

Will U.S. force Nicaragua to radicalize?

The question of whether Nicaragua "radicalizes," becomes a "second Cuba" in the Western Hemisphere, has dominated U.S.—and international—media and government thinking since the end of the civil war July 19th that ousted dictator Anastasio Somoza. Incalculable media space and time has been devoted to seeking out and "analyzing" supposed "factional" divisions within the new government, generating red-scare stories of "Cuban involvement," and speculating about the future "alignment" of the new Government of National Reconstruction.

Will Nicaragua radicalize? The answer to that question lies largely in United States foreign policy toward the new regime. What can be said with certainty now is that, if the Carter Administration has anything to say about it, yes, Nicaragua will "radicalize."

Despite all the administration's protestations of concern over the direction Nicaragua takes, U.S. foreign policy is in fact designed to force radicalization of the political process, by withholding the foreign aid Nicaragua desperately needs not only to rebuild a war-shattered nation, but to guarantee the daily survival of up to one half of the Nicaraguan population, dependent on foreign food aid.

Washington, which only reluctantly withdrew support from the Somoza dynasty installed by U.S. marines in 1934, is now trying to starve the new Nicaraguan government into accepting International Monetary Fund economic, and U.S. political, "conditionalities." From the Administration's viewpoint, either Nicaragua crawls to the IMF for emergency aid, which the Fund is withholding pending acceptance of an "austerity" program, or the new regime is compelled to turn to the socialist bloc in order to survive, justifying an open U.S. political or military confrontation.

Nicaragua's Government of National Reconstruction has publicly repeated its desire for good relations with the United States, based on U.S. respect for Nicaragua's national sovereignty, and has called on America to play a major role in the \$3 billion task of reconstructing a democratic Nicaraguan republic. But the junta has sharply criticized the U.S. failure to provide substantive economic and material aid without political strings attached. Junta member Alfonso Robelo, an industrialist who represents Nicaragua's business community, stated in an Aug. 4 press conference that U.S. "aid exists, but it is not nearly what they offered and bears no relation to the size of their country. ... I would like to think that this is not [political] pressure," he said, "but with each passing moment, it seems that this is the objective."

Robelo pointed out that the U.S. aid following the earthquake of 1972 was "massive and now has been much less."

The government more recently assailed what it called an "hysterical and malicious" campaign against Nicaragua in the U.S. and in the neighboring Central American dictatorships of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. The purpose of the campaign—marked by allegations of "human rights violations" against captured Somocista National Guardsmen—is to block the international aid Nicaragua needs to survive and rebuild, said junta leader Sergio Ramirez. The campaign is not only "harmful for Nicaragua and unjustified," Ramirez stated, but "turns against the very interests of those who generate it, since the best way to radicalize the revolution is to continue that campaign and keep aid from arriving to the Nicaraguan people, who need it so desperately." Ramirez, whom U.S. media like to portray as one of the leading "moderates" in the junta, warned Aug. 9 that "if the United States isolates us, through incomprehension of the Nicaraguan revolution, it will only have succeeded in provoking what it most fears: the radicalization of the process."

Deliberate policy

The only conclusion one can draw from Washington's aid policy toward Nicaragua is that, in fact, Washington policymakers are *trying* to provoke radicalization of the political process. Against what Nicaragua needs in the immediate term—and what the U.S. is capable of providing—U.S. aid has been negligible. A baseline of 300 tons of food is needed daily to prevent starvation of up to a million refugees. Washington claims to be sending 150 tons a day, but Nicaraguan officials report that food shipments have dropped drastically to the level of 60, or even 20, tons a day.

Total U.S. emergency food aid was projected at only \$9 million in the long-range, according to U.S. Ambassador to Nicaragua Lawrence Pezzullo. Pezzullo said \$35 million in loans, previously earmarked for the Somoza regime, would be activated at some future time. Discussion of longer-term general reconstruction aid will not even begin until the October fiscal year opens, and then action could be delayed indefinitely by the still-powerful "Somoza Lobby" on Capitol Hill. The State Department claims no knowledge of the creation of a Fund for International Cooperation, under the Latin American Monetary System, through which Nicaragua has asked that \$2.5 billion in reconstruction

'All must send aid'—Fidel Castro

On July 26, the anniversary of the Cuban revolution, a delegation from the Government of National Reconstruction arrived in Havana, little more than a week after the success of their own revolution in Nicaragua. Here are excerpts from the speech given by Fidel Castro on the topic of the Nicaraguan revolution.

... They (the Sandinistas—ed.) don't harbor prejudices because they aren't afraid that the Nicaraguan Revolution will be mistaken for the Cuban Revolution; they're beyond such prejudices. And therefore on no account are they going to say that the two revolutions are exactly the same. They are two profound revolutions, in many ways similar and in many ways different, as all real revolutions must be.

This is important for our people, and important as well for world opinion. Every country has its way, its own problems, its own style, its methods, and its goals. ... We did it one way, our way; they will do it in their way....

The Nicaraguans have given a magnificent reply to the statements and fears expressed by some people with concerns whether Nicaragua is going to become a new Cuba: No! Nicaragua is going to become a new Nicaragua! That's a very different thing....

We hope that imperialist adventures of invasion and support for counterrevolution will not be repeated against Nicaragua. Of course, we can't have illusions. We are not going to believe that the reaction is going to leave the Nicaraguan revolution in peace, despite the revolution's magnanimity, its

openness, its democratic goals.

They have said: 'if an election is needed, let's have an election!' Any election that takes place in Nicaragua will be won by a wide majority by the Sandinistas regardless of the resources that the reactionary groups can bring to bear....

Even the United States has expressed a willingness to send food and to facilitate different kinds of aid. It makes us happy ... They said they will establish an airlift (to Nicaragua) and send 300 tons of food a day. This sounds good to us....

... a U.S. intervention into Nicaragua would have been a really suicidal act for United States policy in the hemisphere, because we don't have the slightest doubt that the Sandinistas would have continued fighting even though it provoked a Yankee invasion. ... And not only that, but a gigantic Vietnam could have developed throughout Central America and the rest of Latin America, a gigantic Vietnam....

I repeat. It makes us happy that the United States and everyone else are helping. What's more, we would like to begin a friendly competition with the United States, a contest to see who can do more for Nicaragua. We invite the United States, all of the countries of Latin America, Europe, the Third World, and our brothers of the socialist countries to compete in aiding Nicaragua. This is our position for carrying out a really human, really constructive effort in this spirit. ...

aid from Western nations, OPEC countries, and the socialist sector be channeled.

Washington is coordinating its aid blackmail policy with and through its allies in Latin America, primarily the Venezuelan government of president Luis Herrera Campins. Oil-rich Venezuela granted Nicaragua a \$20 million short-term credit—repayable in six months at 10.5 percent interest—on condition that the Nicaraguan government appoint "Social Christians" to ministries and public posts as "insurance" that Nicaragua follows a "moderate" course. This "conditionality" was denounced publicly by Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge, who stated emphatically that "we are ready to die of hunger before accepting conditions from anybody ... Revolutions are not made in jest."

While the Government of National Reconstruction has been extremely careful to keep negotiations open with all parties, including the IMF, and has assured Washington that it has no intent to "align" with the

Soviet Union, it has stated with insistence that it will not accept any conditions on aid which would betray the development goals of the revolution.

What does Washington want?

Why would Washington, which proclaims concern for Nicaragua's democratic future, knowingly provoke radicalization of the regime? What does the U.S. have to gain? "Radicalization" of Nicaragua would not only provide the justification for U.S. political—or military—intervention to destroy the new government, but would provoke a strategic confrontation with Cuba, and the Soviet Union, in the Western Hemisphere—a showdown which Washington believes it can "win." U.S. policymakers do not believe their own red-scare rhetoric, but are more concerned about the "model" Nicaragua represents as a challenge to the rule of IMF austerity.

—Mary Goldstein