

NICARAGUA, TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY -- IN THAT ORDER

Chalice Unitarian Universalist Church
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I. INTRODUCTION

Thanks for inviting me. I hope that my discussion of Nicaragua's history and current situation will inspire you to support the UUSC projects that are shown in the video that will be shown after the service. Let me begin by talking a bit about Nicaragua's complex history.

II. BODY

A. Nicaragua from its birth to July 19, 1979 ¹

The two political factions that have dominated Nicaraguan life up till the present day trace their origins to a time even before Nicaragua was an independent nation.

1. Until 1821, Nica was part of Spanish colony: Captaincy General of Guatemala; fm modern Mex. Chiapas to Costa Rica. About then the Spanish Bourbon monarchs introduced liberal economic reforms which tended to free trade from crown control.

Sectors benefitting, sectors hurt by changes began to clash:

- a. Liberals included landed interests had been unrewarded by previous royal concessions; now in favor of free trade liberalism. Based in Leon.
- b. Conservatives were vested interests that had previously enjoyed crown-controlled production and export

¹ Most material on Nicaragua's pre-"triumph" history is taken from The End and the Beginning, by John A. Booth, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Texas at San Antonio. Westview Special Studies on Latin America and the Caribbean, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1982.

arrangements, no competition. Based in Grenada.

- c. Competition for influence with colonial government led to violent clashes and bitter hatreds.
2. Nicaragua becomes a nation
 - a. Mexico, including Captaincy General of Guatemala, broke with Spain in 1821. The royal referee between Liberals and Conservatives thus eliminated.
 - b. Liberals gain upper hand throughout Central America, break with conservative Mexican Empire; United Provinces of Central America on July 1, 1823: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica.
 - c. Civil war between Liberals and Conservatives breaks out almost immediately, finally destroys the federation. In 1838, now under control of Conservatives, Nicaragua separates from United Provinces.
 3. Post-independence:
 - a. The factor that would ultimately have the greatest effect on Nicaragua was the potential for a canal crossing Nicaragua from Caribbean to Pacific. Britain, France, US all showed interest, but the U.S. finally became the major factor, playing its major card much later in the game.
 4. U.S BUSINESS MESSES AROUND IN NICARAGUA
 - a. Interests of Nicaraguan political factions and U.S. capitalists converge:
 - (1) 1849: Cornelius Vanderbilt obtains concessions from Conservative government to establish a transit route across Nicaragua to transport gold-rush hopefuls. Vanderbilt makes a hefty profit, which inspires his associates, Cornelius Garrison and Charles Morgan, to

try to wrest Accessory Transit from him.

- (2) Vanderbilt foils their plot, Garrison and Nicaragua's Liberals make common cause to overthrow Conservatives. Garrison hires Tennessean William Walker (erstwhile editor of an anti-slavery journal) to lead a *filibuster* (freebooting invasion attempting to seize territory) into Nicaragua.
 - (3) 1855: After an initial setback, Walker defeats Conservatives. Exiles and executes opponents, advocates slavery and annexation to U.S.
 - (4) 1856: Conservative govts of other C.A. countries fear U.S. annexation of Nicaragua, send combined army to engage Walker.
 - (5) 1857: Through British help to Walker's opponents, Vanderbilt's machinations against his Liberal base, and his own hubris and brutality, Walker is finally defeated, escapes to U.S. under Navy protection.
 - (6) 1860: on third attempt to return to power in Nicaragua, Walker captured by British, turned over to Hondurans, executed.
 - (7) Liberals discredited, Conservatives gain power for 30 years. Nicaragua ignored by a U.S. preoccupied with Civil war, building of Transcontinental Railroad.
5. The rise of coffee production lead to major changes
- a. "Reforms" instituted to promote coffee production. Led to concentration of land ownership:
 - (1) Transformation of communally owned and farmed Indian lands to private holdings.
 - (2) Appropriation of church and subsistence farmers' lands
- Naturally, a good deal of violence attended these

"reforms."

- b. Next step: create a reliable labor supply
 - (1) debt peonage established
 - (2) use of "vagrancy laws" for forced recruitment of coffee labor.
 - (3) prohibition of growing traditional subsistence crops to force peasants onto large *latifundia*.
 - (4) work taxes owed to large landowners
 - (5) Results:
 - (a) many peasants flee to cities to escape these measures.
 - (b) 7-month rebellion by Matagalpa Indians in 1881 was suppressed by Conservative government with "extraordinary cruelty."²
6. Liberals regain and lose power:

In 1893, the Liberal Jose' Santos Zelaya wins Presidency. Zelaya is an anti-U.S. nationalist with expansionist proclivities. Zelaya's increasing power leads Conservatives to conspire against him, leading to violence and repression by Zelaya. Zelaya's control over foreign investment leads to alliances with Conservatives by foreign powers (esp. Britian)

U.S. decided to build canal through Panama because of Zelaya's intransigence. U.S. begins construction in 1904. Zelaya in turn seeks help from Germany and Japan for a competing canal.

1909: seeking to ensure monopoly over canal, U.S. joins British and

² *ibid.* p21.

Conservatives to unseat Zelaya. U.S. lands Marines "to protect U.S. lives and property," and to support Conservative rebels, led by Juan Estrada. Zelaya resigns.

7. U.S. finally gains complete control

After some turmoil U.S. engineers the presidency of Conservative Juan Estrada in August 1920. U.S. had thus achieved 3 objectives:

- a. Establish controllable govt
- b. Secure monopoly of canal
- c. guarantee U.S. business opportunities.
- d. U.S. sets up coalition government. Liberal-Conservative animosity leads to Liberal attempt to seize power. U.S. sends marines 4 Aug 1912, defeat and execute Liberal general Zeledon November 1912. His body is paraded before public, lashed to the back of a horse.
- e. With unflagging U.S. support, the Conservatives will stay in power until 1923. Confident of control, Washington reduces Marine contingent to 100 men.
 - (1) Chamorro-Bryan Treaty: "The Government of Nicaragua grants in perpetuity to the Govt of the U.S., forever free from all taxation or other public charge, the exclusive proprietary rights necessary and convenient for the construction, operation, and maintenance of an interoceanic canal."
 - (2) U.S. bankers totally dominate the Nicaraguan economy. U.S. share of imports & exports ---> 75%-80%.
 - (3) Developmental gains made under Zelaya reversed or diminished. Nica in a state of economic penury because of customs receivership caused by defaults on loans negotiated with U.S. banks by Conservative govt.

8. Changes in U.S. policy, 1923-1927.
 - a. State Department thinking and U.S. public opinion begin to converge toward favoring withdrawal of U.S. troops from Nicaragua. Economic development, rather than intervention seen to be the key to control of region.
 - b. This led to the creation of a National Guard, trained by U.S. Army. U.S. Marines leave Nica August 4, 1925.
 - c. Through intrigue, minority Conservatives acquire Presidency from its rightful Liberal heir Sacasa. Liberals then begin rebellion. Guard defends Conservative govt. Mexico allies with Liberals, recognizes Sacasa's "constitutional presidency."
 - d. U.S. aids Conservatives, fearing spread of Mexican "bolshevism." President Coolidge sends 160 Marines to Nicaragua 6 Jan 1927.
 - e. April-May 1927: U.S. mediates conflict with carrot-and-stick proposals that are accepted by the Conservative govt and all Liberal rebels except one (5 May 1927): Augusto Sandino.

9. Augusto Cesar Sandino: Born illegitimately 1895 to agricultural day laborer in debt bondage. As a child, he was with her when she aborted a child while in prison for unpaid debts to her patron. In teens S. lived with ardent Liberal father. Early adulthood worked as laborer, merchant, mechanic's helper. At 25, wounded a man in a fight, fled Nica to avoid prosecution. Became angry at U.S. blockage of Liberal (majority) rule in Nicaragua. Mentioned to friends that he was thinking of returning to Nica to take up arms. One of them scoffed that all Nicaraguans would just as soon sell out their country. This statement had a profound effect on Sandino. Sandino returned to Nica just before the 2nd Liberal uprising in Aug '26. Rejected as a nobody by Liberal general Moncada when he tried to enlist, Sandino forms his own peasant-and-miner army, fights under a red/black banner with caption "Liberty or Death." Sandino becomes a real threat to the Conservatives, his anti-American sentiments grow. Opposed to Moncada's "sellout" to U.S., he returned to mountains to continue the struggle.

On 16 July, 1927, Sandino attacked the National Guard garrison at Ocotal.

Sandino went on to fight the U.S.-trained and commanded National Guard and the supplemental 2000-man U.S. Marine force for the next six years. The combined Nicaraguan-U.S. forces could not defeat him, and U.S. public opinion grew in opposition to the U.S. troop presence and the increasing number of American casualties. To the State Department justification that the Marines were needed in Nicaragua to ensure free elections, Senator George Norris said that if the Marines could guarantee honest elections they should be sent first to Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Congress restricted funds for the occupation force in 1932, and President Hoover agreed to pull the Marines out of Nicaragua after the 1932 election there.

10. THE RISE OF SOMOZA:

Juan Bautista Sacasa won that election, appointed his nephew, Anastasio Somoza Garcia to head the National Guard when the Americans leave. The choice of Somoza was well received by the U.S., and the Marines left Nicaragua in January, 1933.

Sandino met with Sacasa on 2 Feb 1933, and together they worked out a peace plan that day: amnesty for the guerrillas, disarming of all but 100 of Sandino's troops, some land for Sandino and his followers for a cooperative farm in the Rio Coco region.

Over a year's time, even though Sandino, Sacasa, and the Nicaraguan Congress negotiated together in good faith, Somoza's National Guard continued to attack Sandino's forces in the area of their cooperative farm. Somoza had by this time gained considerable power, and ignored Sacasa at will.

23 February, 1934: Sandino, his father, and rebel leaders meet with Sacasa for the third time. After leaving the Presidential Palace their car was blocked by a National Guard vehicle, and they were arrested by a squad of armed men under direct orders from Somoza. Sandino requested a meeting with Somoza, who refused. Sandino and two of his companions were then taken to the old airport north of Managua and murdered. That same night, a Guard contingent surrounded

Sandinista's headquarters in the northern Nicaraguan town of Wiwili and massacred at least 300 of his followers, including women and children. On 6 June 1936 Somoza staged a coup against Sacasa, and through manipulation and intimidation became the new President of Nicaragua.

11. SOMOZA'S CONSOLIDATION OF POWER:

Somoza developed a network of domestic spies, insinuating the Guard into every level of Nicaraguan society. He bought guard loyalty, first by increasing its overt control over a wide range of public institutions: radio, telegraph, postal service, immigration service, customs. Second, he tolerated widespread corruption that made control of these critical sectors very rewarding. He alienated the Guard from the population, who came to hate it because of the domestic spy network. Guardsmen and their families were encouraged to live on base, and fraternize only with each other. Those considered a serious threat to Somoza's power suffered barbaric torture and death. Somoza appointed his sons, Luis Somoza Debayle, and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, to key positions in the Guard.

a. The patriarch rules

Through corruption, violence, and electoral fraud Anastasio Somoza Garcia went on to make Nicaragua his personal fiefdom. This situation persisted until he was shot by the Nicaraguan poet Rigoberto Lopez Perez on 21 Sep 56. Somoza died 29 Sep in spite of valiant efforts by top U.S. military medical specialists to save him.

b. The sons take over

Somoza's eldest son, Luis Somoza Debayle, then assumed the presidency, and Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the younger son, assumed command of the National Guard. Thousands of Nicaraguans were arrested on the slightest suspicion that they had had anything to do with the assassination, or that they might have information about it, or were simply known to oppose Somoza's rule.

Luis died of a heart attack in 1967, and Anastasio took over. He was more overtly brutal than Luis, but this caused the U.S. no problem until Jimmy Carter became U.S. President. His greed finally became his undoing. For example, he appropriated almost completely generously given international earthquake relief and distributed it among his family and friends. He thereby alienated major sectors of the business community, a factor that was to be of no little significance in his downfall.

So, Somoza became fabulously rich, even while domestic non-violent opposition, which included significant business and intellectual elements, to him grew. The violent opposition to the Somoza family project had begun in 1961:

12. THE SANDINISTAS.

As might be expected, a regime as corrupt and brutal as the Somoza dictatorship finally spawned some serious opposition, meaning opposition that was patient, willing to suffer, and prepared for a long-term effort to destroy it. Such an opposition was formed in 1961 Carlos Fonseca Amador, Tomas Borge Martinez, and Sylvio Mayorga. They called their new organization the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) in 1961, and began their activities with fewer than 20 novice guerrillas.

Over its 18-year history, the movement suffered many defeats, but pressed on with building peasant and urban bases of support, learned from their mistakes, and pulled off some spectacular military and propaganda coups:

- a. 27 December 74: FSLN guerrillas crash a party in honor of U.S. Ambassador Shelton, and attended by wealthy Nicaraguans and political elites. (Shelton has departed) They take hostages, and successfully negotiate for the release of Sandinista prisoners, \$5 million, publication of a message from the FSLN to the Nicaraguan people, and safe passage to Cuba. Somoza agreed to most of the demands, and the FSLN won a great symbolic victory.

The January 1978 murder of La Prensa editor and implacable

Somoza opponent Pedro Joaquin Chamorro galvanized popular anger against Somoza, and the FSLN capitalized on this with the second, and most spectacular single event of the insurrection--the August 22 seizure of the National Palace and the taking of some 2000 hostages. The captives included government officials, elected representatives, 20 reporters, and many of Somoza's own relatives. Again the Sandinistas won most of their demands, including \$500,000 and the release of 60 compatriots from prison.

b. FSLN IDEOLOGY

FSLN began with strong Marxist-Leninist foundation, moderated as it became stronger and needed backing of other groups. Finally committed to a mixed economy with government control over banking and foreign trade, and to a "preferential option for the poor," or, as it is also stated, to "the logic of the majority." Some major program elements:

- (1) Land reform
- (2) improved working conditions and pay.
- (3) Expanded public services: public transportation, water and power, health care, improved sanitation facilities
- (4) Abolition of torture and political assassination.
- (5) equality for women
- (6) Non-aligned foreign policy.
- (7) Mandatory, free education through high school, make education available to whole population.

13. OTHER PLAYERS OPPOSED TO SOMOZA

a. United States

- (1) Under "realpolitiker" Presidents Nixon and Ford, Somoza fared very well. Military assistance for '74-'76 went up 67% over '62-'66.
- (2) On the other hand, President Carter reduced aid to Somoza because of human rights abuses. Carter did not want to see the Sandinistas gain power, tho.

- (3) Opposition coalitions and other opposition sectors within Nicaragua
 - (a) Catholic Church
 - i) Monsignor (now Cardinal) Obando Y Bravo opposed Somoza.
 - ii) progressive orders (Maryknoll, Trappist, Capuchin, Jesuits) promoted liberation theology, an outgrowth of Vatican II in 1962, and the Latin American Bishops Conference at Medellin, Colombia in 1968. Guard immediately began "disappearing" leaders of the christian base communities.
 - (b) Protestant Church: efforts to organize earthquake relief shook them out of neutral stance, formed Evangelistic Committee for the Promotion of Assistance to Development (CEPAD), still in operation. At least 10 protestant ministers joined FSLN.
 - (c) popular political groups, from intellectuals to peasants
- (4) Other Latin American Governments
 - (a) Cuba - State Dept. & CIA said that "Cuban assistance was relatively minor in the overall arms flow to the insurgents."³
 - (b) Costa Rica - allowed Sandinistas to use its territory partly in exchange for arms shipped through the country.

³ ibid. p133.

- (c) Panama: help with arms transshipments.
- (d) Venezuela - in May '79 called for all Andean Pact members to sever ties with Somoza.

14. Somoza's end

The seizure of the national Palace on Aug 23, 1978 galvanized popular opposition to Somoza, both violent and political, to an unexpected degree. The FSLN took advantage of this popular anger to organize a general strike with the cooperation of most sectors of the society, and to coordinate armed opposition to the Guard.

Because of human rights violations involved in his self-defense, by early 1979 the regime's diplomatic isolation had grown, and the Carter administration and the Congress turned a deaf ear to Somoza's pleas for help. The final offensive took place in June-July 1979, consisting of a general strike, armed insurrection, and coordinated civil disturbances and demonstrations. On June 20, a Guard officer murdered ABC newsman Bill Stewart while the camera was rolling. This event destroyed most of what little international support for Somoza remained.

Even so, the Carter administration continued to press for a cease-fire and a government of reconciliation comprised of "all democratic sectors." This included the Guard and Somoza's political party, the PLN, but excluded the FSLN. After finally accepting the Sandinistas, Washington still tried to include the Guard and the PLN in the new government. These efforts were rejected categorically by the junta which had been formed in anticipation of Somoza's fall, and the U.S. finally gave up on retaining even a small role for Somoza in Nicaragua's future. After being informed that his end as Nicaragua's leader had come, Somoza submitted his resignation on July 16, 1979. Three days later, July 19, the victorious Sandinistas entered Managua, and the junta followed the next day.

50,000 killed in final insurrection (15,000 in June-July), 300,000 wounded.

B. TRIUMPH - Sandinista achievements, potential

1. Government structure

- a. Governing Junta of National Reconstruction: 5 members, including the current President of Nicaragua, Violetta Barrios de Chamorro. The others were:

- (1) Sergio Ramirez Mercado - Group of Twelve
- (2) Moises Hassan Morales - MPU
- (3) Alfonso Robelo Callejas, agribusinessman
- (4) Daniel Ortega Saavedra - FSLN commandante

Violetta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo would soon leave the junta in disagreement with the Sandinistas' marxist leanings and intent to dominate the direction of the reconstruction. Robelo would later co-found the southern contra group ARDE with former Sandinista hero Eden Pastora. The number in the governing junta then remained at 3.

- b. National Directorate - 9 members, each with portfolio: Interior, Agriculture, Army, etc.
- c. Council of State - representatives of different sectors (labor, business, women, ..) instead of geographic areas.
- d. Announced that elections would be held in 1985, after they had had a chance to implement their programs and establish a working model of a progressive state.

2. problems

- a. debt left by Somoza

- (1) Somoza looted the treasury, leaving only 3 million behind.
- (2) Had a large foreign debt. The Sandinistas either assumed this debt voluntarily, or were required to assume it as a requirement for receiving new loans. Either way, it was a burden.

b. poverty and destruction

- (1) according to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Somoza left behind a Nicaragua in which,:

"half the population lived in a state of absolute poverty. Absolute poverty, the product of poor distribution of wealth, has been defined as 'a condition of life so limited by malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, low life expectancy, and high infant mortality as to be below any rational definition of human decency.'" ⁴

c. tradeoffs

- (1) Needed expertise of producers, couldn't nationalize all industries and land. Thus had to compromise.
- (2) Couldn't give high wages and reconstruct at same time. E.g.: outlawed strikes at certain times.

3. achievements

a. Maintaining humanity, lack of vengefulness

- (1) no blood bath. Tomas Borge: When they tried to lynch the [Somocista] prisoners who were in the Red Cross building, I personally went to see the relatives of our martyrs ... and convinced them not to do it by saying, "So why did we make this revolution, if we are going to do the same things they used to do?" Borge later forgave the Somoza Guardsman who tortured and killed his wife.
- (2) Maximum 30 year prison term, no matter how heinous

⁴ IACHR Report on the Human Rights Situation in Nicaragua, No.7, p. 151, June 30, 1981. Cited in Report of the Amnesty International Missions to the Republic of Nicaragua, August 1979, January 1980 and August 1980, p. 43.

the crime.

- (3) Amnesty International, Americas Watch reports verify that while the Sandinistas were no Boy Scouts, their regime was a far cry from the "totalitarian dungeon" that President Reagan called it.

E.g.: Nicaragua is not mentioned in Amnesty International's 1984 report Torture in the 80s, although U.S.-client El Salvador is severely criticized.

b. Social indicators ⁵

- (1) Eliminated polio, reduced malaria from 18,418 cases in 1978 to 12,900 in 1984, and measles from 1,270 cases in 1978 to 112 in 1984.
- (2) Literacy campaign: standard wisdom is that the literacy campaign reduced illiteracy from 50% to 13%, but that surely is an embellishment of the facts. In the time that the young people had to work with illiterate peasants, they could not effectively pass along more than rudimentary reading and writing skills. Nevertheless, the program is highly significant for the imagination shown by the Sandinistas, and the dedication and commitment to helping the poor shown by large numbers of the Nicaraguan people.
- (3) reduced infant mortality from 121/1000 in 1978 to 74/1000 in 1983

c. Support of people

- (1) Landslide support in the '84 elections (67% of the vote).
- (2) Even in the '90 elections over 40% of the people

⁵ Data in this section taken from Nicaragua: What Difference Could a Revolution Make? Collins, Lappe, Allen, and Rice, Food First, 1985, p. 249

supported the Sandinistas, knowing that they would continue to be punished by Washington. Had there not been 8 years of so-called "low-intensity-warfare," there can be no rational doubt that the Sandinistas would again have been returned to power.

C. TRAGEDY - destruction of the Nicaraguan experiment by the Reagan administration.

1. Methods

a. Economic:

(1) Block international loans

(2) Embargo

(a) Most machinery, capital equipment in Nicaragua is U.S.-made. Can't get spare parts. Inability to repair/replace medical eqpt especially destructive.

(b) Administration pressured other countries not to replace embargoed U.S. goods

(c) U.S. Nicaragua's major trading partner. While the Sandinistas succeeded in persuading European nations to take up the slack, their efforts could not completely overcome the deprivation that resulted from the loss of the huge U.S. market.

b. Terror: It is becoming more difficult for me to discuss the terror that President Reagan visited on the people of Nicaragua. Amnesty International, America's Watch, and Witness for Peace are three of many human rights groups that have documented the atrocities committed by Reagan's so-called "freedom fighters." Their reports are not easy reading, unless, perhaps, you are an Oliver North or Ronald Reagan, and have perfected the art of denial.

So let me present only one example, and let it stand for all the others. Peter Kornbluh, in his book The Price of Intervention, quotes Capuchin priest Father Francis Fary's description of an

attack by the contras on his parish in September 1983:

"20 peasant (civilian) people were assassinated by the contras, including women and children. Some of them were terribly tortured first. Most of them were decapitated. After decapitating one little girl about fourteen years old, they put her head on a stake at the side of the trail, to strike terror into people."

This is what the Nicaraguan people suffered from early 1982 until Violetta Barrios de Chamorro won the Nicaraguan Presidency in 1990. This is why the people of Nicaragua voted Ortega and the Sandinistas out. President Bush had sent the messenger very clearly: Vote for Dona Violetta and the war will stop.

2. Nicaragua today

- a. Nicaragua is in bad shape. There are many factors:
 - (1) First is that the U.S. never had any real intention of helping Nicaragua rebuild after the war. The goal was simply to remove the Sandinistas and then let the business community handle things as they had always done. Nor can we afford much assistance in today's economic climate.
 - (2) Second, the Sandinistas remain a potent force in Nicaragua, both popularly and institutionally with Defense Minister and Sandinista Humberto Ortega still in control of the army. While Ortega gets high marks for being a professional in service to the elected government, his presence has caused deep divisions in the coalition headed by Chamorro. The Nicaraguan Right, comprised primarily of major business sectors, has been reluctant to cooperate, allegedly because of Chamorro's "compromise" with the Sandinistas.

This situation is one factor in Nicaragua's unsettled economic climate, which has not attracted the investment needed for redevelopment.

My own belief is that Chamorro and her advisors don't have a clue as to how to get Nicaragua economically and socially healthy.

- (3) Third, the land issue has not been resolved, and remains perhaps the single most dangerous potential fuse for a major renewal of violence in Nicaragua. In fact, all the sectors that were happy to have the contras kill members of Sandinista cooperatives would have been equally happy if, after the war was over, the contras had just faded away. Instead, the former contras are now demanding fulfillment of the promises of land and economic opportunity that were promised them by Washington and their leadership. Almost none of those promises have been fulfilled, and some of the former contras have become "re-contras," and have taken to attacking former Sandinista cooperatives as they had before. Former Sandinista militants have also regrouped as "recompas" as a counter to this development.
- (4) Fourth, as a condition for development loans to Third World governments, international lending agencies require "structural adjustment," of the government's role. This means reducing government spending as much as possible, which means elimination of public schools, public transportation, public health clinics. Nicaragua is no exception, and the infrastructure and public health is deteriorating rapidly as the government cuts back on spending so as to qualify for First World loan dollars.

III. CONCLUSION

A. What if?

1. Kudos: Int'l bankers didn't see Sandinistas as undeserving of assistance:
 - a. The Sandinistas held fast to a "preferential option for the poor,"

and to the "logic of the majority." The British-based aid agency OXFAM, which helps third world nations with their development projects, said that the Sandinistas had fulfilled their promises better than any revolutionary government in its experience.

- b. According to a confidential memo from the office of the U.S. executive director to the World Bank, "project implementation has been extraordinarily successful in Nicaragua in some sectors, better than anywhere else in the world." ⁶ Peter Kornbluh, Washington Post National Weekly Edition, Sept. 4-10, 1989, p. 23.
- c. A World Bank internal assessment of an urban reconstruction project praised the Sandinistas' "professionalism, dedication, and response" as "remarkable," and said it was "one of the most effective urban projects ever supported by the bank." ⁷

- 2. Why couldn't U.S. buy coffee, tobacco, cotton, beef from a Sandinista cooperative as well as from one of the more numerous private producers that the Sandinistas had encouraged to participate in rebuilding the country?
- 3. What if Fourth Estate had been more courageous? For example, 2 days after the Sandinista's lost the '90 election, the Los Angeles Times editorialized: "there never was much reason for the contras to exist, and now there is none."

Why did not the Times use this always-understood fact to generate blistering editorials about Reagan's dirty little war, instead of the mostly mealy-mouthed, but oh-so-"objective" pieces suggesting that the Sandinistas--because they were not perfect, and made mistakes--were equally to blame for the suffering of the people at Washington's direction.

⁶ Peter Kornbluh, Washington Post National Weekly Edition, Sept. 4-10, 1989, p. 23.

⁷ World Bank Office Memorandum, "Nicaragua: Urban Reconstruction Project/Project Completion Report," June 24, 1983, pp. 1, 16. Cited in Nicaragua, The Price of Intervention, Peter Kornbluh, IPS, 1987, p. 107

- B. A reasonable conclusion: Nicaragua would be the healthiest country in Latin America today, and a solid friend of the U.S. Of course, it is also possible that the dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala might then by now have gone the same way as Somoza, but that would be just what should be hoped for.

Finally, even though they had no intention of attacking their neighbors, the Sandinistas offered many times to negotiate non-aggression pacts with them. These offers were completely ignored by Washington, which chose instead to indulge itself in a campaign of crime and deceit that takes one's breath away when it is fully understood. I submit that this choice, rather than being just another example of "politics as usual," to be dismissed along with thousands of other less-than-honorable policies our government has implemented, instead originated in a clinical pathology.