

munity to provide urgently needed credit. The GRN's terms are generous: according to reliable sources, between a third and a half of the staggering \$1.3 billion debt Somoza left stems from arms purchases that wreaked almost incalculable destruction.

However, the junta is making it clear that its right to develop will not be compromised by financial pressure. At a press conference July 25, junta member Alfonso Robelo stated, "The foreign debt will be renegotiated on terms and conditions most favorable to the national interest, and its repayment will be strictly tied to the process of economic recovery and the gradual restoration of the economy's capacity."

The reconstruction process is beginning from almost ground zero. Not only has the Nicaraguan economy been warped from decades of IMF-style austerity, aggravated by awesome losses and destruction perpetrated by the National Guard during the civil war, but on top of this, Somoza took with him every hard national asset that wasn't bolted down. And what he couldn't take with him he either sabotaged or mortgaged [see below]. When the new junta took over and examined Somoza's books, it found that almost every fixed Somoza asset had been mortgaged for hard cash, which quickly left the country. The nationalization of the private banks last week was received with relief by many businessmen, since it was discovered that the banks' liabilities exceeded their assets severalfold in many cases. Somoza also cleaned out the treasury, leaving less than \$5 million in foreign reserves.

According to the GRN, reconstruction will require international financial aid totaling \$3 billion over two years. So far, pitifully little of this has come through. Mexico and Cuba, as expected, have led in aid to the rebuilding process, whereas the United States and Western Europe—the economies which could help the most—have contributed almost nothing. Mexico is sending twice the number of supply airlifts the U.S. is, and tens of Mexican doctors, architects, urbanologists and other professionals are already aiding Nicaragua. Cuba has sent 60 doctors and Fidel Castro has personally pledged another 500. Further, Cuban education minister Arela de Santos announced that Cuba is willing to make the full experience of its successful 1961 literacy campaign available to Nicaragua, including "all the teachers Nicaragua could need."

Despite the trickle of international aid, the junta has already taken remarkable strides to reorganize the economy, particularly in agriculture, where the focus is on the use of the most advanced technology possible to generate maximum surplus. The immediate goal, according to Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock, is to feed an estimated one million citizens now victims of severe food shortages. The 800,000 hectares of Somoza's holdings—equivalent to about half of the country's arable land—were immediately expropriated by the government. Instead of dividing up the land into un-

productive small units, the junta has announced that both large-scale cooperatives and state businesses will be introduced. Wheelock emphasized this week that the modern agro-industries salvaged from the Somoza era will be preserved as high-technology state enterprises, and the surplus will be plowed into infrastructure, housing, and school construction.

"We cannot turn these lands over to groups of peasants who lack the skills to make them profitable," said Wheelock. "It will be much more beneficial to the peasants if we operate them technologically."

—Chris Curtis

## What Somoza did to Nicaragua

As barbaric as Anastasio Somoza's reign of terror was already known to be, the stories now coming to light in Nicaragua of grotesque tortures, mass graves, dungeons, and sheer destruction encountered by the new government as it takes stock of where Nicaragua stands reveal a depth of horror difficult for the mind to comprehend. The genocide committed by Somoza and the National Guard, including the sheer irrational bestialism employed to that end, has only been surpassed in the post-Hitler period by the Chinese-run Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

The reports presented below are horrifying, but they are not simply the products of a crazed madman determined to hold onto power at any cost. Somoza's Nicaragua, like Pol Pot's Cambodia, represented the final stages of what London policymaking circles advocate as global policy: a new Dark Age. The International Monetary Fund, the Carter administration, Israel and international narcotics traffickers all pumped millions of dollars, men, and weapons into Nicaragua to defend Somoza, knowing full well the nature of his regime, in the determination that if they could not win, there would be nothing left with which others could build a nation.

Serving as war correspondent for the Mexican daily *Uno Mas Uno* in Nicaragua, Carmen de Lira wrote on July 28: "Each one of us knew some brutal act by the Somozan army. Personally, I cannot forget the three hanging bodies of those young Sandinistas who became lost after the battle of Naranjo and fell into the hands of the Guard: The three hung from the trees with their chests ripped open, their genital organs in their mouths, their hearts nailed with stakes. Others remembered the horrible action of the Guard against the children, whose eyes they poked out."

Mexican doctors arriving in the first international brigades to aid the reconstruction, de Lira wrote, confirm the reports.

Mass graves are being discovered across the country

still, a Venezuelan correspondent for *El Nacional* wrote in the first days after the war ended. The journalist reported how he walked with families while they searched through bodies that were disemboweled, grotesquely tortured, or chopped in half, looking for missing relatives.

Prisoners still lie in as yet undiscovered dungeons crisscrossing the hill underlying Somoza's "bunker," the fortified quarters sitting atop Managua from which he ruled. Access ways to the secret dungeons were left mined by the Guard, requiring a special squad of experts in explosives and tunnels to free 150 prisoners still left alive—a full eight days after the war was won. "The search will continue," Anta, the head of the Sandinista squad leading the search, told the press, "because we have reports that there are more cellars and the soldiers swear they hear moanings at night." Anta added that specialized equipment that indicates the presence of underground cavities has been requested from the Red Cross to aid in the urgent search. "Almost all the Tiscapa Hill, where the installations of the presidency, the security office, the tank forces and military hospital were, is crisscrossed by dungeons. ... In some they stored weapons and explosives; in the majority, human beings."

In these cellars were the majority of the torture chambers. A secretary at the Colombian Embassy in Managua told of reports by fleeing National Guardsmen that here Somoza himself would personally attend torture sessions, among whose features were such throwbacks to the Inquisition as snakepits and lions' dens.

### War wounds

Like the mining of the prisons so that no one could ever escape, Somoza has left a legacy of war wounds to the next generation. One-eighth of the population—300,000 people—were left wounded, mutilated, or permanently deformed according to figures released by the Red Cross, much of the damage resulting from the use of various kinds of internationally outlawed antipersonnel weapons. Included among these were fragmentation grenades, whose phosphorus detonators have left thousands blinded, most of them children.

Forty thousand persons were killed in the final six weeks of the 10 month civil war alone, most of them civilians trapped in the cities napalmed and firebombed with tanks of dynamite and gasoline by Somoza's Air Force. The names given to their counteroperations by the Guard forces reveal their strategy, not to win a war, but simply to destroy: "Operation Level and Burn" and "The Nero Strategy," as Commander "Bravo" of the Guard called it, after the Roman emperor who burned Rome. Where resistance is met, the towns will be destroyed, Bravo bragged. In Leon, people were driven into a stadium by Guard troops, and then bombed from the air. In Masaya, where Somoza made his last "counteroffensive," the entire center of the town was brutally

### U.S. Treasury: 'What do they want, cities? Ridiculous'

When asked if the Carter administration intends to supply some of the \$3 billion in reconstruction aid requested by the new Nicaraguan government, a spokesman at the U.S. Department of Treasury had the following to say:

"Three billion is ridiculous. They don't need that much to get the economy going. What are they trying to do, turn the whole place into one big modern city?"

firebombed for hours, while Guard troops surrounding the city shot those trying to flee the flames. In Managua, indiscriminate bombing of the city continued for over a week.

Not even Hitler carried out the sweeping extermination campaign leveled at the youth of the country as a whole as did the Guard. Everybody, especially those over 11, was liable for execution by Guardsmen on suspicion of being a Sandinista.

It is no wonder that the National Guard was, by the end, largely composed of mercenaries, and virtually all drug addicts.

### The final plunder

Forty years of Somoza's rule have left 70 percent of the population illiterate; 75 percent of the children malnourished to a significant degree; and, according to estimates, only half the children born reach the age of five. One-third of the entire national economy was controlled by Somoza's businesses; one half the cultivable land in the country owned by Somoza and his family.

In his last days Somoza took as much of that with him as he could: the National Treasury had barely \$5 million left in reserves; the rest was drawn in last-minute checks by Somoza and his fleeing retinue. Thirteen of the nation's shrimp boats, the majority, were stolen. The cattle herd, according to a French agricultural advisor in Central America, was almost entirely slaughtered in the last days of the war, and shipped to sell in the U.S. on Somoza's private shipping lines. The herd, urgently needed to feed the starving population, will take years to rebuild. Every business and bank in Somozan empire was found mortgaged way above assets. As junta member and private businessman Alfonso Robelo stated, "This country was nothing but a source of hard cash for investment abroad."

Now the country is carrying out the process of reconstruction, with one million of the pre-war population of 2.5 million Nicaraguans left without resources by the war.

—Gretchen Small