

Letters to The Times

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'Nicaraguan Obsession'

The Times welcomes expressions of all views from readers. Letters should be kept as brief as possible and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number, if any. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail

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Benson is correct in saying that Reagan Administration polemics against Nicaragua's Sandinistas are the kind that start wars and cost lives.

But, strictly speaking, it is not "lying" to say that American contra-supplier Eugene Hasenfus was convicted in a Sandinista "show trial" by a "kangaroo court." For these terms are really abstractions, to be garbed in whatever meaning suits the speaker and his audience. As such, they are not subject to the charge of being "lies."

And, this is precisely their value to the skilled propagandist, for it is always the abstractions that are used to dehumanize chosen enemies, and to evoke public rage and hatred against them. They serve the same purpose as the bell used by Pavlov to induce his dogs to salivate, in the absence of objective stimulation. Here, of course, the purpose is to make the subject's neck turn red.

Benson has made an important contribution by showing that we and the Nicaraguans (and yes, even the Sandinistas) have some important things in common, perhaps more than divide us. If enough Americans realize this, we may finally be able to "pressure" the Administration to honestly support peaceful alternatives to its policy in Nicaragua.

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