

Nicaragua and the U.S. Neo-fascist Offensive

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*In April of the current year, media headlines pointed to a ‘revolution’ breaking out in Nicaragua against the Sandinista Front government headed by **Commander Daniel Ortega**. Until then, and for 11 years, the government of that country, legitimately chosen in elections supervised by regional organizations, had carried out wide-ranging programs for reducing residual poverty, poor health, and illiteracy and also implemented many social programs that benefited rural and urban populations. Highways, roads, aqueducts, and an expansive electrical system were constructed. A solid social front, with the participation of unions, private companies, and the state, managed the economic and political interrelations among such programs. Benefits for the poor and marginalized sectors of the country were prioritized.*

A police force and army (both formed in the liberation war against the empire) have together provided security for citizens and have systematically combated drug trafficking and gangs in the region. The security they offer doesn’t exist in any other country in the area nor probably in other regions of the continent.

Highlights of these years of the Sandinista government include diversity of political and religious tendencies and freedom of speech and assembly as evidenced by the country’s numerous television, radio and newspaper media outlets. All political currents receiving votes are represented in the National Assembly. Over that time they’ve contributed to the balance that is necessary for achieving sustained economic development. That shows up now with a GDP growing at a four percent annual rate.

Nicaragua’s original sin was to have achieved a Revolution and then to have defended it vigorously. The United States and local reactionaries wouldn’t ever forget that. At the end of the last century a dramatic and terrible war devastated that country, one with only 3.5 million inhabitants at that time. The cost was 55,000 deaths, tens of thousands of wounded, and destruction of the country’s socio-economic infrastructure. Then three liberal governments ruined the economy and stole even the keys. The FSLN won the elections of 2006 and Daniel became president. The counterrevolutionaries backed off, but remained in their hideouts waiting for whatever opportunity.

The empire for its part was working away in secret. For several years the CIA and its “legal” arm, the International Agency for Development (USAID), were training cadres and organizing groups inside the various dissident sectors in Nicaraguan society. The object was to attack, discredit and defeat the Sandinista government. They were working through organizations like National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Freedom House, Heritage Foundation, and the Albert Einstein Institute. They wanted to show the world and particularly our America that being revolutionary is a venal sin. Similarly, acting on behalf of masses of people is a crime against humanity.

In April the Nicaraguan government, facing demands from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) joined with private companies and labor unions to negotiate reforms to society security. The IMF was proposing to raise the retirement age in a population whose life expectancy hardly reached 70 years. The FMI also wanted to increase contributions from workers and employers, drastically reduce pensions for retired people, and eliminate social programs.

Negotiation led by the government and with the participation of private enterprise and unions was difficult, so much so that Nicaragua received a lot of help from international organizations. But still there was a real threat. Finally, thanks to skillful negotiation, the government and IMF agreed not to change the retirement age and to adjust contributions to social security. So workers would have to contribute 7 percent of their wages to social security, up from the current 6.25 percent. Businesses would contribute 22.5 percent, up from 19 percent. And retired people would lose five percent of their pensions to cover medical expenses. The government would compensate them by providing monetary bonds for their benefit.

A little afterwards, after a decree on this had been released, disturbances broke out. They were concentrated at first in universities and teaching centers, many of them private ones where subversives were waiting. On realizing how things were going, the government annulled the decree and expressed willingness to negotiate an alternative agreement inasmuch as the earlier one had been imposed through FMI pressure on the negotiations. Nicaragua receives important financing from international organizations having to do with electricity, water, health care, education etc. The country could have lost all this inasmuch as the FMI exerts a decisive influence over those entities.

It was at that point that disturbances broke out. The CIA and its acolytes from the USAID were prepared. With help from counterrevolutionaries and encouraged by the media, and with skillful manipulation by social networks, the rioting extended rapidly across the country like an epidemic. The police reacted to the circumstances according to their mission. The initial confrontations worsened once homemade weapons and conventional ones showed up in the rioters' hands. As if following a master-plan, they began to install "blockages" across highways and other access roads throughout the country in order to bring down its economy.

Strangely, the opposition's demands were never about immediately taking power away from the established authorities, but instead were about refusing to wait until 2019 to hold presidential elections. That requires some thinking: an observer might ask, "Why would that be?" There's only one reason: the counterrevolution wasn't prepared to take power. Moreover, those involved wanted to wear down government authorities and discredit them. They lacked program, cohesion, and leaders capable of governing.

At that point the government appealed to the Catholic Church to mediate as "guarantor and witness" on the assumption that its leaders would be acting in good faith. The first meeting with the participation of Daniel and his colleagues was on May 23. It turned into a media show assembled under the complicit eye of the Church hierarchy. Strange young people, dour businessmen, and renegades from way back fell upon the government delegation in a monumental provocation. President Daniel had to endure insults of all kinds. But with his well known presence of mind he rode out the storm and made sure in the following days that the negotiations wouldn't fail. The government's proposal that the barriers be taken

down, which was essential for replenishing supplies, was accepted. And likewise the opposition's demand for the police to be withdrawn in all localities was agreed to. The police forces had been accused of abuses, which, by the way, was a claim quite unprecedented and unheard-of.

The government went along with such a demand in an attempt to avoid confrontation. Also it was confident that the Church with its supposed moral authority together with its allies would react positively. They were thinking that Church authorities also desired a peaceful resolution of the manufactured conflict, which was something that didn't happen. Confrontations escalated just as the counterrevolutionary "general staff" had expected.

Let us imagine for a moment what it means to take away the police in whatever city in the midst of overflowing passions stimulated by all the media and social networks. Confrontations mushroomed and multiplied. Gangs working for the opposition and for their own interests inserted themselves in the streets and at the barricades. The outcome was predictable. Victims accumulated on both sides, either murdered or wounded.

There were killings of militants and police, attacks on public buildings and government or Sandinista radio stations, dances of death by hot-heads on top of the "trees of life," (1) men burned alive with their pleas being "uploaded" to social networks, and finally a society in chaos. All the while, "opposition" agitators howled for help, playing the part of victims. With rifles in their hands and shooting right and left, they invoked the OAS, the United Nations, the "Lima Group," and all the international organizations. Raising their "cry to heaven," they expressed outrage and demanded punishment for Nicaraguan leaders. Today, of course, they look on with indifference at the humanitarian crisis associated with the exodus of Hondurans pursuing the "American Dream."

The atmosphere around their barricades was that of the 1980s war. Money fell into already overfilled hands for the buying of mercenaries and for killing and kidnapping police, or Sandinistas, or anyone looking suspicious. I don't remember having seen or lived through such dramatic circumstances within the heart of a noble, friendly, warm, cordial people.

Once the authorities realized the Church was no neutral party, no guarantor of anything, and realized too that several churches were now counterrevolutionary headquarters and that the opposition was working toward a soft coup against the state, they reacted. They took back the streets and imposed order, arresting the main leaders and the terrorists. These were turned over to the courts. This was all done within the existing legal framework and without the army having to leave its barracks.

Slowly the streets returned to normal, and in massive demonstrations Sandinista supporters backed their government and its leaders.

The Civic Alliance for Justice and Democracy emerged out of the roar of confrontation and smoke from gunfire. It was composed of the main opposition groups and headed by the Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and leaders of the Catholic Church. Little groups formed in its wake at the last moment, among them the April 19 Movement, the anti [inter-oceanic] canal activists, and others. What was astonishing was that for the first time in the history of humanity, rich people and their bishops claimed to be leading a "people's revolution." What a paradox!

Having carefully investigated these events, North American journalist Max Blumenthal had

this to say about U.S. interventions:

“Since the unrest began, the NED (National Endowment for Democracy) has taken measures to conceal the names of the groups it funds in Nicaragua on the grounds that they could face reprisals from the government. But the main recipients of backing from Washington were already well known in the country.

“Hagamos Democracia, or Let’s Make Democracy, is the largest recipient of NED funding, reaping over \$525,000 in grants since 2014. The group’s president, Luciano Garcia, who oversees a network of reporters and activists, has declared that Ortega has turned Nicaragua into a ‘failed state’ and demanded his immediate resignation.

“The Managua-based Institute for Strategic Studies and Public Policy (IEEPP) has received at least \$260,000 from the NED since 2014. The grants have been earmarked to support the IEEPP’s work in training activists on ‘encouraging debate and generating information on security and violence.’ The funding has also covered efforts to monitor the ‘increased presence of Russia and China in the region,’ an obvious priority for Washington.

“As soon as the violent protests against Ortega were ignited, IEEPP director Felix Mariadiaga brought his agenda out into the open. A former World Economic Forum Young Global Leader educated at Yale and Harvard, Mariadaga was hailed by La Prensa for having “sweated, bled and cried alongside the young students who have led the protests in Nicaragua that continue from April until the end of May.”

“Asked by La Prensa if there was any way out of the violence without regime change, Mariadaga was blunt: ‘I can not imagine a way out at this moment that does not include a transition to democracy without Daniel Ortega.’”

In the wake of their failures, the opposition and its operatives created a new organization, “Blue and White for National Unity.” The name perhaps honors the unity the CIA created in the 1980s with UNO (The National Opposition Union), which was the organization opposing Sandinistas in that era. This time they are claiming to unite all opposition groups in forming a rear guard for the Civic Alliance. But in view of the latter’s class composition and its “revolutionary” plans, some discomfort is very likely.

This history looks a lot like the soft corps orchestrated by the CIA, NED, and their associates in Eastern European countries after the Soviet collapse. Organizations with similar slogans and operating under cover brought down governments in that region. But this still unresolved episode in Nicaragua will be different. Nicaraguans are a combative people with traditions of struggle. They don’t allow themselves to be easily fooled and they did overthrow one of the continent’s oldest dictatorships. They are armed with the thinking and examples of Augusto C. Sandino and Carlos Fonseca.

As an epilogue for these lines, we’ll use testimony from an adversary of the Sandinistas who reveals what goes on inside the coup-plotting groups.

“I am from the San Juan district in Jinotepe municipality and am a student of FAREM [University] in Carazo. Along with several friends and comrades I joined the protests of April 19 in Jinotepe. These protests were against the reforms to social security that the Sandinista Government was carrying out. They affect us and all other Nicaraguans [...] All the time on social networks, we were making up attacks by the police, by the Sandinista Youth group, even saying that they

kidnapped us students in order to have us issue a repudiation and express hatred toward people in the government. We too wanted to build support and backing from the population. At the same time we said we wouldn't continue with this campaign of lies and that we would publicize our own struggle, but they kept on with the lies [...]

"The hiring of gangs from the barrios generated much controversy. Many of us were opposed. We did so because they let the gangs watch over the barricades at night. That led to robberies and kidnappings like the seizing of the two transit police. But what certainly bothered us the most was to know that there were people who were financing the pay for these gangs. Where did that money come from? [...] Their entering San Jose Colegio (St. Joseph's College) was the tipping point. When the sisters handed over the College supposedly for protection from attacks, no one foresaw the disaster this would become.

"Their action allowed for more bums and more thugs to come in and that led to more violence. We also criticized all that and declared that this wasn't the objective when we began on April 19. [...] It was regrettable to see how drugs and alcohol were circulating at night at San Jose and regrettable too to observe the stealing amongst ourselves, and fights with real punching over a drink, over an order, or for anything else.

"Today I decided to make this public denunciation for a simple reason [...] It pains me to see the harm they brought to Jinotepe, to see how they beat up our friends just because they thought differently, to see how they gave drugs to kids, to see how they plundered government institutions that attend to our own people, to see dead people in the streets of our Jinotepe [...] When was this going to end? In my own memory I don't recall seeing people with AK47s and every kind of weapon and saying they want to kill a police officer.

"I ask for pardon and am repenting, and I know that God will bring more calm to Jinotepe and to Nicaragua - the calm that we all had and that a few of them had snatched away from us."

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*Translated by **W. T. Whitney Jr.***

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Note

1. The "Trees of Life" are "enormous metallic structures" that celebrate the Sandinista movement. Constructed by the current government, they are located in public spaces in Managua. Opposition protestors targeted them beginning in April, 2018.

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