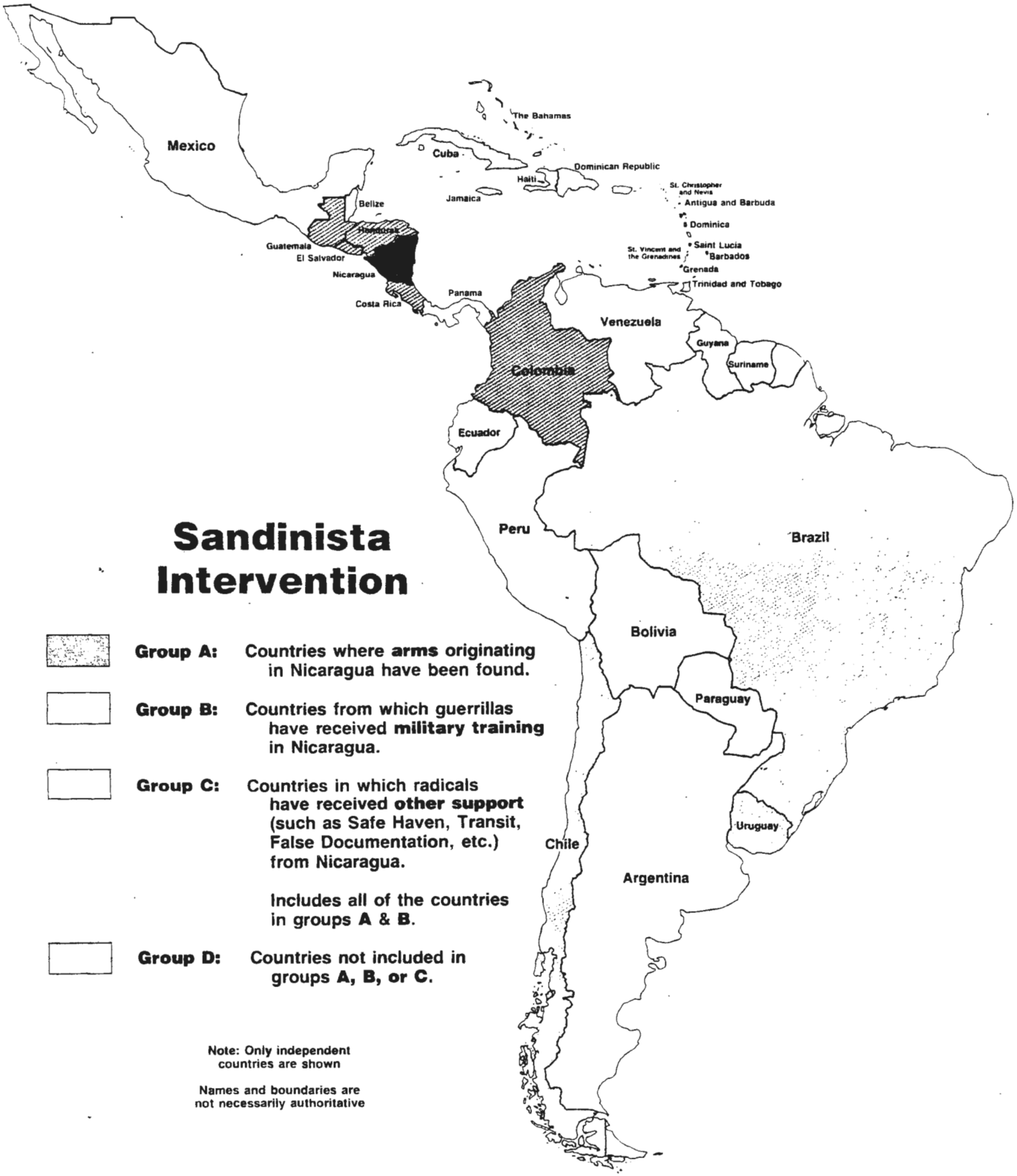
The Sandinistas, of course, would like to create the impression that there is no viable alternative to them. Like Somoza before them, they have driven many of their opponents into exile. But these opposition groups represent a variety of political and programmatic viewpoints. They are committed to presenting those viewpoints to the Nicaraguan people in a competitive democratic process and would do so if given the opportunity.

Adolfo Calero, Arturo Cruz, and Alfonso Robelo lead the main resistance organization, the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO). All three actively opposed Somoza while he was still in power. Calero was jailed by Somoza; first Robelo then Cruz became junta members with the Sandinistas until they could no longer accept betrayal of democratic principles and of Nicaraguan national interests.

The largest guerrilla forces belong to the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), headed by Calero since 1983. Other important resistance organizations include ARDE [Democratic Revolution-

Chart I





Sandinista Intervention

Group A: Countries where **arms** originating in Nicaragua have been found.

Group B: Countries from which guerrillas have received **military training** in Nicaragua.

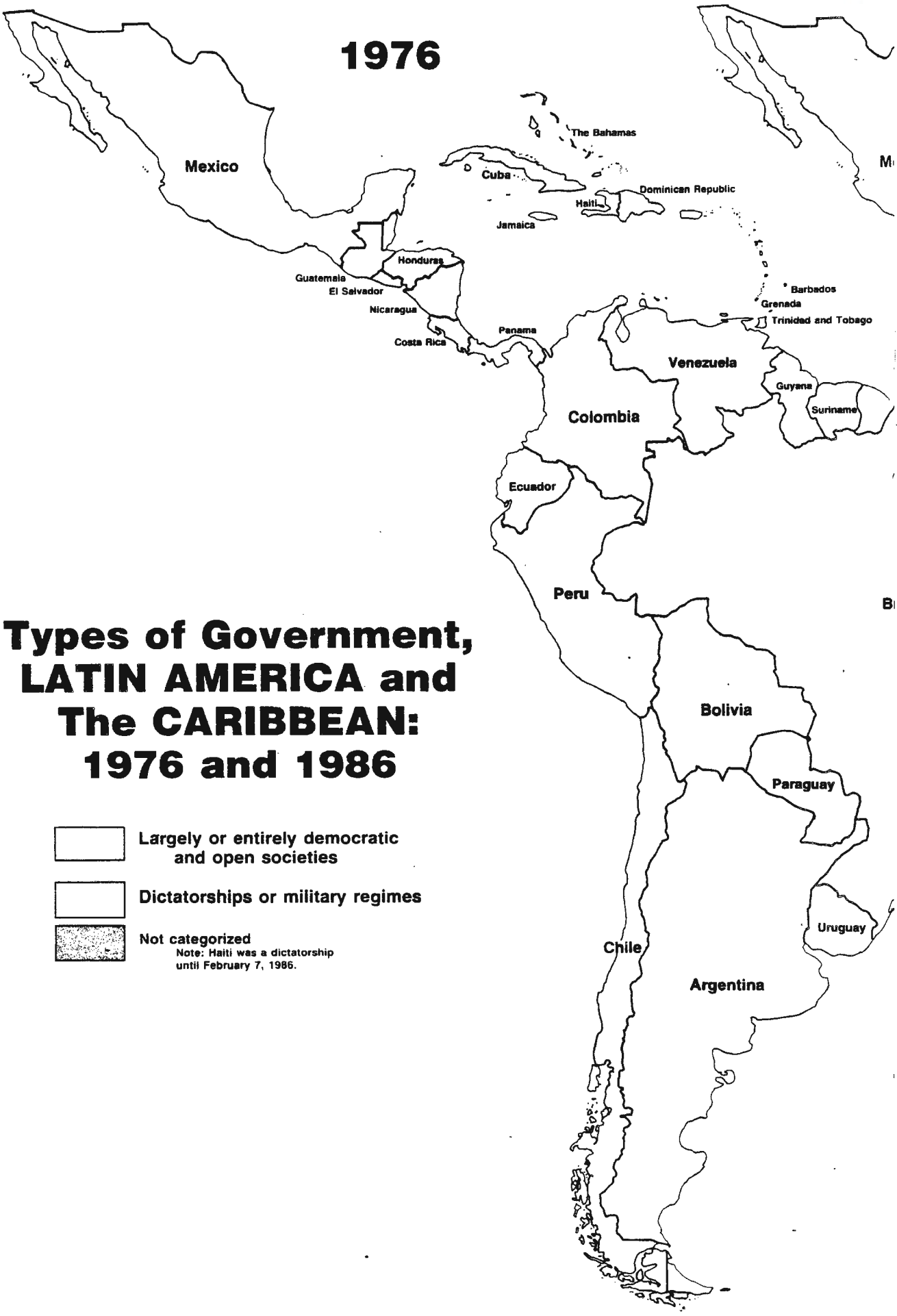
Group C: Countries in which radicals have received **other support** (such as Safe Haven, Transit, False Documentation, etc.) from Nicaragua.

Includes all of the countries in groups **A** & **B**.

Group D: Countries not included in groups **A, B, or C**.

Note: Only independent countries are shown

Names and boundaries are not necessarily authoritative



Types of Government, LATIN AMERICA and The CARIBBEAN: 1976 and 1986

Largely or entirely democratic and open societies

Dictatorships or military regimes

Not categorized

Note: Haiti was a dictatorship until February 7, 1986.

1986


The Bahamas
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Haiti
Jamaica
St. Christopher and Nevis
Antigua and Barbuda
Dominica
Saint Lucia
Barbados
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Grenada
Trinidad and Tobago
Belize
Honduras
Guatemala
El Salvador
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Venezuela
Guyana
Suriname
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Brazil
Bolivia
Paraguay
Uruguay
Chile
Argentina

ary Alliance], built by Robelo and former Sandinista Comandante Eden Pastora, and MISURASATA [Miskito, Sumo, Rama, and Sandinista] and KISAN [United Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Nicaragua] guerrillas active among the Indians of the Atlantic coast.

Resistance fighters are overwhelmingly rural youths. Most are between 18 and 22 years old. They are fighting to defend their small plots of land, their churches, and in some cases their indigenous cultures. Some joined the resistance rather than be forced to fight for the Sandinistas against their friends and neighbors. In defending their families and communities, these young Nicaraguans are fighting for self-determination above all else.

The commanders are more likely to come from urban areas and have more diverse occupations and backgrounds. They include both former National Guardsmen and former Sandinista fighters, but most are civilians from the very groups the Sandinistas claim to represent: peasants, small farmers, urban professionals, and students. One was a primary school teacher; another, an evangelical pastor.

Chart III (see p. 7) depicts the backgrounds of the 153 most senior military leaders of the FDN as of last November. The FDN has the largest number of former military professionals; however, less than half the commanders have prior military experience. And notice a key fact that many have tried to hide: a full 20% of the FDN leaders joined the resistance after serving in the Sandinista army, militia, or security services.

The evidence irrefutably confirms that the Nicaraguan resistance is the product of a popular, pervasive, and democratic revolt.

DEMOCRACY AS THE HEMISPHERIC ANSWER

Throughout these 6½ years while Nicaragua was trading one dictatorship for another, the rest of the hemisphere was making an unprecedented and historic turn toward democracy.

The maps on pages 4 and 5 illustrate the shift to democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past 10 years. The map on the left shows the politics of the region in 1976, while the one on the right shows the situation today.

Largely or entirely democratic and open societies are green. Dictatorships or military regimes are shown in light brown. Three countries not readily categorized as either democracies or dictatorships are colored gray.

Ten countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Uruguay) joined the democratic column in this last decade.

Since the fall of Duvalier in Haiti, Nicaragua is one of only five dictatorships or military regimes left in all of Latin America (the others being Chile, Cuba, Paraguay, and Suriname).

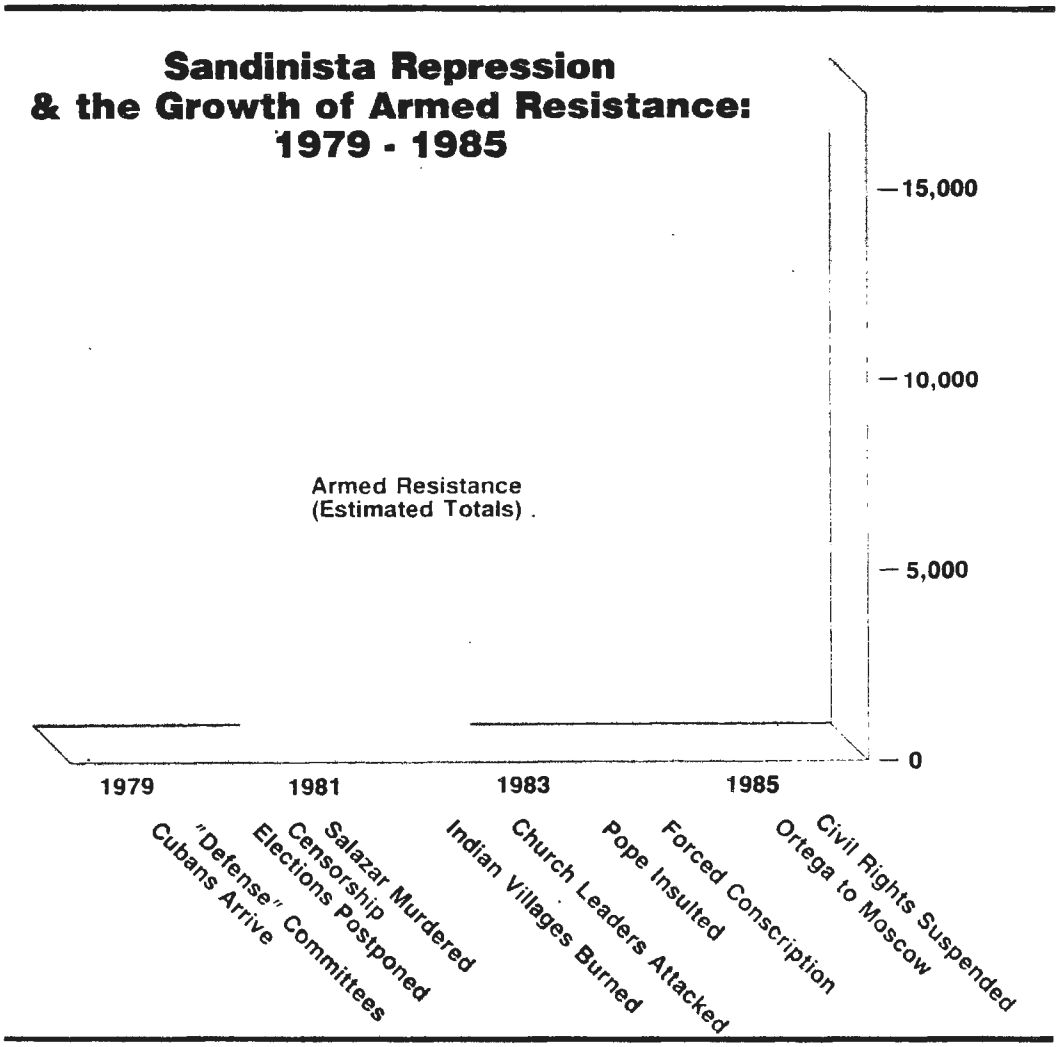
The question is sometimes asked whether any Latin American country supports our Nicaraguan policy. But isn't a better question whether any Latin American country (other than Cuba) supports Nicaragua's policies? Differences between the United States and our allies, to the extent they exist at all, are not over policy goals but over how to achieve them.

Nicaragua poses very complicated issues for Latin Americans, as it does for us. Latin Americans are properly concerned about the defense of sovereignty and the rejection of foreign intervention. History has focused much of that rejection against past military interventions by the United States.

As Latin Americans, however, our neighbors also reject Cuban-Soviet intervention. And when Cuban pilots fly Soviet helicopters, it is not the United States that is injecting the East-West conflict into Central America. It is the Soviets, and that is how it is perceived in Latin America.

So Nicaragua poses a problem on two levels. The Latin American dimension they feel that they can and must deal with themselves; the Soviet dimension they believe only we are strong enough to deal with. This is a point they have made to us repeatedly. The Latin American foreign ministers told me

Chart II



when I met with them on February 10 that they agreed with us that Cuban-Soviet intervention in Nicaragua was unacceptable.

Of course, though nobody wants a second Cuba, most would oppose any direct U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua. But we are not making a case for direct U.S. military action. We are making a case for helping Nicaraguan democrats to help themselves. If our policy advances democracy, we will always have at least tacit support.

Latin American support—indeed, enthusiasm—for democracy is evident. I would hope that by now ours is, too.

WHY PRESSURE IS NECESSARY

If democracy is our objective, why do we want to pressure Nicaragua? The answer is simple: we want a political solution. The Nicaraguan communists do not. They want a political solution only if they can violate it militarily. Pressure is the one way to bring them to the bargaining table ready to bargain. Power and diplomacy must go hand in hand.

A vote for military assistance to the democratic resistance will give Contadora a *better* chance to succeed, because it will give the Sandinistas an incentive to negotiate seriously—something they have yet to do. They did not negotiate with the Carter Administration when the United States was Nicaragua's largest supplier of aid. And they did not negotiate seriously either with us or with their neighbors when the Congress suspended all aid to the resistance 2 years ago. On the contrary, in the fall of 1984, instead of bringing their political opponents back into the political process through competitive elections, the Sandinistas imported assault helicopters from the Soviet Union.

Military pressure is just as essential now to convince the Sandinistas to negotiate a political solution as it was critical in convincing them to agree to the Contadora process in the first place.

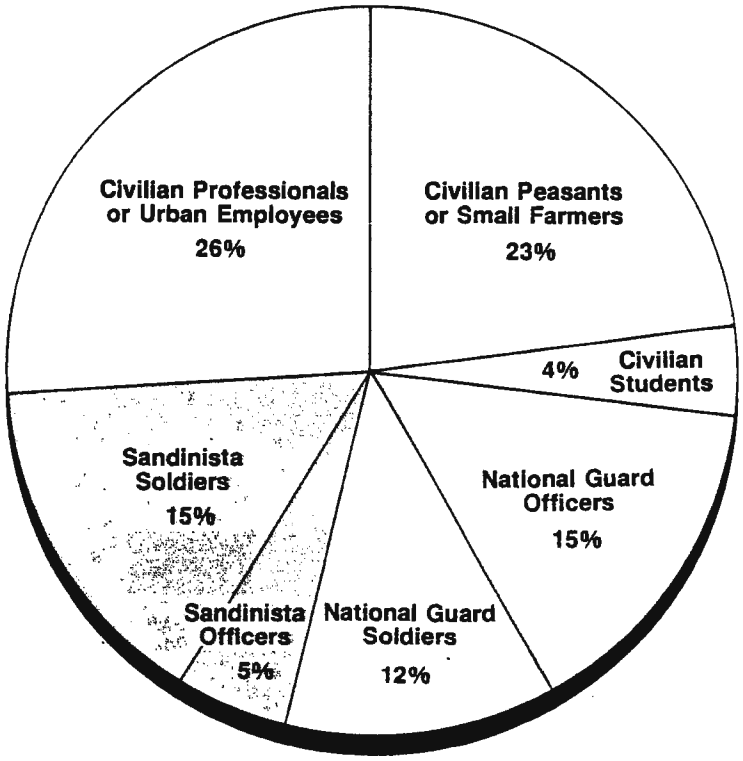
The United States can now help the Contadora process by doing two things simultaneously:

First, the United States must support Contadora politically and diplomatically, so as to help keep the negotiating process alive for the day when the Sandinistas finally do negotiate. This support must include cooperating in the staff work needed to ensure verification of any agreement. After the Sandinistas' record in repudiating their commitments to the Organization of American States, who would trust an agreement that is not enforceable?

Second, the United States must support the Nicaraguan resistance, so as to sustain pressure on the Sandinistas to accept meaningful negotiations toward a workable Contadora agreement. Why would the Sandinistas negotiate if there were no armed resistance?

Chart III

Background of FDN Military Leaders: Late 1985



Total Civilian	**53%**
Total National Guard	**27%**
Total Sandinista	**20%**

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

Carefully thought-out and implemented assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance can make a difference. The President transmitted his proposal to you 2 days ago only after we had consulted widely with our friends in Central America and in the Contadora Group as well as with the members of this committee and others in the Congress.

- $100 million would be made available to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance by transfer from the FY [fiscal year] 1986 Department of Defense Appropriations Act. Twenty-five percent would become available immediately, with an additional 15% released every 90 days through the end of September 1987, as reports are submitted to Congress.
- $30 million of the total $100 million package would be reserved for humanitarian assistance administered by the existing Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (including $3 million specifically earmarked for human rights programs and activities). The President

would be free to use the remaining $70 million for any kind of assistance he deems appropriate, using whatever agencies he desires, subject to normal procedures for congressional oversight. If properly led and trained, the armed resistance will be able to minimize the suffering of Nicaraguan noncombatants during military operations. The United States expects that the armed resistance will follow a code of conduct on the battlefield that will protect noncombatants and prisoners.

• In the event of a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Central America, any remaining balance of the $100 million could be used (through the end of FY 1987) for relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction purposes in the countries of Central America, including Nicaragua.

All current statutory conditions on involvement by intelligence agencies would be satisfied by congressional approval of the President's request. At the same time, we are not breaking relations with the Sandinista government. This demonstrates our willingness to keep open the lines of communication. It strengthens the possibility of a peaceful settlement. It increases everyone's ability to cooperate. And it maintains the program's operational viability.

We are thus asking for an overt vote on a program that will operate within clearly defined parameters. We see these parameters, if Congress approves the President's request, as follows:

• U.S. policy toward Nicaragua will be based on Nicaraguan responsiveness to U.S. concerns about Soviet/Cuban ties, military buildup, support for subversion, internal repression, and refusal to negotiate.

• The United States will address these concerns through economic, political, and diplomatic measures, as well as support for the resistance. In particular:

— We will engage in simultaneous talks with Nicaragua if Nicaragua will also engage in internal dialogue as proposed by UNO (the UNO proposal includes a cease-fire and lifting of the state of emergency); and

— We will respond positively to other steps by the Government of Nicaragua toward meeting our concerns.

• Any easing of U.S. pressure on Nicaragua will be implemented, after consultation with Congress, by reference to observable Nicaraguan conduct (e.g., freedom of the press, reduced arms deliveries or foreign military presence, respect for a cease-fire).

• The U.S. actions shall be consistent with our right to defend ourselves and assist our allies for the purpose of achieving a comprehensive, verifiable Contadora agreement and democratic reconciliation in Nicaragua, without the use of force by the United States.

• The President will report to Congress every 90 days on diplomatic efforts, human rights, and use of appropriated funds. This is the same as current reporting requirements.

I should note that the objectives reflected in these undertakings are not those of the United States alone. Each of them, including national reconciliation through dialogue with the armed opposition, are agreed objectives of the Contadora process. We are asking the Sandinistas to do no more than what they themselves have ostensibly agreed are the steps essential to a lasting peace in Central America.

CONCLUSION

Either we are willing to act on a vital issue close to our shores at a critical moment when the world is watching, or we are not. Either we help Nicaraguans to gain their freedom, or we do not. In Europe and in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and in Cambodia, in South America and in southern Africa, our friends and our enemies will draw their own conclusions from what we decide.

The Sandinistas' record in dealing with Nicaraguans and other Central Americans makes clear that the resistance is the only constraint they recognize. As long as the Sandinistas are free to try to expand their revolution, the killing and misery will continue in Central America.

Only a democratic opening in Nicaragua can alter these dim prospects. And the resistance is the major element in the present equation that can help create that opening. Nicaraguans are disenchanted with the Sandinistas; more Nicaraguans are likely to join the resistance if they believe the United States will support the restoration of the revolution's original goals.

U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan resistance may intensify support for the Sandinistas among certain individuals who are already firmly in their camp, but we do not see the ranks of Sandinista supporters growing as a result of our backing of the resistance. On the contrary, our assistance will give heart to the vast majority of Nicaraguans who yearn for freedom.

Opposition to U.S. aid to the resistance is greatest *outside* Nicaragua, wherever people do not appreciate that the Sandinistas depend on violence as a political tool, or where they lack information about the extent of Sandinista abuses of human rights, or among those who do not realize that the true underdogs are the Nicaraguan people and their neighbors who are resisting violent minorities backed by military aid from Cuba and the Soviet bloc. Reactions among former Sandinista sympathizers suggest that the reality of the new tyranny in Nicaragua is being increasingly understood in Europe as well as Latin America and the United States.

The bottom line is this: absent a credible challenge to their militarized control of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas have no incentive to negotiate a lasting political solution to the conflict in Central America. The resistance can provide such a challenge—if we help. Without military aid to the resistance, the Sandinistas will simply monopolize power and continue to destabilize their neighbors. If the Central American house remains divided against itself, prospects for democracy would ultimately be doomed in the region as a whole as well as Nicaragua.

The United States has both moral and strategic interests in the consolidation of democracy in this hemisphere. To the extent that we support Latin Americans who are struggling for objectives similar to ours, we reduce the likelihood of having to intervene to protect our interests and defend our allies. If there were no armed resistance, we might ultimately confront choices even more difficult than this one.

Under the expedited procedures that Congress has provided, the President is entitled to a vote on his request. A positive vote is essential to protect our strategic interests, preserve opportunities for diplomacy, and assure that the progress made in recent years in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala will not be reversed and that Costa Rica will maintain its democracy.

There are many uncertainties ahead in Nicaragua. We are fully aware of them. But we are also aware that there were many uncertainties in El Salvador, in Central America generally, and most recently in Haiti and the Philippines. We were right in El Salvador. Castro, and the Soviets, and the Libyans, and the Nicaraguan communists have clearly made their choice. Now it is up to us to make ours. ■

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Daniel Ortega at the Cuban Party Congress

Central American

To reaffirm publicly the Sandinistas' solidarity with Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution, President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua made a special point to attend the Third Party Congress of the Cuban Communist Party February 4-7, 1986.

- Ortega was only one of two chiefs of state to participate in the congress (the other being the President of Guinea Bissau).

- Indicative of his priorities, by attending he snubbed an important delegation of Western leaders representing the Socialist International who were visiting Managua.

- He competed at the podium in anti-U.S. rhetoric with representatives from the Soviet bloc and from communist parties of such countries as Angola, Ethopia, and Afghanistan.

- Ortega also rubbed shoulders with representatives of such political terrorist groups as the Argentine Mononeros, the Chilean "Manuel Rodriguez" Patriotic Front, and the Colombian M-19.

- In his speech, Ortega characterized Nicaragua's relations with Cuba as "unalterable, non-negotiable and sealed with the blood of Cuban internationalists fallen on Nicaraguan soil. . ."

- He also praised Cuba as "a symbol of dignity, resistance, and combativeness in Latin America." He closed his remarks by declaring, "Long live Cuba and Nicaragua, united they will overcome!"

- In reciprocation for Ortega's expression of loyalty, Cuban Politburo member Jorge Risquet responded, "In the future, as now, we will share our bread, our knowledge and our blood with the heroic people of Sandino's homeland."

- Fidel Castro asserted that not only the Salvadoran guerrillas (statement by Salvadoran Communist leader Shafik Handal) but "all the Central American revolutionaries" would unite to defend the Sandinistas.

- Ortega returned to Havana March 2, 1986, for what a Nicaraguan Government communique characterized as a "private" stay of 10 days, after dispatching another of the Comandantes, Bayardo Arce, to Moscow to attend the Soviet Communist Party Congress. Arce is chief ideologue of the Sandinista Party.

Excerpts of Ortega's speech in Havana are attached.

Speech by

Commander of the Revolution Daniel Ortega

President of Nicaragua

and

Coordinator of the FSLN Executive Committee

Third Cuban Communist Party Congress

Havana, February 6, 1986

Esteemed Comrade Fidel Castro, comrade delegates and guests: I bring greetings from the FSLN militants to the militants of the CCP who are today holding their Third CCP Congress. We are bringing a fraternal message from Sandino's heroic people to Marti's heroic people...

Cuba is an example of a people's determination when they decide to be free in the face of the terrorist actions of Yankee imperialism. To speak of Cuba is to speak of the heroic resistance against the invasion in Giron. It is to speak of the people's firmness in the face of the criminal blockade. It is to speak of the internationalism of thousands of Cubans who have given their blood and sweat in favor of sister peoples...

In the report presented yesterday, we have learned of the tasks undertaken by the workers, peasants, youths, women, soldiers, technicians, professionals, and party militants. The balance is positive, with a stronger revolution and with a more developed party, above all, marching with open eyes to avoid the obstacles that are in its path. We have learned in the report about the just and dignified positions that Cuba has upheld in the international field of defense of sovereignty, the self-determination of peoples, and peace. We were especially moved by the generosity of its heroic people who despite their limitations, struggles, and sacrifices, give their best and share their blood and bread with sister peoples who defend their freedom and independence in various regions of the world.

In Nicaragua, we are witnesses of the internationalist disposition of the Cuban people. Ever since the struggle against

the Somozist dictatorship, the blood of Cuban revolutionaries has mixed in Nicaraguan soil with the blood of Nicaraguan revolutionaries. In these past years, the blood of Cuban internationaists who were providing their cooperation in various specialties has again been shed in Nicaraguan soil, victims once again of the imperialist policy that assassinated Sandino, Che, and Allende, and that procreated Batista, Somoza, Duvalier, and Pinochet...

Our relations with Cuba are friendly, fraternal, and respectful. They are relations that are unalterable and nonnegotiable. They are relations sealed with the blood of Cuban internationalists who have fallen on Nicaraguan soil...

They (the United States) are trying to justify their terrorist policy towards Nicaragua by accusing our homeland of being the sanctuary of the Salvadoran revolutionaries. We all know perfectly well that as long as there is injustice, exploitation, and lack of freedom, there will be revolutions and that if in El Salvador there is a revolutionary struggle it is because there has been a lack of justice and democracy and because the Salvadoran people have not been respected.

This Third Congress is taking place when the threats of the nuclear hecatomb are being brandished by the U.S. rulers in a policy of universal blackmail that is rejected by the peoples of the world. One can no longer deny the extraordinary efforts that the Soviet Union carries out in favor of peace...

To defend Nicaragua's right to self-determination and peace in Central America means to defend the right to self-determination of Latin America and the Caribbean as well as to defend our right to struggle against the financial blackmail to which we are being subjected by the creditors of a debt that is unrepayable, and therefore, uncollectible. It means defending the right to struggle for a new economic order; it means defending the right to peace...

Long live the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist Party! Long live the friendship between Cuba and Nicaragua! Cuba and Nicaragua, united they will overcome! Long live peace!

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

March 11, 1986

Central America

Subject: Evidence of the Sandinista Commitment to Communism and Revolutionary Internationalism

Critics of American policy toward Nicaragua have argued that U.S. hostility has forced the Sandinistas to radicalize and has driven them into the arms of Cuba and the Soviet Union. The enclosed paper, "The 72-Hour Document": The Sandinista Blueprint for Constructing Communism in Nicaragua, shows that from the time of the revolution in 1979, the Sandinistas were intent on converting Nicaragua into a Marxist-Leninist state closely aligned with the Soviet bloc.

This secret Sandinista report on a September 1979 meeting of the party's leadership was written as an internal document to be circulated among party members only. It provides a revealing glimpse at the true objectives of the FSLN--objectives far different from those publicly declared by the Sandinistas.

Much of the report focused on the Sandinista plan to consolidate power. The comandantes acknowledged that the revolution was won by a broad coalition which included democratic political parties, the private sector, and independent labor organizations, and which had the moral backing of the church. They concluded that to consolidate their power they needed to destroy all rival centers of power. The report outlined plainly their intention to attack the private sector, to subvert or crush political parties and labor organizations, and to spy on and undermine the church. It also outlined their plans to create "mass organizations" under tight FSLN control and to build a large, highly politicized military. In the report, the Sandinistas referred to "democracy," using the Marxist-Leninist concept of the word: i.e., the FSLN was the "vanguard" of the people with a historic right to rule and to implant a Communist system in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas made clear that in their "revolutionary democracy," all power rested with FSLN leadership.

In "The 72-Hour Document" the Sandinistas clearly identified themselves as an integral part of a world Communist revolution. They stated flatly that "revolutionary internationalism" was a basic principle of their foreign policy and declared their determination to assist revolutionary movements throughout Latin America.

A striking aspect of "The 72-Hour Document" is its fervent anti-Americanism. The Sandinistas denounced the United States repeatedly, calling it the "rabid enemy of all peoples" seeking freedom. Remarkably, the September 1979 party meeting had barely concluded when Sandinista officials, including Daniel Ortega, traveled to Washington to request economic aid. The United States, in its efforts to build a positive relationship with the new government of Nicaragua, responded generously to this appeal: by early 1981, the United States provided Nicaragua $118 million in aid, more than any other donor nation.

The U.S. good will and unmatched economic assistance did not moderate the Sandinistas' attitudes or behavior, however. By the time the United States suspended aid in 1981, the Sandinistas had already pushed the other elements of the original revolutionary coalition out of the government; had attempted to export their revolution by providing material assistance to Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador; and had aligned themselves closely with the Communist world, bringing in large numbers of Cuban and Soviet-bloc advisers, particularly in the military/security fields.

References to "The 72-Hour Document" in recent publications such as Shirley Christian's Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family and the State Department's Revolution Beyond Our Borders have stimulated public interest in it. Like Comandante Bayardo Arce's Secret Speech to the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) which the State Department published last year, "The 72-Hour Document" provides insights into the character of the Sandinista regime.

Also included is a brief paper on Daniel Ortega's attendance at the recent Congress of the Cuban Communist Party. Ortega was the only Western Hemisphere head of state to attend the meeting.

Sincerely,

John D. Blacken

John D. Blacken
Acting Coordinator of Public Diplomacy
for Latin America and the Caribbean

Secretary Shultz

Current
Policy
No. 797

Nicaragua: Will Democracy Prevail?

United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is a statement by Secretary Shultz before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington, D.C., February 27, 1986.

U.S. assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance is an essential element in our efforts to defend Central America from aggression, to preserve recent democratic gains, and to improve prospects for renewed economic growth and equitable development. It is an important stimulus to a diplomatic solution to the Central American conflict. It contributes to our defense against Soviet and Cuban military intervention in this hemisphere. Finally, it can help to restore to the Nicaraguan people their right to self-determination denied by a minority that seeks to perpetuate itself in power by force of arms and totalitarian controls.

In short, the assistance the President requested on February 25 is needed. It is legally, morally, and strategically justified. And it can make a vital difference to the emergence of a democratic outcome in Nicaragua and throughout Central America.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In talking with foreign leaders and Members of Congress, I find that just about everyone agrees on what the problem is. It is that a democratic revolution has been betrayed by a violent minority willing and even eager to serve as an instrument of Soviet and Cuban strategic designs on the hemisphere, including armed aggression in the form of support for terrorism and subversion.

In 1979, Nicaraguan democrats and their sympathizers throughout the world believed that the end of the Somoza regime marked a new beginning for Nicaragua. Nicaraguans learned very quickly, however, that instead of democracy, they had fallen prey to what the Sandinistas say is "revolution by vanguard" and what the rest of us know is communist totalitarianism. The popularity of the overthrow of Somoza concealed the establishment of a new dictatorship that threatens the security of Nicaragua's neighbors and has brought the cold war to Central America.

Intervention

One of the most striking characteristics of Sandinista communism is its messianic impulse to violence. As Congress has repeatedly and formally found, Nicaragua has since 1980 been engaged in unlawful intervention, serving as the staging ground for arms shipments to guerrillas in El Salvador. Because so much attention has been focused on this arms flow to El Salvador, which has been sustained and occasionally massive, it is less widely known that at one point or another Sandinista intervention has touched virtually the entire hemisphere.

The map on page 3 depicts the breadth of Nicaragua's interventionist activities. (It also makes clear, incidentally, that the Nicaraguan communists are perfectly serious when they refer to their policy as one of "internationalism.") The map identifies the countries where the current Nicaraguan Government has tried to export violence, by shipping arms, training guerrillas, or providing the kinds of support necessary for terrorist operations. Managua has become a gathering place for terrorists from all over the world, including Europe and the Middle East as well as Latin America.

Two aspects of this pattern of intervention are worth emphasizing.

First, the intervention is strongest against Nicaragua's immediate neighbors, but it is not limited to Central America.

Second, the pattern is politically indiscriminate. Violence and subversion have been directed against democracies and even against Contadora countries as well as against dictatorships and more traditional military regimes.

Militarization

The Sandinistas like to portray themselves as nationalists, but their soldiers are trained and supported in combat by thousands of Cubans and other foreigners known as "internationalists." And this is why, despite its limited size and resources, Nicaragua is able to intervene so widely in the hemisphere: it has

been armed by the Soviet Union and is manned by Cubans in key sectors from training and weapons use to intelligence and counterintelligence.

The first Cuban advisers entered Managua with the Sandinistas and took up positions in Somoza's bunker less than a week after he left it. As soon as the security apparatus was in place, Soviet-bloc arms began to arrive to give the Nicaraguan communists the capacity to repress their own people and to engage in unconventional warfare against their neighbors without risk of a conventional military response.

Chart I depicts the militarization of Nicaragua by this combination of Soviet-bloc weapons and Cuban manpower. The total of Cuban advisers has stabilized at slightly lower levels since October 1983, when the U.S. action in Grenada led the Cubans to seek a lower profile in Nicaragua. Soviet arms shipments peaked in the fall of 1984 with the delivery of HIND attack helicopters at a time when the resistance had been cut off from U.S. Government assistance. The reality is clear: Managua's military capabilities are closely tied to the Soviet Union and Cuba.

Cuban military and security officers, in fact, have done everything from helping with the establishment of political control structures in the armed forces and the state security apparatus to an active combat role with sophisticated Soviet weapons systems.

THE RISE OF THE RESISTANCE

When Daniel Ortega spoke in Havana on February 5 to the Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, he referred to "the blood of Cuban internationalists fallen on Nicaraguan soil." Ortega was talking about Cubans killed fighting Nicaraguans inside Nicaragua.

In this fact is a bitter truth: Nicaraguans who dissent must fight more than other Nicaraguans. And they must fight a sophisticated, heavily equipped, and pervasive security apparatus designed to deny power to all but the ruling communist vanguard. One need look no further than the fate of Solidarity in Poland over the last few years to realize the difficulty of taking on such a formidable internal security apparatus.

Chart II (see p. 6) demonstrates the growth of armed resistance in the face of the new Nicaraguan police state. The resistance responds to a long series of repressive acts, some of which are listed chronologically in the chart. These go from the arrival of the Cubans and the establishment of the defense committees in the summer of 1979 to the start of censorship and the postponement of elections, the murder of opposition leader Jorge Salazar, and the burning of Indian villages in 1981. Catholic and Protestant church leaders were systematically attacked, and the Pope was insulted. Forced conscription came next, followed by stage-managed elections, Ortega's visit to Moscow, and finally the suspension of civil rights in the fall of 1985.

By betraying their promises of pluralism, the Nicaraguan communists have forced the citizens of Nicaragua to take up arms once again. Like Somoza, the Sandinistas don't seem to listen to anyone who isn't armed. And, like Somoza, they seek to blame outside forces for the resistance of their own people to their policies.

The Nicaraguan communists like to say that covert U.S. support created the resistance; that their opponents are all agents of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] and of the heirs of Somoza. This is ridiculous. It was Sandinista repression that in 1979, 1980, and 1981 destroyed the coalition that overthrew Somoza and sparked the resistance. In 1979, 1980, and 1981, the United States was providing aid to the Government of Nicaragua, not to the resistance.

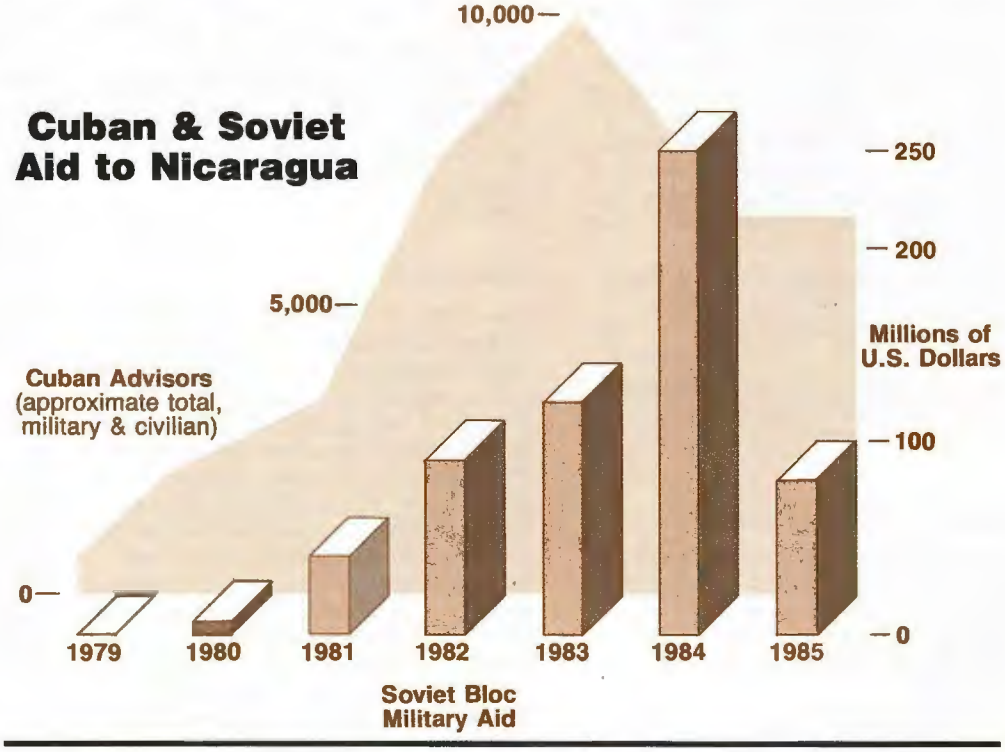
From May of 1984 until late in 1985—well over a year—the U.S. Government provided no assistance to Nicaraguan resistance forces. As indicated in Chart II, the resistance grew by 50%, roughly from 10,000 to 15,000 during a period when there was no U.S. Government assistance.

The Sandinistas, of course, would like to create the impression that there is no viable alternative to them. Like Somoza before them, they have driven many of their opponents into exile. But these opposition groups represent a variety of political and programmatic viewpoints. They are committed to presenting those viewpoints to the Nicaraguan people in a competitive democratic process and would do so if given the opportunity.

Adolfo Calero, Arturo Cruz, and Alfonso Robelo lead the main resistance organization, the United Nicaraguan Opposition (UNO). All three actively opposed Somoza while he was still in power. Calero was jailed by Somoza; first Robelo then Cruz became junta members with the Sandinistas until they could no longer accept betrayal of democratic principles and of Nicaraguan national interests.

The largest guerrilla forces belong to the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), headed by Calero since 1983. Other important resistance organizations include ARDE [Democratic Revolution-

Chart I



Sandinista Intervention

Group A: Countries where **arms** originating in Nicaragua have been found.

Group B: Countries from which guerrillas have received **military training** in Nicaragua.

Group C: Countries in which radicals have received **other support** (such as Safe Haven, Transit, False Documentation, etc.) from Nicaragua.

Includes all of the countries in groups **A** & **B**.

Group D: Countries not included in groups **A, B, or C.**

Note: Only independent countries are shown

Names and boundaries are not necessarily authoritative


1976
Mexico
The Bahamas
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Haiti
Jamaica
Honduras
Guatemala
El Salvador
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Barbados
Grenada
Trinidad and Tobago
Venezuela
Guyana
Suriname
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Bolivia
Paraguay
Uruguay
Chile
Argentina
Types of Government, LATIN AMERICA and The CARIBBEAN: 1976 and 1986
Largely or entirely democratic and open societies
Dictatorships or military regimes
Not categorized
Note: Haiti was a dictatorship until February 7, 1986.

1986


xico
The Bahamas
Cuba
Dominican Republic
Haiti
Jamaica
St. Christopher and Nevis
Antigua and Barbuda
Dominica
Saint Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Barbados
Grenada
Trinidad and Tobago
Belize
Honduras
Guatemala
El Salvador
Nicaragua
Costa Rica
Panama
Venezuela
Guyana
Suriname
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Brazil
Bolivia
Paraguay
Uruguay
Chile
Argentina

ary Alliance], built by Robelo and former Sandinista Comandante Eden Pastora, and MISURASATA [Miskito, Sumo, Rama, and Sandinista] and KISAN [United Indigenous Peoples of Eastern Nicaragua] guerrillas active among the Indians of the Atlantic coast.

Resistance fighters are overwhelmingly rural youths. Most are between 18 and 22 years old. They are fighting to defend their small plots of land, their churches, and in some cases their indigenous cultures. Some joined the resistance rather than be forced to fight for the Sandinistas against their friends and neighbors. In defending their families and communities, these young Nicaraguans are fighting for self-determination above all else.

The commanders are more likely to come from urban areas and have more diverse occupations and backgrounds. They include both former National Guardsmen and former Sandinista fighters, but most are civilians from the very groups the Sandinistas claim to represent: peasants, small farmers, urban professionals, and students. One was a primary school teacher; another, an evangelical pastor.

Chart III (see p. 7) depicts the backgrounds of the 153 most senior military leaders of the FDN as of last November. The FDN has the largest number of former military professionals; however, less than half the commanders have prior military experience. And notice a key fact that many have tried to hide: a full 20% of the FDN leaders joined the resistance after serving in the Sandinista army, militia, or security services.

The evidence irrefutably confirms that the Nicaraguan resistance is the product of a popular, pervasive, and democratic revolt.

DEMOCRACY AS THE HEMISPHERIC ANSWER

Throughout these 6½ years while Nicaragua was trading one dictatorship for another, the rest of the hemisphere was making an unprecedented and historic turn toward democracy.

The maps on pages 4 and 5 illustrate the shift to democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean over the past 10 years. The map on the left shows the politics of the region in 1976, while the one on the right shows the situation today.

Largely or entirely democratic and open societies are green. Dictatorships or military regimes are shown in light brown. Three countries not readily categorized as either democracies or dictatorships are colored gray.

Ten countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, and Uruguay) joined the democratic column in this last decade.

Since the fall of Duvalier in Haiti, Nicaragua is one of only five dictatorships or military regimes left in all of Latin America (the others being Chile, Cuba, Paraguay, and Suriname).

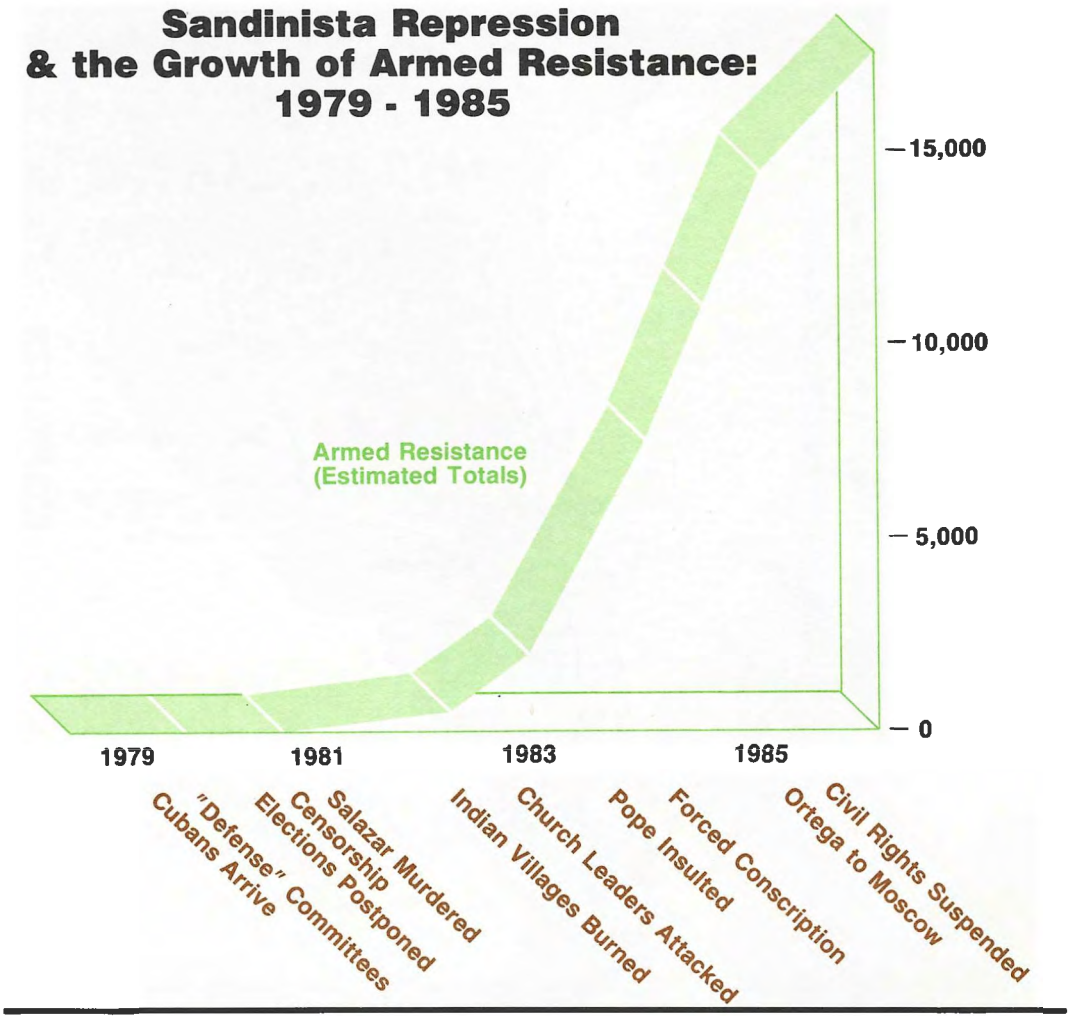
The question is sometimes asked whether any Latin American country supports our Nicaraguan policy. But isn't a better question whether any Latin American country (other than Cuba) supports Nicaragua's policies? Differences between the United States and our allies, to the extent they exist at all, are not over policy goals but over how to achieve them.

Nicaragua poses very complicated issues for Latin Americans, as it does for us. Latin Americans are properly concerned about the defense of sovereignty and the rejection of foreign intervention. History has focused much of that rejection against past military interventions by the United States.

As Latin Americans, however, our neighbors also reject Cuban-Soviet intervention. And when Cuban pilots fly Soviet helicopters, it is not the United States that is injecting the East-West conflict into Central America. It is the Soviets, and that is how it is perceived in Latin America.

So Nicaragua poses a problem on two levels. The Latin American dimension they feel that they can and must deal with themselves; the Soviet dimension they believe only we are strong enough to deal with. This is a point they have made to us repeatedly. The Latin American foreign ministers told me

Chart II



when I met with them on February 10 that they agreed with us that Cuban-Soviet intervention in Nicaragua was unacceptable.

Of course, though nobody wants a second Cuba, most would oppose any direct U.S. military intervention in Nicaragua. But we are not making a case for direct U.S. military action. We are making a case for helping Nicaraguan democrats to help themselves. If our policy advances democracy, we will always have at least tacit support.

Latin American support—indeed, enthusiasm—for democracy is evident. I would hope that by now ours is, too.

WHY PRESSURE IS NECESSARY

If democracy is our objective, why do we want to pressure Nicaragua? The answer is simple: we want a political solution. The Nicaraguan communists do not. They want a political solution only if they can violate it militarily. Pressure is the one way to bring them to the bargaining table ready to bargain. Power and diplomacy must go hand in hand.

A vote for military assistance to the democratic resistance will give Contadora a *better* chance to succeed, because it will give the Sandinistas an incentive to negotiate seriously—something they have yet to do. They did not negotiate with the Carter Administration when the United States was Nicaragua's largest supplier of aid. And they did not negotiate seriously either with us or with their neighbors when the Congress suspended all aid to the resistance 2 years ago. On the contrary, in the fall of 1984, instead of bringing their political opponents back into the political process through competitive elections, the Sandinistas imported assault helicopters from the Soviet Union.

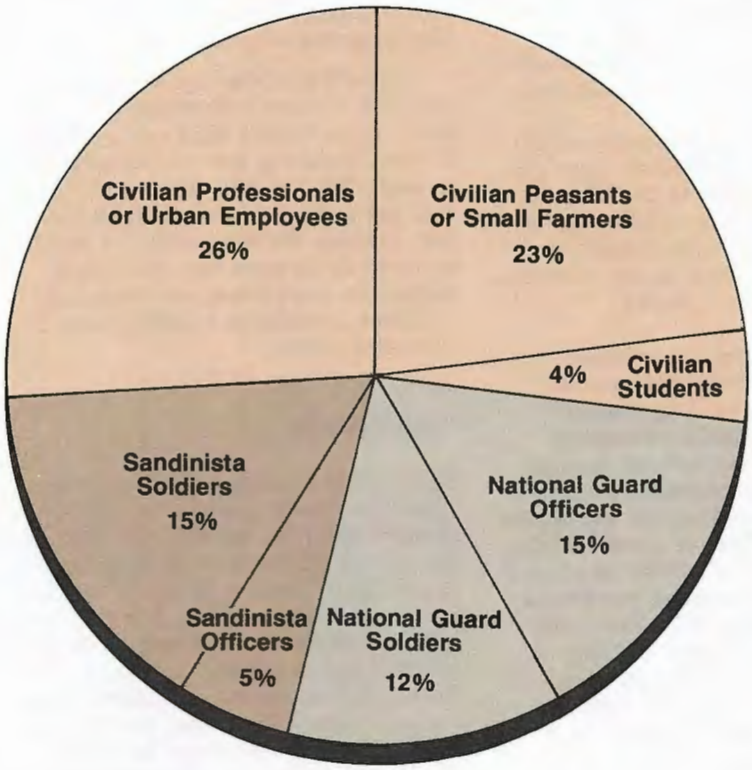
Military pressure is just as essential now to convince the Sandinistas to negotiate a political solution as it was critical in convincing them to agree to the Contadora process in the first place.

The United States can now help the Contadora process by doing two things simultaneously:

First, the United States must support Contadora politically and diplomatically, so as to help keep the negotiating process alive for the day when the Sandinistas finally do negotiate. This support must include cooperating in the staff work needed to ensure verification of any agreement. After the Sandinistas' record in repudiating their commitments to the Organization of American States, who would trust an agreement that is not enforceable?

Chart III

Background of FDN Military Leaders: Late 1985



Total Civilian	**53%**
Total National Guard	**27%**
Total Sandinista	**20%**

Second, the United States must support the Nicaraguan resistance, so as to sustain pressure on the Sandinistas to accept meaningful negotiations toward a workable Contadora agreement. Why would the Sandinistas negotiate if there were no armed resistance?

WHAT WE ARE ASKING

Carefully thought-out and implemented assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance can make a difference. The President transmitted his proposal to you 2 days ago only after we had consulted widely with our friends in Central America and in the Contadora Group as well as with the members of this committee and others in the Congress.

- $100 million would be made available to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance by transfer from the FY [fiscal year] 1986 Department of Defense Appropriations Act. Twenty-five percent would become available immediately, with an additional 15% released every 90 days through the end of September 1987, as reports are submitted to Congress.
- $30 million of the total $100 million package would be reserved for humanitarian assistance administered by the existing Nicaraguan Humanitarian Assistance Office (including $3 million specifically earmarked for human rights programs and activities). The President

would be free to use the remaining $70 million for any kind of assistance he deems appropriate, using whatever agencies he desires, subject to normal procedures for congressional oversight. If properly led and trained, the armed resistance will be able to minimize the suffering of Nicaraguan noncombatants during military operations. The United States expects that the armed resistance will follow a code of conduct on the battlefield that will protect noncombatants and prisoners.

• In the event of a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Central America, any remaining balance of the $100 million could be used (through the end of FY 1987) for relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction purposes in the countries of Central America, including Nicaragua.

All current statutory conditions on involvement by intelligence agencies would be satisfied by congressional approval of the President's request. At the same time, we are not breaking relations with the Sandinista government. This demonstrates our willingness to keep open the lines of communication. It strengthens the possibility of a peaceful settlement. It increases everyone's ability to cooperate. And it maintains the program's operational viability.

We are thus asking for an overt vote on a program that will operate within clearly defined parameters. We see these parameters, if Congress approves the President's request, as follows:

• U.S. policy toward Nicaragua will be based on Nicaraguan responsiveness to U.S. concerns about Soviet/Cuban ties, military buildup, support for subversion, internal repression, and refusal to negotiate.

• The United States will address these concerns through economic, political, and diplomatic measures, as well as support for the resistance. In particular:

— We will engage in simultaneous talks with Nicaragua if Nicaragua will also engage in internal dialogue as proposed by UNO (the UNO proposal includes a cease-fire and lifting of the state of emergency); and

— We will respond positively to other steps by the Government of Nicaragua toward meeting our concerns.

• Any easing of U.S. pressure on Nicaragua will be implemented, after consultation with Congress, by reference to observable Nicaraguan conduct (e.g., freedom of the press, reduced arms deliveries or foreign military presence, respect for a cease-fire).

• The U.S. actions shall be consistent with our right to defend ourselves and assist our allies for the purpose of achieving a comprehensive, verifiable Contadora agreement and democratic reconciliation in Nicaragua, without the use of force by the United States.

• The President will report to Congress every 90 days on diplomatic efforts, human rights, and use of appropriated funds. This is the same as current reporting requirements.

I should note that the objectives reflected in these undertakings are not those of the United States alone. Each of them, including national reconciliation through dialogue with the armed opposition, are agreed objectives of the Contadora process. We are asking the Sandinistas to do no more than what they themselves have ostensibly agreed are the steps essential to a lasting peace in Central America.

CONCLUSION

Either we are willing to act on a vital issue close to our shores at a critical moment when the world is watching, or we are not. Either we help Nicaraguans to gain their freedom, or we do not. In Europe and in the Middle East, in Afghanistan and in Cambodia, in South America and in southern Africa, our friends and our enemies will draw their own conclusions from what we decide.

The Sandinistas' record in dealing with Nicaraguans and other Central Americans makes clear that the resistance is the only constraint they recognize. As long as the Sandinistas are free to try to expand their revolution, the killing and misery will continue in Central America.

Only a democratic opening in Nicaragua can alter these dim prospects. And the resistance is the major element in the present equation that can help create that opening. Nicaraguans are disenchanted with the Sandinistas; more Nicaraguans are likely to join the resistance if they believe the United States will support the restoration of the revolution's original goals.

U.S. aid to the Nicaraguan resistance may intensify support for the Sandinistas among certain individuals who are already firmly in their camp, but we do not see the ranks of Sandinista supporters growing as a result of our backing of the resistance. On the contrary, our assistance will give heart to the vast majority of Nicaraguans who yearn for freedom.

Opposition to U.S. aid to the resistance is greatest *outside* Nicaragua, wherever people do not appreciate that the Sandinistas depend on violence as a political tool, or where they lack information about the extent of Sandinista abuses of human rights, or among those who do not realize that the true underdogs are the Nicaraguan people and their neighbors who are resisting violent minorities backed by military aid from Cuba and the Soviet bloc. Reactions among former Sandinista sympathizers suggest that the reality of the new tyranny in Nicaragua is being increasingly understood in Europe as well as Latin America and the United States.

The bottom line is this: absent a credible challenge to their militarized control of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas have no incentive to negotiate a lasting political solution to the conflict in Central America. The resistance can provide such a challenge—if we help. Without military aid to the resistance, the Sandinistas will simply monopolize power and continue to destabilize their neighbors. If the Central American house remains divided against itself, prospects for democracy would ultimately be doomed in the region as a whole as well as Nicaragua.

The United States has both moral and strategic interests in the consolidation of democracy in this hemisphere. To the extent that we support Latin Americans who are struggling for objectives similar to ours, we reduce the likelihood of having to intervene to protect our interests and defend our allies. If there were no armed resistance, we might ultimately confront choices even more difficult than this one.

Under the expedited procedures that Congress has provided, the President is entitled to a vote on his request. A positive vote is essential to protect our strategic interests, preserve opportunities for diplomacy, and assure that the progress made in recent years in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala will not be reversed and that Costa Rica will maintain its democracy.

There are many uncertainties ahead in Nicaragua. We are fully aware of them. But we are also aware that there were many uncertainties in El Salvador, in Central America generally, and most recently in Haiti and the Philippines. We were right in El Salvador. Castro, and the Soviets, and the Libyans, and the Nicaraguan communists have clearly made their choice. Now it is up to us to make ours. ■

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