

# US INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA\*

by Edmundo G. Garcia

## PREFACE: THE TERMS OF THE DEBATE

In his major policy address on Central America delivered before the joint session of Congress on 27 April 1983, President Ronald Reagan stated:

The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere. Our credibility would collapse, our alliances would crumble, and the safety of our homeland would be put at jeopardy.

... Let us be clear as to the American attitude towards the government of Nicaragua. We do not seek its overthrow. Our interest is to insure that it does not infect its neighbors through the export of subversion and violence. Our purpose, in conformity with American and international law, is to prevent the flow of arms to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica.<sup>1</sup>

A group of leading writers among whom were Gabriel Garcia Marquez (Colombia), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Julio Cortazar (Argentina), Gunter Grass (Germany), Graham Greene (England), and William Styron (United States) wrote a message to the people of the United States just ten days before, presenting a different perspective:

The present United States administration has gone to war against the people and government of Nicaragua.

It is an undeclared war, unauthorized by Congress and, therefore, unconstitutional. It is a covert war.

It is an irrational war. It renounces diplomatic negotiations without giving them a serious try.

It is a reactionary war. The US created and then supported the corrupt Somoza dictatorship during more than 40 years. Now it cannot tolerate an independent government in Nicaragua. It has armed the former guardsmen of the Somoza regime against the people of Nicaragua.

It is an inhuman war. It is destroying the modest but profound achievements of the Nicaraguan revolution. It is destroying the crops and schools of Nicaragua. It is killing the children and the peasants of Nicaragua.

It is a dangerous war. It wrenches the problems of Nicaragua and Central America out of their peculiar cultural and historical context and thrusts them onto

the stage of East-West conflict. This distortion can internationalize the war and destroy the opportunities for diplomacy, democracy and social advancements in the region.

It is a treacherous war. It is the fourth time in this century that the US has invented pretexts to invade Nicaragua. This time, it is doing so by mercenary means, pitting brothers against brothers and countries against countries in the region.

It is an immoral war. Once again, a superpower declares itself menaced by the independence of a small nation and attempts its submission by intimidation or its destruction by force.<sup>2</sup>

And why is it that Nicaragua is considered such a threat?

It is a small nation with 2.7 million people (nearly the equivalent of the population of Manila and Quezon City combined) living in a land area slightly smaller than Luzon (128,000 sq. kms.). Peasants work the land to produce coffee, sugar, cotton and timber exports. It was a poor country. It still is. During the period of the Somoza dictatorship, 200,000 peasants had no land, while the Somoza family owned land equal to the size of the province of Pampanga. If you had distributed land equally to all the landless peasants each one would have owned 5 acres each. At the same time, no regime in the world cooperated more fully with the United States of America than did the Somozas from 1930-1979. It was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who spoke of the first Somoza in the classic phrase: "Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch."<sup>3</sup>

On July 1979, the Sandinistas entered the city of Managua to mark the end of a family dictatorship that spanned almost half a century. Since that day, no Central American nation has more directly challenged US policies in the area than the post-1979 Nicaraguan government. Tomas Borge, the only living founder of the **Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional**, when asked by the British journalist Jonathan Steele why the Reagan administration saw Nicaragua as a threat to the national security of the United States, replied:

In order for us to be a threat to the US, we should first have a desire to invade them, and secondly, have the resources to do so. We have neither.

If we came to an agreement with the Soviet Union to have a nuclear base here, then we would be a threat. But the USSR has never suggested this, nor have we

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suggested it to the USSR. We don't know what would happen if we asked. Perhaps they would refuse. But if they asked us, we would say no. We don't want a nuclear base. The United States should use its common sense.

If we do pose a threat to the security of the United States, then it is a moral threat, the threat of a new morality, the threat of a people that have made the basic principles of Christianity their own, the threat of a country that represents real human rights, the threat of a people that wants to have an authentic national democratic government of its own.<sup>4</sup>

In 1970, it was Chile's unique electoral road to social transformation ("la via chilena al socialismo") that was considered by the United States as a threat to its ideological hegemony in the Latin American region. Today, it is the Sandinistas' view of an independent Nicaragua that is perceived as a danger to the geo-political interests of the recognized dominant power in an area long-considered by the US as its political backyard.

### THE EAST-WEST CONFLICT FRAMEWORK

National Security document no. 68 of 1950 which viewed the Soviet Union as the primary obstacle to US interests provided the doctrinal basis for the East-West conflict framework and its relationship to US national security that must be defended worldwide. The world according to this view was seen as an arena of competition between the US and the Soviet Union. Movements for social change in the Third World were consistently perceived as part of the "Soviet challenge". Thus, the emergence of the "umbilical theory" of Third World revolutions which pointed to Soviet patronage as the ultimate guarantor of revolutionary movements. In this light, the Sandinistas or the FMLN of El Salvador or even the *Unidad Popular* of Chile were seen merely as surrogates or pawns of the Soviet Union.

A more sophisticated and updated version of this black and white cold warrior mentality is embodied in the Reagan-Kirkpatrick doctrine which distinguishes between "autocratic" and "totalitarian" regimes. First elaborated in her essay, "Dictatorships and Double Standards", Kirkpatrick asserts that most Third World nations fall into one or the other of these two categories since their citizens lack sufficient preparation to be "democratic". She claims that autocratic societies, at least, in theory, have the "potential to evolve into more democratic ones through the twin processes of the development of a sophisticated citizenry and the gradual release of power by the autocrat". On the other hand, in her view, totalitarian countries are incapable of ever becoming more democratic. Unfortunately, the only criterion she seems to provide for distinguishing the two types is whether or not they are friendly towards the US.

If one truly favors democracy, she argues, one must then attempt to "transform" totalitarian countries into autocratic ones. This appears to be the major theoretical basis of the Reagan administration's policy toward Latin America. There is a principle: the distinction between totalitarian and autocratic regimes. There is a moral imperative: to transform totalitarian countries into autocratic ones. She then cites the Bolivian election of 1980 which was won by a left-wing coalition, the UDP, as a case in point. She criticizes the Carter administration for not supporting the military coup which eventually followed. "Even five years ago, the US could have welcomed a coup that blocked a government with a significant communist/Castroite component. Ten years ago the US would have sponsored it, fifteen years ago we would have conducted it."<sup>5</sup> Thus the world, according to Kirkpatrick in the year she was hand-

picked by Reagan to become the US ambassador to the UN.

### THE QUEST FOR SELF-DETERMINATION

How do Central Americans interpret their part of the world? Historically, US economic, political and cultural domination has been a fact of life in the region since the turn of the century. Thus the major objective of the forces for change in Central America is the quest for self-determination. The right to choose their own paths, their own means in their own time. The right to drink from their own wells, write their own poems, and dance to the tunes they so decide. Even small countries (including that area aptly described as the American "Mediterranean") have the right, no, the duty, to choose their own social, economic and political systems, and the international relations which respond to their respective needs.

The popular forces in Central America found their roots in the revolutionary nationalist tradition of the 20th century, exemplified in the Mexico of Villa, Zapata and Cardenas. It was a political tradition anchored on the mobilization of the masses of society. It worked towards popular democracy that underscored the importance of local organizations which enabled people to participate in decisions that affected their daily lives. (It posed the question regarding the substance of democracy. The concept of democracy was enlarged. Democracy meant not merely, nor solely electoral politics which gives everyone the right to go to the ballot box every few years "even if the majority of the people find it irrelevant to exercise that right" because of illiteracy or a near-permanent state of siege.)

It is therefore instructive to note how US presidents have time and again warned of communist threats in the region. Let me quote from another address by a US president to the US congress:

I have the most conclusive evidence that arms and munitions in large quantities . . . have been shipped to the revolutionaries . . . the US cannot fail to view with deep concern any serious threat to stability and constitutional government . . . tending towards anarchy and jeopardizing American interests, especially if such a state of affairs is contributed to or brought about by outside influence or by a foreign power.<sup>6</sup>

This was President Calvin Coolidge, justifying US intervention in Nicaragua in 1927 and warning about the "outside influence" of Mexico (reminding one of the proverbs, "Pobre Mexico, tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de los Estados Unidos!"). At that time, Sandino began his resistance against the US marines in Nicaragua. Half a century later, Sandino's sons and daughters took up the unfinished cause, and put an end to a dictatorship that began with the landing of the US marines, the imposition of the National Guard, and continued with foreign support for three Somozas - Anastasio, the father, and his two sons, Luis and Tachito.

### THE REAL CONFLICT IN CENTRAL AMERICA: DIFFERENT ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROJECTS

The real conflict in Central America is the battle over different alternative political and economic projects. What intensifies this conflict is the specific character of US relations to the Caribbean Basin (the 32 countries and territories located in the Caribbean sea and the Central American isthmus). It is an extremely important region for the US, first of all for geo-political reasons. The region has played an import-

ant role in the evolution of the US imperial system and in the consolidation of the US national security state. Secondly, the region is significant because of extensive US economic interests in the Caribbean basin which totals \$21.3 billion, constituting 9% of the total US investments abroad. To explain, we have to go back to history.

It was in the Caribbean basin that the US first consolidated its informal empire, one in which it did not exercise direct territorial or colonial control yet allowed itself to extract economic and political benefits from the arrangement. The US staked out its claim to the region with enunciation of the Monroe doctrine in 1823 which articulated the principle establishing the right of the US to protect the region from outside powers. It was only after its victory in the Spanish-American-Cuban war of 1898 that its interests in the Caribbean basin developed with investments in banana and sugar plantations, public utilities and transportation facilities, laying the groundwork for the "informal empire" in the region.

Between 1900 and 1930, US presidents sent troops on 28 separate occasions into Central America and the Caribbean.<sup>7</sup> This was the era of the "big stick", the "gunboat" and "dollar" diplomacies.

In 1930, US marines landed in both Honduras and Panama where they remained for 11 years "to guard US interests". The US intervened in Cuba at least thrice. From 1906-1909, the US acted "to restore order. . .", from 1917-1922, "to protect American interests during an insurrection" and in 1933 "during a revolution". Six thousand US marines landed and occupied Veracruz, Mexico, from April to November 1914. From 1916-1924, US marines were stationed in the Dominican Republic. This was followed by the establishment of the Trujillo dictatorship from 1930-1961. From 1915-1934, US troops remained in Haiti, eventually leading to the Duvalier dictatorship from 1952 to the present.

In the post-World War II era, the following major US interventions took place:

1954: The overthrow of the constitutional government of Jacobo Arbenz who tried to expropriate the idle lands of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala took place. The lawyers for the United Fruit Company were the Dulles brothers, one of whom, Allen, was then chief of the Central Intelligence Agency, and the other, John Foster, was Secretary of State. In the first volume, "Mandate for Change, 1953-1956" of his memoirs entitled *The White House Years*, President Dwight David Eisenhower claimed US paternity for the Castillo Armas insurrection of 1954.

1961: 1,500 men trained by US military advisers took part in the Bahia de los Cochinos invasion in Cuba from 17-19 April 1961, resulting in the latter's defeat at the battle of Playa Giron in Cuba. In the same year, the US military mission directed a palace coup against a civilian-military junta of a nationalist character in El Salvador.

1964: US troops based in the Panama Canal Zone were employed against nationalist demonstrators resulting in the death of 30 Panamanians.

1965: 22,000 US marines occupied the Dominican Republic to prevent reform leader Juan Bosch from assuming the presidency.

1966: US special forces participated in the rural counter-insurgency campaign and advised security forces in Guatemala. In these operations, some 8,000 Guatemalan

peasants were killed and death squads in the cities eliminated political opposition. Amnesty International published an account in 1981 entitled, *A Government Program of Political Murder*, where it estimated that extra-judicial executions in that predominantly Indian country had reached genocidal proportions.

1970-73: The committee of 40 under the chairmanship of Henry Kissinger decided on the destabilization of Chile's *Unidad Popular* government led by the constitutionally-elected President Salvador Allende of the *Partido Socialista*. During the 11 September coup d'etat, US naval forces participating in the joint exercises code-named "Operation Unitas" were stationed outside the port of Valparaiso, two hours from Santiago de Chile. Sen. Frank Church's senate foreign relations committee extensively documented US covert operations in Chile during this period published in 1970.<sup>8</sup>

1983: Even tiny Grenada (which most people cannot pinpoint in a world map), an island slightly larger than Martha's Vineyard near Boston, with fewer than 110,000 inhabitants, became a national security threat for the US requiring an invasion of thousands of US troops reminiscent of the parable of the elephant that crushed an ant.

### NICARAGUA: THE EYE OF THE STORM

With such a history of major interventions, is it any wonder then how or why the US perspective of the region fails to understand the true nature of the problems in the Caribbean basin? As a team of American scholars suggesting a change of course for US foreign policy put it pointedly: "The revolutions in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala are rooted in poverty and political repression. In each country, the economic system has been dominated for generations by a wealthy few, securing their privilege through military repression."<sup>9</sup>

At the eye of the current storm is Nicaragua. This is where the Reagan administration publicly draws the line. It has defined a new 37th parallel, a new Maginot line of those engaged in a resurrected cold war being fought in Central America.

A week after Reagan's re-election, Reuters Washington correspondent Jeffrey Antevil, commenting on the latest US-Nicaraguan crisis wrote:

Many analysts believe that Nicaragua has now become Reagan's public enemy number one for strategic and ideological reasons. His hostility springs from two long-standing US positions — the desire to halt the spread of communism, which motivated military intervention in Vietnam, and the perception that US security is at stake in the "backyard" of Central America.<sup>10</sup> In a televised speech, the US president puts it in plain Reaganese. He accused the Sandinista regime of imposing "communist terror" on Nicaragua. "They seek to export their terror to every other country of the region," he continued. "This communist subversion poses the threat that 100 million people from Panama to the open border on our south could come under the control of pro-Soviet regimes."<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, two weeks after Reagan's re-election, the Heritage foundation, an influential conservative research group where Reagan's former national security adviser Richard Allen now works, urged his administration to take para-military action to undermine governments threatening US interests.

Top priority in the section headed "Initiatives for 1985" read: "... employ para-military assets to weaken those communist and non-communist regimes that may already be facing the early stages of insurgency within their borders and which threaten US interests."<sup>12</sup> Among the priority targets, literally at the eye of the storm, is Nicaragua.

A scene from the British Broadcasting Corporation's "Third Eye" film series on Nicaragua entitled, "The Threat of A Dangerous Example", shows a Nicaraguan peasant woman in a mixture of confusion, anger and sadness, speak out: "Why is the United States afraid of such a small country like Nicaragua?"

Historically, for the Nicaraguans the threat has always come from one direction: "el norte" or the north.

In 1909, then US Secretary of State Knox sent a note to the Nicaraguan government in which he openly stated that the US government had the right to intervene in Nicaragua's internal affairs. Liberal President Jose Santos Zelaya, who tried to open new markets in Europe was forced to resign. Not that the note was necessary, for US troops had intervened in Nicaragua in 1894, 1896, 1898 and twice in 1899, all without previous notices but simply a pro-forma postscript saying that troop landings were necessary to protect American interests during periods of political unrest. Once again "to protect US interests", US marines stayed a little longer from 1912-1925 and again from 1926-1933. This time they were engaged in armed combat by the guerilla forces of Augusto Cesar Sandino, the first to offer armed resistance to US intervention in the region. Sandino was later killed after dinner with the US ambassador Bliss Lane and the commander-in-chief of the national guard, Anastasio Somoza, on the night of 21 February 1934 after Sandino had agreed to a ceasefire upon the withdrawal of the US marines. The Somozas ruled Nicaragua after that incident for some 45 years. Not once during that period did the US call for fair elections or demand democratization, the protection of human rights and an end to Somoza's intervention in Central America. Through the CONDECA, the regional counter-insurgency force that put down popular protests in the different countries in Central America and which came to an end with the last plane out of Managua on 19 July 1979, Somoza constantly intervened in the region.

### SOMOZA'S NICARAGUA

What did Somoza leave behind? First of all, he could not take with him 20,000 square kilometers of cultivable land owned by his family and friends. Conservative estimates placed his family fortune at \$500 million. They controlled the only meat-packing plants with export licenses, half the sugar mills, two-thirds of commercial fishing, 40% of rice production, and the largest milk-processing plant. They dominated cement manufacture, owned the national steamship and the only airline company (Lanica), a newspaper, a radio station and two TV stations.<sup>13</sup>

Under Somoza, half of the population was illiterate. Infant mortality was so high that in poor neighborhoods 1/3 of all children died before age one. Life expectancy was only 50 years. Eighty percent of Managua, the capital city, had no running water and only one house in ten had a decent roof. Half was owned by less than 2% of landowners while the poorest 50% of farmers held less than 4% of the land.<sup>14</sup>

Somoza did not step down, nor did he resign; nor did he intend to die then.<sup>15</sup> It took a tragic civil war to end the dictatorship. What was the aftermath of the civil war? 50,000

dead (or, 1.5% of the population), 100,000 wounded, 40,000 children orphaned, 200,000 families homeless, 750,000 dependent on food assistance (or, more than 1/4 of the population).<sup>16</sup>

The material damage was estimated at \$1.5 billion (the total of Nicaragua's foreign debt in 1979) broken down as follows: \$500 million in physical damages, \$200 million in lost cotton exports, \$700 million in capital flight, and 25% reduction in the cattle herd.<sup>17</sup>

The economy, so to speak, was in a state of shock. It had ground to halt three times in one and a half years due to general strikes in January and September 1978, and June-July 1979.

Unemployment was 40%, inflation was 80%. It took the Sandinistas more than a year to bring down the figures to 16% and 17.5% respectively. Per capita incomes had slid back 17 years to 1962 levels.<sup>18</sup>

The foreign debt was \$1.53 billion, small by Philippine standards, but per capita-wise, high for Central America. Thirty per cent of these were short-term loans with high interest rates. And the unkindest cut of all: in the national treasury only \$3.5 million were left, equivalent to only two day's worth of imports. Somoza's final pillage involved the disappearance of \$33.2 million, the first half of the IMF credit of \$66 million awarded to Somoza on May 1979.<sup>19</sup> Deposited in the Central Bank in Managua by 1 July 1979 it was still there on 9 June when banks closed down during the "Battle of Managua". On 20 July after Somoza's flight when bank officials returned, the money had disappeared, transferred to one of Somoza's foreign bank accounts. (To show how moderate the Sandinista government's economic posture was, it agreed to repay loans granted the Somoza government during its last days, even though most of the money flowed into private bank accounts outside the country.)

In brief, in the aftermath of the victory of the Sandinista government what would have been their priorities? Certainly, to rebuild, to reconstruct, to plant and to produce, to work and till the fields, to put up homes and schools, clinics and marketplaces, cottage industries and factories, to seek emergency loans at favorable terms, to establish regional cooperation and trade agreements. That would be the sensible way to ensure the national survival of a country that had gone through so much and still had a long way to go.

### THE NICARAGUA OF THE SANDINISTAS

How could Nicaragua have the will and the resources to export revolution to other countries, or subvert the "pax americana" in the region, or provide arms for the Salvadoran FMLN (Frente Farabundo Marti de Liberacion Nacional)?

Where have the Sandinistas thrown their hearts and souls, instead?

The Sandinistas launched a literacy crusade to reduce illiteracy from 50.3% to 12%.<sup>20</sup> It tripled its expenditures for education, more than tripled the budget for health. It doubled the number of students to over a million, and initiated adult education, so that the Rev. Fr. Fernando Cardenal, Minister of Education, could say, "All of Nicaragua is a school."

It confiscated the property of Somoza and his cronies, bringing about 25% of cultivable land under government control. It nationalized banks and sought to use their re-

sources to rebuild the devastation caused by Somoza's national guard.

It encouraged workers to form unions and enforced workers' rights and the reality of a protected "social" wage. It helped organize workers in many plants into production committees and took additional steps to increase workers' participation in planning production and managing factories.

It abolished the death penalty, invited Amnesty International and the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) to study the human rights situation in the country. Both organizations accepted the invitation and have publicly published reports. Three newspapers exist in Nicaragua. And, the largest in circulation is the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*.

Christians have taken different political options in Nicaragua. While there are those who are in opposition to the Sandinistas, there are numerous Christians who either themselves are Sandinistas or work hand in hand with them. There are five Catholic priests serving as cabinet ministers in the Sandinista government, among whom are the foreign minister, the minister of education and health, the minister of culture, the ambassador to the OAS, and a member of the economic planning ministry.

Regarding Nicaragua's dependence, the Sandinistas have no illusions that they can end it immediately. They speak of diversifying their dependence. Thus, they have described their policy as walking on four legs, namely, seeking loans and assistance from the countries of Latin America, the US and Western Europe, the Arab oil exporters and the Socialist bloc. In 1982, of all aid received by Nicaragua 20% came from Socialist countries. With the current international tensions, however, Nicaragua's policy of "walking on four legs" is seen as gradually "limping on two legs". Nicaragua is indeed headed for a difficult period of austerity that may in the long term take its toll among the people, erode popular support, and have serious political consequences.

Their avowed goals are political pluralism, a mixed economy, popular participation and mobilization, national defense and non-alignment. Will these objectives be realizable in Nicaragua, given the current conjuncture? Will the dream remain so even as the fledgling Sandinista society attempts to arrive at its sixth year of reconstruction? Will their creative energies and their indomitable spirit struggle on in spite of the odds? Or, is the reality of international politics, super-power politics, obstacles far too insurmountable for Nicaragua to overcome alone?

#### UNITED STATES INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA TODAY

Let me limit my discussion of US intervention in Nicaragua today to six areas:

- economic sabotage and destabilization
- arming and support for the "contras"
- setting up of military installations and military joint exercises in the region
- the mining of Nicaraguan harbors
- the writing of CIA manuals advocating terrorist methods
- the violation of Nicaraguan airspace

1. Economic sabotage and destabilization. This devious effort was what the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda called in the case of Chile from 1970-73 the strategy of "a silent Vietnam", "una Vietnam silenciosa".

Two days after President Reagan took office in January 1981, \$75 million in aid to Nicaragua was suspended. Since then there has been a systematic withdrawal of promised US aid and other countries subtly discouraged from providing aid to Nicaragua. Nicaraguans estimate that US pressure has deprived them of \$354 million in lost trade and loans in 1983, while US pressure internationally has resulted in a loss of \$112.5 million in multilateral loans since 1980.<sup>21</sup>



In addition, anti-Sandinista para-military forces supported by the US inflicted damage on Nicaragua's productive apparatus and infrastructure amounting to \$130 million in 1982, equal to over 6% of the country's GNP.<sup>22</sup>

2. The funding, training, arming of and support for the "contras". The "contras" are mostly former members of Somoza's national guard who were initially trained in US territory and later in Honduras by CIA advisers. This effort is a violation of the Neutrality Act of the US.

From 1981 to 1984 (or, nearly the entirety of President Reagan's first term) some \$80 million has officially been given by the US government for these military operations. Strangely enough, these highly visible operations are still called a "covert war". However, Nicaraguan poets prefer calling them "una Playa Giron prolongada" in reference to the invasion of Playa Giron in Cuba two decades ago; only, this time, it is a prolonged and slow-breaking invasion.

During his campaign, defeated Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale called the US actions in Central America "an illegal war" which he pledged to end during his first hundred days in office if elected.

According to the *Washington Post*, a high-ranking rebel leader admitted that almost all the "contras" financing comes from the CIA. "The project is not viable without US aid; it is just not realistic," he said.<sup>23</sup>

As a result of this "covert war", 2,311 Nicaraguans have been killed, 1,900 wounded, and 3,720 disappeared or were kidnapped at the hands of the "contras" as of July 1984.<sup>24</sup>

3. Setting up of military installations and joint exercises in the region. The US has exerted military pressure on Nicaragua through the setting up of US bases and military installations in Honduras. They have organized joint ventures with other Central American armed forces off the coasts of Nicaragua. They have also resorted to the arming of Honduras resulting in the arms escalation in the region when scarce resources are vitally needed for food and the development of industry.

A large training base has been constructed at Puerto Castilla on the Honduran Atlantic coast. The US has also built half a dozen new military airfields in Honduras, the largest being the Palmerola air base at the cost of \$21 million. A total of \$149 million has been spent so far by the US to improve their bases in Honduras.<sup>25</sup>

A series of joint military maneuvers has been held in the region, the latest of which were the Big Pine exercises. Big Pine I took place February 1983; Big Pine II took place August 1983 to February 1984, involving 5,500 US army, navy, airforce and several thousand Honduran troops; Big Pine III began June 1984 to year's end and involved over 20,000 troops from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, and over 6,000 US troops.<sup>26</sup> At the same time US military aid to Honduras has increased over 900% in the last four years, from \$4 million in 1980 to \$37.3 million in 1983.<sup>27</sup> Honduras now boasts of the most powerful airforce in the region, while Nicaragua admittedly has virtually no airforce to speak of.

4. The mining of Nicaraguan harbors. The CIA directly supervised military action from a ship 12 miles off the Nicaraguan coast from February to April 1984 principally

resulting in the mining of the Nicaraguan harbors, Puerto Corinto and Puerto Sandino. The mines damaged some 8 ships and were laid by commandos operating speedboats launched from a spy ship manned by CIA operatives.

On 10 May 1984, the International Court of Justice, the World Court, pending its final ruling, voted unanimously that "the United States of America should immediately cease and refrain from any action restricting, blocking or endangering access to or from Nicaraguan ports, and in particular, the laying of mines".<sup>28</sup> The *New York Times* reported, "Granting Nicaragua's request for a preliminary restraining order to protect its sovereign right — 'an indication of provisional measures' in the language of international law — the court also asserted by a vote of 14-1 that Nicaragua's political independence 'should be fully respected and should not be jeopardized by any military or para-military activities'."<sup>29</sup>

As a follow-up to this legal action, the World Court, dismissing US arguments that it had no jurisdiction voted 16-0 to hear Nicaragua's complaint that the mining of its harbors and US support for anti-Sandinista rebels violated international law. It has also been argued that the US Constitution gives Congress the power to declare war, and not the President nor the CIA.<sup>30</sup> In a related move, even the Republican-controlled US Senate by a vote of 84-12 also demanded that Washington halt use of any future US funds for the mining of Nicaraguan waters.<sup>31</sup>

In Madrid, the Spanish government protested to the US embassy pointing out that the mining of Nicaraguan ports contravened the internationally-recognized principle of free trade and navigation. Traditional US allies Britain and France also condemned the US action. British Shadow Foreign Secretary Denis Healey was most blunt in a BBC interview: "This is just terrorist action . . . The whole world is on the tenterhooks in case the Arabian Gulf is closed to all traffic, while here was the American government laying mines contrary to international law."<sup>32</sup>

5. The writing of CIA manuals advocating terrorist methods. CIA manuals written for the use of the "contras" advocated terrorist methods to sabotage and bring about the downfall of the Sandinista government.

In his televised debate with Walter Mondale, President Reagan admitted CIA authorship (although he downgraded its author to a low-level contract employee of the CIA in Nicaragua) of the manual entitled, *Operaciones Sicologicas en Guerra de Guerrillas* (A Psychological Manual of Operations in Guerrilla Warfare), drafted for use of the "contras" suggesting ways in which guerrillas could "neutralize" opponents by means of selective violence and criminal elements, the creation of martyrs within their own ranks and the disruption of government activities.<sup>33</sup>

On 5 December 1984, the intelligence committee of the US House of Representatives concluded that the CIA manual for the "contras" violated a 1982 law prohibiting US efforts to overthrow the Nicaraguan government and at the same time revealed a lack of "command and control of the entire Nicaraguan covert action". As a footnote, perhaps to reveal its Republican paternity, it added that "negligence, not intent to violate the law, marked the manual's history".<sup>34</sup>

6. The violation of Nicaraguan airspace. Finally, Nica-

raguan airspace has been violated by regular spy plane flights for the electronic encirclement of the country to monitor and control communication within and outside Nicaragua. To accomplish the task, the following flights have been undertaken: US RC-135 aircraft of the USAF, Phantom A-4C, AWACS, from the 24th Composite Air Wing, Howard Air Base, Panama, and the OV-1 Mohawk planes from 224th Military Intelligence Battalion from Palmerola Air Base, Honduras.<sup>35</sup>

### PRINCIPLES FOR AN ALTERNATIVE POLICY IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND NICARAGUA

To formulate principles for an alternative policy in Central America and Nicaragua, it would be essential to incorporate the following ideas which taken together could serve as a substantive framework to ensure the protection of people's rights and to further peace in the region.

1. The principle of non-intervention. Generally accepted in the field of international relations, the principle of non-intervention is founded on the essential recognition of the equality of sovereign states. It does not matter that in comparison with the United States of America, Nicaragua's size and strength can be considered small and weak. Basic to this premise is the fact that Central America can no longer be considered merely as "the political backyard" or the adjunct of the northern power. Only in this manner can there be genuine equality among sovereign states as enunciated in Article 18 of the 1967 Charter of the Organization of American States.

2. Self-determination. The people of each nation have the right to determine the political and social systems under which they will live. Respect for self-determination in the current historical conjuncture requires that the US be open to divergent economic and political experiences as envisioned in Article 1 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights of the United Nations.

3. Collective self-defense. Founded on Article 27 of the OAS Charter, the US should pursue its policies through multilateral consultations and abide by its pledge through the OAS to collective defense efforts rather than unilateral intervention. In this context, the importance of the mediation attempts of the Contadora group of nations (Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela) must be seen.

4. Peaceful settlement of disputes. If the objective is to promote peace and democracy in the region as public pronouncements from all sides make it so, then diplomacy and mediation (especially in the hands of a recognized economic and military power) is a superior instrument than arms or military intervention. Article 19 of the OAS Charter discourages States from the use of force or coercive measures in settling conflicts.

5. Human rights and democracy. Under any political dispensation the basic values of human rights and democracy remain valid. At the same time, it is important to consider that elections do not necessarily mean or make democracy in countries dominated by a state of siege, security forces or death squads. Civil rights are undermined if basic human needs are denied to the mass of the population. There are therefore different forms of democratic mass participation peculiar to historical and cultural circumstances.

As a complement to the pursuit of these objectives, a policy of national development that substantially addresses and effectively meets the needs of the majorities in the countries of the region becomes both a moral imperative and an urgent task to ensure dignified survival.



### EPILOGUE: SOME THOUGHTS ON AMERICA

It is both ironic and tragic that somewhere through its journey in history there has been a betrayal of the original American vision. The US revolution of 1776 and the formation of the United States of America stood for a new principle in the history of nation-states: the right of a people to self-determination. The US declaration of independence states that men and women

were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. . . whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter and abolish it and to institute new government. . . when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government and to provide new guards for their future security.

An American historian, William A. Williams, in a critical work, *America Confronts a Revolutionary World*, grappled with the issues currently faced by the United States. He observed that America's quest for empire had overwhelmed

the fundamental principle which, in the first place was responsible for its emergence: the people's right to self-determination. Recalling events of the contemporary period, he wrote:

My citizen's soul is weary under the burden of my knowledge of my country dishonoring its once noble commitment to the rights of self-determination. I leave it to others. . .to retell and embellish the grisly truth about Iran and Guatemala, Indonesia and Santo Domingo, Italy and Cuba, Vietnam and Watergate. And Chile. Perhaps most of all Chile. For there we purposely destroyed a man who was dedicated to making a peaceful transition to the Future. Jefferson trembled for his country. In deep and quiet anger I weep for mine.

Our rulers are unable to disengage from even the most obvious mistakes in foreign policy with any intelligence and morality, or grace and dignity, and they continue to intervene in the affairs of most of the people with whom we share this globe.<sup>36</sup>

There is little else that one can add.

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