

Nicaragua: Telling the Truth as a Revolutionary Act

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Region: [Latin America & Caribbean, USA](#)

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*“The (soft coup) effort (June 2018) to topple the democratically-elected government of Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega was originally led by students trained by US-funded “democracy promotion” programs (USAID). US-funded nongovernmental organizations, the Sandinista Renovation Movement political party, the Catholic Church hierarchy, and, as time passed, Salvadoran gang members and international drug cartels.” — **Chuck Kaufman**, National Co-Coordinator, Alliance for Global Justice*

*“Nicaragua is perhaps among the clearest cases of rampant US imperialism producing sustained anti-imperialist movements, in a pattern that has repeated itself since even before the US mercenary William Walker invaded that country to set up a slave state and declare himself president in 1856. The United States’ financial and industrial interests, backed by US military forces, have sought to maintain control over key Nicaraguan resources, infrastructure and a potential interoceanic canal route¹ ever since.” — **S. Brian Willson and Nils McCune***

*“In 2018, US President Donald Trump declared Nicaragua to be an “extraordinary threat” to national security, and US National Security Advisor John Bolton described Nicaragua, Cuba and Venezuela as a “Troika of Tyranny” that would soon fall with support from the Trump Administration, at the same time as he lauded the election of “like minded leaders,” Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Ivan Duque in Colombia.” - **S. Brian Willson and Nils McCune***

*“The geopolitical hegemony of the United Fruit Company was reinforced by the US Marines, which were deployed in Central America and the Caribbean to defend the interests of the corporation dozens of times between 1901 and 1934.” - **S. Brian Willson and Nils McCune***

*“The US government has applied economic, financial and commercial sanctions against Nicaragua through the infamous NICA Act, with the intention (just as in past experiences in Chile, Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua) to “make the economy scream,” as Henry Kissinger put it.” — **Gabriela Luna***

*“Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State, has blatantly said that the objective of the US is to destabilize and change government in Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, countries considered by Donald Trump to be an “axis of evil” in the hemisphere.” — **Gabriela Luna***

*“(Nicaraguan) elites have always misjudged the working class’ ability to differentiate between the insufficiencies of the Sandinista political and social project, on one hand, and the grand lies used by US imperialism...” — **Gabriela Luna***

The geographical position, extraction of natural resources, exploitation of cheap labor and possibility of building an inter-oceanic canal have been the axes of imperialist interest in Central America.

This has bathed the region's history in blood and resistance, which is why the desperate migrant caravan from the northern triangle of the isthmus is in fact the offspring of U.S. imperialism.

In Nicaragua, the electoral defeat of the Sandinista Front in 1990 brought about the dismantling of the social achievements of the people's revolution and produced profound transformations in the nation's economic, political and social structure, as a result of the application of several neoliberal packages that implied the privatization of major sectors of the economy and a broad reduction in public spending.

This caused a drastic decrease in the quality of life and a 46-point reduction in the Human Development Index, as well as job insecurity, unemployment, peasant exodus, outsourcing and informalization of the economy and a dramatic increase in poverty, social inequality and violence.

The outlook up to 2007 was devastating because the destruction caused by the wars of liberation was compounded by this social catastrophe. Since 2007, hope and life have been redefined with the return of the Sandinista Front to government.

The absolute number of undernourished people in the country has been reduced by half, access to free education and health care has been guaranteed to rural communities, maternal mortality has been reduced by 60% and infant mortality by 52%, while access to electricity has been increased from 54% to 96% of the population.

Nicaragua is the safest country in Central America and is in sixth place globally for women's participation in public and civic spaces. Life in the countryside has recovered dignity, thanks to a policy that prioritizes and values the family economy, making it possible to reduce food imports and become 100% self-sufficient in beans, corn, eggs, milk, fruits, onions, peppers, tomatoes and beef.

These social advances have not been free of contradictions—such as alliances with the private sector and the Catholic Church that lasted until April 2018, when these traditional opponents of the Sandinista struggle began a violent coup attempt.

Above all, the new Sandinista model can be fairly accused of not finding a radical path towards the construction of an alternative model to capitalism and not forming new human beings and a new society capable of overcoming the systemic crisis of capital.

The coup attempt took place in an international context where right-wing extremism and fascism have been consolidated in Latin America. In Brazil, former president Lula was imprisoned to prevent him from running for president, while fascist president Jair Bolsonaro has met openly with the CIA.

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The attempted coup was intended to eradicate not only the Sandinista Front from political power in Nicaragua but also to tear Sandinismo from the heart and historical memory of the people. The practices of desecrating and burning historical sites of the Sandinista Front, of stripping, beating, torturing, kidnapping and publicly murdering Sandinistas, or publicly burning people, is not new in the history of Nicaragua or Central America. These practices stem from the Spanish conquest that publicly tortured indigenous rebels.

They were then applied by U.S. soldiers in military interventions, by the Somoza dictatorship, and were part of the US' counter-insurgency handbook, applied during more than 30 years in Guatemala and El Salvador to stop the advances of peoples' revolutions in these countries.

The CIA's Contra armies applied these practices in peasant communities during the 1980s. The objective of these practices has always been to create terror in the population and to incapacitate resistance.

In 2018, rank-and-file Sandinistas were morally impacted by the images of terrorist violence, such as when Francisco Arauz Pineda, a hero of the guerrilla struggle and son of legendary peasant leader Amada Pineda Montenegro, one of the "Women of Cua" gang-raped by Somoza's National Guard, was publicly burned with a Sandinista flag on his body on June 16th, 2018.

Nicaraguans panicked and sobbed in their homes. In the street no one looked one another in the eyes, and confusion reigned. The objective of psychological warfare is for panic to triumph.

The opposition's death roadblocks were mostly manned by socially-excluded poor people who were paid to create chaos and pain. They were politically supported by young upper middle-class university students, who, from the comfort of their homes in gated communities, misunderstood the reality of the roadblocks, and who consumed the mainstream media's version of the crisis.

These media outlets are dominated nationally by the oligarchy. US-owned social media companies provided platforms for a strategy that activated hundreds of young people previously trained by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to create a dominant narrative. The coup's media blitzkrieg used the advertising pages of Facebook to spread lies, foment hatred and encourage violence—accusing the Sandinistas of the violence against Sandinistas.

Everything that smelled of Sandinista thinking was demonized, in an attempt to alter the "common sense" of the Nicaraguan people, especially the youth.

The first sector to break the psychological and horror siege was the moral reserve of the Sandinista Front: its historic rank-and-file membership. Elders began to reorganize, to communicate, to clarify what was happening, to create study circles explaining Gene Sharp's script for regime change in the heat of the moment. Sandinista elders came to teach, and to channel their organizational and moral strength. In the face of systematic violence against Sandinista families, the only option was local organizing for the protection of families, neighborhoods, towns and cities. Barricades were formed in the neighborhoods and public institutions to prevent arson attacks and assassinations.

These defense barricades, set up over weeks in the cities, towns and neighborhoods of Nicaragua, were made up of members of the Sandinista Front from various generations. They included great-grandparents who had participated in the formation of the FSLN and fought against Somoza, grandparents who fought against the counterrevolution in the 1980s, fathers and mothers who fought in the 1990s “from below” in the defense of the revolution’s social achievements, as well as many anonymous heroes.

This conglomerate had a bit of everything: young people, old people, street vendors, market vendors, the unemployed, retired people, public workers, housewives, ex-military workers, but with one common denominator: these barricades were made up of Nicaragua’s workers. In practice, everyone learned from everyone, and natural leaders emerged from the heart of the neighborhoods who often were not part of any of the official structures of the Sandinista Front.

The lack of sleep, the danger, the constant tension, the sharing of coffee and cigarettes, created the precipitous conditions for intergenerational dialogue. This was political education in practice: young people learned what it means to be a Sandinista, the principles and values of the 1970s Sandinistas, and the historical burden behind their actions.

These young people respected and valued the bravery and knowledge of the old guard, while elders respected the strengths of the young people and their understanding of the impact of social media.

Since the highways were shut down by rightwing roadblocks, Sandinistas across the country organized themselves to distribute locally sourced food. The elites in Nicaragua have long believed that the people are ignorant, or “naive” as the oligarchy’s newspaper, La Prensa, puts it.

The elites have always misjudged the working class’ ability to differentiate between the insufficiencies of the Sandinista political and social project, on one hand, and the grand lies used by US imperialism in Nicaragua, on the other hand. They assumed that if denied their ability to live normally and safely, Nicaraguans would demand a new government.

The plan backfired, and the Sandinista Front mobilized more people in the street from April to September of 2018 than in any other period in its history.

During this period, Nicaraguans saw themselves in a new light and were forced to reckon with the strengths and weaknesses of the political process, of living in a capitalist country with a socialist government, under the shadow of the United States.

Above all, those three months of resistance clearly demonstrated the immense courage of the people of Nicaragua, especially those without land, without a car, the workers from the inner-city neighborhoods. History again demonstrated the Nicaraguan people’s capacity for resistance and survival, dignity and strength.

It was the people’s wisdom that defeated the coup. ...

This marvelous little book was put together in the months after Nicaraguan reality exploded on April 18th, 2018. Its authors and editors are mostly international solidarity activists, journalists and researchers who live in Nicaragua and were witnesses to the violent attempt to force out the democratically elected Nicaraguan government. The organization of the book is meant to allow English-speaking readers, educators, journalists and truth-seekers to

independently study the events of 2018 from a number of different angles—human rights, media, economy, religion and geopolitics.

This means that while *Live from Nicaragua* is best read as an organic whole, each individual chapter can stand alone and be used for educational purposes.

While the number of human victims of the ongoing regime change attempt in Nicaragua is many fewer than the Contra War, in a sense the Big Lie is even larger than during the 1980s.

Many people in the United States and Europe have believed most of the propaganda put out by the coup attempt's media machine.

This has made it more difficult than ever to show solidarity with Nicaraguans—not the wealthy, self-exiled Nicaraguans who have been interviewed on CNN and BBC, but ordinary, vulnerable Nicaraguans who want to live and work in peace.

The solidarity workers of the 1980s were critically important in resisting Reagan's war against the Sandinista Revolution.

In Trump's war against Latin American progressive movements and governments, who will be the resistance?

Live from Nicaragua is the kind of accessible, rigorously researched, politically relevant, and timely reader that is needed in order to understand the kind of "fourth generation" conflicts that have been imported from Eastern Europe and the Middle East regions to Latin America in the last few years.

As Western powers increasingly apply the regime change script, it is up to people across the globe to rebuild solidarity movements and learn the truth about how imperialist strategies attempt to destroy social fabrics and weaponize confusion.

The US government has applied economic, financial and commercial sanctions against Nicaragua through the infamous NICA Act, with the intention (just as in past experiences in Chile, Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua) to "make the economy scream," as Henry Kissinger put it.

Meanwhile, USAID has promised millions more dollars for Nicaragua's right-wing opposition to wage irregular conflict against the constitutional order. While the struggle for Nicaraguan independence and sovereignty is far from over, the fact that the Nicaraguan people resisted the colossus in 2018 should be a source of strength and hope for people across the planet. If Nicaragua can, you can too.

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